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DEMOCRACY AND DECENTRALIZATION IN VENEZUELA

By

Yubirí Aragort Solórzano

A Doctoral thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

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I must say with regard to the American people, that the idea never entered my head to consider as identical the characteristics of two peoples so different as the Anglo-American and the Spanish-American. Would it not be very difficult to apply to Spain the English system of political, civil, and religious liberty? It is even more difficult to adopt the laws of the United States in Venezuela. Does not l'Esprit des lois say that the laws should suit the people who make them? That it is a mere chance if the laws of one nation suit another nation? The law should be adapted to the physiography of the country, to the climate, to the soil, to the situation of the country, to its extent, and to the manner of life of his inhabitants? That laws should be adapted to the degree of liberty which the constitution can sanction, to the religion of the inhabitants, to their inclinations, riches, numbers, commerce, and manners? This is the code which we ought to consult and not the code of Washington (William Spence Robertson 1965, Rise of the Spanish-American Republics. As told in the lives of theirs Librators: p.222).

Simón Bolívar
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relations between democracy and decentralization in Venezuela during the period from 1989 to 2000. In particular it explores the emergence of political decentralization as the spatial distribution of power and its links with the process of democratization within political spaces. The spatial distribution of power has impacts upon both political institutions and civil society. This is where its central importance lies. Because of this, the framework of ideas underlying the thesis is followed within a methodological focus that emphasizes both the potency of the spatial, as a guiding element of politics and the political, and the local scale and the political practice of individuals.

The background to the study is established through an exploration of territoriality and the spatiality of power in Venezuela during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is followed by an analysis of the centralist form of the state and the state reforms which were promoted at the end of the 1980s and which gave rise to the political decentralization of 1989 at the level of states and municipalities. The main period of study (1989-2000) is divided into three stages according to the dynamics of the process of democratization itself. Finally, the changes occurring at the local level through the application of decentralization are analyzed through a case study at the level of the municipality and of the parish: the Libertador municipality of the state of Mérida and the parish of J.J. Osuna Rodríguez.

The most important findings of the thesis are:

* Conceptually, the thesis show that in order to understand the process of democratization in Latin America and specifically in Venezuela, it is necessary to move beyond a binary model of power, characterized by dominance and resistance, and emphasize the spatialities of power. An image of the distribution of relationships of power and resistance as an infinity of points, allows us to understand the articulations of power and space from a double perspective. On the one hand, it suggests that power is de-centrally distributed and this implies a new manner of understanding the dynamics of the process of democratisation. On the other hand, it
suggests that power is practiced and, as a consequence, is all around and between us, rather than being located in a centre, or 'enclosed' within the individual.

* More specifically, the thesis demonstrates that Venezuelan democracy has been strengthened by political decentralization which has permitted the overcoming of difficult moments in the continuity of the democratic system and the reinforcement of institutionality. It also, however, contributed towards a disarticulation of the control that the political parties had exerted over civil society. The fragmentation of the parties and the ensuing atomization of the party system fed the diversity of the political system and encouraged diverse opinions and wide political discussion. This lead to the elaboration of a new Constitution in 1999.

*Furthermore, civil society has played a very important role within the framework of the recent struggles for hegemony in Venezuela. Inevitable civil society found itself subject to pressures and resistances from above and below, but also at the same time in an arena of discussion and dialogue. In this sense, the presence of a pluralist diverse civil society has also been a great support for the continuity of the democratic system, and its contribution to the democratic process has enriched the participatory nature of the new Constitution. One of the most important contributions of the new hegemony established under Chávez has been to give knowledge to civil society of an alternative which has begun to challenge the representative democracy of elites that had previously dominated the political system and, in its place to promote a more dynamic and more participatory democracy at national and local levels.

* The specific local examples explored in the thesis allow highlighted the ways in which clientelism can be associated with the vertical structures of power that have predominated in Latin America. Nevertheless, whilst its importance has been highlighted here through an understanding of the process of democratisation on the South American continent, it is interesting to note that it is not often explicitly considered as another mode of power in western political theory.

Key words: Democracy, Venezuela, Decentralization, Spatiality of Power, Civil Society, Process of Democratization, political clientelism.
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INTRODUCTION

This research is directed at studying the relations between democracy and political decentralization. It deals with various aspects related to this problematic and their implications for the process of democratization which began in Venezuela in the period 1989-2000. The process of democratisation that characterised this period is marked by a series of political events woven together within a context of decentralized power. Political decentralization was proposed initially as part of the state reforms (1984-1989), which accompanied the application of the structural adjustment measures recommended by the multilateral organisations.

However, the popular uprising against these measures on the 27th of February 1989 modified the political panorama and the initial proposals for administrative decentralization were diverted towards a more political decentralization. Later, the military uprising of 1992 (amongst other events) was another issue which was related to political decentralization. This acted to generate changes in the democracy of conciliation of the elites that had been installed in 1961 and, as a consequence, in the direction that the current process of democratisation would take.

During the period of the study, the hegemonic parties of Venezuela have undergone important transformations, and their leadership has for all intents and purposes been completely renovated. The appearance of new political organizations and new movements of civil society, some of these linked to liberal democracy, has also been clearly evident. This re-composition of the political system has given rise to a new hegemony, which sought the approval of a new Constitution in 1999. Participation has been given considerable importance and democracy has been made more integral through the incorporation of the referendum and the assembly in place of the senate. Nevertheless, what is important to underline now, is that this new Constitution, in combination with the measures relating to political decentralization, have favoured the process of change in the political context through the opening of new democratic spaces at the local level.

These events have had great importance in the process of Venezuelan democratisation. The two main Venezuelan political parties, AD and COPEI, had controlled political
participation and local civil organizations through a variety of clientelistic practices for some 30 years. The clientelism of these parties had contributed to the extension of central power over space, as well as to the instrumentalization of practices directed at controlling and de-mobilizing the organizations of civil society at the local level. This, without doubt, favoured determinate groups and semi-corporative organisms that, together with the elites of the parties, progressively accentuated the verticality of power until control was exerted over all orders of national life.

Leading on from the above, the thesis argues that the dynamic of the democratic system since 1989 has mainly had to do with political decentralization, in conjunction with other relationships, events, activities and practices. Therefore, the interest of this work is directed towards understanding how the relationships of democratic power have been modified in Venezuela, how decentralization has intervened in the process of democratisation and, lastly, how these changes been lived by the community?

The adoption of this perspective has orientated the research towards a focus on political decentralization, as linked to the spatiality of power, whilst the technical aspects of decentralization have been considered at the informative level only. The proposal to understand the relationships of power in an infinity of points, before arriving at a centre, permits the assimilation of the articulations of power and space from a double perspective: that power is decentralized and also, that power is practiced and in consequence, is everywhere around and between us. Modern politics has woven a tight link with space through the role that civil society has come to play in the process of democratisation on the march, and the opening of new spaces for democracy.

Such a framework of ideas permits the formation of a vision that puts the socio-historical process by the side of the experiences of individuals. This is achieved through the elaboration of the antecedents of territoriality and the state in Venezuela, the formation of the political context of the democracy of conciliation, the period of decentralized democracy of 1989-2000, as well as through a case study which shows the experiences of the individuals and leaders of the community of the Libertador municipality in the state of Mérida and the parish of J.J. Osuna Rodríguez.
In the Venezuelan case, the interpretation of the distribution of power and its effects upon the predominant centralist practices, have been subject as much to the violence of their dynamic as to the immaturity of their results. Nevertheless, these transformations are beginning to be evaluated within the country, and this study has as its objective to contribute to a deepening of knowledge in this direction, given the privileged place occupied by the theme in Venezuela today.

**Structure of the Chapters**

This work consists of seven chapters. Chapters I and II deal with the conceptual and methodological aspects of the study respectively. Chapter III refers to the territoriality of power in the 18th and 19th centuries, whilst Chapter IV considers the emergence of centralized democracy and the constitution of the modern Venezuelan state. Chapter V then analyses the process of political decentralization since 1989 at state the level. Chapter VI, presents the results and analysis of a detailed case study, and the last chapter, Chapter VII, summarizes the major findings of the theoretical and analytical chapters and offers some concluding remarks.

**Chapter I**

This chapter constructs a theoretical framework in relation to democracy and decentralization. It attempts to design a guiding thread in order to promote the understanding of, and outline the emergence of, decentralization as a spatial distribution of power, and to trace its links with the process of democratization in political spaces.

**Chapter II**

This chapter considers the methodological framework and the specific methodological techniques necessary for exploring the problematic relationship between democracy and decentralization. The methodological focus emphasizes both the potency of the spatial, as a guiding element of politics and the political, and the local scale and the political practice of individuals.
CHAPTER I

DEMOCRACY AND DECENTRALIZATION

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter will construct a theoretical framework in relation to democracy and decentralization. It will be concerned with the design of a guiding thread, to promote the understanding of, and outline the emergence of, decentralization as a spatial distribution of power, and to trace its links with the process of democratization in political spaces. These links acquire a central importance, once the assumption is made that the distribution of power has influence upon political institutions and the conducting of the political.

Pursuing this theme within the pages that follow, firstly the idea of democracy and the process of democratization are used as key points in laying out a notion of the spatiality of power. This is followed closely by a description of the different viewpoints on decentralization. This allows us to situate decentralization in the changing context of state reform. Most important at this point is an examination of the discourse on decentralization, its ideological burden and its relationship to the idea of power. Clearly this discourse is related to the “western viewpoint” of decentralization; as a consequence of this, one aspect that is highlighted is the importance of outlining what the view of decentralization is from Latin America.

Of course, all of the aforementioned is closely related to the role which civil society plays in the current process of democratization, and the opening of new spaces for democracy. Thus, having set out all of these aspects of a framework for the spatiality of power, all that remains is to open the analysis of the various connections of my problematic of democracy and decentralization.
1.1 Democracy, the process of democratization and the spatiality of power

According to Parekh, liberal democracy represents a meticulously constructed and complex political theory, based on an ingenious combination of liberalism and democracy. Liberalism constitutes its theory of the State, and democracy its theory of government. The first determines the structure of the state as separate from civil society which is seen as autonomous. It also proposes a clear delimitation between public functions and private ones. The protection of the basic rights of citizens is the basis of its rationale, and individuals rather than groups or communities. Democracy, for its part, specifies that elected representatives constitute the legitimate government and are those who exercise the authority inherent in the state. This authority they acquire through free elections between political parties and they exercise this authority in harmonious agreement with public opinion (Parekh 1992, p.167).

In the new context of economic openness, the states of Latin America have been reformed and their democracies reoriented along liberal lines. Nevertheless, Parekh indicates that, since liberal democracy defines itself and is structured inside the limits established by liberalism, by being specified in this cultural context, it cannot have universal applicability. In contemporary democracy, therefore, liberalism is the dominant part, whilst democracy has its own independent traditions and internal logic. This explains the ways in which democracy has from time to time been in conflict with the limitations of liberalism (Parekh 1992, pp 160-170).

In relation to these limitations Bobbio has noted that the supporters of the minimal state suggest that the greatest well-being that individuals can achieve for themselves, occurs when they are free to pursue their own interests. They criticize the beneficent state because it reduces the free citizen to a protected subject. However, the pursuit of social unity demands the introduction of some criterion of distributive justice. Bobbio establishes here the limits between the advocates of the liberal state and those of the social state (Bobbio 1986, pp. 88-96). In spite of this difference in relation to what is signified by equality, he signals that liberalism is compatible with democracy from
the point-of-view of its political formula or of ‘popular sovereignty’\(^1\) (Bobbio 1997(b), pp. 45-46).

Pickvance indicates that the concept of ‘democracy of the people’ is directed at the question of the appropriate form of government which, can vary from direct participation in decision-making processes, down to the simple satisfaction of personal necessities. He also argues that the degree of participation is a matter for debate, because democracy is seen as a system which creates political equality as well (Pickvance 1997, p.131).

The position of Parekh that liberal democracy cannot have universal applicability is very important because it limits the field of action of liberal democracy, giving an opening to new ways of understanding democracy. Following this sentiment, Pickvance sees as a solution the restriction of the term democracy to an ideal, an unreachable state, and introduces a new idea. The idea that democracy should be understood as a process.

Bobbio also gives us an idea of this ideal and unreachable democracy, when he puts a bridge between representative democracy and direct democracy. This connection is seen as “a continuity of intermediary forms”, an integral system of democracy which can embrace both forms, according to diverse situations and different necessities. However, in the aforementioned system both forms of democracy are necessary, but are not considered sufficient (Bobbio 1986, pp. 40-41); for this, he gives prominence to the principle of democratization (or the broadening of democracy). This process

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\(^1\) Universal suffrage in principle does not run contrary to a state of rights nor to the minimal state. A liberal state that was not democratic would be inconceivable, as would a democratic state that was not liberal, for the reasons given: 1) the democratic method is necessary to safeguard the fundamental rights of people, which are the basis for the liberal state, and 2) the safeguarding of these rights is necessary for the correct functioning of the democratic method. The best guarantee that rights to liberty are protected against the tendency of governments to limit them is the direct or indirect participation of citizens in the formulation of laws. Equally, participation in the vote can be considered as the correct and efficacious exercise of political power, or at least the power of influence in the collective taking of decisions, but only if acted on freely.
consists not so much of the step from representative democracy to direct democracy, but rather from political democracy to social democracy, which is identified with the extent of ascending power. The reference to ascending power is inscribed within a framework of the flow of power, which has two directions: descending, which moves from above to below and is characterized as bureaucratic power, or ascending, which moves from below to above and is characterized as political power in the name of the individual as citizen. Ascending power is political power because it is exercised at all levels, local, regional and national.

Political power acquires all of its relevance from the sphere of social relations, where the individual is taken into consideration through the diversity of his/her status and roles: as father/mother, as son/daughter, as producer and as consumer, as provider of services and user. There are no greater possibilities for broadening democracy than in the sphere of political relations, in that which the individual is determined by his/her role as citizen. If one wanted to take an indication of the development of democracy, it could no longer be from the number of persons that have the right to vote, but rather the numbers of places where it is possible to exercise the right to vote (Bobbio 1986, pp. 42-45). This reflects the spatial expression of the political.

In this way, the problematic of the broadening of democracy forces us to précis the connections between democracy and democratization, which can be considered as reflecting those which are established between system and process. Democratization, seen as renovation in the forms of participation, the development of autonomy or the capacity for self-determination, is a process that extends the starting-motor of ascending power to various spheres of civil society. The dynamic of this process seeks to penetrate those spaces dominated by hierarchical bureaucratic practices, in order to democratize the state and broaden the rights of citizens (Slater 1998(a), p.2).

This perspective in the literature is currently being discussed in relation to the global, and Taylor indicates that in political terms two forms of globalization can be identified: the familiar type of globalization from above based on the collaboration of leading states and transnational capital, and the globalization from below which defends and protests against neglect of ecology, liberty and human rights (Taylor 2000, p.66).
This notwithstanding, it is most important to underline that a political phase is now being entered which is characterized by the dissemination of spaces and types of political interchange. The spatiality of power acts by configuring the presence of multiple locations where the political takes place. At the same time, this dissemination of spaces acts to configure polyphonic scenarios whose characteristics are the diversity of voices capable of speaking politically, and the potential grouping of some voices, spaces and practices. These polyphonic stages are able to open up a multidimensional political field; there is a series of simultaneous stages for the exercise of citizenship, local, regional, national and international. They are also able to have a supranational character, the result of the political exchange outside the geopolitical frontiers of the nation state. It is possible to determine at least three spaces and forms of political exchange:

i) The expansion of politics outside the frontiers of the nation state.

ii) The development of popular political initiatives and neo-corporate outlines which establish mechanisms and channels of political negotiation with the state, at the boundaries of territorial representations.

iii) The politicization of themes of class, gender or environment with the multiplication of new social movements (Arditi 1997, pp. 13-15).

Following Munck these new social movements contrast with the old workers or nationalist movements and include women movements and peace or human rights movements, as well in a few variants a diversity of regional, local and communal movements. Sometimes however there is an absolute conflict between new movements and “old” movements, which can be deceptive when making reference to Latin America. Nevertheless, for Munck the new social movements are seen as representatives of a qualitatively different form of making politics, and a new social paradigm in an embryonic state. These movements underline their autonomy with respect to political parties and they give priority to civil society over and above the state. In the politics of social movements, their own power is redefined as a pluralistic texture shared in within the social fabric. Consequently these movements help to
create a new political space with new identities, where new demands are articulated (Munck 1997, pp. 163-169).

Thus, the idea of the spatiality of power is matched with the notion of spatial distribution of the social, and its derivative relationships of power. The distribution of the political is at the base of this open field of relationships, and the social is a field of relationships which composes itself around the different positions of the diverse identities which form it. These related positions are always different and mobile, and this favours the articulated dynamic of the spatiality of power; openness comes to be a condition for the joining of different social practices and dialogues. This does not signify, however, that there is an absence of tendencies towards sedimentation, or attempts towards the formation of positions of fixed identities, but these never arrive at a state of total fixity (Laclau and Mouffe 2000, pp. 114-134).

It follows from all of the previously discussed, that a focus on relationships of power cannot ignore that which is signified by space, simply because the social and the political are becoming more and more related to the spatial. In other words the relationship of politics to the political, in the field of the spatiality of the social, is making itself more and more transparent. John Allen (1999) distinguishes what he refers to as three diagrams of spatiality or vocabularies of power: centered power linked to the distribution of capacities, the mobilizing power of resources, and immanent power, or the generator of practices. The first two diagrams of power are inscribed in the binary relationships of domination-resistance.

The first kind of power, centered, is conceived as a possession or as something which can be retained by an institution, group or person, whether it is used or not. It can also be the capacity to influence and control the actions of others (as distinct from the exercise of this capacity). The relationships between the center and its areas of power are equivalent to a joining of the whole and its parts; once power is localized it may be extended, distributed or resisted through the social environment of space. That which characterizes this type of power cannot be transmitted intact through a hierarchy of decisions – in whatever linking of actors, the power is modified and transformed when it passes from one level to another.
The second type of power, as mobilizer of resources, is generated through the combined mobilization of individual or collective resources to ensure certain results. It is contained in the individual and produced through networks of social action, and in as much, is difficult to localize and can expand or shrink within the network (for example social solidarity movements etc.). Nevertheless, this type of power can also be related to the presence of disedimentation identities linked to transnational firms and their skills in linking local practices with global relations. It is in cities or in nation states where resources tend to concentrate, and this is a type of power that can be administered “at a distance”. The power generated in one location, very distant from another, is transmitted intact and seems to suffer little change or transformation by displacement.

In a binary model of power where the powerful are confronted by the impotent, separated by a line of resistance, it is usual to find the terms power and domination as synonyms. Both notions are interpreted as the capacity to impose one’s will on the actions of another, despite resistance. In this asymmetric distribution of power, the product of antagonism or competition, the powerful are considered as being in the best position to dominate the impotent. Once the conflict is extended over space, the inequality of power shows itself in the submission of the weakest to the instrumentalised will of the other.

In order for this power to be effective and able to reach into spaces, the creation of authoritarian forms of organization is required, where the power of supervision and control is distributed in a hierarchical manner. These forms are founded on legality. This makes it necessary that authority (in contrast to domination) be recognized as something formally asked for by the individual, and in this way authority becomes a means to assure approval inside structures of domination. Moreover authority is an instrumental mode of power that can be used in combination with other forms of power such as coercion, manipulation and seduction. This permits domination, as a form of coercion and imposition, to be established from one place to another inside a territorial space, even across vast distances.

The third type of power, immanent power, as power as generator of practices, by way of contrast, is practiced before being a possession or reservoir of resources. By being
immanent it is not an external force and can be actively constituted through space
and, more than the area which it shapes, it is valued for the efficiency with which the
individual internalises its effects – the power is not over, but rather around and
between individuals. This power is the technique which governs to the point where it
is possible to realize action. As such it is key to the organization of space
(distribution, zonification) because the individual assemblies of space which form
part of the institutional complex are essential to ensure individual types of behavior

Discussing this framework of reference opens the debate over the spatiality of power,
and it has already led to the proposal of a re-theorizing of the binary relationship of
dominance and resistance. As has been shown, in this binary relationship domination
has been favoured by making it synonymous with relationships of power and
resistance, as distinct from the effects of power. But if, to the contrary, a distinction is
established between relationships of domination and relationships of power, this
permits a more appropriate focus. Relationships of power then come to be the effect
of the inequalities and differences which are found in the social, the resistances are an
effect of power. This is shown in the contrast between centered power and power as
generator of practices.

In such a way, the alternative route of non-derivative relationships of power is related
to the vision of the immanent power of social relationships, more than being
identified with a specific institution or agency - which is to say, that social
relationships and the constitution of identities form the same terrain. Apart from this
condition, identities are constructed in a conjuncture with relationships of power, and
derived from these same (Slater 1998(b), pp. 1-7). Following this line of thought the
theme of the relationships between politics and the political can be seen more clearly,
as well as their links with domination and resistance. Politics passes from being
considered as an assembly of institutions, discourses and practices that seek to
establish order and organize life in conditions which are always subject to conflict, by
being influenced by the political. Here, the political can be taken to be an antagonistic
dimension that is immanent to all of human society. It is an antagonism that can take
many different forms, and can be localized in diverse social relationships; politics can
be understood as an attempt to pacify the political, or to guarantee the maintenance of order (Slater 1997, p.59).

Another aspect that has to do with connections between power and democratization is its internal and external relationships, and the implications that they have in the encounter between the Western and Non-Western. In this case, where relationships of control are expressed in a system of rules that violate the sovereignty of the people and the constitution of political and social autonomy, the demarcation of spaces follows an external logic and the imposition of hierarchical domination. Sovereignty can be defined as the union of security, legitimacy and authority in specific relation to the demarcation and defense of a particular territory; the dynamic of governmentality can be examined in terms of these discourses, and the combination of programmes and techniques for the deployment of discourses of rule (Slater 1998(b), p.5).

This last is tightly connected with the process of democratization through the programmes implemented by multilateral financial entities such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These programmes and their reforms, associated with global-local spatial integration, have effects over different spatial ambits and their power relationships. Slater, in response to the emphasis placed on the global-local connections of these programmes, has suggested extending the analysis to five spheres, interconnected and differentiated. The global, the supranational region, the national, the regional (intranational) and the local level - the last two levels are related in their turn to the urban/rural and the community. In this diagram the community is understood as a category of social interaction independent of the urban/rural, and distinct from the local and regional (Slater 1998(a), p.24).

This point can be used to connect the spatiality of power with questions evoked by the discussion of decentralization and the process of democratization. The implications are evident every time political decentralization influences the distribution of political power, which establishes clear connections to the internal. Meanwhile, political decentralization is also framed inside politics linked to the external; another aspect is the direct impact that decentralization has on participation.
This is a characteristic which connect to the autonomous character of the new political initiatives and the new social movements. These social and political movements now act without mediation and enter directly into negotiations with the state. In such a manner autonomy and political participation come to constitute themselves as the central rotating point around which revolve the demands of civil society. As a continuation of this, the next section deals with the different ways in which relationships between decentralization and democracy establish themselves.

I.2 Decentralization and its perspectives

Reviewing the literature the difficulties in determining the limits of the concept of decentralization become clear. Some authors say that it includes discussions on the theory of the state (Smith 1985), whereas others define it in relation to popular participation and local democracy (Borja 1987). Decentralization is at once politics, power and space (Slater 1989). Without a doubt, all of these aspects have something to do with the decentralization which is sweeping through the countries of Latin America. As it is plain to see, the dominant proposal is that of Przeworski (1997), that decentralization is a complex and controversial topic.

Castells argues that the new ideology of the minimal state underlines the politics of decentralization. He states that, with economic decentralization, the state restores legitimacy and at the same time reinforces the centrifugal tendencies given to the citizens closest to the government, but also says at the same time that it increases the distance of citizens from the minimal, centralized state. He suggests that this occurs because of the reduction of the role of the state in the economy and in society, through the privatization of enterprises and public services, and the reduction of taxation and the costs of social welfare (Castells 1997, p.243).

On the other hand, Giddens (2000, p.122) notes that decentralization appears to be "the sign of new global times", notwithstanding which the nation-state still remains the most important agent on the international scene. This is through the manner in which the process of democratization, which brings ready-made reforms of the state, is linked on the one hand to economic globalization, the corporatization of firms, the
transnationalisation of capital and technological advance, and on the other hand to the
territorial decentralization of power. The spatial distribution of power on the inside of
the national space is directed at strengthening democratic institutionality and also
local forms of participation.

It is precisely within this context of ideas that this thesis places the discussion on
decentralization. Samoff (1990) affirms that for some authors the principal problem
on tackling political decentralization is whether or not it gives or brings a greater
effectiveness in the transference of decisions of power towards grassroots groups and
organizations that were not represented in government. Although Samoff (1990,
p.521) says that neither centralization or decentralization of themselves will
necessarily benefit the most disadvantaged groups, for others decentralization is
primordially an administrative deconcentration, as a means to improve the
functioning of government in bringing to completion programmes of development.

Schönwälder (1997) separates theoretical tendencies on decentralization into two
different groups: one he calls the political focus, and the other the pragmatic focus.
He shows, for example, how Smith (1985) defines decentralization as political, i.e.
that he is concerned with the distribution of power and the effect of this model of
power upon different groups and social classes. The focus upon decentralization
sustained by Boisier (1987, 1991), Castells (1988) and Borja (1988) also move in the
same direction; the political is a key element of their analysis. Essentially they
suggest that decentralization is a vehicle for political reform, means of democratizing
the state apparatus which is seen as the principal objective to achieving total
democratization.

Such authors also consider that the decentralization of the state apparatus opens new
channels of popular participation within the politics of the system. This opening can
be seen as one route towards democratization for the social movements which operate
at a local and regional level which, moreover, can be integrated into the
decentralization process. Decentralization can be taken, therefore, not only as greater
equality between regions, also a mechanism for achieving a greater participation for
the up-to-now excluded popular masses.
By contrast, Schönhälder signals that the pragmatic focus of Rondinelli (1983, 1989, 1990), Cheema (1983, 1989) and Wilson (1987) principally emphasizes the technical and economic aspect of decentralization. They outline how decentralization contributes to the development of the local and the regional and more specifically, how decentralization can improve the supply and maintenance of public services and infrastructure in underdeveloped countries. Essentially decentralization is seen in this focus as a political instrument which can be used by the state, frequently assisted in this endeavor by international organizations.

The relationship between decentralization and popular participation within the pragmatic focus is suggested through the participation of civil society in local government. The level of popular participation determines the degree to which decentralization achieves its ends, and the participation of local voluntary organizations is necessary to ensure the success of programmes. Whatever the case, the role of decentralization is to a great extent instrumental — a facilitating instrument for the planning and execution of projects from above. Essentially this means that it is proposed as a meta-focus, in the sense of a universal model which can be used in the design and implementation of decentralization independent of political, social and economic context. It also signifies that political participation can be easily limited and controlled (Schönhälder 1997, pp. 757-759).

Manor (1995) also identifies two tendencies, but he calls them decentralization by deconcentration and fiscal control and decentralization as devolution.

The first tendency is related to efficiency, and to political processes conducive for dispersion or dilution of administrative decisions from above to below. It is characterized by, the evaluation and discussion of decentralization programmes in terms of optimal areas, administrative efficiency and executive implementation. Manor criticizes this tendency as not taking into consideration the actions of political forces which participate in regional and local systems of government, in analyzing the results of decentralization.

Moreover, he signals that if deconcentration and fiscal control are chosen democratically this will have effects on governability, and on the contrary, they can
be used to penetrate to the lowest levels of decision-making and civil society. This implies that decentralization also contains a strong political influence, as well as a level of control, over the inferior levels of direction and over civil society. Decentralization not only facilitates implementation of changes in inter-governmental relationships, but can also provoke reactions against processes which promote centralization, or which favour the deepening of these same processes of decentralization.

The second tendency is decentralization as devolution, which Manor considers as all but accepted as a democratic decentralization, in the sense of a total political decentralization. This is related to the transference of resources, duties and decision-making powers to the lowest levels of authority, when these are chosen in a democratic form and totally independent of the central power. This is a process of reaction that can stimulate demands for elections or increase political participation, and thus considerably improve the responsibility of government institutions.

This total political decentralization could increase the speed of response from those functionaries at the lowest levels who need no longer obtain the approval of higher-ups, and in cases where approval was required this would tend to arrive more rapidly. The quantity and quality of responses (usually related to development projects on a grand scale) also increase partially, because decentralization tends strongly to produce a change of resources from small-scale projects to project initiatives on the micro-level (Manor 1995, p.82).

Following this flow of ideas, it can be noted that decentralization allows for at least two interpretations linked to the context of relationships of power. A conventional political view can justify its implementation, meanwhile the political would appeal to the resistant of the political instrumentality which it could potentially. Both points are reviewed as of prime importance in the framework of these ideas, because they contribute to knowing what is thought, what are the interconnections and critiques, and which roads indicate the opinions and tendencies, in non-Western countries; in addition they help to précis some key conceptual interconnections for the study in progress. The suggestion comes from the proposal of Slater concerning the urgent necessity of interrogating about "western ethnocentric formulation of the regimens of
truth and power”, and of constructing a thematic horizon which gives sufficient autonomy to the non-West. The discussion here lends itself to the introduction of elements around this thematic (Slater 1998(b), p.2).

Following on from these broad conceptual discussions, the specific context of the Neoliberal reform process that has been implemented in Latin America will be explored. This allows us to contextualize the views that the multilateral institutions have developed about decentralization and the visions that they have for it in Latin America. Neoliberal reform in this context refers to those political programmes instituted across the region in the process of adjustment to the changes in the global economy. The responsibility for guaranteeing that the process of adjustment known as the Washington Consensus will be fulfilled in the region has been assumed by the IMF, the WB and the IDB (Petras-Velmeyer 1995, p.168). The importance that this point of view has come to have, comes itself from its close relationship with the processes of democratization occurring in the non-West. Schuurman (1997) indicates that the transition to democracy in the Third World can be attributed as much to the increasing loss of legitimacy of non-democratic regimes, as to external pressure from the introduction of structural adjustment programmes connected to the creation of stable political environments for capital investment (Schuurman 1997, p.160). Sonntag (1999) observes that these changes and transformations in the global economy show two elements: one, that the socio-institutional framework is every day less capable of resolving the dilemmas that the system produces, and two that they are opening ways towards the construction or creation of a new social system (Sonntag 1999, p.23).

1.3 The Context of Decentralization

Stephen Gill indicates the importance of the global in the countries of the Third World as an increasingly evident fact, even when it is considered that political and social life continue to be primordially national and local. These constitute the precise spaces where the majority of political and economic activities develop (Gill 1996, p.210). Reform implemented in Latin America has placed emphasis on local spaces,
whereas the role assigned to the state continues to be important in defining the insertion of the country into regional blocks and the global economy.

Reform has been intended to promote the reduction of the functions of the state in order to minimize its impact on the economy, and moreover to promote political and administrative decentralization. Nevertheless, from the Summit of the Americas in Santiago onwards it can be seen that the presence of strong central governments has also been sought; Kent Eaton (2001) indicates (for example) that there is a process of recentralization of the state in Latin America. This process seems to be connected, ultimately, with the growth in responsibility of local governments to the financial entities.

On the other hand, Neoliberal reform also has to do with the specificity of social relationships within national spaces and the power of their effects. The recomposition of the reform of the state reflects, to a certain extent, a response to the continent socio-political instability. The process of democratization is situated, on one side over a struggle against the deepening of social inequality and unequal distribution of wealth, and on the other it is framed by social disintegration and the re-vindications of identities. It is understood that all of these subjects constitute the field of differences of social relationships, and as a consequence separation of them, even if desirable, is not possible.

To begin the theme, there is the Washington Consensus, the agreement of development by the multilateral institutions and the presidents of America: the Summit of the Americas in Santiago de Chile in 1998, and more recently the Summit of the United Nations Organization of Monterrey in Mexico, in 2002. Nevertheless in relation to the theme stated here, the Consensus shows a marked difference between summits; from the Summit of Santiago the aspect which leaps out is the theme of poverty. It could be thought that the slant of the Summit tried not only to create conditions to recompose the power of politics, but also to avoid or control resistances. According to Petras and Veltmeyer, in the context of Latin America the implementation of the Consensus, as well as increasing the deterioration of conditions of existence, has increased the potential for association, co-operation and mobilization of networks of power (Petras and Veltmeyer 1995, pp. 174-178).
Whilst the original Washington Consensus laid much emphasis on economic problems, in the two recent summits, Santiago and Monterrey, the economic content has been conflated with the social content. These later accords accentuate that “the mobilization of financial resources is the first step towards development, but nevertheless the aim is the eradication of poverty”. In this mood, the Summit of Santiago introduces the suggestion of social capital, the inclusion of which it seems is intended to give a character of a social nature to future reforms. Social capital constituted as a new element of debate of economic reforms seeks to restate social values and promote co-operation at the level of civil society. As was shown before, this is also related to the theme of decentralization.

Moreover, from economic growth springs the necessity to achieve social development, improve equity, strengthen democracy and preserve environmental equilibria. The consensus of the presidents of America in Santiago (1998) reflects this order of priorities, by including in its plan of action points which exceed the limits of the conventional, such as (among others): the emphasis on the promotion of education, the preservation and deepening of democracy, justice and human rights, the struggle against poverty and discrimination, the strengthening of financial markets, and regional co-operation in environmental affairs (Kilksberg 1999, p.5).

In general terms, the policies recommended by the Washington Consensus were linked to the financial and commercial liberalization of national markets and their insertion into a globalized economy. With such decisions, it was sought to create sustained economic growth around an intermediate form of democracy, with the aim of overcoming the most important problems of the region. Nevertheless, it was impossible to create the desired conditions of sustainable development, and inequality grew significantly (Fleury 1992(b), p.2). In this respect Chomsky recounts that the Washington Consensus represents those policies which tend to do the opposite of that which they set out, ruining national economies through the use of strict adjustment programmes instead of solving their problems. The result of these adjustments has been the impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of people in underdeveloped countries (Fox 2001, pp. 42-58).
The annual Human Development Report of 1998 prepared by the UNDP observes that global consumption has increased at a rate unprecedented in the 20th Century, which is to say that more people eat and live better than before. Nevertheless, the report stresses that current consumption affects the environmental base of resources, exacerbates inequality and accelerates the link between consumption, poverty inequality and the environment. There exists a great inequality of opportunity between the inhabitants of rich and poor countries in the acquisition of products – additionally, from day to day there is an intangible accumulation of tension in global society concerning social exclusion and other more tangible forces, such as pressure on the environment (SOCSAL 1998, p.5).

According to the IBD, the situation in Latin America is no more supportive. Recent figures indicate that the region presents multiple challenges, which are ethical as well as economic and social; for instance 36% of children under 2 years of age are suffering from malnutrition. 17% of births throughout the region occur without medical assistance, maternal mortality is five times that of developed countries, and juvenile unemployment is twice that of general unemployment. Many families are being destroyed by poverty, and the gap of inequality is the greatest on the planet – the richest 5% of the population have 26% of average regional income, whereas the poorest 30% have only 7.5%. Criminality is on the increase, and is directly linked to juvenile unemployment and the deterioration of family structures (Kliksberg 2001, El Nacional).

One of the truths derived from the application of the Washington Consensus, is that the mere fact of economic growth is not necessarily conducive to resolving the problem of inequality. To the contrary, the search for increased rates of return on investment and the expansion of markets would appear to deepen the above inequalities in contexts such as that of Latin America. The adoption of proposals of liberalization, stabilization and privatization have not prompted improvements in social development, and perhaps this has influenced the reappraisal of aspects not included in conventional economic thought. The regional problematic seems to be much more complicated, and requires the congruence of dimensions whose precedence is not of an entirely economic character.
The break-up of the Washington Consensus promotes, to the international organizations, the urgency of the Summit of the Americas of Santiago and the widening of the agenda to include improving equity, strengthening democracy and the preservation of environmental balances. Raising gross production is an important and desirable objective, but should only be viewed as a means at the service of greater ends such as health, nutrition, education, liberty and values. According to Amartya Sen (1998) this has contributed to softening and humanizing the concept of development, and organizations such as the IDB consider social capital as an expression of development or backwardness. Development is concerned with the widening of real opportunity for citizens, and the realization of their potential (Sen 1998, pp. 600-601).

In the ensuing re-think of the Washington Consensus, particular emphasis has been assigned to the skills and productive capacity of the whole population. On the one hand, these permit the stimulation of productivity, increase economic growth and contribute to the moderation of demographic change. On the other hand they have practical connotations in the terrain of state policy, wherever this affects the ambit of human liberties, social welfare and the quality of life (Sen 2001, pp. 600-601). Another aspect of these reforms is that institutions must be taken into account, as well as the junctures between their formal rules. The variables of political and institutional order carry a heavy weight in reality, and a strong influence in the conformation of unforeseen scenarios. Informal and less tangible institutions also have to be considered, such as ethics, trust, religious precepts and other codes (Kliksberg 1999, p. 5-6).

In relation to this last, a summary suffices to re-examine the links between social capital and culture. Ignorance of individual potential under-uses capacity that can be applied to development, and unleashes powerful resistance. On the other hand, recognition can generate virtuous circles with other dimensions of development; this focus accentuates at base the level of trust that exists between social actors, as well as stores of potential conflict, such as norms of practiced civic behaviour which contribute to the general welfare (payment of taxes and care of public spaces, for instance). It also accentuates the levels of association that characterize the
community, which can contribute to conforming and stimulating the development of co-operatives, as well as other concentrations and networks.

For Rabotnikof (2001) the concept of social capital appears in the context of strategies of sustainable development, and alludes to the institutional and cultural dimension; it refers specifically to the way in which economic actors interact and organize themselves to generate growth and development. Nevertheless, in the political and sociological literature it is also linked with the joining-up of norms, organizations and mediating networks through which individuals accede to power and resources (Rabotnikof 2001, p.110). This observation by Rabotnikof connects the diagram of the spatiality of power as mobilizer of resources (discussed above) with the notion of social capital. Mobilizing power, as a more finished elaboration of the vocabulary of dominant power, fits in better (in the actual circumstances) with the proposed post-authoritarian government, or ‘good governance’, which to be legitimate has to be efficient.

According to Slater (1998) this type of deployment of the neoliberal strategy of structural adjustment of the minimal state and good government, constitutes a transgression of economic and financial sovereignty, as well as the external induction of new rationalities and technologies of governance. This type of conditioning tries to re-affirm the neoliberal perspective in a way which makes it possible and sustainable, in order to dominate at a distance, as much spatially as institutionally. At the same time it marginalizes other possible alternative focuses which give great importance to the state in economic development (Slater 1998(b), p.5).

Something of this can be seen in statements from the recent Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, where “greater transparency and responsibility is required from the poor countries in exchange for the resources for development”. The proposal was made to finance “the fight against poverty through better international commerce, an increase in financial aid on the part of the first world, the relief of debt service and fighting against corruption”. As a result, “the hard criticism underlines that the document makes no clear promises, does not reflect the needs of the poor countries, does not convince some of the rich ones and does not deserve the confidence of civil organizations”(El Nacional, 26-3-2002)
Another way to illustrate the subtle ideological and political burden of these focuses would be to make a comparison between the publications of the joint evaluation programmes of decentralization in Latin America, and the ideas now promoted by social democracy in Europe about equality. In these programmes, when attention is called to the subject of poverty they speak of exclusion, and the World Bank defines exclusion as a process by which individuals or groups remain totally or partially outside economic, social and political participation in society. Individuals have to overcome a barrier of attributes which limit the possibility of insertion into the market (low educational levels and professional skills, etc.), or which would give them access to certain civil, political or social rights. In both cases exclusion consigns the seeker to an individual condition and remains identified with the possession or lack of something, and in consequence also the lack of capacity to achieve it (Fleury 1997, pp. 7-8).

According to Giddens political conflict and competition for leadership always make power unequal and business always makes the economy unequal. Giddens himself indicates that the modernization of social democracy has sought a focus to reconcile equality, pluralism and diversity of styles of life, to recognize the difference between the liberty and equality of classic liberalism as real. This conceptual line moves the concept of social capital closer to a liberal ethic: economic competition is desirable but on an ethical basis. The line also approximates a notion of power: that governments must not help their citizens with food, housing and clothes, without ensuring the conditions through which citizens can earn by their own efforts everything necessary for complete civil efficiency. The relationship between the public and the private has to be in equilibrium (Giddens 2000, p.85).

The idea of social capital would put the accent on equality of opportunity, especially in the area of education - education is the principal instrument through which to cultivate initiatives and responsibilities. Giddens refers to the concepts of Amartya Sen concerning social capacities as appropriate departure points to deepen this ethic, for the concepts of equality and inequality not only refer to the disposition of social and material goods, the individual must have the capacity to make their use effective. This signifies that policies designed to promote equality would focus around the
capacity for achievement and the capacity for failure of each individual (Giddens 2000, pp.85-89).

In this way, through the development of the composition of policies which bind reforms and decentralization, it is possible to see:

1) That the reforms are presented, as a justification for their precedence, as a ‘sustantial package’ of universal measures, irrespective of the subjects of the process of decentralization being submitted to different situations in each country, where the emphasis changes according to place and circumstances.

2) That at the base of these programmes is the notion of power, in terms not only of the relationship of dominance of one over the will of the other, but also of power as a resource that resides in the individual.

3) That at heart these reforms are based on the theoretical formulation of liberal equality and the notion of social capital. In respect of this ethic Bobbio signals that it has nothing to do with democratic egalitarianism, which extends to the pursuit of a true economic equivalence outside of the tradition liberal thought. “Liberal democracy has arrived at an acceptance, other than of juridical equality, of an equality of opportunity that presupposes the equalization of the points of departure, if not the points of arrival.” (Bobbio 1997(b), p.45)

A fourth point to underline is that the reforms are written in a proposal of the spatiality of power and knowledge. Souza indicates, for example, that the theoretical, analytical design of reform moves around a double international/local dominance and under the slogan “think globally and act locally” (Souza 1996, p.534). Insertion into regional and supranational markets, as well as decentralization, have been constituted into essential points in the design of these policies, closely tied to reforms. This underlines the association between local development projects, institutions for international co-operation and the role of decentralization and its links with local powers.
The reforms contemplate the strengthening of relationships with institutes of finance and co-operation, as well as the relationships derived from the establishment of international commercial treaties which insure the interests of regional economic blocks (Fleury 1999(b), p.9). As well, the institutional arrangements which guarantee that economies become more competitive through being integrated into the supranational, have internal repercussions. The measures of structural adjustment are also directed at minimizing the functions of the state, in order to favour its intervention in the public realm, but in tandem with decentralization. Both policies have effects on governability as well as sovereignty.

I.4 The Reformist View of Decentralization

The focus of the World Bank is without a doubt a good point of departure to illustrate how decentralization is seen from the viewpoint of reform. The following section gathers some of the original ideas presented in two reports of the World Bank with reference to decentralization in Latin America and the Caribbean; the proposals of both reports present no noticeable differences.

Peterson (1999, p.1) indicates that governments of the countries of Latin America which have traditionally been centralist, have now transferred much of their responsibilities for services and financial resources to local, state or provincial government. He says that behind this transfer of authority are underlined two fundamental propositions which imply a criticism of the pattern of centralist governments, and at the same time a conjoining of priorities for reform.

The first proposition is that decentralization can strengthen democratic participation in government. Decentralization has been accompanied by popular elections of mayors and at other levels, in order to expand the participation of citizens in local government. Nevertheless Peterson indicates that the proponents of political decentralization state with frequency that they want to put the authority of the government “close to the people”, and this expression presents ambiguities. The proposition that local government is automatically closer to the people is impossible to verify (Peterson 1997, p.13)
For these reasons, for Peterson decentralization only provides a mark of reference for
government. The implementation of decentralization alone cannot guarantee effective
citizen participation in civil life, high standards of public responsibility and
incorporate the voices of citizens. Decentralization creates an opportunity to expand
citizen control of government, “but if it is desired to take precise advantage of this
opportunity, decentralization has to be simultaneously supplemented by other types of
institutional reforms”. Following this direction, Peterson notes as a second
proposition that decentralization can improve the quality and coverage of local public
services (the fiscal dimension is nothing new in the focus on this institution, to the
contrary it had been covered in the World Bank report of 1988 (Slater 1989, p.1).

The potential of decentralization to improve public services comes in a large measure
from the efficiency of incorporating the local demands of citizens inside budgeting
decisions. The potential efficiency of decentralization does not come through its’ own
execution, but rather from the links between democracy and decentralization. It is
understood that democracy refers to participation, whereas decentralization signifies
through it a mechanism which exactly captures the demand for public services, and
makes clear the connection between services received and taxes paid.

It is in such a manner that the link between democracy and decentralization is
established, from the information which local residents possess in order to determine
their own priorities for services and public works; they are more informed than
anyone else about these affairs. If they participate with part of the resources needed to
pay for improved services, they will surely have opinions on how these public funds
should be raised. A system which permits the residents to participate in the choosing
of local budget priorities will satisfy the demand for public services more effectively
than a system which prescribes the levels of local services from the ministries of a
central government.

In the opinion of Peterson, national institutions supply services well below the local
demand for them, whilst at the same time there exists a desire on the part of users to
be more effectively served by the public sector. This not only gives a decisive
impulse to the practical dimension of the initiative towards decentralization, but also
distinguishes from previous decentralizing efforts, as much those established around
an ideological opposition to central government to increase municipal authority, as those that promote the desire to maintain regional life separate from the rest of the nation. As may be seen in this focus, political decentralization remains conditioned by economic reform.

Nevertheless, there are supposed key in this themes on decentralization that are not universal. An example of this is seen, for example, in the argument that fiscal decentralization improves the general macroeconomic yield of the public sector, by forcing a closer participation of the contributor in budgeting decisions. According to Burki, Perry and Dillinger (1999, p.40) this frequently does not happen. In Latin America sub-national costs are financed principally through transfers from central government, and this causes sub-national governments to spend more if they hope to obtain more resources from the communal fund of national resources. Moreover, banks will only be fiscally conservative if they believe that the central government will not rescue local governments that go bankrupt, but again this almost never happens.

In reply to these contestations, Burki, Perry and Dillinger (1999, p.5) indicate that the impact of decentralization on the efficiency of public services, equality and macroeconomic stability depends to a large extent on the characteristics of each case. It is necessary to look much further than the mere fact of local elections in a country, to see if there has been a purely nominal transfer of functional responsibility, or if there has been an increase in inter-governmental transferences. This view also tackles the microeconomic impacts of decentralization, given that impacts in the efficiency and capacity for response of services depends not only on the decisions that are taken at the levels of provincial or municipal governments, but also on the decisions at the level of each school, health center or department of public works.

On the other hand, views on centralized power also seem to be changing. Mayors and governors are not the only important politicians, but also politicians at the national level, as well as the relevance of the laws which they draw up and the effects that these have on the behaviour of politicians at the local government levels. These aspects link in with the points noted above concerning the secondary reforms or the proposals of the Santiago Summit; how to elaborate and apply laws implies an
understanding of how national and local politics are affected by decentralization. The crucial point resides in an underlined importance of the settling of accounts of local governments, and the budgetary restrictions which now have to be imposed by central governments. The necessity of demarking clearly who is responsible for what, alludes not only to the responsibility for supervision but also the authority to ensure the results. That is to say, not only the juridical authority to take decisions but also the financial resources to execute them.

The preceding framework shows that there has arisen a change in the discourse concerning decentralization from the multilateral institutions. Manor (1998) has indicated: “both the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) have launched major investigations of decentralization in both its democratic and purely fiscal and administrative forms. Perhaps because of the collapse of Communism, however, the potential contributions of decentralization to the enhancement of participation, good governance and democratization have received most emphasis, pushing the more long-standing concerns with its economic role in economic development into second place” (Manor 1998, p.2).

The inclusion of the notion of social capital acts to renovate the economic perspective of decentralization. On the other hand, the musings of Peterson show that there exists a complete divorce from political decentralization, objecting to it as a notion of power closer to the people as untrue. Political decentralization has as one of its’ firmest postulations that power is close to social identities, organizations and social movements. This is to say that it is localized between and around people, and as a consequence the distribution and co-operation of powers is directed towards the achievement of more democratic spaces.

As a counterpart to this point of view, that of the multilateral organizations subordinates distribution of power to economic decentralization. The discourse continues to be set out in the language of efficiency, effectiveness and control of services, and to show that centralized states are not efficient or effective even though strongly harmonized. There is also a requirement for recentralization, in order that the locally distributed powers should be efficient and responsible; all of this signifies that
decentralization continues to be conceived of as a policy of central government, with preferential attention to the relationships from above to below.

Nevertheless, when we look towards Latin America we find an evident contrast in relation to these positions over the role played by the state diffused by the multilateral organizations. The principal organizations that define the economic and development strategy for the Latin American countries, the Economic Commission for the Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL, from its initials in Spanish), the Latin American Association for Integration (ALADI, from the Spanish initials) and the Latin American Development Council (CLAD, as above) consider that the intervention of the state is fundamental to moderate the tendencies towards concentration which are generated by the free market. Moreover they accentuate the search for a productivity transformation and a sustainable growth with equity (Armando Córdova 1995, p.68, cited in Freitez and Yégüez 2000, p.89).

As a counterpart, these reports in referring to Latin America observe a marked importance given to the relationships between decentralization and local scenarios; however the central premises of their theory they continue to correspond to the reality of the developed countries. The minimal or non-existent relationship that they have with the socio-historic context of particular realities, puts in evidence the presence of the verticality of power in the implementation of the decentralization reforms. This also explains the absence in the debate on decentralization of a series of policy objectives and values which are of marked importance; the following section therefore looks at decentralization in Latin America.

1.5 The Vision of Decentralization in Latin America

When the situation in Latin America is examined, the emergence of new social movements and their relationship to the opening of new spaces for democracy introduce elements which act to reinforce the sense of political change that surrounds the debate on decentralization and democracy.
Quijano (2000) indicates that all possible democratization of society in Latin America must occur as a decolonization and as a redistribution of power; this is the only way to construct the modern nation-state, including the citizenry and political representation (Quijano 2000, p.35). This aspect is connected to the orientating role played by political decentralization in the political thinking linked to the new municipal left in Latin America.

Munck (2000) signals that the new localism is emerging in response to the effects of globalization and as part of a wider ferment, which involves social movements and the radical church. He notes that this is leading to an appreciation of democracy and an increase in popular participation, but also that some consider the discourse on decentralization not to represent a progressive political project in which the masses can overcome their inequalities. To this argument he counter-proposes something very important about Latin America – “The reality in Latin America is likely to be more prosaic, however, as political in terms of ‘empowerment’ are offset by the difficulty of extending these local advances to the national terrain, on which the media-based personality contests tend to prevail (Munck 2000, p. 195)”.

Taking a balance of the tendencies concerning the economic perspective signaled in the previous point would contribute towards a more profound understanding of this scenario. Rodríguez (1994) considers that there are four principle tendencies that are driving decentralization in Latin America.

*One of these is that which considers decentralization as a way in which the responsibilities and size of the state can be reduced, as much as its capacity for coercion of capital; it is related to the problem of bureaucratization and inefficiency of centralized institutions. This focus is associated with the privatization and the depoliticization of the relationships of citizens to the state.

*In the second place Rodríguez observes the presence of another tendency which also criticizes the concentration and sectorization of public administration as being expensive, inefficient and bureaucratic. This notwithstanding, in this case decentralization remains linked to the capacity to incorporate with agility new social and cultural demands and interests.
One proposal that rotates around these previously-mentioned tendencies is decentralization from the viewpoint of fiscal federalism (De la Cruz 1998). This emphasizes the intergovernmental fiscal structure, the analysis of income and costs of state and municipal administrations, and the behaviour of the social sector. According to De la Cruz, fiscal expansion constitutes a major co-responsibility between central, regional and local government, and the political strengthening of these last. Moreover he depicts a new organization of the state where fiscal decentralization is important because it increases the control of citizens over government and generates new forms of participation (De la Cruz 1998, pp.1-2).

* Amongst other ways in which to view decentralization, following Rodríguez, is that which pursues it through its implementation to maintain political stability, derived from the crisis of representation and legitimization. In this scenario, governments see themselves obliged to promote decentralization as a strategy to re-legitimize the state and as a means to guarantee governability. Again according to Rodríguez, legitimacy of representation does not only come from elections, if not also from the form in which the different levels of government respond to the expectations and demands of their electors. This brings with it the point that, in order to achieve legitimacy, local governments or administrations must be efficient.

* Lastly, he notes the presence of a democratizing viewpoint; this comes to signify a response to the tensions and social conflicts generated by the economic crisis, and the incapacity of the state to satisfy the demands of society. Rodríguez also criticizes in general excessive centrality and lack of adequate channels for political participation and citizenship. In this case, decentralization would bring with it regulating mechanisms of the state to achieve a greater insertion of citizens into the decision-making system (Rodríguez 1994, pp.4-8).

Souza (1996) has corroborated some of the findings of Rodríguez. For her, decentralization is in general presented in the technical language of administrative efficiency, effectiveness and control to continue showing that centralized states are not efficient or effective; it is also a required means by which governments maintain political stability. Levels of fragility and instability, owing to the crisis of representation and legitimization, oblige powerful groups to promote decentralization.
as a strategy to legitimize the state, with the aim of guaranteeing governability and stability (Souza 1996, pp.533-535).

Velásquez (1997) sees things similarly, when he gathers tendencies from their different significances and (according to him) proposals and intentionality, which have been given to decentralization by various actors, He distinguishes three meanings of decentralization. The first of these is when it is constituted in a form to ensure greater efficacy and efficiency in public administration, and its proposal is to reduce the centralization which obstructs capacity for rapid response to the growing demands of the population. It is also when participating actors see decentralization as the possibility to regain lost legitimacy and guarantee a determined political hegemony. In this sense, decentralization would be dealing with an identification of public policy with the interests of the citizen. The drawing closer of the citizen to instances of local power promotes a recognition of the systems of political representation, which would contribute to the stability of the regime in the symbolic and real planes (Velásquez 1997, p.77).

According to Lechner (1996) decentralization is seen as a political instrument which gives opportunities for a redistribution of the power of decision from the central apparatus (above), in the direction of other levels of government or civil society (below). This makes decentralization create opportunities for deepening social re-organization, by favouring a greater citizen autonomy. Nevertheless, this can also create a threat to social integration to a greater or lesser degree, by the over-emphasis in the framework of neo-liberal strategy of the economic impact in all policy decisions (Lechner 1996(a), pp.107-108).

In a similar direction to this last, Brewer Carías (1997) indicates that a true decentralization is the process that implies the territorial distribution of public power between autonomous entities - distribution of political power implies the distribution of competencies and resources. Distributing tributary power, moreover, as a means of generating own income at state level, leads necessarily to new protagonists and leaderships in the state (Brewer Carías 1997(a), p.159)
In the framework of these descriptions it is possible to see a primary differentiation between the tendency towards economic decentralization, and the tendency towards political decentralization. Moreover, a second differentiation inside each of these tendencies is notable. These differentiations have been mounted in a diagram of the spatiality of power by Cabrero (1996), which signals some significant points as much for politics as for the political. Cabrero views the tendencies of decentralization as a double dimension; on the one hand there is the direction and the sense of origin of the decentralizing impulse, that refers to decentralization by deconcentration and delegation, and this case deals with an inducing politics from above to below. On the other hand, there are degrees of depth which refer to decentralization by devolution or by civil society. This last case deals with reactive politics from below to above, revolving around demands for autonomy of decision and participation as concerning civil society or local and regional governments.

From above to below, there will be administrative deconcentration as a means through which the action of government can be improved in bringing development programmes to a head. This deals with the assigning of specific functions to sub-national units, ministries or other instances of specific national sectors, but where the central government maintains total responsibility for the taking of decisions over execution or maintenance of investments, fiscal transfers, control over budgets and financial decisions at the sectorial level.

From below to above, there will be decentralization as devolution or towards civil society, referring to the manner in which civil society conquers powers of decision and autonomy. This deals with the effective transference of decisions of power in response to pressure from groups and organization at the base; it is pursued in order to make local governments responsible for the taking of decisions about projects or the maintenance of operations, supported through self-sustainability, as well as the cession of decision-making spaces to NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) or other civil society groupings such as unions and associations (Cabrero 1996, p.87).

Without doubt this vocabulary of power, which connects decentralization and the process of democratization, is linked to the orientation which the actors can give to the process of democratization; this point is detailed here. Meanwhile, these different
appreciations concerning the tendencies towards decentralization in Latin America are not sufficiently explicit, even though earlier Samoff had warned that these tendencies were advanced by enthusiastic followers in the direction of absolute values, declaring nevertheless that neither of the two tendencies, not the centralist nor the local autonomy version actually had absolute values and that both tendencies must co-exist (Samoff 1990, p.521). The tendencies do not achieve clarity in the difference between economic decentralization and political decentralization, and thus they run the risk of confusion. Manor (1998) has indicated that the results of decentralization do not depend uniquely on the relative weight of devolution and deconcentration in institutional and fiscal structures; they also depend on the class of legitimization and accountability adopted (participatory, electoral, religious or monarchic), and the principles agreed to determine the area of decentralized authority (Manor 1998, p.2). In this sense an attempt to make a comparative balance between both tendencies would contribute to clarifying some questions.

Political decentralization from above to below is presented inside a diagram of power of dominance, where political decentralization remains subordinated to economic decentralization. As Eaton (2001) indicates, decisions to de-concentrate the authority of central ministries, as much as decisions to devolve power to sub-national actors are both prerogatives of the politics of the market (Eaton 2001, p.103). This tendency is removed from the political by not taking into consideration the actions of the relationships of power, which participate in regional and local systems of government, in order to evaluate their results. The efficiency and effectiveness of decentralization in public administration is associated with the achievement of governability and political stability. Their representations, as such, lose importance because legitimacy appears to be associated to the way in which the regime responds to the expectations and demands of its electors; if the regime is efficient it achieves both legitimacy and is more democratic. Another way to look at the link decentralization/efficiency is by way of the inefficiency of centralized institutions and bureaucratization, irrespective of which decentralization from above to below is been used to penetrate and control the lowest levels of decision-making and civil society.

Political decentralization from below to above shows itself within a diagram of democratic power, and refers to the manner in which civil society conquers autonomy
and the power of decision in co-operation with other levels of national power; it carries within it the regulatory mechanisms to achieve a greater insertion of citizens into the political system. It can act to increase elections and political participation, as well as the responsibility (for which read accountability) of the representatives of the citizenry; equally, it can increase the capacity for response related to development projects. Decentralization can also be seen as a political escape from social tensions and conflict, and can impact on the democratization of the party political system and the controls that it has had on civil society through clientelism and disinformation.

Another aspect that has to be taken into account is the correspondence which can be established between a concept of decentralization which is open to different interpretations, and the diversity of political situations and values which are present in civil society in Latin America; a discourse as dynamic as decentralization could be used by actors to unite many opposing forces. The relationships between the process of democratization, participation and the autonomy of civil society are well-known, and are conditioned by the pre-eminence of one or the other of the above-mentioned tendencies. The question of how these notions should be related to civil society is one of the outstanding points of the debate on decentralization and democracy (in the following section some of the other aspects of civil society will be dealt with); this is also concerned with the change operated in the manner of thinking and making politics, where decentralization and the development of social movements are tied together.

1.6 Civil Society and Decentralization

The exposition of civil society is key, and it is therefore convenient for this section to make a brief pause to establish some basic connections which are at the base of liberalism. Not only is the notion of civil society composed around these ideas, but also specific forms of relationships of power. The starting point is the individual, and according to Parekh (1992) liberalism considers the individual to be conceptually and existentially primary and independent of society, which it tries to explain as apart. Individuality and the idea of property of itself model the political, legal, moral, economic and all other aspects of liberalism.
Individuality remains defined in terms of its separation from others, and it feels itself existentially menaced when the limit of its individuality becomes blurred; its constant worry is to preserve this separation and its complete isolation. The idea of property of itself appears by being defined by the individual, in relation to their capacity to choose and to be separated from their elections or choices, including their values, aims and forms of life. This is to say that individuals must be separated from themselves, in order for these values not to be considered as the most profound inner structure, if not only as their primary or secondary properties. Other than this, individuals are moral beings because they are beings of choice, it being their choosing which distinguishes moral conduct from mere custom, whether able or not to reach an agreement as to the class of life that the individual or community desires (Parekh 1992, p.162).

From this, just as different individuals value things in different ways and pursue distinct life-styles, the liberal thinks that individuals share different interests which are derived from a common nature; these interests include security, liberty, property and the autonomous expression of will. Since these interests are considered inherent to humanity and demanded by its nature they are also considered basic and fundamental, as a consequence of which concept of interest bridges are constructed between individuals who are not related, overcoming the distance that the liberal puts between him/herself and the other. Civil society, the great invention of the liberals, is the sphere of interest and choice par excellence; civil society is ruled by the totality of agreed relationships of a voluntary nature, by self-determining individuals in the pursuit of their chosen goals (Parekh 1992, p.163).

Even though the state shares some of the characteristics of civil society, it is basically different. Civil society is founded on interest and has an enormous instrumental value, whereas by contrast the state is coercive and obligatory. The state is also an abstract, formal institution, whereas in civil society human beings encounter each other as bearers of multiple, changing identities; in the state, individuals lose their identities and find themselves mere citizens. For the liberal, the primary duty of government is to create and maintain a system of rights and to accomplish the activities required for this; under no circumstances, according to Parekh, is there the justification for
pursuing economic, social or political ends such as the creation of a more equal society. In the consumer society, each individual appraises and calculates in a different way the time, affective energies and the financial costs which they are prepared to invest in public activities.

Rabotnikof (2001) indicates that for some years the discourses and practices of the multilateral banks (the IDB and WB) have been trying to design policy based on civil society through three routes: participation, a focus on social capital\(^2\) and the theme of good government. These three analytical approximations lead to the identification of civil society as the destination of many of the initiatives of the financial organisms. But they also lead, above all in the case of compensatory programmes and poverty relief, to the identification of civil society exclusively with the networks of NGOs. Nevertheless, in the debate on civil society there are found two opposing views – according to Rabotnikof civil society appears in both types of critiques as the place for the regeneration of trust, as a key to social integration and as the terrain for democracy.

\(^2\) The notion of social capital has shot to prominence in the research of the World Bank with the opening up in 1998 of a dedicate website, http://worldbank.org/poverty/scapital It is organized around two themes. One is to specify sources of social capital – families, communities, civil society, public sector, ethnicity, and gender; the other topic is identifying influences upon the formation of social capital – crime and violence, economic, trade and migration, poverty and economic development, among others. Social capital is integrated into the work of the World Bank in three areas: participation, policies and partnership.

The website has a simplistic and reductionist view of society. For instance, the family is seen as “first building block in the generation of social capital for the larger society”. Ethnicity is seen in terms of diversity and difference for which inner organization and bridging spin-offs have to be set against the potential for conflict. The point is that both themes have long, contested, and rich intellectual tradition. It is important to notice in this website that the notion of civil society and decentralization do not appear as a theme or as the influences for the formation of social capital. The public sector is about good governance based on collaboration with, and decentralization to, the private sector and civil society. Otherwise politics, trade unions, big business organizations, etc, might just as well no exist (Fine 2001 pp. 156-157).
In the reformist version of the multilateral organisms, civil society is placed in front of the state and policy is identified with the market, de-politicized and culturally integrated. Additionally there is an emphasis on a certain return to civic traditions and the substitution of the re-distributive powers of the welfare state by local voluntary enlistment. The critical tendency, on the contrary, affirms that civil society must be re-politicized as an intermediary sphere between private ends, and institutional modes and those sanctioned by the state for the conduct of policy (social movements and citizen initiatives); the necessity for developing autonomous public spheres of debate on themes of general interest and the expression of pluralism is also underlined. Lastly, the reformist (neo-communitarian) vision proposes a just civil society, integrated and vital without the necessity of evoking egalitarian principles guaranteed by the state. Nevertheless, there continues to be a strong tension between institutionalized public spaces and a re-evaluation of the role of a state of rights (Rabotnikof 2001, pp.102-106).

Bobbio (1997) is of the opinion that it is impossible to determine what is signified by, and what are the limits of, civil society other than by referring to and de-limiting the term ‘state’ at the same time. Civil society is the sphere of social relationships which are not regulated by the state, understood restrictively as the conjoining of apparatuses that in an organized social system exercise compulsive power (Bobbio 1997, p.39). Nevertheless, elsewhere he notes that it is also possible to say that civil society is the place where economic, social, ideological and religious conflicts arise and develop, which state organizations have the obligation to resolve by mediating, preventing or repressing them (Bobbio 1997, p.43). That is to say that there exists or there is able to exist a political relationship between civil society and state.

Brown (2000) discusses just this point when he indicates that there are different ways of understanding what civil society is, if reference is made to an economic or to a political activity, and if civil society is autonomous from the state or is organically linked to it. One reflects a process from above to below (top-down) in which the forces of capital form an intellectual and cultural hegemony which guarantees conformity between the population. This vision is contradicted by a process from below to above (bottom-up) propelled by the levels of the population being privatized and disadvantaged. These last seek to construct a counter-hegemony which aspires to
achieve acceptance amongst the population, and to displace the old hegemonic order (Brown 2000, pp.172-173)

There are nevertheless other focuses linked to systemic theory or with public opinion; in the first case, civil society occupies the place reserved for the formation of demands (input) which are directed at the political system, to which responses must be given. Here the contrast between civil society and state presents itself as the contrast between quality and quantity of demands, and the capacity of institutions to give adequate and rapid responses to them. The other sphere is in the phenomenon of public opinion located in civil society, understood as the public expression of consensus and dissent (Bobbio 1997(a), pp. 39-45).

It is maintained in much of the literature that there is a low level of development in Latin America. According to Lechner (1996), the invocation of civil society in Latin America arose in the middle of the 1970s, linked to military dictatorships; it had a clear anti-authoritarian connotation which sought to counterpoint civic power to military power, and in this way appeal to a spectrum of the citizenry. It acquired political renown for its insertion into the re-orientation of the left, and in revising the notion of the popular and seeking another relationship between the political and the social - the Gramscian focus amplified its vision rather than Marx. Gramsci also gave civil society a distinct and separate role from the state and market, although his vision preserved the possibility of an anticapitalist resistance.

Gramsci’s interpretation of civil society was a Marxist approach but one that was profound innovative. He departed not only from Hegelian usage of the term but also from Marx’s basically economic interpretation. For Gramsci, civil society was to be found neither within the state per se nor within the economic sphere of production. Rather, he identified civil society as existing between the coercive relations of the state and the sphere of economic organization. Thus, the formula most commonly found in Gramsci is that the state consists of civil society and political society. Political society refers to the coercive apparatus, the arena of domination, whilst civil society is that of consent and direction exercised through private organizations (Judson 1999, p. 32). Civil society is principally a sphere of indirect domination.
In the more recent uses of the term it calls attention to changes in society, offering a critical reading of the new social structures which are emerging on the continent as a product of the adjustment of economic structures: the drastic reorganization of social life, the accentuated process of segmentation of the interior of society, the de-aggregation of affective bonds and the symbolic forms of the community. When civil society signifies an interpellation to new social actors, two perspectives are distinguishable:

The liberal, which identifies civil society and the market, proposes the liberation of private initiative from state tutelage and offers every creative opportunity to individual liberty, including informalization of economic activity; it is seen as a potential for entrepreneurial development. In the political it is supported by pluralism, which focuses on social activities as an analogy for market interchanges, where social actors can establish an harmonic equilibrium of sales-purchase interests. It proposes the strengthening of civil society to recover effective, participatory and transparent democracy, in extending itself to the arranged calculation of interests and preferences between individuals whilst avoiding the discreional expropriation of collective decisions on the part of government insistence.

Community of action is noted in the new social movements and in the reorganization of society, in the functioning of growth in renewed forms of collective action. It is identified with solidarity networks which counter market forces, and is postulated as a strengthening of society to ensure the full exercise of the rights of citizenship. The subjects of these conflicts, and by extension of civil society, are interest groups, indirectly political associations of diverse types with social aims, ethnic emancipation movements and movements for the defense of civil rights, for the liberation of women and various youth movements. Political parties have one foot in civil society and another in institutions, and they fulfill the function of selecting, aggregating and transmitting the demands of civil society which will become objects of policy decisions.

For Lechner, more than conserving old customs and collective identities, that which is called civil society guides the strengthening of the creation of civic association and the construction of a public space, which permits the re-evaluation of the new
expectations and demands of youth and women's movements, associations of human rights, ecological groups and a vast range of NGOs, which seek instances of expression (Lechner 1996(b), pp.24-33).

In the framework of the constitution of this public space it is necessary to take into account some questions which are at the root of the relationship between decentralization and civil society. Social movements and other organized expressions of civil society are flexible and differing identities, and as a consequence occupy different positions in the social space of relationships. This spatiality of civil society suggests a starting-point for dealing with the particular spatial context where its practices and dialogues are developed more narrowly.

Virtuoso (1996) refers to this aspect when he outlines the change which is operating in the political mentality of Latin America and its close articulation with decentralization. The new political reasoning must be constructed from the necessities of the particular person and from their immediate world of references and relationships. Both of these express themselves in distinct forms of civil organization which seek to self-manage precisely this close environment. This is the origin of the civil society which progressively diversifies itself.

This new political reasoning is linked with investment in the conceptions and understanding of the design of social projects. Central planning from above to below has given place to localized planning from below to above, and civil society and decentralization are articulated around this framework, fundamentally through the organization of local and regional space. Apart from the process of decentralization, the principle channels for the aggregation of interests are local municipal spaces and their organs of government; the municipality is the primary instance of the state immediately next to individuals, their problems and aspirations and thus, to all their organized expressions (Virtuoso 1996 pp.146-149).

For Boisier (1998) as well, the central relevance of emergent democracy is recast on civil society which is constituted as the principal agent of change; it passes to being the principle intermediary between the citizen and the state, rather than the party. The actual tendency is to give more recognition to civil society conformed by actors who
are to be found on the same horizontal plane, instead of any other individual or co-operative entity conformed in hierarchical organizations.

The interest of this section is in what approximates these notions in the life of the city. Boisier indicates that with the distinction between civil society and groups specialized in the managing of powers (the military, religious, economic and political bodies) there occurs on the one hand a segmentation of the social and, on the other, an opening left for the possibility of the civil when this refers to life in the city (Boisier 1998, pp. 82-85). The relationship of the notion of spatiality of the city and civil society is a way of accessing relationships of local specificity, in neighbourhood and community environments. Nevertheless, this is conditioned by what accent must be put on individual practices, and their different interpretations and forms of participation, so that the city could refer to a context of relationships of power which is never closed.

The neighbourhood is thus a context of social relationships where different forms of relationships of power cross. The neighbourhood can be understood as the smallest unit of conjoining of neighbours to municipality, in their relationships of power with the administrative political regime, for the services of the same. Flyvbjerg (2001) says that in order for relationships of power to exist there have to exist resistances as well (Flyvberg 2001, p.121). Virtuoso (1996) indicates that the municipal regime should be understood as a structure of government and a juncture of competences and functions. (Virtuoso 1996, p.150).

Resistances have their place in civil society. In the last two decades it is perceivable that in Latin America there has been a loss of social rights; these have become goods that have to be acquired in the market or, in the case of extreme poverty, by means of focalized social programmes (Waterman 2001, p.120). The resistance of neighbours is derived as well from the requirement for greater municipal autonomy; by autonomy is understood the particular power that municipalities possess to govern themselves according to their own laws, without the interference of higher laws. The type of municipal regime consecrates the class of recognition of local power of the neighbours with respect to the central power, and it is the mediating mechanism which attempts to balance the interests of local neighbourhood power with more
general interests. In pursuit of this equilibrium neighbourhood power intervenes, so that the municipal regime takes into account the autonomy demanded by neighbourhood reality, as well as the subordination required by the vertical structure of the state (Mazzei 1984, pp.3-32).

The boundary between civil society and local government entities is also made less rigid and more open, by the intervention of neighbourhood movements or other political initiatives. The co-responsibility of the state and civil society for national security is reflected at this level, which is an aspect concerned with governability and is related to participation and decentralization. Governability must not be an identification solely with efficiency and efficacy, but also with the requirement of democracy for a responsible legitimacy, in a manner through which different identities recognize each others’ authority (Przeworski 1997, pp.34-35). Decentralization plays a role in relation to this aspect because, as has been said before, it increases governability by favouring the possibilities of dialogue.

But if relating decentralization and civil society is desired there is another important aspect which can be observed, located in Parekh’s framework of liberalism. The socio-cultural reality of Latin America defers the progress of many of these ideas, even when capitalism has achieved conformity to a market society in this century. Lechner (1996) has indicated that Latin American countries have moved rapidly towards a market society, and the mercantilization of the most diverse social relationships has molded a new type of socialization, which imprints social relationships with an individualist-egoist stamp. Such a displacement can be seen as cause and effect of the neo-liberal interpellation of individual interests, breaking with the communitarian tradition created around the public environment and public goods (Lechner 1996(a), pp.106-107).

Existing forms of sociability in Latin America differ in many respects from the social weave and value of association proposed by liberalism. It is true, as Oropeza (1988) has indicated, that many Latin American social organizations have in their most distant cultural traditions an Iberian socio-political order, which transferred social behaviour that is essentially authoritarian, elitist, hierarchical, catholic and corporative (Oropeza 1988, pp.23-24). Most notable of all is the tenacity and
persistence with which these structures have succeeded in perpetuating themselves throughout Latin American history, with their markedly centralist and clientelistic character. No less true is that there still subsist many forms of organization and political practices rooted in the first culture of this continent, side-by-side with these forms of organization transplanted from Europe. This should be an observation of equal or greater importance to be underlined in relationship to decentralization and power, and in actuality many indigenous leaders promote their cultural values and the defense of their practices of political organization, whilst confronted by the influences of “Western modernization” (Korovkin 2001, p.41).

The space of action of civil society finds itself surrounded by the transformations which the private has undergone; Liberal economic reforms not only minimize action by the state but, as has been stated previously, they privatize social conduct. Nevertheless the political reforms could make viable the integration of civil society, just as the decentralization of power could contribute to renewing tendencies towards de-aggregation and fragmentation of values, beliefs, interests and everything else which is considered fundamental to liberalism. This brings some substantiation to the previously-expounded considerations on the close links between the diversity of civil society and the state, in which the liberal vision of civil society was developed. In the framework defined by the fight against centralism a re-politicization of civil society was previewed, and as a consequence a redistribution of political power to the local. This re-politicization can manifest itself in distinctive ways and amongst these, in the Latin American context, could be indigenous communality.

One case of interest to be studied can be seen in the actuality of hegemonic articulation for controlling the apparatus of the state, where civil society, as Constituent or Sovereign, intervenes in the interior of institutionality. From there it can impel important reforms to legislation in favour of a greater distribution of power, of participation and the strengthening of civil society. The new constitutional reforms gather together in many of their articles the suggestions of indigenous and environmental movements, neighbourhood associations and NGOs among others, and this also facilitates an appreciation of what citizens think about these changes.
Conclusions

One aspect that has been detached from the connections established in this chapter, is the importance of being able to count on an adequate diagram or vocabulary of the spatiality of power. In this framework of identification of the connections between democracy and the process of democratization, disposing of an adequate diagram of the spatiality of power of domination-resistance has been vital, and this diagram refers specifically to domination as separated from relationships of power, and not a binary, domination-resistance relationship. The contributions in this sense are orientating, on every occasion that the initial model of the spatiality of power does not make these differences completely explicit. The central point is that power is practiced, and as a consequence is around and between us, before being in a centre or “contained” in the individual.

This also has been key to encountering and understanding the interrelationships between democracy and decentralization. One of the aspects that has been opened up has been the interrelationships which are hidden in the Western view of decentralization, with the view of social capital. The “new” social reforms and decentralization are clearly developed in an overlapping of relationships of power centered on and about a diagram of power-as-mobilizer-of resources of the individual. The superposition of diagrams of power, however, creates difficulties in distinguishing the pre-eminence of the binary relationships of centered power in these reforms. The political and ideological proposals of the reforms are discharged and extended over a wide space of relationships of power, without raising the least suspicions.

The operations of the multilateral entities are supported in the diagram of relationships of resource-mobilizing power and social capital, and they prefer NGOs to realize their operations; for these institutions NGOs are synonymous with civil society. On the other hand, in the case of non-Western visions of decentralization the new social movements and others are generally included as part of civil society, as well as other political initiatives and NGOs. This is one aspect which stands out in the comparison of visions on decentralization.
Another aspect which arises from the Western vision of decentralization is that this does not conceive of the possibility of the development of political decentralization as independent of fiscal or administrative decentralization, but rather as its result. This critique is directed explicitly against the diagram generator-of-practices, and the notion of political decentralization. Nevertheless, in the non-Western vision of the political decentralization tendency, even when this is seated in the formulation of a diagram of relationships of power, its conceptual elaboration is still weak and has to be more explicit.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In the preceding chapter the general outlines and most important interconnections in the thematic development of the thesis were dealt with, from which it is now possible to make a specific pursuit of the problematic relationship between democracy and decentralization. To this end, a connection can be made with Pickvance’s proposal (1997, p.131), about the necessity of understanding democracy as an ideal. Such an understanding also permits us to make links to Bobbio’s proposals (1986, pp.42-45), which allow an understanding of how the opening of new spaces has been to the concept of democracy. The analysis contained in the thesis thus also allows the inclusion of ideas favoured by Slater (1997, p.61), concerning the relationship between democracy and democratization, the spatial as a potential delineator of the political and politics, and relationships inside the territory of the nation state.

On the other hand, the visions of decentralization in different spheres have revealed the basis for the re-composition of a perspective in which, if decentralization appears as a response to the effects of globalization (Munck 2000, p.195) it also comes accompanied by the re-vindication of subjectivities and identities, as well as the growth of inequalities. In this manner, the subjects of decentralization face to different situations in each country and the emphasis changes according to place and circumstances. The explanatory fabric woven in the previous chapter gives us a basis for understanding the relationship between democracy and decentralization but, should be clear that, these visions will necessitate the deployment of a methodological framework which is clearly distanced from the schemes of more closed investigations.

A methodological proposal which moves in this direction is that of Flyvbjerg (2001). His major concern is that Natural Science approach must be abandoned because it simply does not work in the Social Sciences. The principal components for opening a
specifically social scientific pathway are consideration of the dependent context, along side of practice or political action. Both practice and political action refer to processes and in consequence are closely connected; one alludes to the process of the conformation of socio-history, whilst the other refers to the experience of the individual and their own faculties for appreciating, driving and powering this process.

II.1 The Theoretical Methodological Framework

The particular character of the relationship between democracy and decentralization has been revealed by Parekh (1997, p.160) as underlining the non-universality of liberal democracy. But at the same time, this connects with Pickvance’s proposal which, as was stated above could be interpreted as suggesting the assimilation of democracy as a value and through its immediate consequences, also as a process. In the opinion of Flyvbjerg (2001, p.143) this interpretation stands in opposition to the unsustainable separation of fact and value typical of conventional political and social thinking - he indicates that the constitution of modern democracy prescribes a separation of rationality and power.

The linking of particularity and process allows for at least in principle consideration of the relationships between democracy and decentralisation as being more dependent on the characteristics present in each national, regional and local environment and moreover, establishes their interconnections by criteria more closely linked to human activities. In this way, the process of democratization can be seen as an occurrence whose constitution depends on socio-historical context and relationships of power which is at the same time constantly modified by the experience and the practice of individuals. To set out from this starting point implies two methodological concerns. On the one hand, the importance of diversity and the dynamic of particulars and, on the other, a form of investigation that is not limited by closed theoretical frameworks or universal models, and the predictions of consequence.

Following this line of thinking, to locate oneself in the ambit of the particular does not signify detaching oneself from the dynamic of the external, or the international or supranational environment, but rather it means treating the study of a process of
decentralization of the internal or national, regional or local levels as a special space of development, and examining the surprises of the external upon that specific space. This point finds supported by the potentiality of the 'geopolitical', in dealing with issues related to the territorality of politics within national frontiers, as well the examination of penetrations and flows of different transnational modalities of power (the term territorality has here been adapted to refer to the spaces inside nation-states, whilst the term spatial environment denotes the multiple contexts inside and between nation-states). The process of decentralizing politics can be considered as a case of the geopolitical directed towards the interior of a national space (Slater 1997, p.55).

Within territorality, the potential relevance of the spatial for the delimitation of politics comes up against the decentralization which begins inside the broadening of the process of democracy. Decentralization appears at first as a political decision, as a measure that has been impelled from above towards the redistribution of power, and it situated within a context of the re-composition of an eroded governability, and legitimacy of representative democracy of the welfare state (Bobbio 1997(b), pp. 103-109). Nevertheless, this does not signify the absence of a context of relationships of power, but rather the implementation of decentralization in a scenario of opposition from those exercising control over politics, the pressures from below deployed by civil society also can no be ignored.

All of this accentuates the natural interactions between politics and the political – stressing their differences but also their essential interconnections. This idea of the interdependence between politics and the political reflects the current debate concerning the relationships between the state and civil society. Politics has its own public space in the interchange between political parties, in the parliamentary exercise and in other areas, whereas the political can develop in any sphere of the social, independent of institutional rules and limitations. These interdependencies are interwoven around the idea of relationships of power and resistance (Flyvbjerg 2001, p.121).

Decentralization affects traditional politics through the manner in which it carries within itself a redistribution of the power which had previously been the exclusive domain of political decision and action. This contributes to the disarticulation and
fragmentation of the institutions of representation, as well as to the emergence of new
leaderships. Nevertheless, formal politics maintains a public space, and to a certain
degree, decentralization has contributed towards the preservation of that space for
politics. On the other hand the political, in bringing democratic openness to the spaces
of regional and local power which had been controlled by political parties and the
state bureaucracy, has moved the taking of decisions towards the social initiatives and
policies of civil society. In this manner political decentralization contributes towards
the creation of linking corridors in the frontiers where politics and the political are to
be found.

It is therefore observable that politics, the political and political decentralization are
articulated in the process of the democratization. This context of the relationships of
power and resistance is where the organisations of civil society play their most
important role. Bobbio points out that once established, political democracy shows up
that the political sphere is much wider than the formal political system (it is in reality
the whole of society) and there is not political decision that is not conditioned by what
occurs in civil society (Bobbio 1997(a), p.43).

On the other hand, it was shown in the preceding chapter, that in Sh6nwAlder’s
differentiation of decentralization (1997, p.757-759) the pragmatic model considers
decentralization as a meta-focus, in the sense of being a universal model. Nevertheless, if we re-visit the proposal of Samoff (1990, p.521) concerning the co-
existence of different tendencies in decentralization, and the observations of Manor
(1995, p.82) about the strong power exerted by decentralization over local powers and
civil society, it is possible to see that some aspects of decentralization as an institution
for the distribution of financial resources, as well as a receptor for flows of
international finance, could have important consequences for the distribution of
power.

This study, however, will follow the political focus through exploring the links
between decentralization and relationships of power. This is precisely the motive
behind emphasizing the study of the connections and delimitations derived from the
distribution of power, rather than the more technical aspects of decentralization.
According to Slater (1997, p.61) these connections and delimitations can also include,
the potentialities of the spatial as an element of the delimitation between politics and the political. A clear expression of the spatial as an element in delimiting politics and the political can be seen in Bobbio's idea of ascending and descending power (1986, pp.42-45).

We can also note that Slater's proposal finds strong support in the methodology of Flyvbjerg, every time that he gives prominence to the spatial, and even the particular and to political practice. In this perspective, the observation that modern politics are spatial politics acquires a form that is much more closely integrated into the field of social sciences. With this in mind, this section will outline three points of the proposed methodology of Flyvbjerg which are of particular interest to the aims of this investigation.

In the first place, Flyvbjerg indicates that social practices are more important than discourse, and that social phenomena must be investigated in relation to processes. As was indicated at the beginning of this chapter, a notion linked to this proposal is that of the so-called 'dependent context'; he distinguishes between the dependent context, and the independent context (rules and laws) of the natural sciences. Natural sciences explain and predict in terms of elements which are abstracted from an independent context. By contrast in the social sciences this is not possible. The Social sciences are unable to abstract, at least in terms of formal relationships, the rules and laws of the elements of dependent context as a way of explaining and predicting human activity (Flyvbjerg 2001, pp.134-136).

More concretely, the problem is that if an attempt is made to define one action of human activity from an independent context, the definition of that action will not necessarily coincide with how the action is pragmatically defined by an actor within a given, concrete social situation. Social scientists do not have rules and laws like the natural sciences that they can use in order to determine how the people studied by them determine what counts as an action. On the contrary, the determination of an action derived from the dependent context is defined situationally, that is from the mix of socio-historical relationships in which that social practice is inscribed. That is to say, the social sciences adjust themselves to processes (Flyvbjerg 2001, p.42).
In the second place, Flyvbjerg suggests that we have to address those problems that are important to the local, national and global communities in which we live and moreover, most importantly, there must be an emphasis upon issues of power and values. The notion of decentralised power of Foucault (Flyvbjerg 2001, p.116-117) touches upon the framework of reference being developed here. In this perspective, relationships of power have to be understood as a multiplicity of relationships of force which are not external to other forms of relationships, such as for instance economic, knowledge-based or sexual relationships. On the contrary, relationships of power are the immediate effect of the division, inequality and ambivalence present in all these relationships, which in turn are pre-conditions for these differentiations.

In this way relationships of power can be seen; on the one hand, as produced in all points of space in fluid and unequal interactions, without negating that within this fragmentation of power one can have find in certain moments, convergent effects, such is the case of hegemony according to Flyvbjerg. On the other hand, relationships of power can be seen as resistance. Resistance is a part of power, and consequently relationships of power are also dependent on multiple points of resistance. The image of a distribution of relationships of power and resistance amongst an infinity of points, contrasts with ideas such as the ‘centre of power’, or a system of domination which one group exercises over another. The idea of a multiplicity of points of power and resistance, on the contrary, owes more to an understanding of power as coming from below.

Nevertheless these images are only forms which power may assume. Multiplicity does not signify that there may not occur a bipolar fragmentation, such as for example massive class conflict. Flyvbjerg says that, according to Foucault, this is at the very least a case of points of mobile and fleeting points of resistance which produce fragmentations and re-groupings of variables, where some groups disintegrate and others are created. In a similar vein, he notes that fragmentation can also include the penetration of individualities, dividing their points of reference and reconstructing their identities; in the same sense in which a network of relationships of power creates innumerable points of resistance which diagonally cross social divisions -- a system of close nexuses which penetrate apparatuses and institutions without being localized in them (Flyvbjerg 2001, pp.121-122).
II.2 Outlining the Case Study

In the preceding framework we have considered the more general aspects of a theoretical methodology in order to give direction to the more specific discussion of this research project concerning the relationships between democracy and decentralization in Venezuela. The next theme to be developed refers specifically to the connections established between these two narratives in the period between 1989 and 2000. The initiation of this period was marked by the promulgation of political decentralization and its closure by a new concept of participatory democracy. This new concept was introduced through the new Constitution of 1999 and the ‘mega-elections’ of 2000, and involved a significant change of actors in the structure of the political system and a new political hegemony.

The first proper employment of the term decentralization appears in combination with the transition from centralist democratic representation to decentralized democratic representation. The implementation of decentralization in 1989 serves to establish precisely this difference. The forms of decentralization in the centralist period were more related to the de-concentration of public administration and the creation of semi-autonomous institutions that were still dependent on executive power. The decentralization which began in 1989, by contrast, was directed at the distribution of power and more latterly the transfer of competencies or services independent of the executive power. This permits the visualization of an overview of each period, in terms of significant decentralization policies.

After a democratic experiment in the period 1945-1948, representative democracy in Venezuela re-appeared in a more permanent form in 1961 as a democracy of elite conciliation, and as such was controlled from then on by the Social Democrat and Social Christian political parties. This democracy was able to sustain itself thanks to the oil-rentier economic model which began in 1920, through which the parties mediated political participation and civil organizations through clientelistic practices. The fall of oil prices in 1979 marked the decline of this period of fiscal bonanza, by limiting the distribution of these profits in the face of an overburden of demand.
The situation presented by the state of public finances, the progressive deterioration of legitimacy as well as the difficulties of governing and the pressure exerted by neighbourhood organisations, economic and intellectual groups, in the end overcame the resistance of the hegemonic political parties and the government commenced a reform of the state in 1984, leading to the introduction of partial reforms in 1989. From then on, changes began to operate within the system of democratic representation which acted to influence the process of democratization itself. In the ten years from 1989 to 1999, the hegemonic parties of the pact of 1961 fragmented, and new forms of leaderships emerged. New parties linked to new currents of opinion including new movements of civil society, as well as of the church, appeared on the political scene as new powers at both local and national levels.

The broadening of democracy for the twenty-first century is delineated by the constitution promulgated in 1999. In this constitution, participation is given greater importance, and democracy is made more integral in the sense indicated by Bobbio (1986, p.40). The use of the referendum has also been incorporated, and the Senate has been substituted by the institutionalization of the Assembly. However, the most outstanding feature of this political decentralization is that it has initiated the opening of new democratic spaces at the local level. Municipal governments which had hitherto served the dominant political parties merely as a conduit for their clientelistic political practices now face more limits, and pressure from civil society and individuals has obliged a greater responsibility on the part of political representatives.

II.3 Questions and Objectives

The previous section presented an outline of the dependent context most immediate to the subject of the reform of the state in order to tackle the central theme of this investigation and its more general questions and objectives. Concretely, the aim is to explore the connection between decentralization and the process of democratisation, their antecedents and political contexts, as well as presenting a case study to demonstrate the experiences of individuals and community leaders in a local municipality. The process of democratization has been defined previously in the sense
of a broadening of democracy that is also connected with the development of local powers, the emergence of civil society groups and other political initiatives.

The questions to be formulated are directed at interrogating the basis of the supposition that decentralization plays a very important role in the dynamic of the democratic system. This supposition is connected to the premise which establishes that the relationship which exists between democracy and the process of democratization is the same as the relationship established between system and process (Slater 1998(a), p.22). The premise, in direct consequence, presupposes that there exist relationships, events, activities and practices within the context which dynamize the process. In this sense decentralization could be an event that energizes the representative democratic system. How, then have relationships of democratic power in Venezuela been modified and how has decentralization intervened in the process of broadening democracy?. These questions lead to us to the following general objectives:

As a first objective, an analysis of the links between political decentralization and the process of democratization, in the period 1989-2000 at state level within the Republic. To accomplish this analysis the period has been broken into three parts:

a) The stage of institutional struggle between the social democratic and neo-liberal tendencies in the context of a crisis of governability and political decentralization between 1989 and 1993.


c) The stage of changing party-political hegemony and institutional changes between 1999 and 2000 (a new constitutional text, new public powers, the widening of citizens' rights and changes in the conformation of civil society, amongst other aspects).

As a second objective, a case study at municipal and parochial levels, in the city of Mérida and in the parish of J.J. Osuna Rodríguez. The motives for taking this city as a
case study are derived from the revealing character of its functioning within the context of Venezuelan democracy. On the one hand it is a city that is highly dependent on the state but on the other hand it has a strong civil society and highly developed cultural traditions, although the presence of the business sector is low. All of this contrasts with the strong presence of the Catholic Church.

The specific conformation of the Parish of J.J. Osuna Rodríguez was also an important factor in its selection. The author of this thesis has been involved in research here for several years and can access detailed information to complement the perspective that is developed here. Unfortunately this work was not oriented towards evaluating changing values but rather towards an evaluation of the built environment. The focus now being pursued here will give a new orientation to future research here.

The parish in question is one of the largest, population-wise, in the city of Mérida and is a recently-developed neighbourhood. The first properties were only delivered in 1974. The greater part constructed during the democratic centralist epoch with a smaller part during that of democratic decentralisation. The brief period of the Chávez government has also seen the adjudication of some property ownership. During the period of democratic centralism, the adjudication of these land units was marked by a strongly clientelistic relationship, and one the purposes of this case study is to show the effects of this as part of the local dependent context.

**II.3.1 Specific Questions**

- How has the process of democratization been linked with the process of decentralization in Venezuela?

- What form do the articulations between decentralization and civil society take in the context of hegemonic struggle?

- How has political decentralization contributed to the process of fragmentation and re-composition of the democratic system?
- How do the local leaders and members of the community view the process of decentralization, and what is their appreciation or valuation of the democratic change?

II.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To set out a point of departure for studying Venezuelan political decentralization.

- To set out the dependent context for the period of decentralized democracy in Venezuela, starting from the most important aspects of the process of democratization initiated in 1989.

- To set out the linkages between political decentralization and civil society within the process of transition from representative democracy to participatory democracy, and in the context of hegemonic struggle within Venezuela.

To set out the dependent context for the case study of the Libertador Municipality and the parish of J.J. Osuna Rodríguez.

- To set out the process of the broadening of democracy at a municipal and parochial level during the period of decentralization.

II.4 Methodological Techniques

The choice of methodological techniques depends on what it is that one wants to know, as well as the type of information which is to be generated. Flyvbjerg (2001, p.166) says that the social sciences must be understood as an activity carry out in public and for the public. In this sense if the intention is to communicate the results in an effective manner to fellow citizens, at least two preconditions must exist. The first of these is a close relationship between the investigator and the investigated, sometimes in order to clarify and sometimes to intervene, as much as to generate new perspectives. The second is a clear and well-defined guiding thread to the exposition.
In the case of this study, pursuing a research path that will generate a clear exposition suggests returning in detail to the previous section and reformulating our basic question in order to adjust it to these demands - How does decentralization energize democratization, and how are these changes lived by people? In this reformulated question, connected to the general question formulated before, there is a double perspective. On the one hand, there is the relationship between decentralization and democracy in the period 1989-2000, and on the other how this has been played out in our case study of municipal and parochial communities. To respond to this question requires different sources of information and as a consequence the use of different methods.

Following this theme, the unfolding of the question inevitably leads to a combination of methodological techniques in order to generate the desired information. Silverman (2000, p.98) has indicated that when there are a variety of questions to be investigated and a desire to corroborate some with others, different methods should be used. He utilizes the image of trigonometric triangulation in order to illustrate how to deal with the intersection of different sources of information. With this combination, known as triangulation or the mixed method, an attempt is made to maximize understanding of the matter under investigation. This method permits the alternate utilization of quantitative and qualitative information, despite their differences. The most important aspect in combining the two is to see the context as something as changeable and dynamic (Valentine 2001, p.45)

According to this proposal, this study has utilized the following methodological techniques applied to the two spatial levels of analysis: the federal state level of the republic and the municipal level.

**II.4.1 Federal states spatial level**

At this level the analysis was carried out mainly through quantitative data to establish the empirical aspects of political decentralization. Two elements were explored. First, the spatiality of centralization and decentralization in terms of the distribution of resources from central government to local government through the 'Situado Constitucional' during the centralism period (chapter IV) and thorough the
'Consolidation of Resources' during the decentralized period (chapter V). Second, the electoral dimension to represent the results of the governorships elections from 1989 to 1998. The quantitative information was complemented by an exhaustive review of academic treatments of the period, newspaper coverage and a range of thematic commentaries. For this spatial level, it is considered appropriate to use this combination of techniques because it shows directly the process of democratization and its historical context.

The original sources of data from both elements came from a) the National Electoral Court (CNE by the initials in Spanish), this institution is in charge of preparing the electoral process as a Constitution mandate and dealing with the results and publication of the electoral statistics. The website of CNE is: http://www.cne.gov.ve b) the memoirs and accounts of the Ministry of Interior Affairs (FIDES: Intergovernmental Fund for Decentralization), these memoirs were used to collect the information referring the accounts of transferences of resources from the central government to the local government; the memories are published annually. The website of FIDES is: http://www.fides.gov.ve c) Population and housing census is held every ten years by the Central Office of information and Statistics (OCEI by the initials in Spanish). The OCEI website is: http://www.ocei.gov.ve. d) Media archives covering the national dailies El Nacional (http://www.el-nacional.com) and El Universal (http://www.el-universal.com).

Some limitations with the data sources were experienced at this level. In relation to the electoral information, there were changes in the laws governing the electoral system in 1974, 1979, 1989, 1992, 1995 and 1998. These changes are reflected in the boundaries of the electoral constituencies, the establishment of new municipalities and parishes and the utilization of different electoral system at different times (uninominal, closed list, or a combination of closed list and uninominal); all of which make the comparison between years more difficult. But these changes were themselves also part of the decentralization process which was broadening democracy at all spatial levels. In relation to the census and memoirs and accounts of the ministries, the difficulties were caused by the fact that information was collected in different ways and at different times by the various institutions, which made the
comparison of variables much, more complex. In addition, the very definition of the variables thematic also changed (for example, the definition of extreme poverty).

II.4.2 Municipal and Parish Level

For the Municipal and parish level, qualitative techniques were primarily employed to deepen the case study in Chapter VI. These included questionnaires, in-depth interviews and participant observation (Valentine 2001, pp.44-45).

* Questionnaire was carried out in the municipality of Libertador in the state of Mérida. The questionnaire was designed with yes/no answers and open questions and concerned participation in elections, interest in NGOs as well as views on the process of decentralization at the local level (see the questionnaire in Appendix one). The questionnaire was undertaken during the so-called ‘mega-elections’ of 2000. Forty members of the community were interviewed from different parishes in the municipality on the same day as the elections; that is during the lived experience of a political event.

The questionnaire was divided into two blocks of questions, one concerning participation in political parties and participation in social/community movements and NGOs, and the other concerning the impact of decentralization at the local level. To these blocks were added at the beginning some general questions about the interviewee (age, location and activities) and, as a conclusion, some evaluations about decentralization and democracy. More open questions were formulated such as: “Do you consider that we are in a true decentralized democracy? – Why? – What would be required so that the country could move forward to a true decentralized democracy?”

* The technique of in-depth interviewing can be carried out individually or in groups. In these interviews, participants narrated their experiences of their own world, as well as the significance that they gave to them. Three interviews were carried out with members of the communities of the Parish of J.J. Osuna Rodríguez during December and January of 2001-2002. These interviews were conducted with integrated groups of three people. The first was with members of the parish council, the second with a city councilor who represented the parish of J.J. Osuna Rodríguez in the municipal
chamber and two members of the community, and the third interview was with three members of the community (two of them ex-leaders). These interviews were carried out in a pleasant environment without any problems. The questions dealt with the effects of political decentralization upon the local community.

* Participatory observation is a technique that involves living, working and spending long periods of time in a particular community, in such a way that it is possible to gain knowledge and comprehension of the experiences of the local people, in the context of their daily lives. The researcher in this thesis has lived, worked and undertaken previous research in the municipality of Libertador and in Osuna Rodríguez Parish, which allowed for an enrichment of the research by permitting closeness to the reality of the dependent context.

* Other methods used, such as the study of maps, photos and newspaper archives permitted a different vision of the experiences of people in ways that were not so influenced by the questioning of a researcher, and which would not rely on possible confusions of language or culture, or the perhaps limited ability of the researcher to communicate effectively with local inhabitants. In this investigation aerial photographs and photo mosaic of the area were used, maps that showed the spatial differences, and an extensive media archive covering the national and local dailies *El Nacional, El Universal, Frontera*, and *Diario Los Andes*, together with an analysis of the debates of the Congress of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
Chapter III

Territoriality of Power in 18th and 19th Century Venezuela

Introduction

This chapter deals with Venezuelan territoriality and the spatiality of power; the connection between territory and power is proposed as a fundamental point in the analysis advanced, concerning decentralization and democracy in Venezuela. The elements for the analysis of territoriality, decentralized and centralized forms of the state have been established in the previous chapters, and this chapter will specifically discuss the colonial antecedents of the structure of territoriality in the 18th century, as well as the de-centered form which the state assumed in the 19th century. The presentation of the text takes the form of an account of events over time, which is intended to act only as an explanatory resource, all of the aspects of which are the result of the historical evolution of the state in Latin America. González Casanova (1992) has indicated that crises of the state in Latin America occurred principally around the years 1800, 1850, 1880, 1930, 1945, 1959 and lastly around the peak of Neoliberalism and the reforms of the state in 1980 (González Casanova 1992, pp.34-35).

As has been indicated in the previous chapter, in the discussion of the connection between the internal and the external, territoriality has been identified with internal or national spaces. The interventions of the external in territoriality, in a diagram of the spatiality of power, would be expressed in relationships of domination, for instance in the imposition of hierarchical forms of power – this is concerned with a system of rules which violates sovereignty of the people. By contradistinction, the internal can be linked with the combination of governmentality2 and sovereignty which encloses

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2 According to Foucault, ‘governmentality’ is the power which is exercised over a complex of men and their ‘relation to things’. Modern societies are characterized by a triangular power complex: sovereignty-discipline-government or ‘governmentality’. The notion of ‘governmentality’ refers to a series of regulatory strategies that are heterogeneous and indirect (McNay 1996, pp.115-118).
the interconnections between the political, and resistances. There are also observable, in the process of democratization, contradictions between a power which imposes subjugation and subordination, and a power which is constituted through resistance in order to construct forms of political and social autonomy (Slater 1998(b), p.1). A key point in this chapter will be a description of some of the elements that give a view of how this particular process is woven in particular combinations in Venezuela, and starting from this reference, the development of the chapter is constituted by two elements:

In the first part the spatiality of colonial power and the structure of Venezuelan power in the 18th century is touched on, underlining the spatial fragmentation and decentralization of power shown by the provinces. This impeded both effective political and economic control by sub-metropolitan dominant tendencies, and for this reason the Compañía Guipuzcoana was created, a politically economic enterprise acting as an agent of domination. Producers refused this form of monopoly, however, and protests against its presence would lead to the creation of the General Captaincy of Venezuela in 1777, which would be a more direct and centralized form of colonial power.

The Captaincy General of Venezuela, among other institutions, was part of the liberal reforms which had been imposed by political and economic conditions on the crown of Spain. This step towards colonial metropolitan centralization occasioned the loss of much of the provincial autonomy previously concentrated in the town councils or municipalities, and initiated the process towards independence which recovered local powers again. What is noticeable is that both centralism and decentralization combined in this colonial epoch, and that furthermore with the disappearance of the externally dominant force, once again power became concentrated in the town councils.

The second part of the chapter concerns the period of the republic from 1830 up to 1899, including the Federal Wars between 1859 and 1863. The result of these wars was the establishment of the Federation, which came to signify the high-point in the process of democratization which took place in the 19th Century, and which is also the reason for distinguishing two distinct periods. The first covers the period from 1830
to 1864, when leadership was exercised by the military caudillos of the independence struggle, and the state formed a federalist center. The political struggle was to be strongly linked to the Conservative Party – this party was based on caudillismo, the commercial houses and the conservative oligarchy, and maintained control of power from 1864 until 1948, whereas the liberal oligarchy kept power up to 1858.

The Liberal Party was formed in 1840, and went on to represent the democratic tendency related to the federal wars, and to the process which began in 1864. The identifying characteristic of this period, from the point-of-view of this thesis, is the form of decentralization which was adopted by the state through the formation of pacts between regional caudillos, which from 1870 onwards would be accompanied by centralized forms of administration. The political struggle freed the interior of the political party, and moreover around 1897 there appeared new demands for a greater democratization. At the end of the century, however, the seizing of power by caudillos throughout the Andean region re-organized the state and definitively imposed a state centralism which ended movement towards forms of decentralized power.

III.1 Elements for the Study of Territoriality in the 18th Century

The colonial era shows the beginnings of dominance in Latin America, as well as the imposition of schemes of hierarchical power, but this dominance did not show the same characteristics in all regions, and neither was it confronted by the same responses. This section is concerned with connecting some of the relationships of dominance that were established between the provinces comprised by Venezuela and the Spanish metropolis, and the elements of centralization and decentralization around which were woven these particular relationships of dominance. The theme will contribute to a further understanding of the process leading to the spatiality of power in 19th Century Venezuela.
Many of the features of the state as constituted in the 19th century were derived from the territorial structure as defined during the colonial period; one of the more relevant aspects is the territorial disaggregation which persisted up to the first decades of the 20th century. Another important aspect is the impact of the external on the political dynamics and the economy of these provinces, and both of these aspects are related. This was to become important in the organization of Venezuelan society, and also influenced the development of territoriality.

During the whole of the period of Spanish dominance and up until the middle of the 19th century, the province was the basic territorial unit; the Federal Constitution of 1864 renamed them states, which they have remained to date. In the colonial era the provinces were divided into greater or lesser according to relationships of subordination, and as distinct units of political administration they were organized under the authority of a governor who exercised military, governmental, administrative and judicial functions. The city/town council was the organ of municipal autonomy (Gil Fortoul 1953, Volume 1, p. 113), and the provinces were grouped under the authority of royal audiences whose principle function was the administration of justice, but which furthermore (specifically in America) were transformed into instruments of government. They were entrusted with watching over the public order and good government of the cities.

In Latin America three types of royal audiences are distinguishable; those in the capital of the viceroy, those of the greater provinces and those of the lesser. In relation to the viceroys, Spanish America was initially divided amongst two viceroys, the Viceroy of New Spain (1535) and the Viceroy of Perú (1543). The royal audiences of Santo Domingo, Mexico, Guatemala and Guadalajara belonged to the first, and the audiences of Panama, Lima, Santa Fe de Bogotá and Charcas to the second. The Viceroy of Nueva Granada was created at a much later date, in 1718 (Brewer-Carías 1997(b), p.25).

It can be elicited from the preceding exposition, therefore, that in the colonial period there were three levels of power and spatial organization, and the cities constituted
the central axis of this organization. These elements introduce the theme of territoriality and its relationship with the external, which becomes one of the key points underlined here. According to Malavé Mata, these “relationships of subordination of an economic, political and administrative nature with respect to the metropolis come to constitute the most relevant aspect of colonial Venezuela, so far as social organization without autonomous life and being built in a top-down manner, are concerned” (Malavé Mata 1974, p.46).

These different environments of spatiality and government demonstrate the presence of common denominators for the study of territoriality in the context of Latin America; nevertheless, they also bring into view the differences. Whilst the Viceroyos of New Spain (present-day Mexico), New Granada (present-day Colombia) and Peru (present-day Peru) had achieved the formation of their territorial integrity and their metropolitan centers by the 16th century, Venezuela in its current geographic dimensions arose in the 18th century. Before 1777, the provinces which would come to form Venezuelan territory were not even integrated into a single royal audience; on one side the provinces of Venezuela and Cabo de la Vela, Nueva Andalucía (or Cumaná and Margarita) belonged to the audience of Santo Domingo, and on the other the provinces of Mérida-La Grita and Guyana-Trinidad were incorporated into the audience of Santa Fe de Bogotá, after 1718 passing to the Viceroy of New Granada (Velásquez 1998, p.3, Gil Fortoul 1953 Volume 1, pp.116-117).

This decentralization of provincial powers created problems for the Spanish crown for various reasons. Firstly, it feared the expansionist presence of the Portuguese imperium around Guyana, and the threat of invasion by Holland and Britain in the Caribbean. Secondly, the Spanish empire was organized in America as a closed system (Chávez Vargas 1992, p.89), which is to say as an integrated and polarized economy directed towards the metropolis and ‘sub-polarized’ towards the capitals of the viceroys, where the production of precious metals was to be found. Nevertheless in the above-mentioned provinces, on the one hand the absence of abundant mining resources acted to make an important difference with respect to interest in these regions, and on the other hand those provinces maintained political and economic relationships with other metropolises alongside those with the Spanish metropolis, by means of a commercial network extending throughout the Caribbean. These last
points are relevant in particular to the moment when the Crown of Spain decided to centralize the economy and the power of the city-ports, through the creation of a company devoted to a commercial monopoly and the control of contraband.

Additionally, these provinces realized their political and economic functions in a manner entirely distinct from the others. The economy was organized regionally and around city-ports on the Caribbean littoral, or on the edges of the principle rivers, and these were cities whose councils had acquired major political importance, although without a central apparatus to articulate them. This particularity was also a consequence of the presence of great physical-geographic and military obstacles, which represented difficulties for territorial integration. Cháves Vargas has represented the spatial functionality of the 17th and 19th centuries in a diagrammatic mode (see maps: 3.1 and 3.2). In both of these diagrams it is observable that each province has a city-port for the commercialization of production. In the west, towards Coro and Maracaibo Lake, and in the east there are the city-ports of Carupano, Porlamar Guanta, as well as others on the Orinoco (Cháves Vargas 1992, pp.104–107).

This spatial disaggregation had an impact on the “obligatory decentralization” of powers; Lieuwen has mentioned that factionalism and decentralization also characterized the colonial government and administration of Venezuela (Lieuwen 1965, p.23). In 1728 the Compañía Guipuzcuana was created, controlled by 200 shares for the crown and 100 shares for the Company, and whilst the initial contract assured the Company of a commercial monopoly with the province of Caracas, its political influence would also come to have relevance for the conformation of territoriality. From the very beginning of its implementation, the Company generated a fierce opposition on the part of municipal councils that represented the political interests of the producers, and this situation acted to modify the spatial distribution of colonial power as well as the decentralization of power in the provinces.
REGIONALIZATION SCHEME AND NETWORK OF FLOWS - BEGINNING OF THE XVII CENTURY

I. MARACAIBO
  IA. PAMPLONA
 III. A VALENCIA - BORBURATA
 IIIIB. CARACAS - CARABALLEDA
 IV. MARGARITA Y CUMANA
 V TRINIDAD

Source: Chavez Vargas, Luis F. Geografía Humana de Venezuela. Universidad de los Andes: p.104

SCALE: 1/10,000,000
URBAN NETWORK AND FLOWS - BEGINNING OF THE XIX CENTURY

I. MARACAIBO
II. CORO
III.A PUERTO CABELLO - SAN FELIPE
III.B PUERTO CABELLO - VALENCIA
III.C LA GUAIRA - CARACAS
IV BARCELONA

SCALE: 1/10,000,000

SOURCE: Chavez Vargas, Luis F. Geografia Humana de Venezuela. Universidad de los Andes: p.104
The Venezuelan economy of the time was characterized by a very weak agro-farming base, but from this time on it began to be of great importance to the Empire. Agricultural activity based on the *Encomienda* went into decline, and the Company promoted plantation agriculture as an alternative. The monoculture of Cocoa was developed extensively, and the use of slaves reached an apogee. By contrast to the *hacienda*, the plantation was a unit of exploitation which directed a substantial part of its production to the external market.

Nevertheless, to strengthen the monopoly in the province it was also necessary to control contraband, and this implied the isolation of the province from the contraband trafficking effected by other European countries in pursuit of expanding their markets. Holland, for example, had initiated an active contraband traffic (in 1643) in the Caribbean which had the islands of Curacao and Bonaire as its centre of activities; Britain and France also involved themselves in this 'commerce'. The control of contraband would thus affect producers, merchants, and individuals accustomed to these illegal relationships with the Dutch. As a direct consequence, commercial monopoly also implied being able to control the 'strings' of society.

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33 Gil Fortoul (1953) notes that: "In the 15 years from 1706 to 1721, not a single boat arrived from Spain to La Guaira, Puerto Cabello or Maracaibo. Such was the neglect of the peninsular, that the Dutch of Curazao and Bonaire monopolized commerce with their dry-land ports." (Gil Fortoul 1953 Vol.1, p.131)

4 Miranda (1980), referring to Guillén Martínez, suggests that studies of the *encomienda* have emphasized its economic and juridical aspects, but from a political point-of-view it is a structure of forced association for the obtaining of power, prestige and wealth. In a more detailed analysis two important points are observable: 1) The role of the *cacique* as an intermediary between indigenous society and the nascent colonial society, and 2) the roles of the prestige and power generated in a society dominated by the *encomienda*. Concerning the first point, Miranda asserts that the *encomienda* was a process of ethnic assimilation where the *cacique* played the role of mediator between the ethnicities. In this way he became an effective instrument of domination by being fictitiously integrated into the superior social strata through his title of *Don*. With respect to the second point, even though the *encomienda* was a system for the articulation of production, the values which it impelled were not economic; it functioned fundamentally as a framework for social advancement and mobility (Miranda 1980, pp.9-12).
The Company took charge of the unilateral establishment of prices, the control of cocoa cultivation and the monopoly of any other crops assured of a position in the European markets. At the same time it maintained exclusive control of the import of manufactures using commercial agents in each city, supported by armed guards to ensure obedience to orders, thus achieving absolute control of the province. Control was not exclusively economic, but also political – the arrival of the Company accentuated the centralizing tendencies of the Spanish colonial dominion (Malavé Mata 1974, pp.50-51).

This led to a situation whereby the monopolistic management of the Basque company and the interests of the landowners constituted by town/city councils came into direct conflict. In 1733 the Council of Caracas initiated proceedings for damage caused by the Company, and in 1734 the Bishop of Coro condemned the infractions of company officers. In 1741 a riot broke out which necessitated the intervention of the governor, and in 1749 another, in which Juan Francisco de Léon incited more than 800 people. This became the most important resistance movement, directed at obtaining/recovering greater freedom of action for proprietors, especially in the commercialization of products. The massive demonstration was supported by the territorial nobility, small and medium harvesters, indigenous merchants and the population in general. According to Irazábal, the territorial nobility fostered the discontent against the Guipuzcoana which was encroaching on their privileges5, and it was also a demonstration of the economic and political cohesion that this social sector had achieved. Finally, an assembly of interested parties determined unanimously that the Company was prejudicial to the interests of the province and the royal treasury; the most important thing for the Creole cultivators was the creation of

5 According to Gil Foutoul (1953, p.134), the general progress promoted by the Company damaged the interests and the prerogatives of the oligarchic class constituted by the great landowners, descendants of the Conquistadores and Encomenderos. Accustomed to routine systems of cultivation and commerce, they thought that the Company threatened the monopoly that they had enjoyed for centuries, and they took advantage of this first alliance of interests to involve the Company in a civil war.
a committee for the representation of councils, charged with setting prices of produce each year (Irazábal 1974, pp.35-37).

The wide dissatisfaction with and resistance to the Company acted progressively to limit its monopoly, despite this having as its central purpose the maintaining of the status quo of domination and the re-establishment of political stability for the colony. By 1759 the Crown had to introduce measures which represented concessions to the white criollos, such as for instance that with each new offering of shares in the Company they would be allowed to participate. The Crown also propitiated actions favouring free commerce, exonerating from taxation a few crops such as coffee, as well as encouraging the cultivation and merchandising of Indigo and permitting its sale in other countries. In such a manner the way was prepared for the issuing of royal warrants in 1776, which authorized the creation of other commercial companies and halted de facto the monopoly of the Guipuzcoana Company, which wound up in 1781 (Gil Fortoul 1953, p.140).

III.1.2 The Configuration of Venezuelan Territoriality in 1777

The weakening of the dominion that the monarchy had been exercising through the Company brought about the application of a political reformism with certain liberal characteristics, thus diminishing the political instability reigning in the province (Malavé Mata 1974, p.56). In 1776 the Intendencia General of the army and the royal household (Real Hacienda) was created, which institution had as its principle attributes the control of economic and administrative activity, and which signified a measure of centralization and fiscal integration of the provinces of Venezuela, Cumaná, Guayana, Maracaibo, Maragarita and Trinidad. A year later (1777) the

6 Uslar-Pietri (1970, p.45) records that on February 17th 1797 Britain took control of Trinidad in order to have a base closer to the mainland, having flooded Venezuela with subversive propaganda to prepare emancipatory movements that would suit its purposes – it also took advantage of this action to intensify British commerce. The whole of the eastern province of the country, especially Cumaná, traded almost solely with the British Antilles and this recommended it to the attention of the British Secretary of State Lord Neville, up to the point at which the British installed their governor (Thomas Picton) on the island. This latter directed a proclamation to “All of the councils and inhabitants of the
General Captaincy of Venezuela was created, to integrate all the provinces under a single government; this change came to represent the first attempts at political centralization and military control over the territory of the provinces. As can be seen, different action had to be taken if more direct control over the dominion was to be exercised, and following the issue of the Royal Warrant in 1777 the creation of the Captaincy General became linked to the problems that the Viceroy of New Granada already had in taking suitable steps related to the government of these provinces, and the control of the territories in case of invasion. As a consequence, it was decided to annex them politically and militarily to the Captaincy of Venezuela (Brewer-Carías 1997(b), p.31).

In addition, the Captaincy General came to concentrate central-local power in the Council of Caracas (Freitez-Yégüez 2000, p.20), which weakened appreciably the long tradition of autonomy that the other provinces and municipalities had maintained (Lieuwen 1965, p.24). It prompted the formation of a stronger territorial political hierarchy revolving around the city of Caracas, involving the ten principle cities that belonged to the province of Venezuela and the five remaining city-ports of the other provinces (Cháves Vargas 1992, p.105). This was to be a precondition for the political control of the criollo oligarchy of Caracas over the other cities of the Captaincy General of Venezuela, which became fact (as well as a point of discord) after the declaration of independence.

The process of promoting the province of Caracas to the Captaincy General also imposed modifications and innovation in the juridical, political and ecclesiastical spheres. The Royal Audience of Caracas established itself as the supreme authority in the administration of justice ten years later (1786), and following the setting up in 1793 of the Royal Consulate of Caracas, the Archbishopric of Caracas was created in 1804.

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mainland” assuring them of the support of Britain “be it through physical force, arms or munitions” in the case that they resolved “to resist the oppressive authority of their government”.

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The Audience of Caracas came to favour juridical equality, by offering greater accessibility to the obtaining of justice and the defence of rights; above all the measure strengthened the position of the pardos (mixed races) who represented half the population of the Captaincy General at the end of the 18th century. On the other hand this weakened the position of the white population (Gil Fortoul, Op.Cit., pp.102-105), but in exchange the commercial consulate/tribunal signified a major concession of political and economic power to white criollos, similar to that represented by the intendent or governor. The consulate was elected by the criollos in a public act and had extensive powers of government throughout the entire territory, whereas up to that moment the only organisms through which the criollos could exercise authority had been the municipalities, which had very limited faculties and which were anyway circumscribed by the city and its immediate surroundings (Irazábal 1974, p.47).

The white criollos had been segregated up to this time from the bureaucratic apparatus, which remained concentrated in the hands of the peninsular Spanish. Palacio Fajardo (cited by Bravo-Franceschi (1976)) asserts that “up to 1810, among the 166 viceroys and 558 captains general, governors and presidents named in Spanish America there had been only 18 criollos, and these only because they had been educated in Spain.” (Bravo-Franceschi 1976, p.81). The criollos had converted the councils of the cities and municipalities into closed and exclusive organs of power for the assertion of their political and economic claims, above all during the second half of the 18th century.

The initial relevance that the municipality had acquired during the Spanish colonial period was tied to certain privileges conceded to the Alcaldes (roughly equivalent to mayors, but with more extensive powers). Gil Fortoul (1953) indicates that since 1560 vacancies in the government could be filled by the Alcaldes, and that from 1676 the Alcaldes could also govern on an interim basis over political, juridical, military and exchequer matters. This prerogative was present throughout the colonial era, although diminishing progressively in the 17th century (Gil Fortoul 1953 Vol.1, pp.114-115 and 254). Meanwhile, even though the members of the councils abrogated to themselves the representation of the provinces towards the end of the 18th century, they took no active part in the resistance movements that were organized against the Spanish crown, but acted to the contrary during the revolutionary attempts in the
Andean region, following the watchword “Long live the king! Down with taxes!” in 1781, and during the uprising of the negroes and mestizos of Coro in 1795. In the most significant of these uprisings, that of Gual and España which was a popular movement, the uprising of Maracaibo in 1799 and the invasion of Miranda in 1806, the criollo nobility always adhered to the side of the royal authorities, simply because these uprisings pursued proposals that were distinct from their own (Irazábal 1974, p.41).

By direct contrast, during the definitive revolution that commenced with the political representations of the council of Caracas and its neighbors in 1808, the nobility took the lead. Here there were two distinct bands: the radicals who advocated immediate, violent revolution, and the moderates who preferred using legal means towards a peaceful revolution, depending on the route to be followed by events in the metropolis motivated by the French invasion. This brought about the Act of 1810, which opened the council to representation from the clergy, the pardos associations and the people at large. According to the Act this representation had a voice and a vote in all affairs, the proposal being to “erect in the bosom of these same countries a system of government to make up for this pronounced lack, thereby exercising the rights of sovereignty that by this same Act have relapsed to the people” (Gil Fortoul 1953, pp. 199-209).

Within this perspective, the first point to observe is the particular form of metropolitan domination ‘mediated’ by a Company founded for this very end, with the capital of the Crown of Spain and Basque merchants. This specific form of colonial domination was superimposed in the context of the sub-metropolitan domination of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century; sub-metropolitan domination, however, was not a form of government, and nor was it an effective means of control. Secondly, it is notable how the Company became debilitated to the point of disappearance, from which point the reforms responsible for the conformation of territoriality and the centralization of the province of Caracas begin, and the initiation of metropolitan domination proper at the end of the 18th century. This form of domination, then, weakened in the American context, whilst the municipal power-centres of the provinces continued to strengthen themselves. In parallel, resistance movements began against Spanish domination which concluded
with the declaration of the new republic. The proceeding exposition has shown, therefore, a perspective that will help in the comprehension of the spatiality of power in the 19th century.

**III.2 Elements for the Analysis of Governmentality in the 19th Century**

The primary element during this period is military caudillismo linked to the tenancy of land, which would become the principal source of social mobility; this political phenomenon came to have a direct influence on governmentality. In the first half of the century central power would be controlled by the military caudillos participating in the heroic deeds of liberation, by the great landowners of which they formed a part, and by foreign merchant houses. In the second half of the century the provincial powers functioned by means of the "Pact of Regional Caudillos", which would become the principal form of political consensus.

A second element is the persistence throughout the 19th century of the social relationships constructed during the colonial period, and their specific effects on the process of democratization. The social inequalities occasioned by the presence of slavery (associated with agro-export activities) imposed a limited, censured participation. This acted to stimulate the development of a political opposition which materialized in the Liberal party, and the constant seeking of a balance between the central power and local powers, through the delegation or restriction of power in the province. This imbrications of power is most evidently expressed in the series of constitutional reforms, and in the characteristics of the pacts which were established between tendencies or political groups.

**III.2.1 The Formation of the Venezuelan State**

An important aspect of this section is the debate over the formation of the nascent Venezuelan state. This developed in a period lasting from the Council of 1808 up to the Convocation of Bolívar in 1929, the description of which is key to looking at the debate from the results of this process. The finished form of the state adopted in 1830
would be centro-federal, and moreover this co-existence of a federal and centralist form would become a defining characteristic up to the present.

Furthermore, these debates came to form the antecedents from which grew the Venezuelan political parties; Velásquez (1979) indicates that the political parties appeared on the national scene after the separation of Gran Colombia, and the declaration of republican sovereignty. Nevertheless, the division of Venezuelans for political reasons was not a new occurrence, given that it had been occurring since the separation of patriotic groupings and loyalists of the king or Godos, and within the patriotic groupings between federalists and centralists, when dealing with the organization of the Republic. After 1830, the political groups were to divide themselves into pro-dictatorial, civil law and militarist factions, among others (Velásquez 1979, p.135).

In the congress of 1811, the discussion revolved around the form of government that would be most suitable for the new republic. Some proposed a unitarian or centralized regime, whilst others wanted a federal compromise to be recognized before a declaration of independence was made, similar to that adopted by the United States of America. This last was related to the demands for autonomy maintained provinces confronted with the centralism exercised by the province of Caracas, which through its geographical extent and population and through being the capital dominated political, social and economic power (Velásquez 1997, p.154). The Congress would end by proclaiming the Federal Constitution of the State, adjusting it from the Convention of Philadelphia of 1787 (Brewer-Carias 1996), although the analogy could not be perfect. In North America the colonies already had governments when

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7 This debate was repeated in 1826 and again in 1829, due to Bolivar’s manifesto o letter which encouraged the people to show openly their opinions on the form of government or constitution, as well as the election of head of state, that should be adopted by the Congress; it once again opened up the debate between Unitarians and Federalists. The Unitarians proposed a life-presidency for Bolivar, but among the Federalists opinion was by no means unanimous. Some proposed a popular, representative Republic with a federal system throughout the territory, whilst others criticized those who they saw as proposing the extinguishing of central government, only to duplicate this same unitary system in diverse places throughout the Republic (Gil Fortoul 1953 Vol.1, pp. 678-679).
they formed their confederation, whereas in the Spanish colony the provincial
governments had not enjoyed wide political freedom. On the other hand, in the North
the federal government depended from the beginning on a segmented governance,
and its attributions could more properly be described as a delegation of power (Gil

Whilst the Congress debated centralism or federation, elsewhere Patriotic Society was
involved in discussions over the problem of independence8. Nevertheless the
opinions of Bolivar about the Constitution of 1811, collected in the Discurso de
Angostura of 1819, is an important document for the appreciation of similar situations
reflecting the conformation of state organization, and their relevance to the process of
Venezuelan democratization9.

8 In the Patriotic Society Simón Bolivar summarized general opinion: “What should be decided is
being discussed in the Congress – And what do they say? That we must start with a Confederation, as
if we were not already confederated against foreign tyranny. That we must attend to the results of
Spanish policy – What does it matter to us, that Spain sells her slaves to Bonaparte, or keeps them, if
we are resolved to be free? These doubts are the sad effects of ancient chains. Must great projects
always prepare themselves through the exercise of calm? And is not three hundred years of calm
enough? A commission from the bosom of this body must carry these sentiments to the sovereign
Congress.”

9 Amongst the models of dominion which occurred with the step from colony to republic, one of the
most important has to do with the Monroe Doctrine. From 1816 to 1820, the Chamber of
Representatives would vote in favour of establishing delegations towards the new governments of
America. This was achieved in 1822 when President Monroe executed the decree on legations; on the
2nd of December 1823 President Monroe sent his famous message to Congress: "We owe it, therefore,
to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those Powers, to
declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their rule to any portion of this
hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any
European power we have not interfered, and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have
declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great
consideration and on just principles acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the
purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European Power,
in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States".
Following this declaration Great Britain also recognised the independence of the new republics, and
demanded that the great powers allied in Verona desist from all interventions in America. (Gil Foutoul
Bolivar argued that “the more I admire the excellence of the Federal Constitution of Venezuela, the more I am persuaded of the impossibility of its application to our state. And according to my way of seeing it, it is prodigious that its North American model is able to subsist in such prosperity, and without torment at the first signs of embarrassment or danger..... But be that as it may, it had not entered into my remotest thoughts to assimilate the condition and nature of two states so distinct as the English American and the Spanish American. Does not the Spirit of the Laws say that these must be proper to the people that make them? That it is only by great coincidence that those of one nation may be suitable for others? That the new laws must be relative to the aspect of a country, to its climate, to the quality of the terrain, to its condition, to its area, to the way of life of the people? Does the Constitution itself refer to the degree of liberty that it can tolerate, to the religion of its inhabitants, to their inclinations, to their riches, to their numbers, to their business, to their customs, to their manners? For here is the code that we should consult, and not that of Washington (Franceschi 2001, pp.76-77)”.

The Constitution of 1819 has the importance of having institutionalized the state of rights by delegating power to the people; under the necessity of concentrating power, however, it would adopt, in a provisional and transitory attitude towards federalism, a highly centralized government (Mörner 1993, p.33). A unique and indivisible republic was created, whose territory was divided into 10 political administrative units, dependent on the central power. In the Constitution of 1821 the same territory that corresponded to the Viceroy of New Granada and the Captaincy General of Venezuela was established as the territory of Greater Colombia; this charter consecrated a type of confederation of states. As a direct consequence, during the war

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1953, p.538); at various opportunities the governments of Venezuela would seek to take advantage of the game of power balances that this signified. In the case of Guzmán Blanco and other presidents and ministers, the support of the United States was sought in the light of perceived menaces from Europe, whereas afterwards the Doctrine was interpreted in more conventional terms as danger receded. At the beginning of the 20th century the Doctrine would serve the United States to impose its dominion over American territory when confronted by the pretensions of Great Britain and Germany.
of independence power would be centralized without substantially affecting the autonomy of the provinces.

III.2.2 Venezuelan Caudillismo and Power

During the whole of the 19th century, an important theme of reference for its later implications is that the struggle for emancipation modified the evaluative attitude of the Venezuelan. As Velásquez (1998) indicates of those who fought in Boyacá, Carabobo, Pichincha, Junín and Ayacucho, from the humblest soldier upwards when they returned to their homeland they had a different evaluation of their personality. They felt themselves to be creators of a fatherland, heroes of an extraordinary stage of continental development, and as such had the right to be masters of the republic. This climate of collective, affirmative attitudes would stimulate the tendency towards militarism and caudillismo (Velásquez, 1998 p.7).

To this last phenomenon must be added the re-concentration of agricultural land in the territory which began after 1830, and which had been altered by the war. According to Article 4 of the Ley de Repartición de Bienes Nacionales of the 10th of October 1817, as compensation to the officers and soldiers “The government offered to make up the difference (in the debt owed to soldiers) with whatever other national goods, and principally with the concession of wastelands (Bravo-Franceschi 1976, pp. 91-92). This measure converted into an important element for the military of access to social mobility and power; the most favored under this law were the military of high rank, who would come to form part of the land-owning class. The military caudillos would be able to integrate themselves into the national oligarchy through this re-division of lands, and the agreements between these men and the local caudillos was what allowed social organization in the 19th century.

Another aspect related to caudillismo was the constitutional legislation elaborated during the war of independence. The Constitution of 1819 assigned to the municipalities their own powers; amongst these was the authority to propose the naming of a governor who would contribute to consolidating the regional and local power of military caudillismo, by substituting the colonial criollo aristocracy in local organizations. The opposition on the part of the municipalities to the projected
Greater Colombia in 1830 also contributed to strengthening the leadership of the military *caudillos*, as well as that of the civil municipal authorities, until the achieving of separation in 1921.

This political phenomenon of America would have a direct influence on governmentality. *Caudillismo in* its simplest form constitutes a relationship of subordinating power, founded on personal loyalty to a local *caudillo* and in a society organized at its base on *caudillismo*, power rests in the agreements of a national *caudillo* integrated to an oligarchy, with local *caudillos* (Chávez Vargas 1992, p.115). The pact of *caudillos* indicated respect for the leadership of the most qualified military and political figures on the part of local leaders; power was not based on the existence of a powerful national army, but rather martial force for the defense of the government was constituted by the personal armies that local leaders recruited from amongst the peasants and tenant farmers who worked on their haciendas. Neither was this kind of government based on a true bureaucratic apparatus at the national level, if not from the fulfillment of the pact of power which united the landowners and Hacendados to the merchants, soldiers and politicians; it was an alliance which dispensed privilege to all as equals.

In the first half of the century central power would be controlled by the military *caudillismo* which took part in the liberation struggle, the great landowners of which they formed a part, and the foreign merchant houses. In the second half of the century the provincial powers functioned through the medium of pacts of regional *caudillos*, and moreover there existed a closed relationship between the Liberal party and *caudillismo* (Oropeza 1988, p.30). This agreement between chief, party and army lasted until 1899, when the national army was founded by Cipriano Castro.

**III.2.3 The Liberal State of the 19th Century**

The year 1830 marked the rupture with the original Bolivarian project of Greater Colombia, and Venezuela was created as an independent republic. The political relationships within the new republic established themselves around the principal *caudillos* who arose during the war of independence, and the oligarchy. The process
was lead by José Antonio Páez, who had been controlling the destiny of the nation since 1821 by acting as a guarantee of governability, and who would have influence in Venezuelan politics until his last exile in 1863. The results of his work would be the Constitution of 1830, a document which reflected his political and social philosophy (Lieuwen 1965, pp. 33-34).

**III.2.3.1 The Centro-Federal State (1830-1858)**

At this point, and in order to guarantee a minimum of governability the Centro-Federal Pact model of government was adopted (Guerón 1996, p.357). This pact recognized a unique sovereignty in the power of the nation (Angulo 1997, p.45) and a number of autonomous prerogatives of the provinces. It conceded to provincial deputations the right to present to the president of the republic a list of three candidates from amongst which to choose the governor (Villalba 1996, p.13); this would come to represent the federal component of the pact. The *caudillos* of the centre with Páez as leader represented the so-called Conservative Oligarchy (1830-1848), and the *caudillos* of the east, the Monagas, represented the so-called Liberal Oligarchy (1848-1857). Up until 1846 the province of Oriente or Cumaná fought to convert itself into and independent nation, and only the intermediation of Páez put an end to these aspirations, by ceding central power to the Liberal Oligarchy (Vélásquez 1997, p.155).

But the new state conserved the same forms of inequality which had predominated in the period of Spanish colonization - slavery and servitude continued to be the dominant forms of exploitation. In order to maintain this form of exploitation, the conservatives sanctioned reforms and legal measures which continually raised the age of manumission of slaves from the 18 years declared in the Constitution of 1821, to 21 years in the Constitution of 1830, and later still to 25 years as promulgated in the *Ley de Patronato* of 1839 (Malavé Mata 1974, pp. 116-118). They also maintained the censorious form of the participatory system; to be elected or to elect one must be older than 21, as well as being an owner of property with a profit of greater than 50 *pesos*, or in a position with an annual salary of at least 100 *pesos*, and in addition be able to read and write. The presence of this social differentiation went to the centre of the political debate promoted by the Liberal Party, after its creation in 1840, and the
party would thus be integrated by many different factions covering a great deal of political activity. Perez (1996) indicates that if there are any ties that still link the historical parties of Venezuela with those of the 20th century, they must be with the Liberal party (Perez 1996(a), p.49).

Coronil (1997) signals that after the war of independence, liberalism became the public language of the political elite of Venezuela; liberalism is therefore associated not only with the origins of the nation, but also with the Bolivarian project of social emancipation and republicanism which the criollo elites lead. For this reason liberalism had been converted into an essential component in the legitimization of criollo government since independence, and the Liberal party and the Conservative party (the principle parties of the first half of the 19th century) shared the liberal discourse. In the heart-breaking wars of the century, marked by changes in the alliances of the elites and a succession of military governments, “The liberals were conservatives and the conservatives were also liberals” (Coronil 1997, pp.85-86, cited by Velásquez). Nevertheless, the important point is to indicate that political liberalism was one thing, and liberal Venezuelans quite another, as Rangel (1980, pp.35-36) says, when attempts were made to establish the differences between doctrinaire liberalism and ideology in Colombia, and what exactly the Great Liberal Party was. The “opposition were not able to rest on solid principles or political ideals, but only simply on the exchange of one group of men for another, of the ‘in’ for the ‘out’; that is why the Liberal party was founded” (Uslar-Pietri 1970, pp. 130-131).

The Liberals, through the foundation of the newspaper ‘The Venezuelan’, took advantage of the tensions between producers and lenders of money occasioned by the fall of prices of coffee in 1840. Through this medium of opinion they opposed themselves to the continuity of Páez and his power elite, and demanded principles of alternation. The party strengthened itself throughout the urban centers and in all of the parishes of Caracas, as well as other centers of population of the interior, and in 1844 it took control of the municipal council of Caracas. Following this success liberal societies were consolidated in many other towns and villages, generating a true mobilization of opinion. In 1846 the Liberal Party launched the candidature of its leader Antonio Leocadio Guzmán in the presidential elections, with the slogan “Liberty, Popular Sovereignty, Progress, Equality, Alternation and Constitution”.

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Velásquez (1997, pp.156-157) suggests that these were the only elections before 1947 that were protagonized by groups distinct from the dominant party of Páez.

In 1848 José Tadeo Monagas inaugurated a decade of reforms; some of the laws established by the conservatives were modified, for which reason his government would be called the Liberal Oligarchy. In this same year were initiated the reform of the *Ley de Libertad de Contrato*, as well as the modification of the *Ley* of 1841, as the product of an alliance with the liberals. The next year the death penalty was eliminated for political crimes and Monagas broke relationships with the conservatives, leading to the jailing of Páez (who would be exiled in 1850), as well as mounting a persecution of the liberals of Antonio Leocadio Guzmán. In 1851 the brother of Monagas, José Gregorio Monagas, occupied the presidency and decreed the abolition of slavery in 1854, allocating three million *pesos* for the indemnification of the owners (Bravo-Fransceschi 1976, pp.25-26). In 1855 José Tadeo Monagas once again became president of the republic, without any opposition, and began discussions on the reform of the Constitution of 1830.

This event has been linked with the pretensions of President Monagas to guarantee his re-election, but he was unable to count on the support of more than a fifth of the members of both Chambers of the government. To get around these constitutional obstacles, the Congress of 1856 ruled that this majority was only required for partial reforms, and did not establish limits for general reform. As a consequence, President Monagas decreed that future congresses would have the faculties to effect general reforms without introducing alterations in the form of government; moreover, the reform would take place when the people asked for it, and when the two Chambers that had sanctioned the present decree had been reformed in their totality.

Gil Fortoul indicates that “in order to accelerate the total renovation of the two Chambers, Congress made use of a subterfuge to expedite a new law of territorial division”. The faculty of Congress to multiply the number of provinces and fix their limits had as its objective the amplification of the federal component of the constitution, but in the end this was converted into a pretext for the centralization of power in the president. In 1830 the republic was comprised of eleven provinces; the conservative oligarchy augmented this number to thirteen, and the liberal oligarchy to
twenty, and according to this law that altered all the provinces, the executive power would proceed to name new governors whilst at the same time decreeing that the permanent army should increase from 3,000 men to 10,000 (Gil Fortoul 1953 Vol.1, pp.75-77). This point in particular illustrates the relationship between the territoriality of power and governmentality in the 19th century, and how through the use of constitutional reform, federalism was employed to strengthen the central powers.

At the end of 27 years of vigilance by the Centro-Federal pact, the Constitution of 1857 came to modify the Constitution of 1830, with the intention of adopting a unitarian, centralist regimen as a substitute for the previous centro-federal system. In order to achieve this end the provincial deputations, who had had the faculty to elect the list from which governors were chosen, were eliminated, and this selection became dependent on, and chosen freely by, the executive power. In place of the deputations, the municipal authorities were given limited political and administrative attributes, but with these modifications the federalist component of the constitution disappeared.

Nevertheless, an alliance of conservatives and liberals achieved the overthrow of Monagas and the convocation of a Constituent in 1858, in which the federal component re-appeared again. Velásquez has detailed the representation of the federal position of 1811 in the Constitutional Assembly of 1858, and in this constitution the decentralization of public power was achieved through the widening of municipal power (Velásquez 1998, pp.9-10).

In the Constituent of 1858 the qualification of conservative was applied to the greater quantity of deputies, but in reality they were nearly all advanced or radical liberals. The presence of this ‘conservative’ majority was a consequence of the dissidence arising from the liberal oligarchy as a consequence of the overthrow of José Tadeo Monagas. They formed three factions: those who had been part of the government presented no candidates. Those who had been on the side of Antonio Leocadio Guzmán were allied with those who were organizing armed action, and the representatives of the militarist tendency such as Falcón and Zamora who preferred civil war.
From the viewpoint of the democratic results of the Constitution of 1858 “It could be said that that all of the deputies were partisans of civil power, of laws more democratic than the previous ones, and unquestionably of political decentralization. But by the means through which it was formulated, the majority adjusted themselves to the Centro-Federalist compromise of 1830 (Gil Fortoul 1953 Vol.III, pp.114-115)”. The dissident faction of the Liberal party would enforce its presence above all in triumphing over the name of Federation10. Municipal power would be exercised through a legislature and a governor in the province, through a council and a municipal leader in the cantons and through such other functionaries and bodies as the provincial legislature established. There was thus a return to a tri-partite power structure, as well as the restitution to the provinces of their political autonomy, given that they would now elect governors by a majority of the voters through a direct, universal and secret vote. The people would exercise direct sovereignty in the elections, and indirectly through public powers; the deputies and the president of the republic would be chosen through a direct and secret vote (Brewer Carías 1997(b), pp.487-501).

The response came in the form of the Federal War (1859 and 1863), which can be classified as a guerilla war whose theatre of operations covered principally the territories of the plains states known as Barinas, Portuguesa, Cojedes, Apure and Guárico (Sanoja Hernández 1998, p.7). According to Chávez Vargas (1992) the demographic structure of the region of the plains had begun to acquire great

10 Even though the Constitution of 1858 was more democratic because “the people would exercise sovereignty directly in the elections, and indirectly through the public powers established by this Constitution”, this did not detain the imminent federal revolution. The military leader was Juan Crisóstomo Falcón, but its soul was Ezequiel Zamora, who achieved the developing in the federation of truly popular roots. The word federation was understood by only a few people at this time, but the yearning for social vindication ran throughout the people. A sincere and patriotic person such as Zamora was a sure guarantee of triumph, and on the 20th of February 1859 he disembarked in Coro, from which date up to the 20th of December of the same year there were some 130 military actions. It was not only the oligarchies and the landowners who feared the torch lit by Zamora, but also the nominal leaders of the federation, General Falcón and Antonio Leocadio Guzmán, who saw in Zamora the de facto leadership; Zamora died in 1860, and the federation lost its most popular character of the early years (Uslar-Pietri 1970, pp.146-150.)
importance; between 1839 and 1873 it had accumulated some 25% of the entire population of the country. The base of this growth was the development of cattle-raising on an open range and pasture basis, and by 1855 the greater part (90%) of the exportation of hides, which represented some 20% of the total exports of the country, left through the gates of Ciudad Bolívar to the United States.

Over time a regional antagonism had developed between the economic groupings constituted by the agro-commercial complex of the centre and the plains producers, and these latter, in alliance with other rural caudillos, gave their support to the federal tendencies which confronted the nascent centralist tendency incarnate in the new concept of the state. This federalist tendency developed a relationship with demands for “social justice against the exactions of the usurers”, against the hacendados.

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11 In 1834 the Ley de Libertad, Igualdad y Seguridad de los Contratos was decreed. This so-called “Law of Usury” gave absolute liberty for the arrangement of contracts, in areas such as the fixing of interest rates and other conditions desired by the contracting parties. For Maza Zabala (cited in Franceschi-Dominguez 1974) the liberating of contracts marked the influence of the commercial/usury houses in the social life of the epoch, because this law was effectively converted into an instrument for the concentration of wealth and for the despoliation of small landowners. Furthermore, in 1841 the Ley de Quita y Espera was promulgated as a complement to the previous law; according to this, the consent of all creditors was necessary before the concession of a prorogation of the debt, or a suspension of the auctioning of the goods of debtors (Franceschi-Dominguez 1974, p.120).

12 Up until 1934 the politics of the Conservative governments were very close to those of the commercial houses and the conservative oligarchy. In 1834 (mentioned above) the Law of Liberty, Equality and Security of Contracts, also known as the “Law of Usury” was decreed, and in 1841 the Ley de Quita y Espera was promulgated as a complement. Both laws constituted a big factor in the social and economic discontent which lead to the coming of the revolts which occupied the life of the nation in the second half of the 19th century. Equally, many of the naval interventions by European countries in the Venezuelan city-ports in the first half of the 19th century were related to these problems. Indebtedness was also a cause of important conflicts in the national order (Díaz-Rodríguez-Villegas 1996, p.19), and in 1848 one product of the alliance of José Tadeo Monagas and the liberals was the initiation of the reform of the Law of Usury, as well as the modification of the law of 1841. It was proposed that a stay of debts for debtors was a legal advantage, but the management of foreign national businesses protested against the measure. In 1856 the United States and Holland claimed prejudice against their nationals and at the same time their property rights on the island of Aves, and Holland sent an ultimatum, sitting its’ fleet in La Guiara. The question of dominion and sovereignty in
eager to exploit manual labour and the sack of uncultivated lands by the landowners, and demands for equality and improvements promised by the liberals and not fulfilled, which had given rise to the movements of social agitation and the rebellions of 1844, 1846 and 1847. Both struggles, the social and the regional, would find expression in the war which began in 1858 (Cháves Vargas 1992, pp.115-117).”

The Federal War culminated with the Constitution of 1864, which took from the Constitution of 1858 what it in turn had taken from the Constitution of 1830, which is to say the autonomy of the provinces. In terms of the form of the state, it would take a political administrative division of territory similar to the Constitution of 1857 and moreover it would amplify greatly the federal component, to the extent that it could be mistaken for absolute federalism. These aspects would be what came to characterize spatiality of power after the Federal War, which was a multiplication of centralism at all levels (Gil Fortoul 1953, p.679). The Constitution of 1864 consecrated the principles proclaimed by Venezuelan liberalism since 1841, and which continued to be enunciated in the federal programme of Barinas in 1959: the abolition of the death penalty, freedom of the press, permanent prohibition of slavery, the inviolability of the domestic household, of property, of correspondence, freedom of worship, the absolute independence of the electoral power and universal, direct and secret elections of the president (Velásquez 1979, p.150).

**III.2.3.2 The Federal - Centralist State (1863-1899)**

Federation is a phenomenon that has confronted other Latin American countries. But in contradistinction to countries such as Colombia or Peru, where the social and economic groups that had dominated since the colonial era were able to consolidate their dominion and control of political, social and economic life, in Venezuela the Federation pursued the elimination of all social exclusiveness, caste divisions, and reserved spaces in political life, an occurrence responding to the continuity of the

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the island of Aves was submitted to Spanish arbitration, which decided in favour of Venezuela in 1865. Previously Venezuela had been in conflict with Spain, which claimed payment for damages caused to its nationals during the civil war of the federation between 1859 and 1864 (Gil Fortoul 1953 Vol.III, pp.246-249, 257 & 278).
social structure and the economy of the colony, the maintenance of slavery and the
predominance of the landowners in government. Velásquez (1979) considers that the
Federation constitutes the culminating moment in the Venezuelan democratic process
of the 19th century (Velásquez 1979, p.149). Irazábal (1974) is moreover of the
opinion that the Federation is part of the process of democratic struggles which were
manifested so clearly during the war of independence, and found the solution to their
continuity in the liberal movement which began in 1840 (Irazábal 1974, p.173).

The Federation created the “United States of Venezuela”, whose states were declared
independent and equal as political entities. In a form similar to the Constitution of
1858, it was proposed that governors should be elected by direct and secret suffrage,
the new states also reserving to themselves political and administrative government,
the administration of justice and of natural resources, as well as the administration of
the municipalities (Angulo 1997, p.47). In this way each federal entity would have its
own government and the national power would be confined to a federal district, as a
neutral territory (Brewer-Carías 1997(b), p.149). The basis of the new state rested on
the regimen of “pacts”, which came to signify the reciprocal recognition of political
and administrative autonomy, of equality as political entities and the full conservation
of non-delegated authority. The states had to have as a form of political organization
popular, elective, federal, representative, alternative and responsible government, and
as much as the ‘Federal Pact’ facilitated the states in their unification of two or more
to form a whole, it also always conserved their individual character (Velásquez 1988,
p.10).

Moreover, the pact gave support to the nation state and central power through the
organization of armed forces, which were formed by citizen militias or contingents of
individuals contributed by each one of the states in accordance with its laws of
military service. The national government was unable to situate any military chiefs
and troops/forces in any state that were not from that same state, without the
permission of the government of the state where they were desired to be located.
Owing to the absence of a national army, the creation of these militias directed by
regional caudillos gave support to the national power (Brewer-Carías 1997(b), p.150),
and it was necessary to strengthen provincial power to guarantee governability to the
central power (Velásquez 1997, p.154). The main proposition of the federal alliance
sought to sustain Venezuelan unity, in other words it dealt with an agreement which attempted to strengthen centralism by strengthening the province. Even with the inevitable differences, in the future this type of agreement of incongruous appearance but effective results, where the local must be strengthened to be able to save the state, would be repeated; something similar would be presented at the end of the 20th century.

Regional *caudillismo* and coercion, under the formula of governments co-ordinated from Caracas, guaranteed governability during the first fifteen years. In 1870 Antonio Guzmán Blanco, the son of Antonio Leocadio Guzmán the Liberal leader in 1846, reorganized the Liberal (Yellow) Party and established a federal regimen with a centralist tendency which lasted until 1888. In his speech of 26th February 1879 he signaled that “the Septennium was a government of war: its primordial duty was to establish peace...... for this reason it had always to be repressive” (Brewer-Carias 1997(b), p.565). In effect, even though the elements of liberalism related to the economy were maintained as part of the federal pact, the discourse on liberal democracy began to be erased very quickly. The constitutional reform of 1874 established in the Federation (Constitution of 1874, Title II, Articles 13 & 23 (Brewer-Carias 1997(b), pp.551-563) that voting should be direct, public, written and signed, and reduced the period of governance of senators, deputies and presidents to two years. This left intermingled on one hand greater control of the elections, and on the other hand an intention to force a greater mobility in the alternation of power, which in the case of Guzmán Blanco permitted him to come and go on multiple occasions in order to exercise his form of “autocratic power”.

According to the agreements achieved in 1879 between Guzmán Blanco and the regional *caudillos* (Brewer-Carías 1997(b0, pp.567-585), a congress of presidents of the states was to be called in order to create the institutions which would rule the country provisionally, and which would elect the president. The proposal of the centralist reform was “to re-organize the national administration and modify the institutions according to the public rights of the United States of America in the north, which until now has served us as a norm.” The measure created the Council of Administration and the Federal Council, which were charged with electing the presidents of the states. The twenty states which comprised the Venezuelan Union.
were reduced to seven great states which were called sections 13, but non-delegated sovereignty continued to be held in the states; the secret vote was also restored in elections.

These agreements dealt with a special regionalization of power, and the beginnings of the centralization of federalism. The states ceded to the central government control over environmental resources, as well as the rights that they had maintained over transport profits, in exchange for each section receiving a quota of the general profits for every 16,000 inhabitants in the state. These modifications to economic autonomy, the institutionalization of the *Situado Constitucional*, the creation of the Federal Council and the designation of the governors of states, progressively limited the political autonomy of the regional leaderships at the same time as they strengthened the central powers (Brewer-Carias 1993, p.16).

Throughout the period from 1870 to 1888 a more stable political order was created, which completely re-orientated the politics and the economy of the country. Between 1870 and 1877 obligatory public education was decreed, the raising, codification and systematization of statistics and censuses on a national basis, and the installation of telephone and telegraph lines; the establishment of civil marriage and the establishment of the civil registry, moreover, brought Guzmán Blanco into conflict with the Catholic Church (Uslar-Pietri 1970, pp.155-158).

In its second government (1879-1884) the country became open to penetration by imperialism; by means of the 'politics of the railways', the first direct international capital investment was effected by Great Britain and Germany. The construction of railways had been a preoccupation of Venezuelan governments since 1853, but had to

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13 According to the Law of 1856 the following sectional demarcation was established: the eastern states (Cumaná, Maturín and Barcelona); the central states (Bolívar, Guzmán Blanco, Guárico, Apure and Nueva Esparta); the south-western states (Carabobo, Cojedes, Portuguesa, Zamora); the north-western states (Barquisimeto, Falcón and Yaracuy); the Andean states (Guzmán, Trujillo and Táchira), the state of Guayana and the state of Zulia (Agreement of the 30th of April 1879, cited by Brewer-Carías 1997, p. 575). In 1881 the political divisions were reconstructed again into nine great political entities (Constitution of 1881, Title I, first section, Article 4, cited in Brewer-Carías 1997b, p.589).
be suspended because of political instability; it was part of the political economy strategy of orientating growth "towards the outside" (Chavés Vargas 1992, pp.130-131). A concession to J. R. Lesew for the exploitation of the mines of Naricual was granted, and to the Boulton company a concession for commercial traffic from the ports of Venezuela to the United States. A contract was signed with Dr Polli and Co. for the exploitation of guano and phosphate, and another with the British company, Guayana Co. for the establishment of agricultural and mining colonies in Guayana. Between 1884 and 1886, during the first government of Joaquín Crespo (who continued the policies of Guzmán), a concession was arranged with Horatio Hamilton for the exploitation of the natural resources of the State of Bermúdez and over the whole of the Asphalt Lake of Guanaco.

Antonio Guzmán Blanco returned between 1886 and 1888 and governed for only 6 months, after which period his political stature began to decline (Bravo-Franceschi 1976, pp.227-230). From the above, however, can be elicited the beginnings of the process of modernizing the state which was planned in the second half of the 19th century. As has been indicated, in order to achieve these proposed ends Antonio Guzmán Blanco decreed a conjoining of means framed within two principal objectives: the control and appropriation of the power of the regional caudillos, and the consolidation of an alliance with the commercial financiers. In order to achieve these objectives, in the first place he implemented a policy of implacable repression against the conservative caudillos, at the same time as a policy of moving closer to the liberal caudillos, on the condition that they accepted his hegemonic power. Those who did not accept this agreement were frightened by the shooting of Matías Salazar in 1872, and Guzmán allocated the presidencies of the states to his allies. As has been suggested above, he also assured the dependency of the states on the central power through the implementation of the Situado and the centralization of taxes, a situation similar to that which occurred later in 1947.

In this sense it is considered that there was never an effective administrative decentralization in Venezuela (Brewer-Carias 1975) but, first and foremost because the caudillos in power developed an administrative policy of a centralist character, coloured by political/military decentralization. The reverse occurred, in consideration of the political decentralization of the Federation, which was a reality with lengthy
historical roots linked to *caudillismo* (Brewer-Carias 1975). This explains why with the passing of *caudillismo* in the 20th century, federalism became merely a constitutional formality.

Secondly, an alliance was established with the financial groups of Caracas, which were the results of the fusion of commercial and banking capital, giving them concessions for some of the branches of public finance (Chavés Vargas 1992, pp.132-134). Thirdly, as has already been discussed above, there was the advent of international conflicts over the game of the balance of power, between the expansionist policies of the European countries and the external policies of the United States, defined since the beginning of the century by the Monroe Doctrine. This policy of the "protectorate of liberty and democracy on the continent" would play a big part in the period 1881-82, or at least a renovated version, Manifest Destiny, the "Big Stick" and the "I took Panamá" attitude of the US Secretary of State Chester Alan (Bravo-Franceschi 1976, p.241, Betancourt 1967, p.28). Border disputes with Great Britain were to continue, in the sphere of external affairs, for some time to come14.

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14 One question which occupied the attention of the governments of the Venezuelan Republic were the incursions of colonists of British Guayana in territory that Venezuela considered its own (under treaties between Holland and Spain), urged on by the local authorities and by the metropolis. This is a problem of border disputes which is still unresolved today; in 2000, when the government of Guyana tried to sign a contract with the business Beal Aerospace Technologies for the installation of a base in the area in dispute, the Venezuelan government raised its protests at an international level (El Nacional 20/8/00). According to Schultz (1999) the dispute has its origin in the failure of the European powers to identify with precisions their colonial limits in the New World. The British took possession of their part of Guyana because the Dutch had been losing parts of their side during the Napoleonic Wars, and were therefore obliged to transfer the property of "the emplacements of Demerara, Esquibo and Berbice" to Great Britain (Schoultz 1999, p.107). The antecedents of this dispute raised themselves again in 1822, when the Venezuelan Minister of the Exterior warned the British cabinet about the occupation of the left bank of the River Esequibo. In 1834 the Royal Geographic Society of London sent Schomburg to plot the borders, with the results that Venezuela was deprived of more than half of the territory that she considered to be hers. In 1842 Great Britain recognized that these plotted borderlines, rather than being the signs of dominion, were in reality a tangible means for future discussions, and in 1844 formal negotiations were opened. Venezuela proposed the River Esequibo as the dividing line, whilst the British Minister, Lord Aberdeen, proposed other divisions – the negotiations remained deadlocked, with neither party able to agree (Gil Fortoul 1953 Chapter I,
In the years that followed there was developed a strong current of feeling against
Guzmán Blanco and the 'caudillist' struggle for power, but the centralist tendencies
of the state were maintained. The national assembly sanctioned the Constitution of
1894, where the law of political divisions was modified and the name of Guzmán
Blanco was eliminated from the names of the sections. Despite its centralizing
tendencies, the government of Crespo established for the first time the autonomy of
the municipalities and its political independence with reference to the economic and
administrative regimen (Brewer-Carías 19979(b), p.164).

For the period 1898-1902 Joaquín Crespo had guaranteed free presidential elections;
five candidates presented themselves amongst, whom was José Manuel Hernández,
the candidate of the opposition, who proposed regrouping liberalism anew with the
National Liberal Party. For the first time Hernández developed an electoral campaign
with electoral techniques and methods perfected in the United States, and he traveled
the country, creating national societies. At the beginning of 1897 he could rely on
some 60 newspapers, whose leaders proclaimed his position as head of a new party
which would rescue the principles proclaimed in 1841. Confronted by evidence that
his triumph had provoked an electoral fraud on the part of the government, Hernández
revolted and later was captured and sent to prison; meanwhile, Crespo imposed his
candidate, Ignacio Andrade, who fled abroad before the arrival of the Andinos

Despite all of the forces deployed in the 19th century to control the 'caudillist'
fragmentation of territory which made the Venezuelan state fragile, in the opinion of

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pp.115-121). Discussion were re-opened in 1876, and a treaty of arbitration was signed in Washington
in 1897; the first discussions of the tribunal of arbitration began in Paris in 1899. The results of these
meetings were detailed in a letter by Severo Mallet-Prevost, and once they became known permitted
the re-opening of negotiations. He said that "if it is true that Venezuela, from a strategic point-of-view,
had been given the most important sector of that under litigation (the mouth of the Orinoco river and
around 5,000 square miles in the surrounds), it was still unjust to Venezuela and deprived it of a very
important and extensive territory, over which Great Britain had not, in my opinion the least shadow of
a right." (Cited in Domínguez-Franceschi 1984, p.366).
Coronil (1997) this would only be possible when the state transformed itself into a mediator between the nation and the foreign petrol companies at the beginning of the 20th century. From then on, the state acquired the political capacity and the financial resources which permitted it to appear as an agent capable of imposing its dominion over society (Coronil 1997, p.4).

Conclusions

In the first part of the chapter it was observed that the spatial fragmentation and decentralization of power represented by the provinces impeded effective economic and political control through sub-metropolitan domination. For this reason the Compañía Guipuzcoana was created, an enterprise of the political economy as an agent of dominion. But the producers of Venezuela refused this form of monopoly and protested its presence, and this led to the creation of the Captaincy General of Venezuela in 1777, which would be a more direct and centralized form of colonial power.

The creation of the Captaincy General of Venezuela, along with other institutions, was part of the liberal reforms that had been imposed on the Spanish Crown by political and economic conditions of that period. The step towards colonial metropolitan centralization occasioned the loss of much of the provincial autonomy concentrated in city/town councils and municipalities, and in this context the process of independence began, which regained a new local powers. It has similarly been observed in this chapter that centralism and decentralization were combined in the colonial epoch, and moreover it was observed that with the disappearance of the external force that imposed dominion, power was once again concentrated in the councils.

By the time of the declaration of independence at the beginning of the 19th century, it is possible to say that the organization of the state was completely decentralized; in 1811 the federal pact was formed, and liberalism passed into being the political discourse of the Venezuelan political elite. The War of Independence created the power of the regional and local caudillos, and at the same time consolidated the
provinces with their aggregated militia. In the period which began from 1830 up to
1864, the state assumed a centro-federal form, and from 1840 onwards after the
Liberal Party was formed, the liberals would lead the process of democratization in
the 19th century. After the Federal Wars between 1859 and 1863, the Federation came
to signify the high point in this process, through the institutionalizing universal
suffrage and the direct and secret vote, amongst other demands.

The Liberal Party came to represent the democratic tendency after its birth in 1840,
which tendency was closely associated with the Federal War and with the
democratization process initiated in 1864. The political decentralization adopted by
the state through a concertation of pacts between the regional caudillos is
characteristic of this period, and from 1870 onwards this would be accompanied by
centralized forms of administration. The political struggle liberated the interior of the
Liberal Party, but notwithstanding this new demands for greater democratization
appeared around 1897. Towards the end of the century, however, the taking of power
by the caudillos of the Andean region reorganized the state and definitively imposed a
centralism that would put an end to this form of decentralized power.

The first comment to be made in relation to the theme of territoriality and the
spatiality of power, over and above the presence of Spanish colonization, is related to
the economic reforms. The presence of the West, as much in the 17th as the 19th
century, is not only linked to the ideas of political liberalism but also to the reforms of
economic liberalism. This is particularly useful in showing that the manner in which
global politics impacted on the territory of Non-Western countries is nothing new,
and that the reforms of the 20th century appear in context to be no more than a
continuation. The other aspect of this theme is the relationship between economic
reforms during the 19th century and the strengthening of centralism, and consequently
of governmentality. It is understood as a relationship of subordination from above to
below, at the same time as it would appear that political liberalism is at the base of
sovereignty. It is understood as a relationship of articulation with democratic rights.
In every case this had been the reason of dispute up until the Federal War.

The second and last comment is related to the particular Venezuelan characteristics
revisited by governmentality in the 19th century. At the highest level this is linked to
the *Gran Caudillo* (great leader) and central power, and below to the small *caudillos* and to territory; the lack of infrastructure, the geographic conditions, the agro-farming economy and history acted to favour the control of these leaders over local spaces. In contrast, the global economy requires a centralized state with which to negotiate directly, and this is a process in Venezuela which found its high point in 1879, when Antonio Guzmán Blanco found a political method of subduing the *caudillos*. This was in the first instance through a combination of coercion, terror and astuteness, and more latterly through the legal means available with the centralizing of the state. The lesson that we can derive from these situations for the situation today, where the state is centralized and seeks to decentralize itself, is linked to the autonomy of the local powers. In the historical context these were stolen by the *caudillos*, and since that time the central government through the use of its *Situado Constitucional* or through other mechanisms has controlled the local.
Chapter IV

Centralism and Democracy in Venezuela 1899-1988

Introduction

The previous chapter emphasized the liberal, federal character of the Venezuelan state at the constitutional level, which was accompanied by a regional fragmentation of centralist political power, based on a system of pacts with local leaders. The political phenomenon of caudillismo arose as a response to this form of local government. The result of the pacts was to diminish conflict and encourage co-operation between regional powers – nevertheless, there was no guarantee that the combining of powers would bring political stability to constitutional government. In fact, political instability was predominant, a state of affairs that reflected the provisionality, continuismo and alternation of these same caudillos, as well as the autocratic character of these governments.

The last chapter also described how the territories forming Venezuela had been integrated (in a particular combination) into the capitalist economy of Europe since the 18th century, resulting in a continuous interference by the capitalist powers in national politics. This interference brought about the previously mentioned displays of force. Nevertheless, the government of the “Central Pact” of Venezuela was also forced to respond to further violations of national sovereignty. Both of these aspects (as well as other forms of subordination to the external) continue to be closely linked to Venezuelan territoriality right up to the present date especially after the liberal-federal form of the state became established as the economy of Venezuela remained tied to the global capitalist market, even though the terms of its external insertion changed.

This chapter examines how the form of the Venezuelan state changed in the political context of the 20th century, owing to the manner in which successive dictatorial and democratic governments gave centralism its definitive form. At the beginning of this period, the dictatorship of Gómez created the basis for the modern state by unifying
the country geographically and politically in the process taking the caudillos and their traditional political parties out of the game. The particular form of decentralisation (federalism) that had characterised the exercise of political power in the 19th century disappeared, and state power saw itself reinforced by the fiscal revenues that the new petrol economy brought with it from 1920 onwards. This permitted the organisation of public finances and also the professionalisation of the army, begun initially by Cipriano Castro.

The period from 1936 to 1945, considered as transitional in the development of the process of democratization, coincided with a series of conditions conducive to political mobilization, and it is for this reason that Rey (1991) has called it a period of "populist systems of mobilization". Venezuelan society in general began to demand a wider participation in electoral suffrage, and to demand universal individual rights, as well as rights for women; the political parties reclaimed their legal status, and workers their rights of association and resistance. The end result of this mobilization was the Junta Cívico Militar (Civil-Military Junta) led by the Acción Democrática (Democratic Action, AD by its initials in Spanish) party, which took over government in 1945 and saw the triumph of its programme for government in 1948. The intentions of AD in re-establishing democracy were subsequently frustrated by the dictatorship commanded by Pérez Jiménez in overthrowing the government presided over by Rómulo Gallegos, who thereafter organised resistance to the dictatorship until 1958.

The political and social considerations enacted by the provisional government of the "Trienio Adeco" (1945-1948) would have an important impact on the conciliatory democracy that was installed in 1958, as well as in the manner of implementing the federal component of the state, through the decentralization of state and municipal government. One important aspect of this was the desire of the leaders of AD not to repeat its former hegemonic arrogance of power towards other political actors. This change of attitude of the leaders would come to be a key determinant in achieving a pact of consensus between political parties, and later still the semi-corporative pact between the state and other social actors. Moreover, there existed in the bosom of the AD different ideological tendencies within the leadership, which provoked divisions inside the party in 1960, 1962 and 1968, and from which fractures a great part of the resistance arose that the AD governments had to face between 1958 and 1968.
From the decade of the 1970s, the political scene was controlled by the AD party and COPEI (Partido Social Cristiano), leading to a bipartite alternation of government that lasted until 1988. The bipartite hegemony was accompanied by a socialist party (MAS) and by a heterogeneous structure of smaller parties of various ideological and political tendencies, which represented electoral minorities and formed part of the opinion-generating organizations. These decision-forming groups would acquire their importance in the decade of the 1990s, when the process of the decomposition of bipartisanship coincided with the fragmentation of the political system. The strength of bipartisanship rested on a consensus of political and social actors, as well as form of political clientalism supported by the oil-rentier economy that served to stabilize democracy by acting as a “utility mechanism”. The governments of this period of conciliatory democracy did not contemplate putting into action any form of decentralization before 1989, and the discussion of this theme would take place in the debates on the reform of the state between 1984 and 1989.

The AD-COPEI hegemony achieved the centrality of the state without the necessity to articulate political decentralization. This political decentralization, contemplated in theory in the Constitution since 1947 and expressed in the opening of suffrage for the elections of governors and mayors, constituted a demand by democratic political groups and organizations of civil society that tried to resist to the verticality of political power. Instead of supporting this democratic resolve, the leaders of the popular conciliatory democracy jointly imposed a form of administrative deconcentration and the Situado Constitucional on the states and municipalities, and after 1970 a form of regionalisation on the economic groups. With this strategy, the presidential executive took direct control of state and municipal levels of power and, through the political parties, of the organizations of civil society. From 1983 onwards, the mechanisms which guaranteed the governability and stability of conciliatory

15 The Situado Constitucional is a non-conditional intergovernmental transfer of resources, designed to transfer a part of the ordinary income of the national purse towards the states. The formula for the distribution of these resources is established in the Constitution of the Republic, and consists of dividing 30% of the Situado into equal parts, with the remaining 70% allocated according to the size of population in each state.
populist democracy changed moved against the old political system, imposing the design of a new pact between the various political actors, along with new rules for the sustaining of democracy. This would come to constitute the central political aspect of the critique formulated by the reform of the state and, additionally, one of the principal points dealt with in this chapter.

In the context of this study of the relationship between democracy and decentralization in Venezuela, as well as the question of the role of decentralization in the process of democratic change, this chapter re-visits four aspects including:


2) The populist system of mobilization (1936-1945) and its relationship with the democratic experience of the Trienio of 1945-1948, as well as the resistance to the dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez (1948-1958).

3) The conciliatory democracy (1958-1988) and its most significant characteristics: the form of decentralization (deconcentration) introduced by political leaders, the mechanisms introduced to contain resistance, the reasons behind the minimal development of civil society and bipartisanship among others.

4) The reform of the state (1984-1989) and its most important aspects: the characteristics of the Presidential Reform Commission and the proposals for political reform and decentralization.

**IV.1 The Centralism of the Gomecista Dictatorship**

Centralism in 20th century Venezuela was to be imposed in the name of the political restoration of the provinces; Andean caudillismo16 through the use of the

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16 Andean Caudillismo is a Venezuelan expression that refers to the caudillos that originated from the West of the country, specifically the Andean states of Táchira, Mérida y Trujillo.
constitutional reforms of 1901 and 1904, eliminated the presidential election through the universal, direct secret vote. It shifted the powers of the Councils of Government created by the Constitution of 1893 to the municipal assemblies, and later to an electoral council. In 1904 a new reform was introduced which reduced the number of states to 13, and established the autonomy of the districts into which the states were divided, whose municipalities now also enjoyed a degree of autonomy (Angulo 1997, p.49). This was to be the initiating of a new model of the state, completely centralized and strongly influenced by North American monopolies, as well as by the exclusivity widely proclaimed by the USA concerning intervention in Latin America.

From 1900 onwards, the economic and social base of the countryside began to disintegrate; this was closely connected to the control of and reduction in the power of the regional caudillos, as well as the new exploitation of petrol. Caudillismo ("Amarillo" Liberalism and nationalism), by its disaggregation and low degree of institutionality, did not appear to be the necessary guarantee of stability for the new platform required for the oil exploitation business. Nevertheless it did contribute, in an indirect manner, to the regime of concessions17 that would convert petrol monopolies into the new proprietors of large latifundiae.

For Cipriano Castro and the Andeans who took power in 1989, the army was the most important factor in the exercise of power. The cabinet is not important, the army is what counts. Only there will one find those of the greatest worth", commented Castro (Rangel 1975, p.98). The Andeans arrived in Caracas in order to take power, which had been controlled by the Caudillos of the centre. From their taking of power, General Castro directed public spending towards the cost of war, which represented 40% of the national budget between 1899 and 1900. One of the first measures taken to generate funds to purchase armaments was a reduction in the numbers working in public administration. By 1900 the army already had 5000 soldiers, 40,000 rifles and 50 million bullets, together with various Schneider and Krupp mountain artillery trains. In 1901 Creusot cannons and Hotchkiss machine guns were purchased from France and by May of that year the size of the army had grown to 9000 and by December 18000. All of these men came from the Venezuelan Andes. (Rangel 1975, p.101).

17 During this period the major source of oil profits was the sale of concessions to foreign oil companies. A quotation made by Rómulo Betancourt from Ludwell Denny (We fight for oil, ob.cit.,p.114), shows the exorbitant profits made by the oil companies operating in the country: "The profits grow, although the transportation costs, commented this author. The Venezuela Oil Concessions, subsidiary of Dutch Shell, paid 55.5 in dividends to more than 15% of the company bonus in 1927. It got profits of $3,4 million over $10 million of capital investment. The General
Brito Figueroa points out that the development of oil exploration did not destroy the system of land holdings, but rather strengthened it. The system of agrarian landholdings that had existed in the last decades of the XIXth century was readily convertible to the required use, because it allowed the oil companies to gain legal domain over large extensions of Venezuelan territory. Although, the manner in which the land was owned and exploited was not the same as in the agrarian concept of land holding, in reality the companies controlled large extensions of the best agricultural and productive lands, thus transforming the latter into areas of oil exploration and reserve areas (Brito Figueroa, 1974, p.379).

As dictator, Gómez provided the oil companies with what was widely regarded as an exceptionally advantageous investment environment and, in return, the oil companies established political and economic conditions that helped to consolidate his dictatorial rule. The result of Gómez's benevolent attitude and the presence of vast oil deposits in the Maracaibo Lake transformed Venezuela from an insignificant oil producer at the end of the First World War into the world's second biggest producer and leading exporter by 1928 (Lieuwen 1965, p.48). Thus, during this period the Gómez regime and the domiciled foreign oil industry drew strength from each other, and together they defined the political and social scene through which Venezuelans began to recognize the importance of oil, and to fashion their political identity as citizens of an oil nation.

This transformation of Venezuela from an indebted agricultural nation into a wealthy oil exporter is an historical turning point that still holds the national imagination, as the point at which (according to the official historiography) Venezuela emerged as a modern nation. With this shift in political power, once fragmented and contending

Asphalt, one company from Trinidad, selling its Venezuelan production to the Dutch Shell, got profits of $2 million over $6.5 million of capital investment in the year 1926-1927. Apex Trinidad Oilfield paid 80% of dividend in 1927-1928. The Lago Petroleum Corporation subsidiary of the Standard Oil got profit of nearly $8 million over a work capital of $3.5 million. The shareholders of the companies operating -American and English- have been increasing their values around 600% from 1924 to 1927" (Betancourt 1967, p.81).
regional caudillos, became centralised in the state. The more the state expanded institutionally and tightened its control over the body politic, the more Gómez appeared to be the source of its growth and the physical embodiment of state power (Coronil 1997, p. 68-83). By contrast, Venezuelan society outside the state had a low level of organised development and little social differentiation. Gómez's dictatorship greatly limited citizen participation in political life; for instance, political parties and political organisations were outlawed and any illegal political organisations opposing the regime were strongly repressed.

By intervening in caudillismo, moreover, Gomecismo eliminated at a stroke the civil wars that had terrorized the country, as well as the leadership of the traditional political parties. This in its turn facilitated the construction of a national army as a support to the central power (Brewer Carias 1994, p. 155). The majority of scholars (e.g. Lieuwen) argue that the army was a key element in Gómez's power structure, which he so thoroughly reorganised, modernised, and expanded it, that would-be domestic revolutionaries dared not challenge him (Lieuwen 1965, p. 46). Through such means, a process of territorial integration was also started, which was by no means the least of the Gomecista achievements. Dávila highlights some of the more important achievements of Gómez's regime, as being the: “consolidation of a centralised liberal state; the pacification of the country after the end of 19th century caudillismo, the creation of modern state institutions which allowed further modernising policies; the modernisation of the internal power structure through the creation of a professional army and the channelling of basic social conflicts.” (Dávila 2000, p. 225-226).

The government of Gómez modified the constitution on five separate occasions between 1914 and 1931; these alterations were fundamentally orientated towards the consolidation of centralism, as well as the favouring of monopoly interests. In the constitutions of 1922 and 1925, the loss of financial autonomy of the states was complete through the centralisation of public finances, and in consequence the co-participation of the states in fiscal collection was eliminated (Guerón 1996, p. 358). The constitutional reform of 1925 also established the possibility that the President of the Republic could name the governors of each state, and it prohibited the states from having their own armed forces. Equally, the reform eliminated the need for gaining
legislative approval of concessions for hydrocarbon exploitation (Brewer Carías 1975, p.158).

The way in which the regime was forced to confront the little surviving caudillista guerrilla activity, the land invasions of the dispossessed and the student uprisings of 1920, 1921 and 1928, in such a way that the opposition in exile was able to gain strength from the oppression of these movements. This opposition was essentially composed of two political and ideological projects: the one Marxist and the other Social Democrat. In 1936 the Unidad Nacional Estudiantil (National Student Unity – UNE) arose, which was Christian Socialist in orientation; the UNE constituted the ideological counterpart to the Venezuelan Students Federation (FEV), which was Marxist in orientation. The largest popular party was the ORVE, directed by the members of the 'generation of 28' who had returned from exile.

The uprising of 1928 against the dictatorship is one of the most transcendental occurrences in contemporary Venezuelan history, and it was an insurrection that came to demonstrate the depth of democratic reserves still maintained by Venezuelan society, over and above the tyranny of oppression. The movement, limited and partial in its inception, was transformed by the support that it received from every social sector, in a spontaneous act of protest by the majority of Venezuelan society.

The members of the the 'Generation of the 28' proposed a coalition of political and ideological aspirations, which awoke in the opposition to the regime the possibility of a more effective struggle; from this initiation onwards, the coalition fulfilled the role of public leadership in the process of democratisation. According to Betancourt (1967), the movement proclaimed the defence of the national economy, of agrarian democracy and of social justice, rigorously debating by every possible means that the country should recover and affirm a regime of public liberties (Betancourt 1967, p.91). Moreover, the movement contributed to the development of a series of iniciatives that included organization in exile, the formation of political groups outside and inside the country, and the growth of armed movements against the dictatorship.
This “Group of 28” constituted a liberal, social democratic organisation, who owing to their expulsion from the country by Gómez to Colombia and other countries, formed in exile an organisation called the Revolutionary Association of the Left (ARDI by its initials in Spanish), which after a few years transformed itself firstly into the ORVE, later on into the PDN and finally into the Democratic Action group. In 1931 the ARDI group drew up a democratic action programme for Venezuela called the Plan de Barranquilla, a document that constituted a first attempt at the production of a minimum plan of action, with the intention of proposing a political programme for the country using an analysis of the situation in Venezuela and its causes. The Plan outlined the nucleus of what would become the organization of the state in the period beginning in 1936.

The oil industry, through the distribution of massive profits, was to modify completely the economic, social and political reality of Venezuela; it would convert the Venezuelan state into the largest employer and the largest investor within the economic apparatus, and it would also contribute to the transformation of the spatial structures of the periphery by breaking up the economic and political structures which had evolved in the countryside. In the centre, it would put in march a process of urbanization, which in a short time would completely change the basis of socio-political organization in Venezuela. These actions would have important effects on the formation of spatial and political centralism, and on the mobilization of demonstrations in support of representative democracy between 1945 and 1948, as well as the development of the conciliatory democracy during the period after 1958 (Rey 1991, pp.536-543).

18 The results of the transformations of the bases of economic power were the fixing of the centre-periphery relations of spatial organization in Venezuela. This model of spatial integration was adjusted without major conflicts with the model that had existed during the agricultural-exportation phase. The major proportion of profits were invested, by and large, in the area of the capital: Caracas-La Guaira and Valencia-Puerto Cabello (which had been the centre in the previous model). The central-northern region, the central-eastern region and the rest of the territory were organised around it (Chávez Vargas 1973, pp.20-31).
According to Rey, who bases his conception of the analysis of mobilization on that of Deutsch (1961), a populist system of mobilization "refers to those Latin American parties or political movements formed by a coalition of heterogeneous social groups arising with the proposition of restructuring the existing social order, through the organization and mobilization of the masses (up to then passive), and their integration into the nation not merely from the point of view of their political participation, but also economically and socially." (Rey 1991, p.536).

The year following Gómez's death was marked by significant popular mobilisations and an active political debate. The political organization of resistance to Gómez and the accelerating process of oil exploitation had acted to create suitable conditions for the development of a populist system of mobilization, and whilst it was true that only from 1936 had the political debate reached the public stage, the process had been developing for a long time before that, during the heat of the struggle against Gomecismo. It was during these years, following the dictatorship, that the creation of political parties of the masses under a system of populist mobilization began.

By the end of the Gomecista regime, therefore, the conditions for the development of a populist system of mobilization had already been established: firstly, an intense and extensive process of social mobilization which had generated a mass of individuals ready to join new organizations and to contract new loyalties; secondly, a situation of exclusion from political, economic and social participation through the enforcement of a restricted suffrage, and thirdly, the appearance of a new political elite19(Rey 1991, p.535).

Gómez died in 1935, and on his passing the regime gave way to the establishment of a more moderate military government, owing mainly to popular pressure. The

19 This new political elite was constituted by groups of the urban middle classes who suffered from an incongruency of status, finding themselves alienated from a socio-political order that blocked their participation and allowed them none of the recognition that they believed they deserved.
successors to Gómez were General Eleazar López Contreras (1936-41) who had previously been minister of war, and General Isaías Angarita (1941-45). The new government subsequently created a new political organisation, the Bolivarian Civic Group (ACB) with the intention of confronting the nascent communist organisations, which were very strong in the oil industry unions. Opposition to the military regime was organised around the ORVE, led by members of the 'generation of 1928', the PRP (Republican Progressive Party), the FEV (Student Federation of Venezuela), reoriented after the exile as a consequence of 1928's demonstrations, and the Social Christian-orientated UNE. Furthermore, the opposition could rely on strong support from a multiplicity of trades unions and education leagues.

López Contreras Gómez's, minister of war, distanced himself from 'Gomecismo' and carried out some reforms that moved the country towards a process of democratisation. Notwithstanding this attempted appeasement, the government faced two strikes in 1936. The first one was at the beginning of 1936, when leaders of the “28” organised a mass demonstration in Caracas against the government. As a response, a week later López Contreras presented the government's February Programme, which outlined the nation's major problems and presented a plan of national development. By incorporating criticism from the opposition into the plan, the military regime attempted to neutralise them, but at the same time it legitimated a reformist discourse, thus intensifying the very social pressure towards democratisation that it had hoped to avoid (Coronil 1997, p.94).

In April 1936 a new Constitution was adopted, with the adoption of which congress promulgated a very advanced labour law, giving workers the right to organise and to affiliate with international bodies, the establishment of rights to social insurance, and a number of other placatory measures. Irrespective of this, there was a second strike at the end of 1936, when the companies failed to meet the demands (particularly salary increases) demanded by petroleum union leaders. After this strike, government policy became less tolerant of the demands for reform, and repression against the social struggles directed by leftist leaders began to be more systematic and effective.

López Contreras took advantage of the broad powers allocated to the regime under the new Constitution to act against the communist and anarchist parties, branding
forty-seven leftist politicians as 'Communists'. Some of them were exiled and others imprisoned. In February 1937, the political parties ORVE, PRV and FEV were outlawed. So that by the end of López Contreras's term of office, only the ABC (the President's political party) remained as a legal political organisation.

The most important social change called for in the opposition's political struggle was that of direct participation by the people in the election of their representatives. By adopting such a populist stance, the opposition won various seats in the election of municipal councils and in the state legislatures in 1937. In 1941 there were indirect presidential elections, the result of which was a continuation of the military regime. This government, however, was more moderate than the previous one and its support came mainly from the urban middle-classes - in addition, it had substantial support from the Communists. The new government set up an official party named the Venezuelan Democratic party (PDV), however from a political point of view the ascendance of General Medina Angarita to office produced a rapprochement with the groupings of the left, forcing the opening of a more democratic pathway, including the growth of workers unions and the legalisation of political parties.

In the institutional area, Medina enacted some radical changes, firstly by promulgating new laws on taxation, and secondly in 1942 by initiating a reform of the oil sector "which unified a whole network of previous legislation, requiring the companies to increase their oil-refining capacities in Venezuela, and increasing taxes and royalties to the point where the treasury's oil revenues were expected to equal the profits of the industry" (Lieuwen, 1965:58)20. Medina continued with this programme of change by producing a new social security labour law, and perhaps as importantly the 1945 Constitution, which in spite of widening the power of central government retained at least in name a federal form of state.

Just before the Presidential elections of 1941, the PDN leaders organised the Democratic Action (AD) party and Rómulo Betancourt returned from exile to direct

20 This law was particularly contentious, acting as it did directly against the interests of foreign oil concerns.
the AD campaign under the presidential candidacy of the novelist Rómulo Gallegos. The Social Christian organisation and the Communists consolidated their efforts, with the Communists proposing a formal democracy according to their global socialist strategy. In the municipal elections of 1944 the Communists, following their internationalist line, supported Medina's government and thus in 1945 the PCV (Venezuelan Communist Party) was officially constituted, achieving legal status.

At the end of the presidential period the issue of Medina's succession arose, an issue that rapidly disappeared with the coup d'état undertaken against him in October 1945\textsuperscript{21}. The coup was led by the UMP-AD alliance, which was a group of middle-ranking officers led by Marcos Pérez Jiménez, a high-ranking graduate of military academies in Venezuela and Peru. Its stated objective was to take over the government in order to bring a return to 'decency' and 'patriotism' in the state: "This coup, orchestrated in secret at the top, was soon glorified by the AD as Venezuela's "October Revolution" (Coronil, 1997, p.131).

In spite of Medina's democratic efforts, a series of political fractures and disputes within and outside his government had lead to the Coyuntura (the "historical conjunction") of 18th October. Firstly, there had been a breakdown between the followers of Medina and those of López Contreras, who rallied around the rightist opposition formed by the traditional 'gomecistas' and the oligarchy; secondly, there were ideological and programmatic differences amongst the various political parties and organisations on whom Medina relied for support; thirdly, the radical reforms imposed by Medina had created a tendency towards opposition in the military sector; and finally, there were the interests of the oil companies.

\textsuperscript{21} The event marked the end of an era: that of the ascendency of the army generals and the landed aristocracy who had ruled the country ever since independence. On the 19th October, Rómulo Betancourt selected a seven-man junta: two military officers, Carlos Delgado Chalbaut and Mario Vargas, and the AD leaders: Rául Leoni, Luis Beltran Prieto, Edmundo Fernández, Gonzalo Barrios and Rómulo Betancourt himself, auto-selected as President.
IV.1.2 The democratic experience of 1945-1948

The government of the Civic-Military Junta immediately received cross-sector support, from student unions, the Church, the Communists, the private sector, the diplomatic corps and the State Department of the United States\(^{22}\). Once in power, the AD government started to carry out a political programme that affected multiple areas of society, through changes in the electoral law and in labour policy, through the promotion of industry, the development of an agrarian policy, to the promotion of education, public health, administrative reform, banking reform and military policy. According to Stambouli (1980) this national project was used by the government to promote the political mobilization of civil society, and indeed the project certainly seemed more radical compared to the liberal democratic reforms undertaken by the oligarchy and the military from the death of Gómez onwards (Stambouli 1980, p.67).

On the question of political democratization, the Junta promised to establish universal elections as soon as possible, to draw up a new Constitution, and to transfer power to a duly elected government. In order to accomplish this, the first step taken was to organize the election of a new congress by universal vote, in 1946. After the elections, congress wrote a new Constitution and electoral law that came into effect immediately. This electoral law was the most democratic in the republic's history - the Constitution granted suffrage to every Venezuelan over eighteen years of age, eliminated the literacy requirement and the exclusion of women and set up the direct popular election of the president, congress, and municipal representatives. The Junta also reformed the labour laws, allowing again the unionisation of workers and creating the right of Habeas Corpus and other basic rights of citizenship. In the area of the economy, the National Economic Council and the Corporation for the Promotion of Venezuela (CVF, Corporación Venezolana de Fomento) were created.

\(^{22}\) On the 30th of October, the state department of the USA sent out a declaration recognizing the new Venezuelan government. A notice appeared the same day in the Herald saying that: "The North American oil interests believe that the regime of Betancourt is more democratic than the old regime of Medina, and they assure us that there will be no serious difficulties between the USA and Venezuela concerning either the production of petroleum, or the properties of the Petroleum concessions in Venezuela" (Stambouli 1980, p.61).
In this way, and through these actions, it can be seen why the government that emerged from this civic-military-reformist junta came to be characterised as governing a social state or, following the nomenclature of Latin American political literature, a democratic populist state.

In the new environment of free speech, free press and freedom of assembly, new political parties were soon able to participate in the elections of the constituent assembly of 1946\(^{23}\) and in the presidential and congressional elections celebrated in 1947, which were the first elections with universal, direct and secret suffrage. The Constitution of 1947 also consolidated the fundamental basis of a pluralist structure, as well as the idea of the centrality of the state and its social character (Komblith 1998, pp. 162-163). Nevertheless, Betancourt (1979) considers that the Constitution of 1947 was flawed in not having faced up to the ultimate consequences of the question of the political organization of the state. Even though the constitution, in imposing on the executive power the obligation of elaborating a national five-year plan, did not expound in any explicit form a tendency towards centralisation, Betancourt argues that it is not possible to plan at a national level if the regional governors can not be appointed and removed by the head of the state (Betancourt

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\(^{23}\) AD's leading competitor was COPEI (Independent Committee For Political and Electoral Organisation), which was Christian socialist oriented. A third party of importance was the URD (Republican Democratic Union), which was of a similar ideological and programmatic orientation to the AD; the only other faction of importance was the Communist Party. According to Andrés Stambouli (1980, p.68) the results of the elections of 1946 for the constituent national assembly which sanctioned the constitution of 1947 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPEI</td>
<td>185,000</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URD</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCV</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In December 1947 the elections for President and Congress were held. The AD candidate Rómulo Gallegos was elected with 74.7% of the votes, COPEI got 22.4% and the URD/PCV 3.2% (Stambouli 1980, p.68).
1967, p.261). Accordingly, as much as the Constitution establishes this obligation, it is implicitly based upon the principle of political centralism.

In contrast, Betancourt considered it a good decision that the Constitution consecrated directly the principles of administrative decentralization, in those areas that would not affect collective national plans. The national executive was obliged to distribute 25% of the ordinary income of the treasury, and in the opinion of Betancourt this measure acted to dismantle the federalism of the constitution of 1811. Nevertheless, the Constitution maintained the bicameral system and the state legislative assemblies that belonged to the federal system. 24

In the Constitution of 1947 centralism would be legitimised and purified of its more authoritarian elements by administrative decentralisation, in the same sense of political regionalisation that would be introduced in the seventies, a policy of which it could be said that it had its origins in the government of 1945. Towards such ends the practice of the annual conventions of the president, his cabinet and the governors of the 20 states and the two federal territories were established. Nevertheless, The Junta subsequently imposed a co-ordination of administrative activities under the guidance of the central government as a response to the dispersion of administrative forces, and none of the constitutional aspects acted to strengthen the regional and local governments politically, any more than they modified the concentration of decision-making in the cúpula of the state.

24 Additionally “as a concession to the small groups of opposition inside congress, the parliamentary majority of the AD effected a transitory article in the Constitution, that there should be a plebiscite concerning the form by which the governors of the states should be designated” (Betancourt 1967, p.262)”. This plebiscite was to be realized within the first two years counting from the date of the promulgation of the constitution and at an opportunity to be fixed by congress, which would decide if the elections of state governors and the removal of the president should be by free elections in the council of ministers, or if they should be decided by a universal, direct and secret vote. In the meantime until this plebiscite was realized, the governors would be named and removed by the head of the state.
In February of 1948 President Gallegos took office, but 10 months later he was to be overthrown by the same military group that had defeated Medina in 1945. According to Caballero the civil population offered some resistance to the military coup (Caballero 1999, p.92) so that, following Derham, years later the AD party was able to paint the military coup of 1948 as essentially anti-democratic and anti-patriotic. This ignores the circumstances in which it occurred and in particular the incompetence that the civilian government had demonstrated in the previous three years. When the overthrow of the government of the ‘trienio’ (1945-1948) did come, the rifts previously created by this incompetence ensured a lack of support for the politicians (Derham 2002, p.278).

There were three principal reasons to which the fall of representative democracy in 1948 is attributed. Firstly there was the sectarianism of the AD, which led to a lack of astuteness and a failure to recognise the significance of the political moment, and in particular in interpreting the re-composition of politico-economic forces in an oil-producing country. Secondly, there was the populist tendency that characterised its ideological framework, to the extent that the measures taken by the government found little or no welcome amongst those sectors fearful of the preponderance acquired by the popular sector.

Thirdly, the oil companies lost faith in the government following the announcement that there would be no more oil concessions and that there would be changes in the taxation of the oil industry. Furthermore, the decisions of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the confiscation of around 120 million hectares of property, in combination with the agitated climate that already existed in the countryside, provoked strong reactions from the oligarchy and the land-owning sector. The Church was worried by the government’s advocation of private education (in particular Decree 321) and, together with the parties of opposition (COPEI and URD) was also concerned about the sectarian measures of the government. Only the emergent bourgeois sectors seem to have benefited during the 1945-1948 period of government.
IV.1.3 The Pérez Jiménez Regime of 1948-1958 and mobilization against it.

The new military Junta determined that it would rule under the banner of legitimator of order and progress. This was to be accompanied by a discourse that emphasized material progress and efficient transformation of the physical infrastructure, in direct contradistinction to the disorder of the party political system. Coronil (1997) emphasizes that this ideological framework was closer to the interpretation of Venezuelan positivism of the beginning of the 20th century, than to any interpretation of the theory of modernization dominant since the Second World War, where the state was assigned the central role as the agent responsible for planning and the promotion of development. The discourse of the Junta emphasized the technical simplicity of development in the absence of party conflict, rather than the complexity of this same (Coronil 1997, p. 174). Nonetheless, within this idea all parties were made illegal, and at the same time an ambitious plan of public works was initiated, as well as the development of great industrial complexes by the state.

This doctrinal principle, brandished as a guide for governmental action under the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, was made explicit in the daily newspaper ‘The Herald’, in an editorial called “Under The Bulldozer”, written by the minister for interior relations, Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, under the pseudonym ‘R.H.’; “If anything characterized the actual political regime of Venezuela at that time, it was the tractor” (Stambouli 1980, p. 94).

Once installed, the government of the military Junta proceeded to decree the dissolution of congress, the legislative assemblies, the municipal councils and all of the departmental and community juntas, substituting for them juntas of municipal

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25 “The tractor is the best collaborator of the government, the most exact interpreter of the elevated and noble proposition to transform the physical environment.... The tractor, this symbol of fatherland and government, destroys many things. Even those political clubs, so-called parties, and their representatives have suffered its impact. It is closing a chapter of our history (Stambouli 1980, p. 94).”
administration named by the state governors, with the consent of the government of
the military Junta. At the same time the government decreed the dissolution of the
Supreme Electoral Council and all of the electoral councils, declaring illegal the
Democratic Action party. The Junta named the magistrates of the Federal Court and
the Supreme Court, promulgating a decree for the regulation of the functioning of the
judicial power. A short while later, the Workers’ Confederation of Venezuela, the
CTV, was dissolved and the Communist Party of Venezuela, the PCV, was outlawed
the 22nd of January of 1949 the USA recognised the military Junta as the legitimate
government of Venezuela.

A short time after the installation of the military junta a process of political
demobilatization was initiated which was consolidated in 1952, when the government
refuse to recognise the results obtained by the URD party in the elections called to
elect a constitutional assembly (Stambouli 1980, p.88). In December the military high
command dissolved the junta, and named as provisional president Colonel Marcos
Pérez Jiménez. Sanoja (1998) says that through the pressure caused by being unable
to legitimise the action of 1948, the military faction resorted to an ‘auto-coup’
(Sanoja 1998, p.98). In 1953 a constituent national assembly was installed with a few
dissident deputies of the URD and COPEI, which would promulgate the new
Constitution and designate Colonel Marcos Pérez Jiménez as ‘constitutional’
president of the republic. The government would affirm its project for national
greatness, supported by a substantial increase in fiscal income derived from the oil
boom caused by the nationalisation of oil in Iran, the reconstruction of Europe and the
Korean war. The greater part of public expenditure was oriented towards
infrastructural projects (motorways, decorative touristic ornamentation, and complex

Coronil says that the U.S ambassador had privately expressed his support for Pérez Jiménez: “
It is likely that, without this support, the coup would not have taken place or that it would not
have taken the form it did. As the New York times reported on 12th October 1955, “It is an open
secret that if the United States had expressed its displeasure at the robbery of the Venezuelan
election by partisans of Col. Pérez Jiménez in November 1952, the latter would have retreated, or
at least would have come to an agreement with the opposition. By keeping ourselves strictly
outside the conflict, and quickly recognizing the Pérez Jiménez regime, we, in a certain sense,
architectural monuments, amongst other things), concentrated in their majority in the central zone of the country. At the same time, the state began to convert itself into a major investor in large petro-chemical and steel iron - producing industrial complexes (Stambouli 1980, p.96).

In 1958 the resistance of civil society and the political parties achieved the overthrow of the dictatorship. AD and the Communist Party had been able to maintain a clandestine organization during the ten years of the military dictatorship, and of the other two parties neither the URD or COPEI had been made illegal. The resistance had been able to count on the sympathies of army and air force officers, as well as the Catholic Church, (the deterioration in the relationship between the Church and the government in particular was a product of the imprisonment of Rafael Caldera and his later exile in the Papal Nunciature in 1957). Finally, in the streets the most active militants were the lycee students and those of the university. The students of the Central University of Venezuela had protested in the streets against the electoral farce and their movement had been harshly repressed, notwithstanding this it played the most important role in the street actions which preceded the overthrow of the dictatorship (Caballero 1999, pp.102-105).

IV.2 The Conciliatory Democracy between 1958-1988

The AD government in 1945 re-framed the role of an alternating, representative democracy that functioned through the institutionalization of rules governing the functioning of the party system, as well as through the development of a system of free and universal elections. This project was linked to a model of development in which the state assumed the central role as driving force behind the process, as well as redistributor of the profits of the oil industry. The project of the state in 1958, defended by the AD party, COPEI and URD, was founded on this proposal. But from 1958 onwards, as a contrast to the problems of 1945 that had rotated around the institutionalization of suffrage and the establishment of democracy, the problem would be how to achieve the legitimation of representative democracy.
A first step was to direct the consolidation of democracy along a route of pacts between parties. This led to an alliance which established a number of agreements which came to be known as the Pacto de Punto Fijo. This implied a non-aggression pact between the parties in order to avoid what had happened over the last decade and, as a consequence, the promotion of co-operation as a norm in order to drive forward the establishment of representative democracy. It also implied the recognition of the existence of a plurality of social, economic and political interests, which led to the establishment of agreements permitting non-party sectors of society to access power.

In this way an alliance was established between the state (under the control of the political parties) and the most important of the non-party sectors. The basis for the coalition of all sectors of Venezuelan society had been constructed during the prolonged struggle against the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, and it expanded to include the military sectors in exchange for their support for democratic structures, as much as it included (for instance) agreements between unions and concentrations of workers. In 1964 a convention was signed that regularized relationships with the church, and finally the business sector was included in the planning mechanism for public policies, by means of institutional fora for consultation (Gómez and López 1990, p.43).

The strategy was that during the process of democratisation discrete actors, on perceiving the satisfaction of their material interests, would also develop a sense of legitimacy with respect to the regime. Rey (1991) has defined this system as a popular conciliatory system; a conjoining through negotiation and accommodation of heterogeneous interests, woven together through “mechanisms” of a utilitarian type which would act to fulfil a central role in the generation of support for the regime and, as a consequence, in the maintenance of that same (Rey 1991, pp.542-543).

As can be seen, the stability and legitimacy of this representative democracy would not be founded on a territorial distribution of power, nor on a system of social values - rather, these alternatives were proposed at an institutional level. The adopted option, in a purely transient manner, was for the concentration of political and administrative power at national administrative levels; this ‘transience’, however, would last until
1989. The national executive became the decision-maker of last resort concerning all important decisions at state and municipal levels, whilst in the meantime the municipal legislative entities showed increasing dependence on the president, as well as an extreme political weakness.

Moreover, the ‘presidentialism’ of this centralisation would be strengthened by partisanship. The president, who generally speaking would be a member of the leading circle of his party or the party leader, was head of state, leader of the government and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. In the president was therefore concentrated such a quantity of power that it would be impossible that any administrative or organizational decision of the state could escape his participation, or could be taken without his consent. On the other hand, the party leaderships also accumulated a great quantity of power and decision-making capacity concerning the direction of the state, the government and the country (Márquez 1996, pp. 108-109).

From 1958 onwards, therefore, the political weakness of local power would continue to be critical. Centralization was seen by political society as an instrument capable of propitiating institutional stability and the viability of the nation - nevertheless, article 2 of the Constitution of 1961 established that the political organization of the state was federal. The national territory was divided into 22 states and a federal district which had the capital of the republic as its seat, and where the national organs of supreme power operated, as well as in the islands constituted by the federal dependencies in the territorial sea. Both the federal district and all of the states were divided into municipalities. According to Brewer Carias (1997b), the Constitution dealt with “a system of political decentralization in which the states, as much as the municipalities, enjoy political autonomy” (Art.s 16 and 25, 1961 Constitution) and had assigned to them a series of exclusive competences which they exercised, and for which there existed no supervisory controls from one level to the other (Brewer Carias 1997(b), p.218). Irrespective of this, however, the practices of the political parties which controlled the legislative bodies and which were subsequently able to delay or promote the promulgation of corresponding laws, maintained a system of distribution of power from top to bottom.
Furthemore, Article 22 of the Constitution of 1961 established the form of election and removal of state governors according to a law that would be issued later on, in accordance with the principles consecrated in Article 3 that referred to the democratic, representative, responsible and alternating form of the government. With respect to the form of election and removal of state governors, such applications had to be admitted by both houses in session conjointly, and with the vote of two-thirds of the members. This law would not be subject to the veto of the president; although, so long as this law was not promulgated, governors would continue to be freely nominated and removed by the president.

Overall, the Constitution of 1961 was permeated by centralism; this was not a Constitution that thought in terms of autonomous states. Centralism remained reflected, for example, in the subordination of governors to the agents of the national executive, and also in the apparent loss of state autonomy. The attributes of the states were subject to constitutional norms. In terms of generation of their own incomes, for example, the Constitution distributed taxation powers only at the national and municipal level. Article 18 also imposed a series of prohibitions on the states – they cannot levy their own import, export or transit taxes on foreign or national goods or anything else, and neither can they raise customs (Martín, 1988, p.65).

Furthemore, the presence of this form of exertion of national public power over the member states and municipalities of the federation can also be seen in the imbalances within the distribution of competencies in favour of the central. The federation was not designed to have an effective decentralization of competencies, and in effect a long list of competencies were reserved to the national power by Article 36 of the Constitution, over and above those which corresponded to it by its very nature. Brewer Carías (1997(b), p.220) thus indicates that the national congress, following the centralist legislative tradition, continued the centralizing process by preserving central control over the majority of combined competencies, amongst which he puts those of planning, social protection, education, culture, sports, health, the promotion of agriculture, the protection of the environment, public works and housing, as well as the arrangement of national territory.
The above goes to show how the positions of the centralists and the federalists have been a constant in the Venezuelan political context. The struggle continues between those who think that politics must carry on being conducted from above, from the central apparatus of the state, and those who propose that power stem from civil society. In the period from 1961, political leaders thought mainly about strengthening representative democracy from a centralist posture. These two positions would continue to frame the characteristics of debate in the discussions over the reform of the state that began in 1984.

These positions were rooted in the fact that the contrasting state forms were presented as been mutually exclusive. Velásquez (1998) says that one is dealing with two cultures in conflict, the centralizing and the decentralizing, but as the country acquires political consciousness there are more and more possibilities through which achieving change to a more decentralized society can be possible (Velásquez 1998, p.35). The problem is essentially that of political equilibrium, of the balance of powers in their combination, but the party leaders, however, gave more importance to ensuring subordination to the central power, albeit legitimated by the putting into motion of policies of decentralization through deconcentration.

Policies for promoting decentralization by deconcentration were proposed for the first time in 1945 and would be maintained and deepened, by the political parties that controlled power from 1958 onwards. The argument used to justify favouring and strengthening decentralization by deconcentration was the necessity of combating the perils of the possible derailing of political decentralization towards regional or local centralism. There were no plans made by either of the groups (centralists and no centralists) to allow the possibility of generating vectors of legitimacy through the combination of political decentralization and centralism, in the way tried in the 19th century.

These antecedents allow us to shape a vision of the Venezuelan political system in which both forms of state appear combined: firstly the centro-federal, and later the federal. These schemes of power show that "political and administrative decentralization" both together legitimate the central power. This appears to be the key by which the legitimising role of decentralization finds full expression; although
it was because of the presence of other factors that the party democracy was able to impose for so long a scheme of centralised subordination – (amongst these factors petrol played a very important role).

Kornblith (1998) points out that AD’ Proposal was viable because of the interaction of a relative abundance of economic resources arising from oil profits, with which the state was able to satisfy the demands of different groups, with the relatively low and simple levels of such demands (such that their satisfaction was achievable with the resources available). But Kornblith adds that the capacity of the political party leadership to aggregate, channel and represent these demands, thus assuring the confidence of those represented, also played a relevant role. This permitted a conciliation between the elites and the mediation of conflict, as well as a “pragmatic” approach to that taking of political decisions (Kornblith 1998, p.164).

It would be difficult to overvalue the role of the economy as a factor of change. It must be understood that the relationships that centralism had with the particular form of oil economy of Venezuela, also contributed to the consolidation of the centralist tendency of the political administrative apparatus of the state. It was not only in the concentration at a national level of income coming from hydrocarbon profits on which the central administration rested; the state also controlled other lines of the economy such as iron and steelworks, aluminium, electricity, gas and gold, as well as imposing profit taxes, import tariffs, and taxing and controlling the use of fiscal stamps and other administrative tools.

Since 1925 oil had been the principal export product, and by 1929 the country had reached first place in the world in the exportation of oil. The industry stagnated in the decade from 1930, coinciding with the Great Depression, but in 1943 the sector regained high rates of growth (9% in that year). It was to maintain this growth until 1957. Owing to the strong global demand for oil and the promulgation of a new Ley de Hidrocarburos (Hydrocarbon Law) that in exchange for a more significant state participation in the income generated, notably increased access for petrol companies to oil exploitation.
The first oil-price shock at the end of 1973, which took the price of oil to US$14 a barrel, materialized in the form of an enormous growth in aggregate internal demand. Venezuelan society was under the perception that it had entered into a phase of endless prosperity. Nevertheless, in 1979 a prolonged and persistent period of stagnation commenced that not even the second price-rise shock in 1979 could alleviate (Aranda 1984, p.301). The period between 1974 and 1978 represented the peak of the Venezuelan oil boom, and the stagnation after 1979 would culminate in the epoch-making crisis of the 'Black Friday' of 1983, and the devaluation of the bolívar.

In Venezuela during the period from 1979-1982, for the first time in contemporary history the production of non-oil products stagnated. At the same time inflation, which had attained an average of 1.7% between 1950 and 1973, and which between 1974 and 1977 remained at 8.5%, exceeded an average of 16% during the three years of the stagnation between 1979 and 1981, making it impossible to maintain the value of the bolívar at the same time as freely floating exchange rates (Hausmann and Márquez 1983, pp.41-43).

There are various reasons behind this economic behaviour, one of which was the global economic crisis that was in full flow that time. Internally, however, there had also been an uncontrolled growth in fiscal expenditure and consumption, and a governmental and social incapacity to propose and put into practice a dynamic and self-sustainable model of growth.

Nevertheless, the dynamic factor was the oil industry. In strengthening the financial capacity of state power, profits from oil had permitted the state to position itself as the major initiator of processes of transformation in all ambits of social and political life, whilst at the same time distancing itself from the levels and rhythms of internal social forces. Moreover in the oil-boom phase, the discursive framework of the dominant groups in the centre had definitively been closed against regional groupings. Control by the state and oil businesses over the national territory had led to the disarticulation of economic and social bases in the regional interior, with the result that these bases lost their capacity to exert political pressure (Urdaneta, Martínez and López 1990, pp.14-15). As a consequence, this exclusionary centralization of resources also
signified the gradual and progressive elimination of both the financial structure and
the autonomy of the states.

**IV.2.1 Centralism and The “Situado Constitucional”**

To counter the centralising tendency, the *Situado Constitucional* had been created
following the Constitution of 1947. The *Situado* is equal to at least 25% at least of
total national income, to be distributed proportionally amongst the federal entities,
and it is in this manner that the central government distributes, amongst the other
levels of power, quotas of profits derived from the oil business. In this way oil profits
are used to satisfy the demands of the regional groups, as well as to alleviate the
tensions that might be provoked by the concentration of national resources at the
centre. Up to the end of the 1980s, the assignation of the *Situado Constitucional* had
been established at a minimum of 15% of the ordinary income of the annual budget,
which in its distribution to each federal entity corresponded to 30% of the total
divided into equal parts, and 70% according to the number of inhabitants.

In 1974 at the beginning of the oil boom, the *Ley de Coordinación de Inversiones*
(Law of Co-ordination of Investments) was initiated, which obliged the states direct
50% of the *Situado* towards programmes co-ordinating the creation of infrastructure
and services. To accomplish this co-ordinating agreements were signed during the
conventions of governors, at which the commitments of all parties were inscribed.
Generally speaking these agreements were signed on the basis of programmes pre-
established by central offices. This law effectively accentuated the process of
economic and financial centralization of the state, in demanding the prior approval of
the central government for the execution of these programmes. Of the remaining 50%
of the *Situado*, 10-15% was designated for the *Municipal Situado* Nevertheless, both
the municipalities and the states saw a reduction in their income. Public services that
had previously been controlled on a local basis were progressively absorbed by
central government, even though the local powers still controlled income derived
from urban expansion and from businesses (Urdaneta, Martínez and López 1990,
pp.18-20).
In this way, the governors increased their dependence on the centre, remaining without their own resources fundamentally doing little more than administering assets loaned by the central government. Moreover, in not having their own taxation powers, the actions of governors remained completely subject to the decisions of national government in fiscal matters. This dependence was completed by the control exercised by the Ministry of Internal Relations (MRI) over the governorships. In this relationship the governors had to give periodic accounts of project execution, whilst, at the same time, the MRI reserved the right of approval over contracts, as well as signing for payments for works (Mascareño 1996, pp.27-28).

**IV.2.2 The Spatiality of Centralization**

As may be seen from the above, the centralization of power had a direct impact upon the distribution of resources and population over the national territory. Since the dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez centralism had acted to accentuate demographic concentration. Absolute and relative figures for the distribution of the *Situado Constitucional* during the period 1978-1987 show a tendency towards major increases in the geographical concentration of the *Situado*; this is clearly observable in tables 4.1 and in map 4.1, which shows the distribution on a percentage basis for 1987.

In table 4.1 it can be seen that the Central and Capital regions captured 33.3% of the total assignation in 1986 and 1987, a total 1.5 times greater than the quantity assigned to the Andean and North-Eastern regions nearby, despite these regions being 4.1 times larger in terms of land area. On the other hand, the Federal District got an assignment of 11.3% of the total of the *Situado*, which in relative terms is greater than that for regions such as of Los Llanos, Zuliana and Guayana. In so far as the decision-making power resides at the national level, the *Situado* has been transformed into a virtual subsidy from the rest of the territory, in support of the Central and Capital Regions, thereby distorting the original intentions of the mechanism (Urdaneta, Martínez and López 1990, p.23) by imposing an unequal socio-economic pattern of distribution on resources (centre-periphery).
<table>
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<th>1979 (b)</th>
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It is important to underline that the *Situado Constitucional* favours the most populous states, because 70% of its distribution is calculated on the basis of relative population levels. According to the statistics of the population census for the year 1990 (table 4.2) the regions of greatest population concentration are in first place the Capital Region with 3,974,754 inhabitants, in second place the Central Region (Aragua, Carabobo and Cojedes) with 2,755,430 inhabitants, in close third the Western Central Region with 2,753,317 inhabitants in 1990, and in fourth place the Zuliana Region, composed of a single state, Zulia, which had 2,235,305 inhabitants. Looking at the figures for the *Situado Constitucional*, the greatest transfer of resources in 1987 (between 4 and 12%) was to six out of the ten states that formed these four regions (Map 4.1).

Table 4.2 Population and annual growth rate: 1990 - 1981

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Source: OCEI Venezuela: Demographic Situation
For 1990 (Map 4.2) the less populated states found in the Central Western region, in
Guayana (with the exception of the state of Bolívar) and in the North-Eastern region
of the country demonstrated the highest levels of extreme poverty (between 20% and
30% - and above) in the case of Apure and Delta Amacuro. It is important, therefore,
to make clear that whilst it is obvious that the relative population criteria is important,
since one can suppose that the concentration of resources upon the Capital and
Central regions reflects the concentration of population, on the other hand, it has
contributed to the deepening of regional inequalities in those states with smaller
population which are far from the centre of the country. The *Situido Constitucional*
when it is defined in this way does not establish any criteria for territorial
compensation and as such in no way reflects any sense of territorial justice.

Also in this period the growing and preponderant role of the *Situido Constitucional* in
the composition of governorship resources, with respect to other sources of income
can be seen. The internal incomes of the states had been diminishing in importance;
for 1984 they constituted 11.3% of the resources, but by 1987 they were only 1.4%,
confirming that, little by little, fiscal dependency on the centre acted to disincentivize
the willingness of states to generating their own incomes (Table: 4.3).

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(Source: Urdaneta A., Martinez O. L. and López M. “Venezuela: Centralización y descentralización del Estado” p.29)

**IV.2.3 Deconcentration of the National Public Administration**

Another point of importance within Venezuelan centralism is the form of
deconcentration operating in the national public administration, which has given raise
to the creation of a system of participation and representation of a semi-corporate
character, that exists distinct and parallel to the strictly democratic. This came to be a
counterpart to the social distribution of oil profits, which was the objective pursued by the state. According to Rey (1988) it was an attempt to remove a particular sector of decision-making from the area of centralised political control. This constituted a guarantee for various special interest groups. These were not only commercial sectors but more generally any group with sufficient power to provide support for the regime; this gave space to the proliferation of decentralized entities and enterprises of the state (Rey 1988, pp.33-34).

Since 1930, therefore, there had been an increase in ministerial schemes, autonomous institutes and decentralized entities. The autonomous institutes substituted for the ministry in functions that those bodies were unable to execute, such as the apportioning of credit and the promotion of development, or the improvement of public services. For their part, the decentralized entities fulfilled financial or productive functions, in the form of state companies or companies of the mixed economy. In this latter case the result was a ‘centralized’ national administrative deconcentration, which reinforced the concentration of the political power of the national executive, and specifically that of the president (Urdaneta, Martínez and López 1990, pp.31-35).

‘Presidentialism’ came to be greatly reinforced by administrative deconcentration. The importance of the public sector, as much in economic as in political terms and above all after 1970, produced a concentration of power in the executive which placed it far above the other powers. The direct subordination of these organisms to the president increased politico-administrative centralism and reinforced the concentration of power. Moreover, ‘presidentialism’ came to be further reinforced by the insignificant level of sanction that the legislative power was able to exercise over it. The concentration of power in the presidency increased its potency through the weak capacity for intervention possessed by the legislative power or congress in the affairs of the decentralized entities and organisms, and above all in the state businesses which functioned as private businesses. To these centralising tendencies must be added the partisan practice of “liberating from party discipline” the person who had been elected president.
IV.2.4 Bipartisanship and Clientelism

Levine (1998) has called Venezuelan democracy "party democracy". This signifies that the political parties have effectively penetrated, controlled and organized social life, monopolizing resources and channelling political action. The parties grew together and were present at the creation of modern Venezuela. The parties also constituted important networks of identity and communication in a fragmented and, for the most part, illiterate society. Accepting the legitimacy of this system signified working within structures dominated by the parties, or working within a state apparatus also controlled by them (Levine 1998, p.32); there could be no escaping their penetration.

At the beginning of the period under study (1958) the pact was maintained by three parties: AD, COPEI and the URD, and the party of government was AD. The government had to confront attempts at military coups from both the left and the right, in particular the armed insurrection of the Communist Party and the MIR (Revolutionary Left Movement), a radical-led tendency of AD. After 1960 the pact broke up, followed by a coalition government of AD and COPEI. In 1962 another moderate tendency appeared called the AD-Opposition, which had an important following in the elite of the party, but which had little support in the bases. In 1968 the AD suffered a third rupture that impeded its continuation in the presidency, and the subsequent elections were won by COPEI, the government of which lasted from 1968 to 1973. Seven candidates in all were presented for the elections, which were marked by a strong fragmentation of the vote and fierce party competition.

The multi-polar electoral map of the 1960s disappeared with the elections of 1973, and up to 1988 the dominant phenomenon was the polarization between AD and COPEI, and between their respective candidates. The bi-polarization during these fifteen years was much greater between the presidential candidates than between the legislators. Polarization grew at a pace with cross-voting, and the overall percentages obtained by the AD and COPEI grew impressively: 84.7% in 1973, 89.9% in 1978, 91.2% in 1983 and 96.3% in 1988. Despite representing the greatest presidential polarization of the era of representative democracy, the result of 1988 was, at the same time, the pre-announcement of the break-up of bi-partisanship (Sanoja
Hernández 1998, p.133). Moreover, a new modality appeared in the form of a third party, the Movement to Socialism (MAS), which converted itself from that time into the third political force in the country, a position which it would retain until the elections of 1993.

Another point worth noting about this period concerns the municipal elections. The first of these were celebrated in 1948 by direct, universal and secret vote and were separated from the presidential elections. They would not, however, be held again until 1979. The parties requested the holding of new elections in 1963 and 1968, including the elections of governors, but congress always blocked it. The importance of the 1979 elections was that they produced a dramatic modification in the political map of the country. The electoral understanding reached between all of the parties of the left, as well as regional electoral grouping, to adopt with distinctive slates and an electoral platform that recognised the aspirations of the communities, gained them a significant representation.

Between 1979 and 1989, according to Maingon-Sonntag (cited in Sanoja Hernández 1998), the general political tendencies were:

* The strengthening of regional leaderships, with the simultaneous consolidation of minority organizations that favoured the strategy of local and regional power, and the tendency towards the rupture of bi-partisanship.

* The building of opposition alliances to the party of government, which were of a pragmatic, tactical character for obtaining the vote.

* The increase of abstention. The loss of votes in all of the parties started to exert a pressure on the Venezuelan political framework. Abstention went from 30% in 1979 to 47% in 1984 and 55% in 1989 (Sanoja Hernández 1998, p.108).

This situation occurred as a result of distortions that the political parties had introduced into the Venezuelan political system, through the tutelary relationship that they had imposed on civil society. The social organizations depended on the parties
and the state, which kept civil society in a marginalized and dependent condition. Revindication was only accessible through the informal systems of privilege, which left everyone who wasn’t ‘connected’ with the parties outside the political process (Sanoja Hernández 199, p.106).

The parties made a deliberate and continued effort to penetrate social organizations (and all areas of potential organization) in order to incorporate leaders and members of the networks into the party structure, and submit them to the authority of the party leaders. This manner of articulation between political parties and civil society is referred to as ‘clientelism’. Community organizations had no resources with which to remain autonomous, and thus became dependent on the parties. The measure of a leader within this system was judged according to a greater or lesser capacity to lobby, and navigate the advantages and inequalities that accumulated within the political system, a requirement that deepened the institutional deficiencies in the framing of demands. According to Levine and Crisp, political space was monopolized by the political parties: “Given the penetration of the parties into other groups of civil society and the highly disciplined form in which it was expected that political parties behave themselves, there existed a general idea that Venezuela was governed by the parties, a partidocracia, and not for the people who had elected them” (Levine and Crisp 1999, p.12).

IV.2.5 Civil Society and the Conciliatory Democracy

The initial processes of contemporary civil participation and organization were linked to the development of the political parties in this period of the democracy of mobilization. The citizenry formed themselves into unions, guilds, barrio committees, peasant leagues and student centres, that subsequently moved towards playing the role of intermediator between the citizens and the government they confronted.

In the period of conciliatory democracy from 1961 up to the end of the 1980s, the formation of organizations began to intensify, leading to the emergence of the most important neighbourhood movements, environmental groups, co-operative movements and cultural organizations (in many cases closely linked to the Church);
as social movements they maintained a reclamatory, confrontational character, sometimes even welfarist.

Socsal indicates that up to the middle of the 1970s, whatever their origins and initial aims and values, the development of civil society organizations increasingly came to be influenced by the interests of party politics. At this point, however, the cooperative movement, for instance, promoted initially by the state and international organisms in the context of middle-class values and as adjuncts to state plans of control, achieved the strengthening of its autonomy with the reform of the Ley de Cooperativos (Law of Co-operatives) in 1975. A similar situation arose at the end of the 1970s, after the promulgation of the Ley Orgánica del Ambiente y del Reglamento sobre las Juntas Ambientales (Organic Law of the Environment and Governance of Environmental Groups), when local and neighbourhood organizations and ecological organizations were founded, both of an institutional and non-governmental character (Socsal 1997, p.22).

In the 1970s ecclesiastical base groups were also consolidated to support the Medellín and Pueblas Episcopal conferences of 1968 and 1978. These new organizations were influenced by sectors of the Catholic Church sympathetic to the poor, to Liberation Theology, and to the new currents of thought in the areas of illiteracy and popular education of Pablo Freire, which created a new paradigm in non-governmental cooperation. At the same time there arose associations with intellectuals and professionals that had been formed in the revolutionary currents sweeping through Latin America, which opened spaces of encounter and discussion in the universities as much as in the public meeting areas (Ortega 1994, p.126).

In relation to the neighbourhood organizations, the first of these dated from 1936 when they were formed in all of the barrios then existing in the country, and were called Communal Juntas. In 1961 the first neighbourhood organizations arose in the middle-class and upper-middle-class urbanizations to promote the control of urban growth, whereas in the poorer urban areas service centres were created to facilitate the public action substituting for the Communal Juntas (Rivero 1995, pp.4-6). This differentiation of spatial contexts forced the community organizations of Venezuela
to present two faces in relation to their forms of struggle and their demands, and their
dependency on the political parties. Whilst the urbanization organizations were
formed to resolve problems of urban deterioration, the poverty-focused groups
directed their demands towards basic necessities such as property and land titles,
housing and public services, making these organizations particularly susceptible to
the intervention of the parties, given the control that these same had over the
resources necessary to satisfy such demands.

In 1971 the Federation of Urban Community Associations (FACUR) was created,
which from 1975 until 1980 increased the level of neighbourhood action and the
demands for institutional reform at the local level. As an indication of the growth and
importance of the struggle of these associations, in 1978 congress approved the Ley
Orgánica de Régimen Municipal, the Organic Law of Municipal Governance
(LORM), to legalize their status. The political parties felt themselves threatened by
these emergent alternatives, and in 1979 congress established a party-biased
regulation to determine mechanisms controlling the creation and action of such
associations. The party hegemonies also responded by forming parallel associations
and federations, such as the Communal Integration movement (IC) of the AD party,
and the Federation of Neighbour Associations of COPEI, constructed to win control
of the neighbourhood movement (Riverol995, pp.7-8). The pressure from
neighbourhood groups for greater democracy continued, however, and in 1989 the
Municipal Law of 1979 was modified to include the election of mayors; the party-bias
of the regulatory regime was also modified to take into account local participation.

From 1980 onwards, new neo-liberal organizations appeared that were orientated
towards alternative projects for the economic and political organization of society.
The Roraima Group became the first organization of this type in Venezuela, followed
by the Centre for the Spreading of Economic Knowledge (CEDICE) in 1984. Both of
these were integrated by the business sector, but the first of them included
intellectuals, academics and social leaders. To these organizations must also be added
the Neighbourhood Schools, considered by Garcia and Roa to be very much liberal in
type. As objectives, such schools proposed the definition of a neighbourhood identity
and ideology, the strengthening of neighbourhood organization and the opening of
channels of communication between neighbourhoods and the public sectors, as well as citizen education.

The Roraima Group presented its political and economic proposals, framed in a liberal tradition, in two principal documents, one in 1983 entitled “Proposition to the Country: The Roraima Project – Plan of Action” that contained the economic lineaments, and another in 1987 called “More and Better Democracy”, which was focused on the political proposals.

In the economic field the group proposed a strategy denominated “Productive Venezuela”, centred on economic liberty and responsibility and on a minimal state. In the second document a framework was set out for the modification of the political system; in this the democrtisation of the electoral system had priority, the moving of government closer to administration, determining responsibilities, demanding the accountability and assessment of those in power and assigning rewards and punishments. This, it was proposed, would ‘normalize’ government in permitting the autonomous development of civil society through the opening of new spaces for dialogue, which would interrupt clientelism and the excessive power of the state.

In the proposals of the Roraima Group the principles that characterize a liberal democratic model can be seen: representative democracy, a strong state of rights, an effective and efficient bureaucratic apparatus, social pluralism and the stimulation of private initiative, over and above the dichotomous model of liberalism for conceptualising the state. According to García and Roa, this model loses specificity in being confused with the market, in which are included social organizations as much as economic ones; moreover, it obviates the public dimension of civil society (García and Roa 1997, pp.10-14).

For its part, CEDICE is a non-profit organization orientated towards the teaching and spreading of economic knowledge, with special emphasis on assistance to young people. It is a group for the diffusion of liberal thought that seeks to influence public opinion in the political decision-making process, in other organisations and in the formation of national leadership; the organization seeks to model the cultural and ideological bases of Venezuelan society.
Freitez and Yégüez (2000) signal that the most incisive critique of the state and the political parties had been coming from the business sector and the neighbourhood movements of the highly urbanized middle-classes. These latter had emphasized the necessity of strengthening civil society, as well as demanding participation in the organs of political representation and promoting new spaces of representation. Nevertheless, in the opinion of Freitez and Yégüez the critique at heart concerned deconstructing the collective dimension that had played a fundamental role in the configuration of the state, and the organizations of social and political actors (Freitez and Yégüez 2000, p.133).

Those organizations and movements closely linked to the church, the business sector and the communities continued to exercise pressure in search of greater democracy and decentralization of power, as fundamental elements for the rescuing of political spaces controlled by the parties. In 1989, as the result of pressure on the state, the implementation of a formal process of decentralization began; the struggle would commence with an insistence on political reform of the electoral process, by envisioning it as an area that must be appropriated for the achievement of consensus.

By way of examining the synthesis, it is possible to divide the period of centralist democracy (1958-1988) into two stages as regards the evolution of social organization:

a) In the first stage after 1961 the processes of community participation and organization became linked to the developments of the political parties, which translated this participation into unions, guilds, barrio committees, peasant leagues and student centres. Such institutions later passed to playing an intermediatory role on behalf of citizens facing the government.

b) In the second stage, with the consolidation of representative democracy and up until the end of the 1980s, the formation of organizations began to intensify, and at this point the most important neighbourhood movements, environmental groups, cooperative movements and cultural organizations arose.
IV.3 Antecedents of the State Reform

The discussion on democracy and decentralization reviewed in the introductory chapter shows that the reform of the state was a part of the new economic implantation of neo-liberalism in Latin America, and came accompanied by the measures of structural adjustment. Even though this is a phenomenon extending throughout the American continent, the Venezuelan situation differs in some aspects from the other countries of the area. The Venezuelan state played an important protagonizing role in the modernization of the economy, as well as in the advance of the process of democratisation, even though from the beginnings of the 1980s this role began to be questioned.

The collapse of the economy from 1983 onwards produced the destabilization of the political system that had been one of the central pillars of Venezuelan democratic centralism. The subsequent, massive capital flight to the exterior and the drop in hydrocarbon prices in 1979 forced the devaluation of the national currency (De la Cruz 1992, p.17); all of this (added to the commitment to pay the external debt) generated the exhaustion of the country's international reserves, a fiscal crisis, recession (Kornblith 1998, pp.22-23) and the rapid deterioration of public services. The devaluation increased the rate of inflation and caused hoarding and speculation; the purchasing power of the bolivar deteriorated, and with this came a concomitant deterioration in the living conditions of the lower and middle classes. By contrast, the situation strengthened the exaggerated enrichment of those sectors linked to foreign exchange.

Confronted with such a situation, it was not difficult for the ruling classes to foresee the approach of a period of political instability; the reduction in the quantity of resources available to the government presaged an increment in the conflicting complexity of Venezuelan society. Such a loss of economic support acted progressively to deepen the crisis, culminating in the weakening of the entire socio-economic model and the possibility of satisfying wider social demands. This in turn would impact on the deterioration of the legitimacy and, finally, the obstruction of the mechanisms for consensus and control of conflict.
The preoccupation of the leadership that had again taken up the reins of the democratic project of 1947 was centred on the viability of democracy and at the same time, on the control of areas of potential conflict. Both of these points were related to the pact of consensus between the political actors designed to guarantee governability, with the dominant role given to the parties to channel the demands of society using the mechanisms of ‘decentralization’ through the Situado Constitucional, deconcentration and regionalization. These, however, instead of contributing to the distribution of power, acted to reinforce its concentration in the executive. Nevertheless Brewer Carias (1988) has commented that it was the centralist form adopted by the state and the presence of a democracy of parties that made possible the establishment of democracy in the country (Brewer Carias 1988, p.94).

These mechanisms all showed signs of exhaustion as the reasons motivating their implementation ceased to be effective, and many actors began to demand the political decentralization of the state as a base from which to achieve greater participation and representativeness. The political actors felt worried by the increase in electoral abstention during the 1980s, which motivated the proposal to embark on electoral reform in order to improve and diversify the channels and mechanisms of political participation and representation, which had been shown to be too narrow and too scarce in the new environment. Stambouli (1993) has indicated that one of the proposals to confront dissent was the growth in the autonomy of action of the distinct components of the system, which would have been a possibility, liberating new forms of expression that had been repressed in the institutional bipartisan system (Stambouli 1993, p.32).

In a different direction, the neo-liberal denunciations of the public administration began to be more frequent in Venezuela, placing the responsibility for all individual and social ills on the state. This anti-state discourse was championed by the powerful international financial organisms, whose support was necessary to confront the grave problems of the external debt, and which also permitted relief to the state from its fiscal burden, as well as the renovation of support from internal power groups, e.g. the enterprise sector and the unions, who would also be the beneficiaries of the
privatisation of many of the state enterprise sector. On the other hand, the neo-liberal discourse also meant the abandonment of regulating private economic activity so as to benefit the business sector, as well as abandoning the social and welfare policies in which could be seen the manifestations of populism. Generally speaking the planning of reform was seen as necessary to reduce the dimensions of the state. Moreover, given the incapacity of the state to bring about conciliation between the diverse interests of society and to assume responsibility for their conduct, it was proposed to substitute it for a form of semi-corporatism (a regime in which decisions would be made by the interests of the various actors, in place of those elected by the people), called ‘the Social Pact’ (Brewer Carías 1988, p.168).

According to Rey (1991), for these political actors the realization of true democracy would consist in the introduction of a system of privileges of a current, semi-corporate character for certain social groups that still had not benefited from the system. Nevertheless he argues that a corporate system is based on an unequal distribution of power and privileges in a manner that is incompatible with the basic values of democracy. This was even more the case in Venezuela, where broad sectors of society lacked other organizations that were not party-affiliated or affiliated to the unions controlled by them. Moreover, a widening of the system of privileges would encounter obstacles in the current situation of relative scarcity, and would only be viable in an economy with steady growth from oil profits, which is not something that could be reliably foreseen (Rey 1991, p.569).

On the contrary, to the extent to which the economy of the country is less dependent on external oil-based resources, conflicts of allocation are transformed into redistributive conflicts, and the problem does not consist of an increase in privileges, but rather which of the actual beneficiaries must be excluded from them. For the realization of true democracy it would have been better to eliminate the mechanisms of semi-corporate representation and participation, and reinforce democratic control over public decisions; for this, in addition, the distributive activities and the social policies of the state should be reinforced, as well as increasing its capacity for response to the demands of the majority.
IV.3.1 The 1984 Commission for the Reform of the State

In all of the governments of Venezuela of the 20th century, including the dictatorships, a continuity of institutional actualisation is clearly visible, expressed in the first instance in the growth of decentralized administration begun in 1928. Nevertheless, the creation of the Commission of Public Administration (CAP) in response to the recommendations of a United Nations mission in 1958 would be the formal start of the reforms of public administration. In the period 1962-1968 the programme of administrative reform lost all governmental support, but in 1969, seeking to articulate administrative reform with the process of economic and social development, a process of regionalization was decreed.

The national division of territory into 8 administrative regions, in addition to the implementation of mechanisms for planning and promoting development, attempted the progressive deconcentration of the decision-making power of the national authorities towards regional administration. It also pursued the achieving of a suitable form of participation for politico-territorial entities in regional decision-making. Without a doubt, this regional opening up contributed to the process of participation and dialogue in themes of national interest for many sectors of the provinces. In 1976 the Commission of Public Administration was ended, and CORDIPLAN (The Central Office of Co-ordination and Planning) took its place. One year later the Ley Orgánica de la Administración Central (Organic Law of Central Administration) was passed, which re-formulated the ministerial structure, and subsequently the Ley Orgánica Municipal (Organic Municipal Law) of 1978 linked the municipalities to the process of regionalization.

In this context of administrative reforms, the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (the CTV) proposed the political reform of the state in 1981. This is the first time that an important political actor had set out the necessity for a reform of the state that was to be understood as a re-definition of the global model of development, as well as a redistribution of political and social power (Rey 1988, pp.23-24). At the end of 1984, through the implementation of Decree 430, the Presidential Commission for the Reform of the State was created (COPRE), as part of the supporting project of the
"Social Democracy Pact" and one of the indispensable pre-requisites for the strategic viability of the 7th national plan.

The first activities of COPRE consisted of defining its priorities and form of internal organization. The plan of action gave priority to the processes of democratisation and decentralization, as fundamental nuclei of the modernization of the state. The organization was formed to begin with by three sub-commissions, and later by various working groups, arranged around the following topics: political reforms, public administration, decentralization, economic strategy, social policy, the administration of justice, education, science and technology and culture. The total membership of COPRE was 35 and the political orientation was inclined towards the party hegemonies of the AD and COPEI27 (Gómez y López 1990, p.86). Given the thematic broadness under consideration by the state reform project it must be considered as the most complete since that of 1958, given that it was not limited exclusively to examining the area of public administration so much as embarking on the conjoining of public powers, and it did not propose purely technical objectives for the improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of public powers, if not that they should achieve political objectives.

This corresponded with the ideas relating efficiency and democracy to the political strategy of the discourse of the President of the Republic, at the inauguration of the COPRE:

"The Venezuelan state is recognizably inefficient. On the one hand it is about habits refined at distinct levels, where inertia is perceived to be the mechanism for excellence; on the other hand it is about a type of growth belonging to a rentier, oil-addicted society which tries to achieve results on the basis of an expenditure that is every time bigger and less productive. Even so, democracy has attained undoubtedly important objectives in the last quarter of a century, but the truth is that the manner

27 Gomez Calcaño-Lopez Maya has elaborated an outline of the political orientation of the members of COPRE: for the AD party 9 members, and independent but pro-AD 6; for COPEI 5 members, MAS 1 and pro-MAS independents 1, MEP 1, URD 1, independent left-inclined 2, and independent others 6 (Gomez Calcaño-Lopez Maya 1990, p.91).
in which these important objectives have been reached has not opened the most ideal paths to participation (COPRE 1990, p.87).”

The reform was conceived of within a political perspective, which takes into account the fact that the whole reform process implies altering the relationships of power in society. Rey (1988) points out that COPRE took as a basic principle the re-articulation of relationships between the different branches of public power and civil society. The commission considered all public powers at all levels of decision in terms of how their technical and political objectives contributed towards the establishment of a modern, essentially democratic state, as well as where the postulates of the Constitution in terms of citizen participation came into force as an effective element in the taking of decisions by public powers (Rey 1988, p. 24). Moreover, the process of reform had to propitiate the advance of decentralization, the perfecting of a state of rights, the professionalization of public administration, the modernization of state action and the transformation of the legislative power, within a framework of an audacious fight against corruption and an effort to give the greatest lift to ethical values and the cultural transformation of society (COPRE 1989, p.5).

IV.3.2 Tendencies of the proposed reform

From the beginning of the 1980s, a consciousness of the necessity of introducing changes into the conduct of the process of democratisation, as well as the redefinition of its objectives, made itself evident. Equally, documents were produced by a variety of some political and social actors within an effort to outline an exit to the so-called political crisis, without the existence of any prior consensus about the character and specific forms that the redefinition of the relationship between state and society must adopt.

The institutional space that opened for the discussion of the reform of the state would be dominated essentially by two groups. On the one hand, those who wanted to apply measures of Neoliberal adjustment (which had already been initiated between 1978 and 1983 by the government of Herrera Campis) reflecting the perspective of the business sectors (Fedecámaras) and related intellectuals. On the other side, there were those who believed that the roots of the problems lay not in the size of the state, nor in
its interference in social life, but rather in the weakness of a state confronted by established economic groups and the control which the political parties exercised over the organizations of the sectors subordinated to them.

The first group saw the democracy of conciliation as a form of welfare state which, they saw as incompatible with the development of initiative and private commerce, and they sought to modify the text of the constitution of 1961 substantially. In their vision, the reform should consist of a reduction in the intervention of the state in society and in the economy, whilst the major ideological obstacle to overcome would be populism. The second group proposed the re-organization of political space and the creation of innovative forms of social control, through agreements of understanding and openness between social actors. This would be something similar to the model of conciliation, but incorporating new rules that would diminish the centralizing tendencies, and allow the political parties to play a protagonistic role, but without suffocating civil society. Moreover, this latter group proposed decentralization at all levels, seeking to guarantee governability and political stability for the regime by increasing the efficiency of the state in the provision of services to communities (Gómez and López 1990, pp.53-55).

According to Blanco (1993), the executive secretary of COPRE, the strength of the pressure for change would finally submit the state apparatus to changes without precedent in the 20th century. These forces had emerged from a society seeking to deepen the ‘horizontalization’ of relationships, in sharp antagonism to the dominant concentrating and centralizing tendencies, in order that the state might achieve a more responsible form of political representation. Blanco indicates that in reality these were forces that from new bases prompted a double movement of both decomposing and recomposing the state, that is not simple substitution, but rather the elaboration of new functions which would substantially alter the relationships between the state and civil society (Blanco 1993, p.72).

According to Hernández (1993) the process began at the regional level. In civil society regional elites had been formed as a product of provincial economic activity, and the efforts to educate the population. These sectors, together with the groups formed in ecological, neighbourhood, and sporting struggles began pressuring
towards a reform of the electoral system and the political system, so that ultimately they converted themselves into opinion-forming movements, thanks to the role played by the communications media (Hernández 1993, p.110). For his part, De La Cruz (1992) argues that the interests and demands of civil society at that moment were formulated through sectoral politics, specifically through themes such as the autonomy of parties with respect to the state, political activism and the capacity to generate political opinion. In addition, the majority of public opinion simply opposed bureaucracy and united with the proponents of decentralization (De La Cruz 1992, p.25).

One can also clearly distinguish the contrasting positions. In the documents and actions of the political parties, unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The partisan neo-liberal tendency sought to orientate the reform of the state towards a reduction in what was presented as the excessive intervention of the state society and, in particular, economic life. They demanded a decentralization of Venezuelan political administration, centred on the privatisation of state businesses and a rationalization of the administrative structure in order to reduce public expenditure. This view accepted the democratisation of the political system at heart because it would contribute to diminishing party political influence in all spheres of national life.

The other tendency was of the centre-left, which attributed the limitations of development to the elitist character of the political system in favouring the most organized groups and those of the greatest power, all to the detriment of the majority. This posture underlined the weakness of the state in the face of the pressure of the strongest economic groups and the relationships of power and manipulation that the party apparatuses exercised over the state and civil society. The leftist groups proposed the achieving of greater control by the electors over the elected, by democratising the internal structure of the political parties and institutionalising the channels of participation, which is to say the democratisation and decentralization of all levels of the political system (Urdaneta, Martínez y López1990, p.57).

In this context of tendencies and ideas, the results of debates on proposals for political reform proposed the deepening of democracy within political parties themselves,
reforms to the suffrage laws, popular, direct and secret elections of governors of the federal entities, reforms to the laws governing municipal government, as well as those governing the financing of political parties. The presentation of these conclusions to the public generated a wide polemic in which many different sectors of the country participated, and in spite of strong resistance on the part of the governing AD party to their approbation, reforms to the suffrage laws, the laws for direct election of governors, and laws governing the reform of the municipalities were all discussed by the Venezuelan congress in 1988. As can be seen, all of the proposals relating to the decentralization of power that were discussed in the original (COPRE) document had acquired a major place in Venezuelan political debate and would act to promote far greater participation by civil society in political representation, and at the same time, gave great support to the political and administrative decentralization of the state.

Conclusions

A key theme in the development of this chapter is the change that has come about in the diagram of power that had dominated at the end of the 19th century. The form of the state that had its beginnings with Castro and Gómez would have a marked difference from the preceding forms, and this change would express itself in the predominance of the centralist form, without its federal component. In this diagram, political ends would be decided by the "Federation" meanwhile the autonomous states as they had been in the 19th century would be converted into political agents of the central government. This would be the scheme that would last until 1989 – federalism came to be, more and more, a formal element of the liberal state.

The second important theme outlined in the chapter is related to the creation, at the beginning of the century, of the bases for the exercise of a nearly absolute governmental dominion over the territory of Venezuela. The establishment of an army and the development of certain infrastructure for economic and military operations began to articulate the regions of the country, and this would also eliminate the tensions occasioned by the regional caudillos who, found themselves increasingly impeded in their affairs by an increasingly organized and numerous army. This element would come to be reinforced by oil exploration, and consequently
by the support of the North American oil companies, once they acquired domination over the Venezuelan market.

The third theme worthy of note with reference to the political has to do with the vertiginous process of democratisation that occurred after the death of Gómez, through the strong social pressure which arose in response to his dictatorship and which immediately sought channels for the democratisation of the state. Organized resistance to the dictatorship had been clandestine, based around the political parties of the time, the oil workers unions and civil society, and after the death of Gómez in 1935 there would continue for nearly a decade a regime of transition to democracy, led by military factions and classified by some authors as a "populist system of mobilization". In the later years of this decade the Democratic Action party was organized, consolidating itself with the Social Christian Party and the Communist Party. The period that began with the death of Gómez and ended with the overthrow of President Médina has been called a period of mobilization, whereas that which ended with the fall of Rómulo Gallegos in 1948 was known as the Trienio Adeco (1945-1948).

The Trienio had important consequences for the conciliatory populist democracy that was established in 1958, as well as for the manner in which the federal component of the liberal democratic state was implemented and the decentralization of state and municipal governments. The process of democratisation begun in 1945-1948 which implemented universal suffrage, instead of deepening the distribution of power to local and regional levels of government, reinforced the inherent centralist tendencies - not the centralist tendency of the 19th century, however, but rather a new model which dominated in the long period of the Gomecista dictatorship of the 20th century, where the federal component had no role to play. Moreover, the federal character that had previously been maintained by legislation was cancelled through the elimination of state judicial competence, in the democratic constitution of 1947 and through the introduction of the Situado Constitucional in an administratively decentralized manner. Political decentralization was also discussed and approved within fierce ideological confrontations in the Constituent of 1946-47, and some of the leaders of Democratic Action had always showed their reservations about implementation (Velásquez 1997, p.155). When the proposals for elections to governorships were
realized, which rather than enclosing within themselves all that was signified by political decentralization looked towards their antecedents in the constitution of 1864 and the Federal Revolution, the "Adecos" refused to implement them.

Democracy was restored in 1958 around the broad consensus a variety of political and social actors, and the most prominent point to mention here would be the formation of important utilitarian mechanisms that would stabilize representative democracy for more than 30 years. This also explains how the verticality of power could be maintained and deepened in this democracy of conciliation, without the necessity of implementing political decentralization and how, in spite of this, the stability of the regime was achieved. Supported by socio-political factors, conciliatory democracy recognized and gave attention to the plurality of minority and majority interests, guaranteed to powerful national and international sectors that their interests would not be threatened by the application of democratic rules. Moreover, this democracy assured control of the population, and at the same time trust in representative democracy was fortified.

These utilitarian mechanisms counted for their implementation on the availability on the part of the state of oil profits, the use of which avoided conflicts antagonistic to the distributive processes so long as the redistribution of these same did not imply affecting any one sector in order to benefit other social sectors. But there were also only a limited number of organizations considered trustworthy that could be inserted in the state through mechanisms of a semi-corporative nature, which brought support to governments so long as they were capable of articulating diverse interests and processing their demands towards decision-making organizations. Bipartisan rule was implemented from the end of the 1960s, and a condition for the development of conciliation with centralism and without decentralization was that the number of political actors with the authority from the sectors they represented to reach agreement was relatively small. This scheme of power designed to achieve relatively stable government was, and had been from its very beginnings, incompatible with political decentralization.

Political decentralization is a means of distributing power which (by its very nature) is accompanied by the multiplication and incorporation of new spaces of power and
decisions, implying in its turn a greater participation and mobilization of political actors. It was logical for the Venezuelan political elites of the period to suppose that the presence of multiple political actors would complicate political negotiations, and introduce elements of instability in the political system of conciliatory democracy, especially since they would not necessarily be under the control of party hegemonies. Such institutionalised instability might have come to pass if the naming of governors and mayors had been submitted to public scrutiny, given that this would have multiplied by the hundreds new spaces of decisions. Thus, the populist scheme of conciliation had a different mechanism at base that favoured the structuring of democracy through party elites, and which impeded the implementation of political decentralization because of the disadvantages it had for this scheme of power.

Nevertheless, the leaders who supported the centralist party democracy, faced with political crisis, began to look behind them from 1984 onwards, and to promote from above a reform of the state that promised more participation. Some of the elements that had guaranteed the governability and stability of the democratic scheme of 1958 had begun to change by the end of the 1970s, which led the principal political actors of the semi-corporative pact (CTV and Fedecámaras) to reconsider purely administrative reform of the state. There had been a change in oil income to such an extent that the previous bonanza had almost ceased, and this had affected above all the payment of external debt, which grew rapidly with the interest payments agreed with creditors. In a parallel fashion the denunciatory policies towards the welfare state and against the political parties promoted by the multi-lateral organisms (the IMF, World Bank and IBD) began to provoke fractures in the image of the political system of democratic conciliation.

This critique was adopted especially by the business sector, which drew up supporting documents and appeared from that time onwards in the company of groups of intellectuals and the inhabitants of urbanized sectors of Caracas, themselves organized around the neighbourhood associations and representing Venezuelan civil society. Nevertheless, criticism of the political parties also came from other sectors of the political and intellectual system, which came to constitute the counterpart in this debate over reform of the state that had previously been adopted. The debate re-opened ideas on the community of values and the normative orientations of
democracy, and the decentralization of state and local powers once again came under consideration. As in all processes where the interconnection between politics and the political is present, during this opportunity civil society played an important role.
Chapter V

DEMOCRACY AND DECENTRALIZATION IN VENEZUELA

Introduction

As was indicated in the previous chapter, the democratic regime established in Venezuela from 1958 onwards was characterized by the widespread domination of the activities of political parties, and the observance of the Pacto de Punto Fijo, as a result of which the period from 1958-1989 is known as the 'Conciliatory Democracy, or the Centralist Party Democracy'. The political parties assumed a monopoly on participation and representation at all levels of the state and of society. This could have been considered necessary in order to initiate the process of democratization. However, with the passage of years, the parties were transformed into an apparatus of the leadership, alienated from the electors and exercising control over the will of the citizenry. As a result, the democratic process was itself weakened, so that to a great extent the crisis of Venezuelan democracy is the crisis of the political parties.

At the end of the 1980s, the country was confronted by a crisis of governability28, and the government of the time put into operation a neo-liberal project of structural adjustment sponsored by the IMF. Notwithstanding this, the process of democratization appeared to awaken from its long period of stagnation, and the ensuing decade would bring more than a few surprises for institutional democracy. Many events of a particular and circumstantial nature would appear on the scene: the social protests and the armed institutional repression of February1989 as an

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28 The term crisis of governability is associated with the neo-liberal proposal sponsored by the multilateral institutions at the end of the 1980s. As Bobbio has suggested, these institutions tried to highlight the suppose incapacity of the democratic governments to control conveniently the conflicts that arise in the social and political context (Bobbio 1997(b), pp.103-104). Notwithstanding, in Venezuela, the emergence of a pluralist, diverse civil society in the new hegemonic context suggests the necessity of replacing this terminology. As Morgan Quero (2000) has pointed out that the alternative could be the notion of governmentality mentioned before in Chapter I and III.
expression of the verticality of power, the redistribution and decentralization of 1989, the military coups of 1992 and the presidential destitution of 1993, fracturing of the traditional hegemony and the fragmentation of political parties. The quantitative and qualitative retreat of civil society in 1995, the blocs of refounded parties (the Polo Patriótico of the MVR, PPT and the MAS and the Polo Democrático of Proyecto Venezuela, COPEI and AD) in 1998.

Through such events, the closure of the decade would be characterized by the political phenomenon of the growth of a new hegemony and new constitutional bases that favoured citizen participation. The political sectors that took power in 1998 proposed an alternative project to that of neo-liberalism, which sought to construct a participatory democracy of mobilization. In the new Constitution, more than 56 articles were dedicated directly or indirectly to citizen participation, in contrast to the Constitution of 1961 that had supported the representative democracy of the parties. At the beginning of the 21st century, however, more precisely in April 2002, democracy would see itself menaced again by a coup d'état.

All of the above occurred principally within the field of the institutional struggle to re-establish governability and maintain hegemony. To begin with this struggle occurred within the institutionalised political forces of social democracy and the new neo-liberal tendencies which had been propelling their project within Venezuela from the end of the 1970s. From 1993 onwards the political frame began to change, and by the middle of 1998 the hegemonic struggle expanded to include emergent forces from the military sector, from civil society and from the old Venezuelan left. At the end of 1998 a new hegemony was established in the country, in such a manner that in the period 1989-2000 there are three distinct moments:

2) A phase of diminished neo-liberal domination\textsuperscript{29} and the deepening of decentralization (1993-1998).

3) A phase of changes in party-political hegemony and of institutional changes (1999-2000) – This included amongst others a new constitutional text, new public powers, a widening of the rights of citizens and changes in the conformation of civil society.

The intention of this chapter is to construct a scenario that will facilitate our understanding of these stages; through a consideration of democracy, participation in elections, civil society and political decentralization in Venezuela. As can be deduced from the antecedents that have already been outlined, this period reflects new political realities. That is to say that political decentralization from 1989 gave Venezuelan democracy certain features that were not present in the period of the centralized democracy of the parties. Now more recently with the new Constitution of 1999, new elements are being incorporated into the principle of decentralization.

These changes will inevitable have a notable impact upon the unfolding of the current process of democratization through the influence that civil society now exerts in ensuring that the decisive levels of power increase their reciprocity and their impact upon local politics. The progressive changes that have occurred have been surprising, above all in the articulation between the organizations of civil society and the structures of power over the past decade.

Given these elements it is important to analyse what has happened, and what influence political decentralization has had on the democratic life of Venezuela during the recent process of democratisation, as well as how this dynamic is interwoven with the emergence of civil society with its quantitative and qualitative growth, and of course with the growth in citizen participation. This dynamic shows that the rise of civil society increased through the same measures that weakened the traditional party structure and this phenomenon appears to be the key to

\textsuperscript{29} It is called diminished neoliberal domination because several measures of structural adjustment, such as privatization and IMF policies were implemented.
understand what has happened. The types of questions that need to be addressed in exploring these processes include:

- What role has decentralization played in the breaking of the control the political parties exercised over civil society?
- How has civil society been drawn towards decentralization?
- How has citizen participation been promoted at the local level?
- In what sense has the development of new movements and organizations of social resistance been advanced?

**V.1 First stage: The institutional struggles between the social-democrat and neo-liberal tendencies in the context of the crisis of governability and political decentralization, 1989-1993**

The year 1989 was crucial in the history of Venezuela over the second half of the 20th century. The importance of the events that took place show this clearly: the putting in operation of the programme of structural adjustment, the social uprising of February 27th and the first direct elections for governorships, mayors and municipal authorities. These events were mixed up with each other and acted to influence the new pathways which, conjointly, the political and politics would take in the national territory.

At the beginning of the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez (in February of 1989) in the face of the strangulation of the rentier economy, macroeconomic adjustment policies were implemented which became known in Venezuela as the "Economic Packet". The Packet was adjusted to the requirements established by the multilateral organisms, which were intended to re-establish macroeconomic stability (Milward 2000, pp.33-34). Measures that would be implemented were announced immediately together with others of a more progressive application (but still over a relatively short period of time). They included decisions over exchange policy, the freeing of markets in goods and services, arrangements for the external debt, and decisions on fiscal policy. All of this was conducted under the tutelage of the IMF in order to obtain,
over a period of three years, the sum of around US$4,500 million (Kornblith 1998, p.9).

The application of these measures had been delayed by Venezuela's party democracy for many years, but by the end of the 1980s the urgent need for financial resources meant that action could be delayed no longer. Nevertheless, the very level of adjustment required from accumulated pressures within Venezuelan society meant that the government could expect a strong reaction against the measures — naturally, these would come neither from the corporate entities, nor through direct routes from civil society. The parties had closed down the channels of expression available to civil society through their control of the central unions and neighbourhood associations, and this had hitherto acted as a guarantee of civic immobility. Perhaps it was for this reason that no social policy was outlined with which to alleviate the negative effects which could be expected to arise from the adjustments; moreover, the government were security in the results of the most recent presidential elections of 1988.

Whatever the expectations of the government, the violent mobilizations on February 27th 1988 of a population disarticulated from the mechanisms of consensus surprised them. The mobilizations started with the sacking of approximately 1000 local business and industrial outlets in which nearly a million people took part in Caracas alone, and which spread rapidly to the other important cities of the country. For five days the government retaliated and attempted to repress the uprisings, causing more than 1,000 casualties (Coronil and Skuriski 1991, p.291).

The impact of the urban revolt on the population in general and on the soldiers who took part in the repression, would have dramatic effects on political developments in the decade that followed. For Richard Gott (2000) this event marked the beginnings

30 The "Caracazo" had major international repercussions, not only because of the gravity of the events themselves, but because of the relationship that these established with the policies of the IMF. A short while after the events in Venezuela, the inhabitants of the squatter settlements in Argentina took to the streets of the cities of Rosario and Buenos Aires to confront the neo-liberal adjustment put in place by President Menem with looting and sacking (Medina 2001, p.64).
of the contemporary history of Venezuela, and the beginnings of the end of the old regime. The population had taken to the streets in the same way as thirty years previously in January of 1958, when the dictatorship or Pérez Jiménez was overthrown under the leadership of the Junta Patriota. But this time, through accident, anarchism and leaderlessness, the populace sought only to demonstrate its discontent with a corrupt and bureaucratic government, with its mere facade of democracy (Gott 2000, p. 45).

In trying to explain these events, the reasons that surface are generally socio-political or socio-economic in type; very few are geopolitical. For example, Hernández suggests that with the application of structural adjustment measures, diverse sectors of society found themselves with an even greater distance between their desires and the possibility of their satisfaction. It was this that led to the explosion of civil society. The belligerence of this explosion was symptomatic of various trends: the deterioration in quality of life for much of society, processes of modernization, and the awakening of a citizen consciousness (Hernández 1993, p. 114).

Nevertheless, there is another aspect that has not as yet been touched on in the analysis of these events. The social organization of civil society is spatial. In the smallest barrio or community, individuals organize themselves around their needs, conscious of their rights as citizens. Excluded groups in their own environment weave a tightly-woven mesh of ties of loyalty and solidarity. This was the space in which discussion took place. It was here that actions were planned around a natural leadership outside the formal structures of domination. And this geopolitical dimension acquires even more meaning, when it is realized that it is exactly such an interwoven mesh of actions and discourses that permits and guarantees an organized civil society.

In the same way, the negative effects of the "Neo-liberal Packet", together with the loss of legitimacy of the political parties and the endemic corruption of the state apparatus, were later related to the two attempted military coups of 1992. Of these two attempted coups which had distinct ideological orientations, the first had been organized in the barracks by medium-ranking officers and, as such, had not particular commitment to the governments of AD. Moreover, it was related to sectors of civil
society and the emerging political parties of the left, strengthened by the decentralization of the elections of 1989.

In the face of such circumstances the crisis of governability deepened. The government lost support when the political parties in Congress, including the party of the government and its own economic organizations, tried to distance themselves from the neo-liberal discourse. An attempt was made to convert the government and its neo-liberal measures into the parties responsible for the crisis. Later on, candidates for the presidency in 1993 would develop a counter-discourse that opposed to any agreement with the IMF that implied market-based policies (García, G, and Roa, C. 1997, p.20). Nevertheless, two years later the government of Caldera would initiated the programme “Agenda Venezuela”, in compliance with IMF instructions.

Rey and Pabón (2000) indicate that the crisis of governability in the period 1989-1992 was not produced by an excessive concentration of power in the government, but rather due to the fact that the government adopted neo-liberal policies which were rejected by the majority of the population. Since the 1970s an increasingly neo-liberal political current had been developing which, came to propose the reform of the Constitution of 1961 in order to free it from its populist, socialist burden. A further proposal was the drastic diminution of state and governmental power. This current, even though it was always in the minority and its adepts mainly in the upper and middle classes, influenced the policies of the second presidency of Pérez (Rey and Pabón 2000, p.246).

The crisis of February 27th 1989 and the military coups of 1992 shattered the institutional cement of the party democracy. The same ‘democracy’ which had been considered by Washington during many years to be a model for Latin America. Even the most deeply rooted convictions were weakened by these events, such as, the supposed popular passivity and the control of institutionality over the military. The lack of trust the of the Venezuelan population in bipartisan democracy transformed itself into increasing levels of electoral abstention. Surveys undertaken in 1989 revealed the retreat from an rejection of politics, parties and institutions such as congress and the system of judicial power (López, M. and Lander, L. 1999, p.43).
Face by the significance and extent of these events, the leadership of the diverse corporate sectors were promote deep transformations in state-civil society relations. The unforeseen and explosive character of the 27th of February accelerated the putting into practice of some of the measures discussed and programmed by COPRE. By December of 1989, the first state governorship and mayoral elections had been held, and changes had been made to the suffrage laws.

These measures had already been implemented in other Latin American countries where civil society rested on a stronger network of relationships and had different economic and socio-political heritages from that of oil-dependent Venezuela. Nevertheless, they put in action a socio-political and institutional trend of the 20th century. Confronted by a crisis of representation, they acted as a means whereby the state could maintain control (Velásquez 1998, p.16). The direct elections of governor and mayors provoked change in the conduct of politics.

V.1.1 The beginnings of Political Decentralization: The First Governorship Elections of 1989

In order to analyze the governorship elections of 1989, this section begins by observing the changes in the party system inside the states with the emergence of MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) and the Causa R. These were two emergent minority parties of the left that won two governorships, MAS in the state of Aragua and the LCR in Bolívar, this latter located in the mining region of Guayana. In Carabobo a third new regional party called “Project Carabobo” triumphed in alliance with COPEI and MAS. This was linked to the industrial sectors of the region, and displaced the AD hegemony that had lasted for decades. In the state of Miranda (in the capital region) and the oil-wealthy state of Zulia, MAS participated in an alliance with COPEI (the social christian party). Aragua, Carabobo, Miranda and Zulia are located in the north-central and coastal regions, and have the highest percentages of the population on the electoral register (Table: 5.1).
The summary of the elections of December 1989 shows that of 20 governorships, AD achieved the majority in 11, COPEI in 6 + Proyecto Venezuela, MAS and LCR in one each (see the map of 1989). Under the centralized scheme all of the governors would have belonged to AD. However, in the majority of governorships won by AD, the winners were Pérez supporters, this helped to separate him even more from the machinery of his party (Sanoja 1998, p.160).

The reading of these first direct and popular elections brings up a number of different characteristics. For one thing, there was a personalization and a localization of the vote in the state and municipal environment, and an opening of new political spaces for the minority parties and for the formation of new oppositions.

In terms of the number of political parties and organizations that participated in the process were concerned, the states with the greatest number were Anzoátegui with 10, Carabobo with10, Miranda with 15, Yaracuy with 11 and Zulia with 15, which was where the COPEI-MAS alliance predominated. In the rest of the states the number oscillated between 4 and 9 new organizations and parties; Apure, Barinas, Falcón and Trujillo had the least numbers.

Another aspect arising from these elections was the high level of abstention, indicating that these first governorship and municipal elections did not create in the electorate the “civic enthusiasm” that they were supposed to. Until 1988 the level of abstention in national elections had been low; the average level of abstention in the six previous elections had been 9.8% (Molina 1995, p.30). From 1989 onwards abstention began to convert itself into the dominating characteristic, above all in the regional elections as will be shown in analysis later in this chapter, during the period of decentralization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Party - Alliance</th>
<th>Votes %</th>
<th>Electoral population %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aragua</td>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivar</td>
<td>La Causa R</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carabobo</td>
<td>Copei-MAS-P Carabobo</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>Copei-MAS</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulia</td>
<td>Copei-MAS</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Supremo electoral (CSE)
One of the reasons behind the high abstention was the separation, in time, of the Presidential elections from the regional – because Presidential tended to influence the voting intentions of the electorate. On the other hand, the regional elections were relatively new and the electoral procedures complicated: there were new electoral system, changes in the laws relating to suffrage, spatial electoral units that changed from election to election, the existence of distinct types of election (governor, mayor, councillors, parish councils), in some cases the electorate did not know the programmes of government of the candidates. These factors made the participation of the electorate more difficult.

Whilst abstention at the national level reached 54.84% (Table: 5.2), at the regional level it was even higher. The states of Miranda, Sucre, Carabobo, Lara Bolívar and the Federal District had the highest levels of abstention at 68.6%, whilst the lowest figures were from the states of Delta Amacuro, Nueva Esparta, Cojedes, Falcón, Barinas and Zulia. Those were regions where the bipartisan electoral machinery remained dominant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Total Abstention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DTO Federal</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivar</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucre</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carabobo</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Total: 54.8%</td>
<td>National Total: 54.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Total Abstention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delta Amacuro</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Esparta</td>
<td>42.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cojedes</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcón</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barinas</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulia</td>
<td>48.37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An additional factor was that the direct elections for mayor (linked to local spaces of decision and to proportional representation personalised by the selection of councillors) had been completely controlled by the traditional political parties, the AD and COPEI. In the whole country there were 269 mayors selected, and the party of government (AD) achieved 151 mayoralties, whilst COPEI got 105. Nevertheless, at this level the process was beneficial to the two parties of the left as well (MAS and LCR) which obtained 10 and 2 mayoralties respectively. As well, 38.4% of the candidates ran in coalitions, and diverse parties allied themselves in different combinations, of which in only two cases was the policy of alliance decisive for the
AD. The alliances in which COPEI took part were a determining factor in triumphs for 25 mayoralities, in 17 of which it participated in an alliance with the MAS (Kornbluth 1998, pp.49-52). The study of these alliances in the period of decentralization is an important key to an understanding of the fragmentation of the old party system during the formation of a new system of parties and the construction of a new hegemony.

**V.1.2 The disarticulation of the Democratic pact of 1961 and the Second Governorship Elections of 1992**

The second direct elections for governorships, mayoralities and municipal councils of 1992 were marked by the two attempted *coup d'etats*, the first in February led by the current President of the Republic, Hugo Chávez, and the second on the 27th of November a few days before the regional elections. Of these attempts, the coup that acquired notoriety in the political context was the first one. Despite the coup not achieving its proposed objectives, it aroused hope and enjoyed ample support from the sectors of the population which were demanding drastic solutions to the continuing deterioration of democracy and the poor performance of the government.

The movement MBR 200 (Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement 200) conspired in the bosom of the armed forces to overthrow the government and to establish a constitutional assembly as the legitimate basis for a new regime. The result was the coup attempt of the 4th of February 1992, directed by Chávez and other medium-ranking officers but with the additional support of some civilian left-wing groups. Despite the failure of the coup, it had broad support, and it revealed various things: a) the existence of divisions inside the military, b) the presence of military alliances with civilian groupings, and c) the growing disenchantment with electoral democracy. Chávez became the focus for these sentiments, as well as into the leader of the process undertaken. During his brief and memorable televised discourse in which he recognised the overthrow of the troops under his command “for now”31, left

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31 He spoke confidently, and without notes:
the promise of a movement which would grow and eventually triumph (Coronil 2000, p.37).

The 27th of November produced another attempted military coup. Just as the 4th February, however, the new uprising was an event foretold. Even the high command had warned at the beginning of that month that normality in the barracks was far from being realised and that there persisted a climate of barely-contained bad feeling. Moreover, the spectre of the social protests had broadened, both in terms of the sectors of the population that took part in them and in the new forms they had acquired, amongst which were the more spontaneous modes of action, such as the "Cacerolas"32 (The use by groups, protests or entire barrios and neighbourhoods of banging on pots and pans en masse to protest against the inaction of government) (Medina 2001, p.90).

"First I want to say 'good morning' to all the people of Venezuela, but this Bolivarian message is directed specifically to the courageous soldiers of the parachute regiment of Aragua and the tank regiment of Valencia.

Comrades: unfortunately, for the moment, the objectives that we had set ourselves have not been achieved in the capital. That is to say that those of us here in Caracas have not been able to seize power. Where you are, you have performed well, but now is the time to rethink. New possibilities will arise again and the country will be able to move definitively towards a better future.

So listen to what I have to say, listen to comandante Chávez who is sending you this message, and, please, think deeply. Lay down your arms, for in truth the objectives that we set out ourselves at a national level are not within our grasp.

Comrades, listen to this message of solidarity. I am grateful for your loyalty, for your courage, and for your selfless generosity; before the country and before you, I alone shoulder the responsibility for this Bolivarian military uprising. Thank you." (Gott 2000, p.p.70-71).

32 In the military pronouncement of 27th November 1992 there had been agreement and disagreement between those who commanded the action and the imprisoned plotters. The depth of these disagreements still has not been clarified to date, but the rank of the military plotters had risen in relation to the "Comacates" of the 4th of February. Once again, however, the military mobilization was insufficient and erratic, and for the second time the civilian population was left on the margins (Medina 2001, pp.91-92).
1992 also saw demands for constitutional reform return to a prominent place amongst the demands of the civilian population. Congress took on board the demands of the citizenry, but the proposals of the reformists were unable to overcome the obstacle constituted by the impeachment referendum in congress (at that moment this juridical procedure had initiated the removal of President Carlos Andrés Peréz from the presidency of the republic). In this way, the impossibility of reaching an agreement to overcome this obstacle converted the referendum into a symbolic representation of the whole idea of constitutional reform.

Overall, this situation contributed to the weakening of the AD party, and its subsequent losses in the elections of 1992. Meanwhile the policy of alliances between COPEI and MAS reached a peak and the sectarianism of the LCR appeared to be unstoppable, COPEI won 11 governorships (see the map of 1992) and 20 mayoralties, many of them through the support of MAS. AD saw its percentage of the vote diminish at the national level and in the majority of the states by nearly 9%, in comparison with 1989. COPEI saw its vote diminish in only four states (Anzoátegui, Aragua, Lara y Sucre) and throughout the country saw its vote rise from 31.9% to 35.4%; Zulia, Yaracuy, Carabobo, Mérida and Barinas being the areas of greatest vote increase. One of the most interesting results of these elections was the increase in the percentage of votes obtained by other parties such as the LCR and MAS in states such as Sucre, Aragua, Bolivar and the Federal District.

Table: 5.3 Comparison of the electoral results of 1989 and 1992 for AD and COPEI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>AD: '89 Elections</th>
<th>AD: '92 Elections</th>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>COPEI: '89 Elections</th>
<th>COPEI: '92</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monagas</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>Zulia</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apure</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>Yaracuy</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucre</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>Carabobo</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guárico</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>Mérida</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barinas</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>Barinas</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE).

Table: 5.4 Comparison of the electoral results of 1989 and 1992 between MAS and LCR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>MAS 89</th>
<th>92</th>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>La Causa R 89</th>
<th>92</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aragua</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>Dto. Federal</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucre</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>Bolivar</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazonas</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Amacuro</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>Anzoátegui</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>13.81%</td>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE).
The process of decentralization became orientated towards controlling the deep political crisis of the period 1989-1992. This was particularly noticeable in the importance given to the direct election of governors and mayors which had been introduced after the civil uprising of 1989, this sought to strengthen regional leaderships so as to dilute the conflicts of governability. Nevertheless, control was maintained by the party hegemony over traditional social democracy, even though the upsurge of new political actors and parties was prominent.

In spite of the re-election of some governors in 1992, in general terms the high levels of abstention were maintained. However, owing to the effects of the opening of new electoral spaces, the abstention level decreased by some 4% with respect to the previous elections. The electoral process of 1989 had generated the high levels of abstention, whilst that of 1992 tended to produce more participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>Total Abstention</th>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>Total Abstention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dto. Federal</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>Delta Amacuro</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>Amazonas</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carabobo</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>Nueva Esparta</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apure</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>Cojedes</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulia</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>Portuguesa</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucre</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>Yaracuy</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Total:</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE)

Within the party system, decentralization permitted emergent parties like LCR and Proyecto Carabobo to take advantage of regional and local arenas and break into the Venezuelan political scene, competing with the big parties. It also allowed the more established parties such as MAS succeeded in obtaining a greater regional and local presence (Amazonas, Aragua and Sucre), even though this was not repeated at the national level. It also meant that AD and COPEI, the political parties of traditional social democracy, and even MAS, were made more dependent on a system of alliances to protect their regional leadership. It was this latter that particularly displayed the weakness that the larger parties were beginning to experience.

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33 The COPEI-MAS alliance had taken place in five states, Anzoátegui, Barinas, Carabobo, Falcón and Monagas.
The elections for state governors and mayors provoked a regionalization and a municipalization of political life with particular characteristics, often very different from those that could be observed in the national environment and with profound implications for the new form of conceiving politics and democracy in Venezuela. This permitted the dilution and sectorization of social conflict, as reflected in the manner in which campaigns were structured and electoral circuits delimited, interrelating and utilising fragmenting mechanisms in the urban sectors. The new electoral system at the local and national levels had been made more complex. At the national level, the central power found itself confronted by a diversity of political actors, with which it would now have to negotiate and arrive at a consensus.

On the other hand, the legitimacy of the system was strengthened by the representativeness demonstrated by the re-elected governors and mayors, because the population were not resigned to simple choosing state and municipal authorities. The legitimacy won by the regional and municipal administrations had to put itself at the service of the improvement of the quality of services. This can be verified by the tendencies towards the re-election of governors and mayors at the end of their terms of office, which might be a reflection of a high level of satisfaction of the communities with their local and regional leaders (PNUD-BM 1999, p. 19). In some cases, such as Carabobo and Aragua negotiations with the national government would never have resulted in an effective transference of the competencies of health and the protection of minors, without the constant pressure which was exerted by the governors (De La Cruz 1995, pp. 10-12).

The mechanism for re-election foreseen by the law also had an impact on the system of parties, because it permitted the governors and mayors to be able to ‘de-link’ themselves more easily from the interests of the party elites. The law designated that local authorities had to give an account of themselves to their communities, and not to the party leadership. In this sense, the law provided for a greater political autonomy (Penfold 2000, p. 259).
The political crisis made the tasks assigned to these first regional and local authorities very difficult. On the other hand, relationships with the central power were very slow, complicated and, in some cases, non-existent; additionally many ministerial offices did not understand the mechanics of the new national regime, whereas others believed that they were only dealing with a passing phase. Moreover, owing to the political conflict, there had been no time for the regulation of the Organic Law of Decentralization and Transference of Competencies (Velásquez 1998, p.17).

Civil society was beginning to awaken after 40 years under the control of the political parties. For example, community development organizations, which had numbered only 48 in the whole country during the centralist period up to 1988, doubled in number between 1989 and 1993. The greatest number of these organizations were located in the capital of the republic. (Socsal, 1999). Another example of the emergent social forces of this period was the growth of organizations dedicated to the protection of human rights after the social crisis of 27th February. Immediately following these events the civil organization COFAVIC had been constituted, which acted to co-ordinate the families of the victims.

To conclude this section, it can be affirmed that the period 1989-1993 was a period of strong reactivation in the life of the country in all spheres: social, economic, military, judicial and electoral. The implementation of the structural adjustment programme, the social crisis of February 27th, the two coup attempts, the impeachment of President Carlos Andrés Pérez (itself an event without precedent in Venezuelan history), and the two sets of regional elections, all occurred in the space of a few years and were set in the framework of a retaking of governability but, this was to be within a new model with new actors, where the citizens themselves refused to be passive actors any longer.


Given the presidential crisis of May 1993, in which President Carlos Andrés Pérez was impeached, the national congress agreed, in fulfilment of the prevailing
constitutional norms to designate a president who would complete the constituted period from 1989-1994. The new government considered that, over and above guaranteeing the realization of the general elections of 1993, it had to ensure the definitive shift from a centralised regime to a decentralised one and it made this proposal into national policy, following which it was necessary to assure the definitive consolidation of the process of democratisation (Velásquez 1998, p.17).

The state became pro-active in the matter, and the short government of Velásquez accelerated and deepened the decentralizing dynamic through a number of measures:

- The designation of a high-ranking official within each ministry and autonomous institute to be in charge of aspects of decentralization linked to the areas of his/her office.
- The creation of intergovernmental mechanisms such as the Governmental Territorial Council (consisting of the president of the republic, ministers and governors), as a forum of discussion for the solution of problems related to the national and regional powers.
- The creation of the National Council of Mayors, consisting of the president, some ministers and one mayor from each state representing all the mayors of that state.
- The creation of the Council of Governments of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas.
- The acceleration and clarification of the transference of competencies to the states.
- The intervention of governors in the selection of national functionaries to ministries or autonomous institutes whose jurisdiction affects that governors’ state, in cases where offices remain vacant.
- The creation of the National Commission for Decentralization, formed by officials from each ministry who were charged with decentralization in their respective area.
- The creation of Regional Councils of Government, formed by the governor and mayors of each state.
- The creation of the Intergovernmental Fund for Decentralization (FIDES).
The establishment of the allocation to states and municipalities of 30% of the total sum collected by VAT (Value Added Tax) (Salamanca 1995, p.19).

In other words, this imbued government with a vision and a systemic framework for decentralization policies, to create a juridical and institutional infrastructure with the aim of making policy organic and fluid. Decentralization continued to be impelled from above, but through pressure that came from the base sectors of society, it also acted as a means to guarantee the broadening of democracy.

**V.2.1 The Fragmentation of the Party System**

The presidential elections of 1993 represented a significant rupture in the bipartisan dynamic of the Venezuelan political system because for the first time since 1958, a candidate (Rafael Caldera) not supported by the party machineries of AD or COPEI achieved electoral victory. Although it was a very close victory, with only 30.45% of the votes and within a climate of high abstention rates of 40%. Additionally, for the first time since 1968 a candidate of the left, Andrés Velásquez, obtained more than 20% of the vote. The electoral force of AD and COPEI, which in the elections of 1988 had achieved 92.84% of the total votes, collapsed to levels without precedent, thus signifying the collapse of bipartisanship and the re-appearance of fragmentation, or electoral multi-polarity. This occasion also marked the return of the worrying themes of electoral abstention and fraud.

In the elections for congress, electoral fragmentation also made its presence known even though the domination by AD and COPEI continued (Table: 5.6). These two parties continued to be respectively the first and second force in congress, but with a significantly reduced number of representatives than in past elections. The third most powerful faction in congress was the Convergencia (properly Convergencia-MAS) which comprised 24.4% of the total, the fourth was the LCR with 20.7%, whilst MAS came fifth with 10.9%. With such a panorama, it was natural that AD and COPEI renewed their pact, thereby accounting for 45.9% of congressional deputies between them. This was a very different situation to the accustomed one where the government could count on an absolute majority in both chambers, and where AD and COPEI between them could concentrate 80% of congressional positions.
Table: 5.6 Composition of Congress in 1993 - % of Deputies and Senators by party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Deputies % Votes</th>
<th>Deputies - No of seats</th>
<th>Senators % Votes</th>
<th>Senators - No of seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPEI</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causa R (LCR)</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergencia</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE)

The change in the patterns of politico-electoral behaviour and preferences reflected the crisis that was running through the traditional party organizations and through them the fundamental bases of the socio-political system. According to Kornblith, the prognosis that these changes would produce original and important tendencies can be divided into three central points:

- In the democratic arena there was a dramatic growth in new organizing options and a redefinition of the relations between political parties, together with the appearance of new and different groupings within civil society.

- Outside of the democratic ambit there was a certain revaluing of authoritarian, militaristic or revolutionary options.

- In an intermediate zone between the other two, there was also a replanting of personalist options based in calls for a plebiscite (Kornblith 1998, p.179).

In his reading of the process Kornblith, glimpsing what was happening towards the end of Caldera’s government, saw the development of the military/revolutionary option together with the emergence of organizations within civil society.

In terms of the role played by the process of decentralization, Molina Vega affirms that it generated the emergence of a new political leadership which was largely autonomous from the party beaurocracies, given that they enjoyed direct public support. The importance of this was that it nourished the personalification of politics. Already by 1993, three of the official candidates owed their popular support to their performance as governors or mayors (Molina 1993, p.31).
The constitutional period of President Caldera (1993-1998) started with a profound fiscal and financial crisis, which according to the reports of the Central Bank, implied that for the year 1994 the injection of state resources into the banking system would be equivalent to ten percent of national income. The financial cost that this represented for the treasury severely limited the economic capacity of the country within an international context where the policies of the multilateral organizations towards the Non-West were hegemonic. Despite the fact that Caldera triumphed with explicit promises that he would pursue a model distinct from that promoted by the multilateral financial organizations, after two years of erratic attempts to define an economic policy, he announced the implementation of the "Venezuelan agenda" a diminished version of the Gran Viraje of Carlos Andres Pérez (López y Lander 1999, p.41)

This new economic policy of economic adjustment and opening seemed to give a certain direction to the economy for a couple of years and opened up a possible path forward, it imploded, however, with the fall in oil prices in 1998 which ended the climate of optimism and accentuated the social crisis, inequality and poverty, causing radicalization of calls for a new political change.

In the same vein as had occurred in the economy, the electoral promises of President Caldera were not kept. In the institutional sphere the continued deterioration of the principal institutions of the state and the resulting deligitimation of the political system were not solved despite a certain climate of political peace. His electoral pledge to produce profound transformations in the powers of the state through constitutional reform was repeatedly postponed. One of the obstacles acting against progress on any profound reform initiative was the alliance the government made, although never in formal terms, with the AD party (who were the largest opposition group in the Congress), which was maintained throughout the term of office of the government. And AD were, of course, the defender of the status quo within the political system (López and Lander 1999, p.43)
V.2.2 The Third Governors Elections 1995

The third regional and local elections of December 1995 closed the cycle of re-election of the first governors and mayors who had been elected by the direct popular vote. There were legal restrictions which stopped a governor or a mayor putting themselves forward for a third period and many had been re-elected in 1992. According to De la Cruz (1995) this first generation of governors and mayors had been forced to carry out a long struggle with central government to speed up the transfer of competences (De la Cruz 1995, p.p.10-12). These transferences relied upon the granting of new resources without which it was impossible to contemplate any sort of decentralization process.

In 1995 the definitive structure of the Intergovernmental Decentralization Fund (FIDES by its Spanish acronym) was established. This is an autonomous government service, affiliated to the Ministry of Interior Relations, whose fundamental mission is to give financial assistance to the processes of decentralization and regional development.

It was within this framework of advances in administrative decentralization which had permitted the financing of some regional leaderships, that the regional and municipal elections of 1995 were held. COPEI performed very badly in these elections and AD were able to win back much of the political space which they had lost. The Social democrat party won 11 governorships (Amazonas, Anzoátegui, Apure, Bolívar, Cojedes, Guárico, Mérida, Monagas, Táchira and Trujillo), one in alliance with COPEI, the Delta Amacuro territory and the two mayorships of the Federal District. It displaced Causa R in Bolívar and in the mayorship of the Libertador municipality. In Amazonas, Anzoátegui, Monagas, Táchira and Guárico they made alliances with regional parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>Regional Alliance</th>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>No. of parties per region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amazonas</td>
<td>AD - MIDEA</td>
<td>Amazonas</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anzoátegui</td>
<td>AD - CRECE</td>
<td>Cojedes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monagas</td>
<td>AD - OCIM</td>
<td>Monagas</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Táchira</td>
<td>AD - OTI</td>
<td>Táchira</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guárico</td>
<td>AD - RA</td>
<td>Carabobo</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE).
If to this is added the fact that the AD triumphed in 60% of the mayoralities of the country, because during the period of Caldera they had oiled the regional machinery much through the expulsion of *perecistas* (Carlos Andrés Pérez followers within the party) as with the interventions in sections and the direct control over the organizational secretary in each state capital (Sanoja 1998, p.162).

It is important to underline the growth in the number of regional parties and alliances that took part in these regional elections in comparison with those of 1992. This effectively signifies that the party system had begun to diversify and operate at a more local level in the service of regional interests, thus opening more and more the opportunities for participation inside the party system, an essential element for the strengthening of democracy.

MAS experienced a decrease in its total percentages in these elections, from 13.8% in 1992 to 10.4% in 1994, but won control of two new states, Lara and Portuguesa, in alliance with the Convergencia and COPEI. By contrast, the LCR increased its vote from 8.0% in 1992 to 12.7%, winning the governorship of Zulia and losing that of Bolivar and the mayoralty of Municipio Libertador, although it came in second place in four more states (Table: 5.7A and map of 1995).

In these elections of 1995 one of the more outstanding characteristics was the decline of the movement headed by the president of the republic, the Convergencia Nacional, which saw itself displaced to fifth with 8.6% of the valid votes, and made creditor or owner of the governorship of Yaracuy, confronted by the strength of COPEI. In such a way the alternative from amongst those loyal to the system evaporated; leaving the road clear for the emergence of more radical alternatives (Medina 2001, p.99).

| Table: 5.7A Comparison of the results of the elections of 1992 and 1995 between MAS and LCR |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| **STATES** | **MAS 92** | **95** | **STATES** | **La Causa R 92** | **95** |
| Aragua | 56.2% | 32.2% | Zulia | 0.0% | 27.6% |
| Lara | 31.3% | 28.8% | Total Nacional | 8.0% | 12.7% |
| Portuguesa | 24.8% | 22.2% | STATES | Convergencia |
| Sucre | 48.2% | 39.8% | Yaracuy | 0% | 38.1% |
| National Total | 13.8% | 10.4% | National Total | 0% | 8.6% |

Source: Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE)
Abstention rates for these elections (Table: 5.7B) returned almost to the levels of 1989 (54.8%) at 50.7% in 1992 and 54.0% in 1995. The Federal District, Aragua and Miranda abstention rates of between 60 and 69%, and it was in these states, as has been indicated before, in which the highest percentages of the electorate were concentrated. Apathy towards politics made itself strongly evident in this electoral year, this can be understood as a consequence of an aversion still held towards the old modes of political production which stood above the people and their interests. In fact the regional results were in general terms, a reversal towards bipartisanship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>Abstention Totals</th>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>Abstention Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dto. Federal</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>Cojedes</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>62.25%</td>
<td>Delta Amacuro</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aragua</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>Nueva Esparta</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carabobo</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>Amazonas</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>Total Nacional:</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE).

Whilst it is true that the elections for governors and mayors broke open the field dominated by the party cúpulas, they complicated the electoral process34, (i.e. the increased complexity of voting and of the scrutiny system and the increased possibilities of fraud). 75% of the electors of 1993 and 1995 abstained, but the crisis was predestined for the elections of 1995. In the repeated elections President Caldera, who two years before had won on only 20% of the possible vote, had failed to implement the constitutional reforms which civil society had set out following the events of 1992. The elections of 1993 and 1995 oblige, therefore, a serious reflection on the degree to which abstention has to be seen as a rejection of the illegitimacy of the political system and as a repudiation of a false ritual of the legitimation of power.

34 In 1998 the reform of the electoral system was supported by an ever more vigorous current of public opinion which was set against a system which permitted voting but not choice. According to Olavarría, the legal reforms which regulated suffrage showed continuous evidence of the same unique proposition, the preservation of the power to choose for the parties and in particular their elites. The option which the parties therefore decided on resulted in the complicated hybrid system of a single vote with party slates for the elections of 1993 (El Nacional 1998).
On the other hand, this can also be considered as a very important stage in the evolution of decentralized democracy in Venezuela. With political decentralization, a lessening of the principal problems that confronted centralised democracy was achieved. As governability was gradually restored, the political parties achieved a degree of 're-legitimization'. Nevertheless, the traditional party system was wounded by the promotion of multi-partisanship or party fragmentation, and as a direct consequence, there arose new regional parties and actors that changed the correlations of political power in the interior of the regional legislative organs of government. Additionally, economic decentralization advanced with the creation and implementation of normatives such as FIDES and the Law of Economic Assignations (LAE).

Another aspect of great importance in this stage of decentralization from 1993 to 1998, which is referred to here as the attenuated dominion of neo-liberalism, is the importance of multi-lateral investment at state and municipal level. This invoked, for example, the human network which was structured between CORDIPLAN (the ministry for planning) and the ministry for home affairs, along with the multilateral lending banks (BID, the World Bank and the UNDP). The association of governors and the executive and co-executive organisms were key factors in the substantial improvement of leadership of the multi-lateral portfolio and its achievements. In this sense, it is appropriate to note that the theme of fulfilment and execution of multi-lateral projects passed into forming part of the agenda of the mayoral and governmental conventions (UNDP-WB-IDB 1999, p.114).

V.2.3 Map of the Distribution of Resources from the Central Government to the States 1998

1998 saw an important political period closes, that of bipartisanship and a phase of decentralization (1989-1998) Therefore, it is interesting to compare the spatial distribution of resources from central government to the states in this period of decentralization with that of centralism.

A quick reading of the map of 1998 (Map: 5.4) shows a spatial pattern to the assignation of resources by the central government to the states (intergovernmental
Map 5.4.

Consolidation of resources for investment: from central government to the states. 1998

- **0-4%**
- **4-8%**
- **8-12%**

Situated Constitucional, Fides, Ley de Asignaciones Economicas.

Source: Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
transfers\textsuperscript{35}, which is very similar to that during the period of centralism (see the map of 1987 in Chapter IV). This signifies that in the entire 11 years from 1987 to 1998, and in the 9 years since it was first decreed, decentralization in Venezuela had advanced very little in modifying the spatial pattern which privileged the Central-Northern-Coastal region to the detriment to the rest of the national territory.

More concretely, for 1998 the same number of states remained (10), which in 1987 had received assignations from the central government of between 4 and 12%. Only the Federal District and Zulia received between 8 and 12%, whereas Miranda, which had been in this higher group, now fell into the second category. In this second category were Lara (Central-Western region), Carabobo, Aragua and Miranda (Central-Northern region), Anzóategui and Monagas (North-Eastern region). It was in this last region that there arose a change in the spatial pattern of 1987, because the state of Sucre gave way to Monagas, which had improved its economic status through the advent of the ‘Oil Opening’. Bolívar in the Guayana region also received assignations from the central government of between 4 and 12%.

\textbf{V.2.4 Multi-party Politics and the New Hegemony in 1998}

In the regional elections and those of the national congress that were held on November 6\textsuperscript{th} 1998 the universally plural political representation that had been initiated in the elections of 1993 was accentuated. This juncture was to have a significant impact in the electoral history of Venezuela because it articulated the political actors of a non-neo-liberal persuasion around the so-called Patriotic Pole (PP). The Patriotic Pole, which had been constructed to support the candidature of Hugo Chávez Frías, was to become integrated with the Movimiento V República (MVR), the MAS and Patria Para Todos (the PPT, an offshoot of the LCR) as its principal allies, as well as other parties and sectors of organized civil society.

\textsuperscript{35} Intergovernmental transfers refer to the Situado Constitucional, FIDES and the Law of Economic Spatial Assignments under the denomination of the consolidation of central governmental resources to the states.
The counterpart of the Polo Patriótico would be represented by leaders who had risen from the process of political decentralisation which had begun in 1989: the candidature of Irene Sáez, who had been mayoress of one of the richest municipalities of Caracas and who had founded the Movimiento Con Irene, was one such. Another was the candidature of the ex-mayor of Caracas, Claudio Fermín, who had also been a presidential candidate for the AD party in alliance with the Partido Renovación (an offshoot of the AD). Lastly, there was the ex-governor of Carabobo, Henrique Salas Römer, with the conversion of Proyecto Carabobo into Proyecto Venezuela. These different parties were to form the so-called Polo Democrático, which was of a neo-liberal character.

According to Margarita López Maya, an investigator of UCV (Central University of Venezuela), the candidature of Hugo Chávez Frías acted as a focus for the strongest resistance to the neo-liberal project. The rest of the candidates were emerging alternatives from the process of decentralization, which had been important in the formation of a new leadership which was more personalist and with distinctly caudillista characteristics. Irene, Salas Römer and Claudio Fermín: arose from this route out of the politics of decentralization that were based around the personalities of the leaders whatever successful management experiences they were able to demonstrate (El Nacional, 21/12/97, pp.1-16).

This is confirmed by Vries writing in early 1998, “Venezuela has been atomized into multiple spaces of power, each of which aspire to be the focus for a new integrationist project. This project has penetrated more deeply with the advance of decentralization and the process of personalizing the vote. The same thing has happened in civil society, in the political parties and even in congress, where nobody now has an assured vote and all are therefore continually obliged to seek strategic alliances” (El Nacional, 1/4/98).

This process of atomisation was reflected in a series of important events, amongst which were:
a) A change in the ideological-personal paradigm of the principal leaders of the country, for example in the negotiations and alliances between Caldera and Teodoro Petkoff.
b) The taking of power by the provinces within FEDECAMARAS (the federation of chambers of industry and commerce);
c) The founding of the Movimiento Apertura by Carlos Andrés Pérez, thus initiating the dismembering of social democracy;
d) The aspirations of Salas Römer, who had led COPEI, to stand as an independent candidate without party support;
e) The division between the LCR and the PPT;
f) The exit of Claudio Fermín from the AD in a dispute with the party president;
g) The participation of Chavéz as a candidate for the MVR (Movement for the Fifth Republic);
h) The transformation of the supreme electoral court into an organization which could adapt itself to this process of atomisation.

These facts conditioned the electoral process of 1998. This political conflict the anti-party thesis and the anti-politics of Venezuela were to reach their maximum expression. The political importance of the party leaderships was continually reduced, as much through their rejection by the majority of people as through the confrontations within and between the apparatuses, fractures and divisions of the parties. In other words, the people were withdrawing their support for the "Pacto de Punto Fijo", and for bipartisanship, in such a way that electoral politics became orientated against the parties and gave rise to anti-party formulas.

Moreover in perspective, the process was constituted as a dispute in which the fractionalising of the political world would be imposed. The atomization into multiple spaces of power had broken a pattern of socio-political organization which was symbolised by clientelism as an instrument of power and by the ‘partyocracy’ as a form of ideology. This rupture generated a profound confusion over which scheme would substitute for the previous model because of the imperative of finding a new social contract would allow for co-existence of the interests of each group.
In such circumstances, the elections of November 6th took place with wide electoral participation. The index of total active electoral participation was 54.4% (whereas in the elections of 1995 it had been only 46.1%), which represented an appreciable increase in participation. The closeness of the presidential elections made these elections more attractive because they were perceived as a type of mediation between the political forces of the candidates for the presidency.

Two principal political forces emerged from the elections: the Polo Patriótico (MVR, MAS and the PPT) and the AD. The AD and the MVR went on to became the two primary electoral forces in the country as a consequence of achieving together more than 43.2% of the valid votes for each legislative house. They were followed by Proyecto Venezuela with 12.28%, and COPEI which fell to fourth place with 10.68% of the deputies. The national vote for the other parties for the lower house were: MAS 8.72%, PPT 3.73%, LCR 3.09%, the Apertura 1.72%, the Convergencia 2.4% and Irene 1.48% (El Universal 11/9/98). These results indicated above all the plural character of the judgement of the electorate.

In addition, a new composition in the framework of state governance arose from this elections. The principal political groupings that constituted the Polo Patriótico (the MVR, PPT and the MAS) reached agreements to select communal candidates for the regional elections. As a result, the candidates for the PP succeeded in elections in 8 states (Anzoátegui, Aragua, Barinas, Guárico, Lara, Portuguesa, Vargas y Zulia), and moreover the alliance achieved second place in 10 of the remaining 13 governorships (see the map of 1995). It has to be noted that, as the product of political decentralization, the number of regional political parties was greater in some states (Aragua, Anzoátegui, Nueva Esparta y Zulia: Table: 5.8) than others, indicating a new tendency towards regionalization in the party system. Additionally, there was also a tendency among different sectors of society to participate with a preference for parties that worked through non-governmental organizations, as could be observed in Aragua and Anzoátegui.
The AD party equalled the Polo Patriótico in the number of governorships, winning in Amazonas, Apure, Bolivar, Cojedes, Mérida, Monagas, Sucre and Trujillo. Nevertheless, the notable reduction in its vote between 1995 (34.5%) and 1998 (28.3%), and the fact that the AD lost control of 4 governorships, cast doubt on the apparent success of the party. COPEI took control in Táchira and in the Delta Amacuro in alliance with MERI (a regional party) and maintained the governorships of Miranda and Falcón. COPEI also saw a reduction in its overall vote from 21.3% in 1995 to 15.2% (Table: 5.9), nearly tying with MVR which achieved third place with 14.3% of the total votes at the gubernatorial level. The incumbents were re-elected for the Convergencia in Yaracuy and Proyecto Venezuela in Carabobo (Table: 5.10).
The results of the regional elections and those for the national congress led, in the brief space of a month, to the adversaries of the Polo Patriótico constructing an alternative pole for the formation of a presidential campaign. They argued that two-thirds of the country had demonstrated themselves to be against the candidates and the proposals of Chávez Frías, who, as the central theme of his programme of government, had adopted the idea of a profound reform of the state through a constitutional assembly (López and Lander 1999, p.47). As an alternative to this, Salas Römer proposed radical change through the deepening and broadening of decentralization. Proyecto Venezuela, thereafter joined, the self-denominated Polo Democrático in alliance with the traditional bipartisan bloc some five days before the elections of the 6th of December, after a series of manoeuvrings and negotiations directly contradictory to party loyalties.

Irrespective of these manoeuvrings, the electoral results of the 6th of December gave Chávez Frías a wide margin of victory, winning in 18 of the 24 Federal entities. These results produced an accentuated polarization (96.1%) in which the Polo Patriótico won more than 50% of the votes, whilst electoral participation increased by 9%, an increase in the total number of votes in the order of 1,103,703 (López and Lander 1999, p.48).

V.2.5 Civil Society in a Decentralized Democracy

Notions of civil society and political decentralization began to achieve some force in the Venezuelan social and political context during the decade of the 1990s, to the extent that they revealed the distinctive place that political participation and decentralization would come to occupy in the constitution of 1999. The experimental changes that had taken place since the first years of the 1980s permitted civil society to begin to play an important role in the process of democratisation that began in 1989.

As was indicated in Chapter IV, civil society put the case of electoral reform as well as that of political autonomy from the spaces of municipal power and state power, in addition to the general questioning of the role of the political parties. Both projects
sought to modify the limits of the monopoly power that the parties exerted in the spaces of local power. The priority assigned by both sets of actors to political decentralization would modify the initial proposal of the multilateral organizations which had given greater importance to administrative decentralization. This process would culminate, as previously indicated, with the complete rupture of the social contract of 1961 and the construction of a far more participatory civil society.

For this reason Virtuoso (1996) indicates that what was being produced in Venezuela was an investment in the conception and understanding of the project of society because the relationships between civil society and local or regional space deals with reconstructing revolving around a new conception of the public. In thus characterizing this investment and thereby emphasizing the importance of the local in politics, Virtuoso says that central planning from above to below has given place to localized planning from below to above (Virtuoso 1996, pp.146-149). He does not, however, observe that the manner of conceiving the public and the local is also rooted in the political. As has been noted previously when touching on the account of the uprising of the 27th of February, the “El Caracazo”.

Allen (1999) commenting on Foucault, Arendt and others, has noted that power is produced by the joint action of people in demanding a common proposal. Power is rooted in mutual action and when it is not sustained in this manner, it disappears. Mobilization and association is the formation of a common will towards the enrichment of public life and the obtaining of benefits for all of the associated, especially in popular life. Public spaces are emplacements for collective mobilization, which is to say emplacements of power, where people use expressive resources to make their voices heard and which are not directed towards the pursuit of sectoral interests, but rather more towards the attainment of scenarios where all can be beneficiaries (Allen 1999, pp.109-113).

Venezuelan civil society had orientated its action towards improving the instrumentality of power and the pursuit of the benefits of sectoral and institutional interests and so forth, to the detriment of other individuals and spaces that were collectively less well organized. According to Levine (2002) civil society during the 1980s was made up of groups that were organized on a national basis, as well as
numerous regional and local associations \(^{36}\) (Levine 2002, p.252). The most developed organizations of civil society and those with greatest power were the neighbourhood associations which had high levels of participation amongst the middle and the upper classes, both of which were seeking more access and space in the process of democratisation.

Nevertheless, in the period of decentralized democracy mobilizations played a dominant role. According to López Maya, in the eleven years between October 1989 and September 2000 there were a total of 8,355 protests in the country which represented an average of two protests daily, including weekends and holidays. The data shows a tendency towards protest activities which peaked between the years of 1991 and 1994 (corresponding to the political crisis resulting from the impeachment of President Pérez), when the average was 2.75 protests daily. A further peak occurred during the first two years of the Chávez administration between 1999 and 2000, with a daily average of 2.8 protests (López Maya 2002, p.202).

On the other hand, during the second government of Caldera the number of NGOs multiplied, along with multilateral financing of social development \(^{37}\). This implies

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36 A short list could include the following: human rights organizations, neighborhood associations, feminist and ecological groups, cooperatives, local church (including the new organizations of the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches), regional and local cultural associations (including literary groups, theatres, orchestras, musical groups, dance groups and folkloric associations), a wide range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in education, research of the provision of social services across the length and width of the country, political parties and local electoral movements, new business associations and private foundations, together with federations and other principal associations that promote co-ordination and common action between all of those mentioned above (Levine 2002, p.252).

37 According to the database of REVISA (the Venezuelan network of social information for action) there were 931 organizations working in the development of social programmes in 1999. The spatial distribution of all development organizations for 1999 shows the heaviest concentration in the following states: Zulia (167), Monagas (105), Federal District (93), Mérida (68), Miranda and Lara (61). Followed by a middle group with the following distribution: Yaracuy (47), Portuguesa (40), Barinas (36), Guárico (35), Anzoátegui and Trujillo (31). Finally, those with the smallest numbers of organizations were: Sucre and Falcón (27), Bolívar (23), Delta Amacuro (17), Carabobo (13), Nueva
that there were effectively two overlapping structures of civil society. The hegemonic change incorporated new forms of association in the political environment such as the Bolivarian movements or circles (which will be examined in more detail later on). In such a way a variety of forms of association can be distinguished in the social and political framework that has existed in Venezuela since the beginnings of the decade of the 90s. The only question that remains is whether all of these types of association supported a vertical form of the instrumentalization of power or, if on the contrary, they helped to reactivate the notion of public space.

The reactivation of public space would imply that civil society, its social movements, groups and networks became bit by bit less tied to the state and the control of the political parties. Nevertheless, Levine (2002) indicates that Venezuelan civil society seems to be more inclined towards participation in political parties than in social movements per se. According to him, the legacy of 30 years of party intermediation had made the creation of an autonomous civil society problematic. Whilst it is doubtless true to say that civil society (and its component groups and networks) is actually far less tied to state and party control than before, it is in no sense of the word autonomous. These movements are still vulnerable to penetration and co-option by political parties competing for resources and space within the political system (Levine 2002, p.260).

**V.2.5.1 Movements of Opinion**

Opinion-forming movements of civil society during the decade of the 1990s had many resources. They were rooted in a general context within which there was an inclination towards organization which gave them sufficient flexibility and innovation. Moreover, there were among them audacious and creative leaders. All of this permitted a change of terrain and their re-emergence in other spaces, if they were defeated in one particular form (Levine and Crisp 1999, p.17). Nevertheless, the majority of these civil society groups were centralized, with bases in the capital of the republic.

Esparta (12), Aragua (11), Apure and Amazonas (10), Vargas (5) and Táchira (1) (SOCSAL, Portafolio Social, 1999).
One of the best examples of these middle class movements is *Queremos Elegir* (we want to choose). This was founded in 1991 by the promoters of the School of Neighbours (*Escuela de Vecinos*) and was orientated towards the promotion of electoral reform and citizen initiatives towards the strengthening of voter education. Their political programme was directed towards the promotion of the institutionalisation of personalized vote (uninominality) in the elections for offices of popular representation.

The impact of these movements in recent political life has been notable and their influence over the creation of public opinion has been supported by the media which has effectively made them the representatives of civil society. The power of these movements, although it is not often recognised as a form of power, lies in their role as negotiator and generator of political incentives. The electoral alliances of 1998 were characterized by the manoeuvrings of the Polo Democrático in pursuit of a separation of the state and municipal elections; in separating the elections they hoped to re-affirm control over local power, change the electoral panorama and obtain advantages over the *Polo Patriótico*. One of the organizations of civil society that most demonstrated disagreement with this was *Queremos Elegir*.

In the opinion of this movement, “to move these regional elections forward a few weeks puts this electoral level at the mercy of the interests involved in the relationships between candidates and parties. It would diminish the weight of the local and regional, and it would be tainted and determinably influenced by the presidential candidates campaigning at the local level. Moreover, it would ensure that the regional results would be used to seek favour for specific presidential options, which is far from desirable. It must be taken into account that the objectives are to simplify the organization of the process, to diminish the annual costs, to make voting and scrutiny simpler, to avoid the influence of the national over the regional and thus to consolidate the process of regional and municipal decentralization. (El Nacional, 20/4/98)” Other organizations of Venezuelan civil society that present more or less the same characteristics are:
1) **FUNDAPATRIA** (Foundation for the Defence of the National Patrimony). This organization was created in 1995 and from the cultural, intellectual, artistic, scientific and economic sectors of the country. In 1998 the organization presented a document “Profile of the country and government for Venezuela”, which had as its aim the orientation of the country towards the consolidation of sustainable development and growth. Both in terms of the economy as in social programmes. In principle the document supported political reform and re-affirmed the popular will over the state and the discrete organs of society (El Nacional 22/11/98).

2) The **CESAP** group is one of the largest NGOs in Venezuela and at the moment is involved in more than 100 community projects in the popular sector. According to the president of this organization, the tendency of the social policy of the government is centralist and assistance-based. Decentralization is a vital element in making social policies effective and efficient, CESAP proposes community participation as an alternative that might evade the rupturing of the social fabric of society by contributing towards the creation of people capacity to generate changes and providing opportunities for them to develop their potential. Three basic units have to be reconstructed: The family, the school and the community (El Nacional 25/02/01).

3) The **Primero de Justicia** group arose as an organization of the neo-liberal tendency of civil society and was composed by young people of around 30 years of age, so-called ‘yuppies’. This civil organization was founded in 1992 to promote the citizens right to justice. Organizations such as this, which appear in principle to constitute organizations of civil society, have in fact penetrated into the structure of political society. For the elections of 2000, for example Primero de Justicia participated as a political organization presenting three candidates in the state of Miranda in the capital region. In these elections it won three mayoralties: Chacao, Baruta and Hatillo, which are areas of predominantly middle-class and upper-class inhabitants of the Federal District and it also won five seats in the national assembly (El Universal 1/12/00).

4) **PROVEA** (*Programa Venezolano de Acción y Educación en Derechos Humanos*) documents affairs related to human rights, and leads action and campaigns
about human rights. The Network of Support for Justice and Peace is an independent citizen movement that monitors human rights, above all at a local level. The point of departure during the 1990s for the creation and struggle of all these parties dedicated to the protection of human rights was the “El Caracazo” of the 27th of February. Because of the magnitude and characteristics of this social mobilization described above, the security forces of the state had been given carte blanche to act in whatever way necessary to contain the uncontrollable mobilization that menaced private property, without the least fear of any consequences. In the immediate aftermath of these events the civil organization COFAVIC (Comite de Familiares de las Victimas del 27) was founded to aid the families of the victims.

The great majority of the human rights organizations appeared on the national scene in order to defend the fundamental rights of citizens contained in the Constitution and the law. They denounce abuses and demand greater public and police responsibility, they are also concerned with the situation in prisons and the problems of public security as well. Other organizations have dedicated themselves to the problems associated with the transparency of the electoral processes, such as for example is the case with the Network of Watchers (Red de Veedores) of the Andrés Bello Catholic University and the Network of National Observers (Red de Observadores Nacionales), which is comprised of among other organizations, Momento de la Gente (Moment of the People), Pro Calidad de Vida (For Quality of Life), Dale al Voto (Put It To the Vote) and Liderazgo y Visión (Leadership and Vision).

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38 For the year 1999, the database of REVISA (the Venezuelan Network of Social Information for Action) made a census of 48 organizations dedicated to civil and human rights. This represented 5.15% of the total of organizations dedicated to social development in Venezuela, of which 28 were created during the period of centralization (1989-1998). The spatial pattern of human and civil rights organizations is as follows: The states of Apure, Delta Amacuro, Falcón, Sucre, Nueva Esparta, Táchira, Yaracuy and Vargas have none, the Federal District has 11, Zulia 10, Monagas 4, Lara, Miranda and Guárico 3, Amazonas, Portuguesa, Barinas, Bolívar and Trujillo 2, Anzoátegui, Mérida, Carabobo and Aragua 1. In Amazonas they are orientated towards the support of respect for indigenous rights (SOCSAL, Portafolio Social 1999).
V.3 Third Stage – Institutional transformations and Change in Party Political Hegemony (1999-2000)

As has been indicated previously, from 1998 onwards a new political force consisting broadly of the Polo Patriótico, led by President Hugo Chávez and with the MVR for its base, took power. The change of power took institutionality as its guiding principle – respecting and maintaining all public rights and constitutional guarantees.

This new political movement outlined, as a first stage, the hegemonic conduct of the Venezuelan state followed by the progressive promotion of changes to the other structures that comprised the political system. The political proposal has been that democracy continue, but that it should change its course through the proposal of a new social contract.

This clearly showed the intentions of the new hegemonic movement to incorporate into the political debate the three most controversial points concerning the process of democratisation now under way in Latin America:

* The defence of the welfare state against its neoliberal critics,
* The debate over communitarianism and liberalism, and
* The development of participatory democracy rather than the democracy of elites.

These three points have been referred to in chapter I and, without doubt, they cover the expectations of the debate over the politics of the future and the process of democratisation.

In order to energize the process of discussion between the different political actors, organized civil society and the new social movements, the new hegemonic bloc proposed a constituent assembly in order to reconstruct the republic. To this end a consultative referendum was called and a new Constitution was drawn up in 1999 with the participation of civil society, groups of electors and individuals. A consensual referendum followed this, and later an election to re-legitimize the public powers, president, congress, governors and mayors.
V.3.1 The New Context of the Mobilization of Democracy

The process of democratisation expresses the relationships of power and in this sense is also the field of permanent resistance in the context of the diversity of civil society. This signifies that it is the generative source of conflicts which fundamentally revolve around discourses about the values of equality, liberty, collectively, solidarity, diversity and participation between social actors and the state. Social actors pursue the deepening of the content of these values through democratic mobilization in the terrain of civil society, so as to open new spaces of citizen articulation.

Citizen associations will determine the discourse which achieves the bringing together, within its own environment, of the aspirations of civil society so far as democracy is concerned. When the power of mobilization is greater than "the law of government", this can lead to a process that can change democratic institutionality (Morgan Quero 2002, pp. 72-75). Democratic institutionality is the contract between the sovereign and the delegates who come to represent its power. This is formally expressed in the Constitution and laws of a country. This institutionality rules and delimits political differences, as well as contemplating the rights that have been conquered by means of the resistance of civil society. Moreover, it assumes responsibilities, such as the norms of its own preservation and change, in a manner such that it would be possible to submit them to ongoing reform.

Without a doubt these norms, rights and responsibilities are not always respected by governments, as happened in Venezuela with the demands of civil society for the reform of the Constitution of 1961. In spite of having lost much of their effectiveness, the articulation of the political actors around the original structures of conciliatory democracy meant that such demands had been postponed by all the governments since 1989. Nevertheless, with the wearing down of institutionality and the constitution of a new contract opposed to that which had controlled the political system since 1958, the co-ordinates of the game were thrown over and the process of democratisation took another road.
In the Venezuelan case, the reform of political decentralization was initially implemented to strengthen democratic institutionality and to resolve the lack of representativeness. However, the violent mobilizations of the population in 1989 disarticulated the mechanisms of consent and the two coup attempts of 1992 weakened the government so profoundly that the political and corporative elites, under renewed pressure from civil society, began discussions on constitutional reform.

Kornblith (1998) points out that constitutional reform was first outlined in 1992 and thereafter repeatedly postponed, in spite of the insistence of different sectors and personalities. There was agreement on the necessity of renovating the political system by means of constitutional reform, but this agreement could not count on sufficient force to modify the political framework in the direction proposed by the coup leaders (Kornblith 1998, pp.104-109). The discourse of the coup plotters of 4th February took constitutional reform as their ‘battle-flag’, and proposed the implementation of a constituent assembly that would give rise to the cancellation of the Constitution of 1961.

This context of the opening of spaces of power that had hitherto been closed to participation, of the drawing closer of citizens to their representatives, and of the rupture of the institutional pact, led to not only the fragmentation of parties and that which went with them, but also the emergence of public discussion and the mobilization of civil society. In public discussion resides that essential part of democracy which projects civil mobilization and induces a permanent presence of civil society in political decision-making.

Civil society had manifested in different ways its lack of consent to the contract of conciliation of 1961. This was manifested through abstention and a refusal to allow the substitution of electoral bipartisanship for representative democracy. Civil society also proposed the revision of some of the terms of the contract without negating others, as happened with political decentralization in 1989. Finally, there was a demand for the devolution of delegated powers, or at least part of them, to popular sovereignty, as was the case with the constituent assembly of 1999. Mires states that devolution is the act where society constitutes itself as civil (Mires 1996, p. 145).
Whilst the old hegemony that still controlled the legislature continued to propose point-by-point reforms to the Constitution without rescinding the contract as a whole, the patriotic bloc demanded the devolution of powers. In every case, this came to signify that in the field of the social, a political space was arising which did not belong exclusively to the state, because it was returning to its legitimated representatives.

V.3.2 Hegemony and the Bolivarian Ideal

From 1998, the bloc constituted by the main political parties, the AD and COPEI (who had been in power since 1958) and by other actors who appeared to be linked to them such as the Proyecto Venezuela, Apertura, and the Movimiento Renovación, had been displaced from hegemonic control by a new bloc of parties, political organizations and social movements.

The ideological concept that motivated the proposals for change of the new leaders was the Bolivarian republicanism represented by the MVR. It was this framework that distanced them from the ideologies that characterized the old hegemonic bloc. To this ideological matrix which represented the new hegemony was incorporated a socialist ideology, present in its system of values. This same ideology had been refuelled within the framework of the anti-institutional struggle during the period of decentralization. The socialism a la Venozolana of the MAS, which had joined together with the PPT to form the new hegemonic bloc. Of the groups comprising the PPT, the principal force was the MVR, whilst other organizations and minor groupings located in the old Venezuelan left also came to form part of the ‘patriotic’ bloc.

Carrera Damas indicates that Bolivarianism, or the socially active expression of the cult of Bolívar, had functioned since the 19th Century as sustenance and support of the national conscience, as an ideology of substitution. During that period it had attempted to compensate for the burgeoning institutionality that was revealed in the fractures within the structure of the state left by the struggle for independence (El Nacional 3/4/00). Nevertheless, the Venezuelan political situation at the end of the
20th Century when this thinking was once again taken up was comprised of distinctive characteristics. The break-up of the principal ideological matrices (the social democrat and social Christian) as a result of the pre-eminence of renovated ideological postures such as neo-liberalism and the Third Way, together with the fall of the socialist bloc, generated an ideological uncertainty that favoured the re-birth of previous paradigms.

The Republic of Bolívar belongs to a political paradigm illustrative of the 18th Century, where society was conceived of as a moral body. This morality expressed itself through its institutions, through its laws and through the conduct of its governors. The morality of the republic converted its integrants into virtuous beings by means of education, and the reason and liberty of the individual were orientated under this morality of the social body (Franceschi 2000, p. 82).

Why was this message, based on Bolivarian principles, understood by civil society? The relationship between these elements and a diagnosis of the political system could not be more evident. According to López and Lander (2000), the population rejected the hegemonic experience of the AD and COPEI because of its corruption (López and Lander 2000, pp. 22-23). The structure of the state collapsed fundamentally because of their moral corruption. The sovereignty of the people was substituted for party leaderships that made use of power to superimpose their interests over those of the majority, and the parties were transformed into mere apparatuses of their leaders, distanced from the electorate but exercising control over the will of the citizenry. This explains how it was that this concept of democracy set in motion an enormous distancing between the political institutions and the citizen.

Such a degree of moral corruption impoverished civil society. The political leader ceased to work in its bosom and the citizen stopped trusting in the leader and in the institutions, rejecting politics as much as political agents. The citizen was progressively absent, abstaining completely from the political involvement and for these reasons, the convocation of the constituent assembly would have amongst its essential aspects the restitution to the republic of the lost ethics and honesty of its governors.
V.3.3 The Factors Involved in Hegemonic Change

Over and above the empirical evidence that has been shown throughout this chapter, other factors have contributed to this acceptance of change. Whilst, it is true that there was little in the Venezuelan political context that had suggested the emergence of a force with the capacity to displace the political elite that had been exercising control over the apparatus of the state in such a definitive manner and in such a short space of time, this was made possible through a conjuncture of various factors.

Elements of explanation of the new hegemony can be seen in at least three factors. Political decentralization was one of these, inasmuch as it progressively modified the control that had been exercised by the old hegemony over public powers. Moreover, the effects that electoral reform (the election of mayors, for instance) had on the inner structure of the political parties acted as another element that came to complement the redistribution of power, as did the impact of the coups d'état and the role played by civil society in them. All of these factors acted as elements of force majeure, above all upon the political system, disarticulating the old hegemony and at the same time exerting pressure for new forms of democratic participation.

In relation to the first of these factors, there is no doubt that political decentralization served to promote the hegemony at the local level of a number of regional initiatives that have been described above. Proyecto Carabobo (who displaced the local political hegemony of AD in the state of Carabobo) were helped by the decentralization of services. Causa R, helped by decentralization of union struggles in the state of Bolívar, were able to overcome the control that AD had exercised over that region. Later this same political force broke the control of the hegemonic parties in the state of Zulia helped by the popularity of leaders of the 4th of February. In the state of Yaracuy also de Convergencia party took the place of the Social Christian, which it has maintained to this day.

MAS, for its part, came to exercise hegemony in the state of Aragua y Lara, and later on came to control local power in Portuguesa, the Delta Amacuro and Sucre. The PPT controlled the mayorality of Caracas in 1992-1995, the governorship of Anzoátegui and the newly created state of Vargas. In general terms and taking into
account that the political game favoured alliances, by 1998 the majority of the states in the country, where the greatest concentrations of population were, either were or had been controlled by the opposition to AD and COPEI. This gives ample evidence of the role played by the decentralization of power in the total substitution of the traditional political hegemony.

By another route, political decentralization reformulated the structure of the institutional struggle by forming new institutions that would act to exercise pressure on central power. More concretely this refers to the pressures exercised by local leaders towards greater financial autonomy in order to be able to satisfy the demands made by the community. This institutional pressure was channelled through the new Associations of Governors and those of the Mayors, created at the beginning of the decentralization process. However, because of the characteristics of financial dependency and limited income-generation possessed at the local level in Venezuela, the failure to fulfil the satisfaction of the necessities of service provision was directly translated, by means of these associations, to the central power, thus deepening the lack of trust of the community towards the party leaderships.

In a similar fashion decentralization and the uninominality of the vote gave greater political autonomy on local leaders with respect to the party leaderships. The distribution of power, in a certain sense, broke the dependence of local leaders on the political elites, from the moment that continuity in the exercise of power depended more on this same leadership, than on that of the decisions that they were able to take. This greater independence also acted as an influence on the formation of new local political organizations, in many cases through the break-up of the hegemonic parties and their leadership and in other cases through the emergence of new leaders. The atomisation of the party system weakened the presence of the big parties in the organisms of direction and control of the state (in particular the national congress), as well as in the corporative associations and federations, as strategic alliances increased in order to reach agreement.

The second major factor was the coup of 4th February, which even though it had been unable to achieve its military objectives, still represented a significant political triumph. A sense of opportunity grew in the leaders of the movement at a time when
the country recognised no leadership and a political vacuum had been nourished by voter abstention since the 1980s. Thus, developed simultaneously with the splits within the military forces that divided the upper hierarchy of officers, something which had never been easy for any other kind of movement to achieve. This all signified the beginning of the end for social democracy.

The most significant contribution of the military movement was to give civil society a possible alternative for change, and to act as a re-vindication of political reality, particularly the right of dissent and the right to rebellion. Equally the movement revitalized a political discourse which had been suffocated; José Vicente Rangel signals that the elitist and stultified discourse of the centralist democracy was substituted for a more direct and populist discourse. The calling for the constituent assembly was an aggregating discourse that contributed to the homogenisation of public opinion, giving a direction to civil society. The notion of civil society as a public arena and as the primary environment for the expansion of democracy acquired a greater relevance from that point onwards.

The fall of institutionality showed the little consistency that it had when confronted by the reactivation of the capacity for action of citizen associations, and the re-establishment of the public political sphere. This, in its turn, showed that power is located in that dimension in which individuals and groups form an image of their situation, and that civil society is the legitimate, real representative of political power.

**V.3.4 The Constitution of 1999: Decentralization and Participation**

The Constitution of 1999 was the result of the constituent assembly called by President Hugo Chavéz, and of the decision of the Supreme Court of Justice to admit the possibility of realizing such a consultation by means of a consultative referendum for all citizens, after a prolonged dispute between the various political sectors. In the text of the Constitution that was approved, the theme of decentralization was brought up to date through the creation of an authentic federal state. It also paid attention to aspects concerning the channels of citizen participation. The text also assumed, as never before, the progressive character of human rights and the idea that justice is located within a terrain of respect and propriety.
Decentralization had effectively achieved constitutional recognition, and the new political actors understood that in order to re-found the republic and to deepen democracy, it was necessary to accept decentralization as a constitutional mandate (Brewer Carías 2000, p.10). Article 4 of this new Constitution indicated that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was a decentralized federal state formed by political entities themselves derived from the distribution of public power and would thus be directed by principles of “territorial integrity, co-operation, solidarity, assistance, subsidiarity and co-responsibility”. The vertical division of the state persisted, but each level of government (national, state and municipal) possessed its own autonomy, organization and competencies, with territorial distribution and limitations.

In Article 6 of the Constitution, reference was made to the national government and to the political entities of which it was composed, signalling that this “would always be democratic, participatory, elective, representative, decentralized, alternating, responsible, pluralist and subject to revocable mandates”. Meanwhile, Section IV perceived decentralization as a national policy, summoned to deepen democracy by moving power closer to the people.

The election of local authorities remained an established fact and their responsibilities were fixed. Moreover, mechanisms were established for social control over politics, such as referenda (including for the revocation of mandates) and citizen participation in public affairs. In relation to decentralization, bodies for negotiation, concertation and co-operation were created, such as the Federal Council of Government, the state planning councils for public policy and the local councils in the municipal environment.

In relation to the financial autonomy of the states, a Hacienda Pública Estadal was created, in accordance with Transitory Disposition Fourth, number 6, a law that would establish the taxes of which the financial division was to be composed, the mechanisms of application and the dispositions that would regulate it. Equally, the Constitutional Division was fixed at 20%, and the inter-governmental fund for
decentralization (FIDES) and the Law of Special Assignations were kept (El Nacional 1999/812).

This ‘Magna Carta’ also contained annotations concerning participatory democracy. Participation is privileged (both directly and indirectly) in 56 articles, those being related to sovereign decision-making and obligatory fulfilment. This is in contrast to the Constitution of 1961, which provided greater support for representative democracy. Of all of the above-mentioned articles, the most prominent are 62 and 70. In Article 62 it is the obligation of the state and the duty of society to facilitate the most favourable conditions for the participation of the people in the formation, execution and control of public affairs. For its part, Article 70 establishes what the means of participation and public protagonism are to be in the exercise of sovereignty, calling for the celebration of citizen assemblies as one of the most important forms of participation, because of their interlinking character.

V.3.5 Social Networks and the Bolivarian Circles

The projected vehicles for reinforcing the mechanisms of the organization of civil society during the period of the new hegemony are social networks. The primordial objective is the promotion of a new political culture which would permit access to democratic participation within the new republican institutionality and the development of a system of networks that would cover all social systems and be capable of organizing, articulating and co-ordinating every component of society.

According to their promoters, these social networks are the expression of the social fabric which was beginning to be constructed and which would go on to constitute the primary form of organization of the state, over and above the governmental structure of the ministries and other traditional public institutions. The project includes the construction of the schools network, the health network, the network for citizen security and for civil defence, the sporting and cultural network, that of alternative communication, the housing network and the network of consumption and production in co-operatives.
The construction of these social networks has been initiated by the schools network linked to the National Educational Network (PEN), which had as its legal base Articles 62 and 70 concerning these political rights of citizens (referred to previously). It was also supported by the norms of the constitution of 1999 that promoted decentralization, particularly Article 184 and Ordinances 1 and 6. This Article permitted states and municipalities to decentralize their services and transfer their implementation to community organizations and organized neighbourhood groups. With these social networks, the combating of political bureaucratisation could be pursued, and government could be move closer to the people, under the premises of joint and autonomous management. In the sense in which citizens would assume responsibility for public affairs, political society would be re-absorbed into civil society (Rey 2001, pp 283 and 287).

The point of departure for the above process lies in the transformation of the governance of the schools designated by the Ministry of Education, into a general assembly that would be the maximum authority of each school. The assembly would be integrated by different community components (student collectives, teachers, parents and their representatives, administrators and workers, religious representatives, neighbourhood groups and associations, cultural and sporting groups, commercial and business sections and many more). The openings of these new spaces would be directed towards the formation, elaboration, planning and execution of local, parish, municipal, state and national policies, programmes plans and projects, but also towards the exercise of social control, itself strongly related to the values inherent in the concept of accountability, as well as the formation of the citizenry as takers of decisions.

Through the medium of this change, the school is transformed into a fundamental element of local popular power and of the construction of a new political culture that is directed towards guaranteeing the irreversibility of the revolutionary, pacific and democratic process. Rey (2001) has noted, critically, that for the promoters of the PEN the school is considered as a space of cultural resistance and counter-hegemony which recognizes the fundamental role played by the ideological apparatuses, and particularly, the school in the struggle for hegemony. But Rey adds that this is contrary to the principles and values of the Constitution, which consecrated cultural
pluralism and the universality of thought. Moreover, through the novelty of the social networks the structure of constitutional powers foreseen in the Constitution of 1999 would be reformed, inasmuch as what in reality would be attempted would be the creation of a new power that had not been foreseen by the Constitution (Rey 2001, pp. 280-288).

Nevertheless, in the opinion of President Chávez the government had to contribute, by means of its social policy, to the seeking of a way to organize popular expression, re-unifying and conscientizing the people and impelling a political project for the articulation of networks. Moreover, the organisms linked to social policies and their international financing, such as FONVIS\textsuperscript{39} should have as their objective, not only the material maintenance of the people, but also their organization. Lastly, political parties must be the expression, the channel of participation and the influence behind this popular organized movement, without hegemonic pretensions of their own.

The emergence of the Bolivarian Circles proposed by President Chávez can be seen in this last sense. Nevertheless, this can be seen as veiled by a series of questions, because it is difficult to see whether the President proposes the formation of a new party, or whether he is promoting the idea that social movements should not be remote controlled from the centre. In the opinion of García Ponce (El Nacional 24/06/01) there is a difference from political parties because the Bolivarian Circles have a horizontal structure and an organization structured from below to above. This makes them different to the Patriotic Circles which are the nucleus of the MVR party, and the political foundation of the revolution. The Bolivarian Circles are in contrast a manifestation of social force in every arena, and a dynamic element of participatory democracy.

\textsuperscript{39}FONVIS (The Venezuelan Social Investment Fund) was created in May 1990 with two purposes to contribute to improving the living standards of the population in situations of poverty in urban and rural areas and to help the process of decentralization. The strategy has been to strengthen the capacities of sub-national organizations through transfers of technical and financial resources.
18/01/01). The initiative came from the President of the republic and those who had led the movement, MBR 200, which had organized the military rising of February 1992. The formation of these Circles was a fundamental part of the project of change of the “Bolivarian Revolution”, and of the re-unification of the student, indigenous, peasant and women’s movements together with the military movement which had been proposed by the President (El Nacional 12/12/99).

The proposal is to create a local leadership as a result of the social programmes, coordinated and administrated by the army, which the government began with the so-called Plan Bolívar 2006. From the collective action deployed in the re-organization of community services, in which would participate many of its members and local organizations, it was hoped that there would remain a popular organization, from which might arise or empower itself a leadership. Additionally, in the case of spontaneous mobilizations or spontaneous outbreaks of social protest, local leadership might contribute to that which it was hoped to consolidate, so as to incorporate that leadership in the process of change and transformation.

This complemented an idea of the links between the creation of Bolivarian Movements and the system of social networks. According to the promoters of the Bolivarian Circles, the association permitted the discussion of the problems of the community, and their channelling in order to seek solutions quickly. Nevertheless it would seem that the principal function was to constitute the primary structures of internal political, social, ideological and security organizations of the country, if the prominent participation of these Circles in the events related to the coup d’etat of April 2002 is observed.

V.4 National Sovereignty and the External Context in the New Hegemony

Since the assumption of power by President Chávez in 1999, he has invoked a thesis of sovereignty as re-vindication of the development of what he considers to be an independent foreign policy, invoking the principle of national self-determination contemplated by Article 1 of the Constitution of 1999. Of this policy, it is of interest
to underline at least two aspects: the opposition of the Venezuelan government to the policies of the IMF and against the “system of commerce manipulated by the corporations”, which Chávez criticizes incessantly as ‘savage neo-liberalism’, and the efforts of the Venezuelan government to strengthen the organization of the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries, OPEC. Both aspects are connected, because the long-term policy of Venezuela to reconstruct OPEC and re-install a regime of higher tariffs on oil must be seen in the context of the overwhelming imbalance in commercial relations overseen by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In relation to the first aspect, the Venezuelan President affirmed in the recent meeting of the presidents of the Americas in Monterrey (Mexico) that: 1) the model of the North had been, on many occasions, the cause of underdevelopment of the South and it was appropriate to decide on that occasion what kind of development was to be financed in future, 2) that the IMF was not the suitable tool for this battle for the lives of billions of people, and that furthermore its policies had been at times poisonous for the peoples of the South, and because of this the time had now come to revise them urgently, and lastly 3) that different treatment had to be meted out to distinct countries of the world according to their levels of development, and here he suggested the setting up of an International Humanitarian Fund. “The rich countries cannot carry on claiming billions of dollars daily in agricultural subsidies, and then demand of poor countries that they cease subsidizing their agriculture. This is not merely unjust, it is immoral” (El Nacional 22/03/02).

The foreign policy of Venezuela operates under the consideration that it is also necessary that the countries of Latin America should previously guarantee their unity, before being incorporated into any Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (ALCA, by its initials in Spanish). This is a thesis shared by many politicians of the region, especially in countries such as Brazil. As has been indicated previously, since 1980 the World Bank and the IMF have imposed a free-market agenda that is founded on ideas of free trade, ‘flexible’ labour laws, privatisation, the reduction of the state budget and the de-regulation of the economy. The existing Venezuelan government rejects the free trade agenda under the terms of the WTO, as much as it rejects the form of ALCA that the USA wants to expand to include the rest of the Americas in 2005.
In relation to the second aspect, that of oil exportation policy, the government began to contact so-called strategic allies in the international ambit, in order to preserve the unity and interests of OPEC. These contacts had their origin in the visits by President Chávez to the heads of state of all member countries of the organization, including Libya, Iran and Iraq. Venezuela promised the countries of OPEC that it would comply with the sales quotas, as well as implementing a price-banding system for the exchange value of crude oil.

The second OPEC summit that took place in Caracas in September of 2000 in recognition of the active role of Venezuela in the strengthening of OPEC, transmitted among other things its Report on the Future of Energy, proposing the creation of its own installations for new transport and energy technologies, with the aim of investing in the future of non-fossil combustibles. At the same time, the report recommended that member countries take advantage of the electronic bartering of hi-tech products. This policy would be viable in bilateral exchanges with clients lacking in funds and with low-price exportable products, as happened with the trade agreement between Venezuela and Cuba.

The incorporation of Cuba into the scheme of hydrocarbon co-operation with Central America and the Caribbean through the medium of the Energy Agreement of Caracas in 2000, which acted to complement the Pact Of San José, is a part of this policy. According to the Pact Venezuela and Mexico would share the distribution of 160,000 barrels daily to the smallest countries of the area under special payment conditions. Needless to say, the administration of the USA disapproved of the commercial relations between Venezuela and Cuba.

To this policy of the defence of petrol prices and free commercial relations has to be added the proposal of the new Hydrocarbon Law, which raised the taxes on royalties of new exploration wells, from 16% to 30%, which also generated reaction from the giant multi-national Exxon Mobil and other operators. Exxon Mobil is the most important extractor of oil from Venezuela, and on approval of the above-mentioned law subsequently had to pay double on its explorations. The Law also acted towards
the control of the oil company PDVSA, which since 1975 had been state-controlled but at the service of foreign operators.

Outlining a pathway to autonomy has represented a risk to the country since the beginning of the 20th Century, when relationships between the USA and Venezuela were complicated by the interventions of the oil companies. At the present time, according to the secretary of OPEC, the situation is fairly complicated. The dependency of the USA on oil is progressively increasing, and in the meantime Venezuela is the third largest supplier of oil to that country, which makes its political stability vital to any US administration. This explains the warning of the US of recourse to the Charter of Democracy of the OEA as a means of sanctioning the Venezuelan government if it violated freedom of expression or labour rights in Venezuela (El Nacional 13/04/02).

To both of the two aspects discussed above can be added, on the one hand the vision represented by the Washington Consensus which sustains the orthodox view of industrial development, globalization and free trade, and on the other hand the Third World-ist vision under the slogan “Another World Is Possible”, which seeks to put a brake on the power of global finance and improve the order of social justice. The government of Venezuela is branded with a strong socially democratic orientation, but in the eyes of the rest of the world it appears more radical.

Much of this radicalism is interlaced with the discourse of the president and with the social reforms that the government is seeking to implement: the re-division of land to the dispossessed, growing investment in housing and infrastructure, as well as the control of import prices of subsistence goods. Nevertheless, because of the difficulties implied by trying to escape from the plan sketched out by the policies of the multi-lateral organisms, the new hegemony has also promoted policies of neo-liberal character, combining them with policies towards the control of prices, subsidies and protective measures.

The revision of neo-liberal policies in the context of the democratisation of Latin America, as a consequence of the little social success that these have achieved in the region, serves as an explanation for the welfarist actions and programmes.
Nevertheless, the effects that these programmes have had on the interests of certain economic groups, as well as the general disposition of the government, have combined to generate opposition amongst the national and international elites. Medina (2001) is of the opinion that to understand the controversy surrounding the new hegemony, over and above the problems already referred to as regards oil, it is necessary to consider the juxtaposition of the idea of democracy within the neo-liberal parameters of the USA, and the “type of participatory, direct and plebiscitary democracy” which is currently being attempted in the country (Medina 2001, p.88).

Rodríguez Araque (El Nacional 18/4/02) refers to the manner in which the results of the discussions over the formation of government in 1998 led, in the political order, to a profound process of the democratisation of Venezuelan society, and in the economic order towards a productive economy. This last signified that the project would try and construct a proposal that would permit the articulation of the country so that it had advantages in the global economic system. This is to say that the project proposed maintaining the control of the oil industry in place of privatising it. This is an important point in understanding the political crisis besetting Venezuela at the beginning of the 20th century, in the global context. In the hegemonic struggle the neo-liberals can count on powerful interests, and the social democratic project on powerful sectors.

The triumph of Chavéz created a series of expectations that, in part, were fulfilled and this gave to his movement a wide base of support that made the levels of social conflict tolerable, in spite of the criticism of the opposition. However, the levels of internal social conflict grew and the mobilization of the sectors of civil society opposed to the government of Chavéz began to demand the destitution of the president, supported by the Bush administration. In the meantime, other sectors of civil society, whether beneficiaries or not of the new hegemony, rejected these demands.
V.5 Political Context and the Hegemonic Struggle 2001-2002

The preceding commentary has shown that the Venezuelan social context was divided by the setting up of two distinct state projects. The first was the neo-liberal project which derived from the second presidency of Carlos Andres Pérez in 1988, and which at that opportunity found strong international support and little internal support, and which at this time is supported by an opposition that itself can count on the support of only a few sectors of Venezuelan society. The other project, the Bolivarian of 1998, is an alternative that is antagonistic to that of the neo-liberals, and is supported by a diversity of sectors, the majority of them located in the broad impoverished social sector, following the leadership of the MVR. The active existence of both projects has polarized society, leading to confrontation between both sectors and increasing the levels of conflict.

The fragmentation of the political parties has left a vacuum in the political space that, circumstantially, has been occupied by corporative organizations, such as the Venezuelan Workers Confederation (CTV), the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEDECAMARAS), the elite of the oil businesses of Venezuela (PDVSA) and other institutions, such as the armed forces, media groups and sectors of the church hierarchy. These organizations and institutions have, in parallel with their normal functions, transformed themselves into political organizations with aspirations to control the power of the state.

In the conflictual circumstances at the beginning of the year 2002, the CTV and FEDECAMARAS signed the co-called ‘Pact of Governability’. As on previous occasions the church acted as legitimator; in its opinion, these two organizations would not attempt to re-establish the democracy of conciliation, if not an institutional normality which could only become reality with the exit of Hugo Chávez from the presidency. According to FEDECAMARAS this pact bore no relationship to the famous Punto Fijo Pact, and its elaboration was an effort to seek an escape from the crisis of governability. Meanwhile, for the president of the CTV, the document did not so much set out a facilitating agreement for the conduct of government, as try and establish an alliance for the transition of government.
At this point the government rejected the initiative of the CTV and FEDECAMARAS, with the assurance that there was no crisis of governability. Moreover, the government was not disposed towards a pact that bore a strong resemblance to the old model that had been abandoned with the presidential elections of 1998, even though those involved were not political parties. Nevertheless, after the events of the 11th of April the government recognised that some kind of rectification would be necessary, and that the solution to the ungovernability would have to be in a dialogue between the opposition and the government, that would have to establish a minimum level of agreement.

The agreement proposed by the opposition was exclusionary; because it denied any interweaving of popular participation, something that in the new environment created after 1998 would have been impossible to accept. One of the contributions to the process of democratisation that can be noted in favour of the new leadership, and which the opposition had been unable to achieve, is that it had mobilized 56% of the electorate in 1998 and 59% in 2000. Rangel expresses the belief that this mobilization of social differentiation, of the resentment that underlay the mentality of these popular sectors when confronted by the Venezuelan elite sectors, was a policy to feed the process of political change, the demand for a constituent assembly (El Nacional 7/7/02). But it had also permitted the popular sectors to understand that they could form and active part of the politics of the country, and that they could participate in the formulation of policy.

By the side of the sectors that defend the 'Revolution' organized in the Bolivarian Circles, there is the opposition that operates under the umbrella of the 'Democratic Co-ordinator', integrated principally by the middle and upper class of the capital of the republic. The Co-ordinator platform, according to one of its directors, Elías Santana, is an organization that circumstances and maturity have brought about. It is a space of articulation between some of the political parties and some groupings of civil society. This relationship has only existed for a brief period, and is in the process of formalizing its structure; it still has no capacity installed for the execution of centralized decision-making (El Nacional 15/7/02). The Democratic Co-ordination platform is integrated by the secretary-generals of 13 political parties, among them
AD, COPEI, the Proyectos Venezuela, MAS, Alianza Bravo Pueblo, Primero Justicia, the Alianza Pro la Libertad, MIN, the Bandera Roja and the presidents of 33 organizations of civil society, amongst them the Civic Alliance formed by Queremos Elegir, Movimiento Nulidad 1011 and Ciudadania Activa, Asamblea de Ciudadanos, Pro Catia, the Red de Veedores, the Asamblea de Educacion, the Coordinadora de Lucha de Mujeres (MOUVE) and the Federation of Environmental Organizations of Venezuela, among others as well as the CTV and FEDECAMARIAS.

These political actors in principle centred their struggle on the demand for a revocatory referendum, and the possibility of a constitutional amendment to shorten the constitutional period of the presidency and latterly the demands were linked to the resignation of the president, and more recently towards the intervention of the OEA as a mediator in the national conflict. They appear to forget that the most important problem is how to recuperate the democratic spaces, and how this would translate itself into a solution to the problem of poverty, with the participation of all sectors.

V.5.1 Mobilization of Civil Society 2001-2002

In the last months of the year 2001 the Chavista hegemony entered a political and social crisis with the old elites, the product of the approval of a conglomeration of laws contained in the Ley Habilitante, and which found its key point in the coup attempt of the 11th of April 2002.

In November of 2001 the 49 laws of the Ley Habilitante entered into effect, but many of these laws were not accepted by the opposition. The Federation of Commerce and Industry rejected the measures because it considered them outside democratic channels. The approval of these laws was not the product of a popular consultation, and moreover these laws generated insecurity and had an affect on the credit supply. The president argued however that the Hydrocarbons Law in particular would strengthen foreign investment. The laws that were the principal source of conflict were the Land Law, the Hydrocarbons Law and the Law of Water and Coastal Zones. These three laws were related to specific areas of interest of the national proprietors and foreign companies related to oil, tourism, hotels and agro-industry.
As a means of pressure, FEDECAMARAS called a civic stoppage on the 10th of December 2001, jointly with Conindustria Fedenaga, VeAmCham (the Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Cavecol (the Venezuelan-Colombian Chamber of Economic Integration). Later on the Workers' Federation of Venezuela (CTV) joined the stoppage, and thereby workers and management were together again, as they had been in 1958. Nevertheless, although it could count on the support of these sectors, internally FEDECAMARAS was divided; the sections of the states of Bolívar and Apure did not agree to the stoppage.

The president challenged them to stop the country to see who had most support: “If the oligarchy or the people is sovereign.” He added, “They have never defended the interests of the people, they have always defended their oligarchic interests. This does not worry me at all. To the contrary, it shows me that we have taken the right road.” The same day as the stoppage the government promulgated the Land Law so as to initiate the “Agrarian revolution”, assigning 12 million bolívares to this end. “This law has been questioned by different sectors of society and the oligarchs have demanded six months to implement it; but we have been waiting two hundred years, and I have decided not to wait another day.”

The civic stoppage of the 10th of December of 2001 strengthened the protests and the mobilizations paid for by the banking sector, the commercial and industrial sectors, backed by CTV and the press and television. These protests converted themselves into the daily business of the political life of the country.

In the days following the stoppage of 10th December, the National Electoral Council (CNE) declared the authorities of the CTV to be illegal. Another important incident was the protest of the followers of the MVR in front of the offices of the daily newspaper El Nacional, accusing them of lying in their news; this provoked a reaction from blocs of the press in their resorting to international arenas. However, the United States from the beginning maintained a carefully neutral stance, neither confirming or denying the responsibility of the Executive for the protests.
On the other hand organizations of civil society opposed to the government, in the same manner as their sympathisers, began street protests, *cacerolazos*, convoys and demonstrations. Thus, in the same day of the civic stoppage there were protests in front of the offices of FEDECAMARAS to reject the civic stoppage. On the 8th of December the organization *Fuerza Solidaria* called a march demanding the resignation of the president. Another type of protest used by the opposition were the *cacerolazos*, each time the president addressed the country through the state-owned television company, or other state channels.

The second public march of the opposition with the assistance of the political parties, groups of artists from the press and television and the Civic Alliance, was organized for a commemoration of the 23rd of February, and according to the opposition 250,000 people marched. The government sympathizers also made their feelings felt with a march and *cacerolazos* in the popular sectors.

In the month of January 2002 the conflict with the church was intensified owing to the discourse of the Apostolic Nunciate to the Palace of Miraflores, in which he demanded that the government avoided radicalisation; the head of state considered this to be an attempted interference in political affairs.

Another destabilizing element was the fracturing within the national armed forces, particularly at the higher level. During the few weeks previous to the *coup*, various colonels and captains made their discontent with the government public, by demanding the resignation of the president, and finally by taking part in the *coup* of 11th April in making destitute the head of state.

**V.5.1.2 The PDVSA-Government Conflict**

At the end of the month of February 2002 the executive designated a new executive for the PDVSA (the Venezuelan State petrol company), which nomination of a new general executive generated for the first time in the history of the business the public discontent of the majority of payroll employees. This was followed by *cacerolazos*, strikes and industrial discord and, under the banner of “Meritocracy yes, politicisation no”, the employees of diverse sections of the business that had produced the greatest
quantity of earnings for Venezuela maintained its struggle for two months, culminating with their participation in the march of 11th April, itself culminating a few hours later with the abrupt exit of the president of the republic.

On its side the government maintained a firm position in relation to its power to nominate the new junta directiva of the state company. The Minister for Energy and Mines said “the government is very clear about the complexity of the oil business, but we are conscious that PDVSA is a state business and it is necessary that it adapt itself to the Venezuelan political economy framework in a coherent form.” The comptroller general of the republic also said that the president of the republic had the right to choose members of the executive and the president of Venezuelan state companies. Threats were made by both sides, and the employees tried to paralyse business operations by operating a go-slow; on the 7th of April, the president announced on national state television that 7 senior members of management were to be fired and 12 more retired. On the 11th of April the employees of PDVSA marched on the Miraflores Palaces conjointly with CTV, FEDECAMARAS and other sectors of civil society, to demand the resignation of the head of state. The marched was numbered at about half a million people, and culminated with the bloody events of the Puente Llaguno (the centre of the city of Caracas), where 18 people lost their lives.

V.6 The Civic-Military Coup and Counter-Coup

It has already been noted that vertical models of power in the national environment counted on the communications media which obstruct the expansion of resistances to other spatial ambits (Munck 2000, p.195). For this reason, for the social organization of resistance the distribution of local power signified a political gain. This consideration of Munck has distinct relevance in the light of the events that have been analysed.

Britto García (2002) indicates that the coup of 12th April was a media organized coup. The communications media in the hands of the private anti-Chavista sector had increased their criticism of the government to such a point that national and
international analysts and other sectors of the population also considered that the coup was a media led coup. Venezuelan television played a unique role in agreeing with the military coup leaders, to the extent that they didn’t transmit news of any pro-Chavez reactions in the streets, but instead showed US films, which is to say that the imposed a virtual stoppage. “They transmitted at nine in the morning deserted streets filmed in the early morning, commercial centres closed by their owners, and reduced Venezuela to some 2000 protesters who were supporters on the payroll of PDVSA. The US ambassador Shapiro and the representatives of the Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce converted themselves into stars by means of these transmissions.” (El Nacional 15/4/02) The middle and upper class public had to resort to watch international news broadcasts by satellite to find out what was going on; the television channels argued that they hadn’t shown the mobilizations because they felt themselves threatened by partisans of the government.

It was also a rebellion of mobiles; Venezuela has one of the highest rates of per capita mobile phone use in Latin America. In the evening a demonstration was called by word of mouth and the use of cell phones outside the palace of the government, as a demonstration of support for the president, at which about 100,000 people were present (Wilpert 2002). The coup as much as the counter-coup was mobilized by cellular phones without the use of a single tank, in spite of their showing as a warning. General Baduel headed this rebellion of the cellular phones by calling all the heads of garrisons by cellular phone, one by one. The garrisons of the whole country were put in agreement telephonically with the counter-coup.

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40 According to recent studies by the UNDP, the advance by Venezuela by four places in the Index of Human Development of the UN for 1999 is owing to the greater diffusion of Information Technology amongst the population. One example is access to the internet: the number of users has practically quadrupled in Venezuela from 0.34 to 1.2 per 1000, even though it is still a long way behind Uruguay, the country in the region with highest levels of access to the net (19.6 users per 1000). The study also underlines that the number of fixed line telephones has increased from 82 to 109 per 1000 people, and in the meanwhile the subscription figures for mobile phones increased from 87 to 149 per 1000 people (El Nacional 7/11/02).
During the coup national television channels were taken off the air and the other channels repeated the events of the organizers of the coup without any questions. They announced that Chavez had resigned and his cabinet had been removed from office. Moreover, they reported that all the victims of the 11th of April belonged to the sector of civil society that supported the coup, and that they had been victims of the Bolivarian Circles controlled and financed by the president.

The communications media and the opposition to the government had manipulated the notion of civil society. Because of the importance of the organized sectors of the neighbourhood associations of the urban area of Caracas, as well as the union and guild organizations amongst others, they ended up excluding from civil society the sectors organized in the barrios, as well as any other organization that was not identified with specific sectors of interest, in such a manner that when the media referred to civil society they always did it from this view. Only after the protests and the marches and counter-marches of the 11th of April, when both sides were able to gauge their forces, did consciousness of the diversity and respect for the other appear, which is essential in the democratic system.

The coup plotters committed various fundamental errors. They believed that they could ignore the other part of the coup coalition integrated by the CTV. Moreover they made no consideration of the opinion of the leaders of the political parties represented in the national assembly, which had been conducting a moderate opposition to the government. Secondly, they believed that President Chávez could not count on the support of the people, and they forgot the opinions of the governors and other sectors in the interior of the country. Thirdly, not all the sectors of the military were in agreement with the coup.

In the first instance it was decided to integrate the military junta with representatives of FEDECAMARAS, the military, one member of each political party and the support of the television channels. Palast signalled that in reply to his question days later to Carmona, asking him who had given him the authority to self-declare himself president, the coup leader responded: “Civil society”. By this he meant the bankers, the heads of the oil companies and the others who signed his declaration (Palast, The Observer, 12/7/02).
The new governing junta proceeded to dissolve the public powers: the national assembly, the supreme court of justice, the attorney general, the national electoral commission and all the governorships were all voided, and elections were to be called in a year. Moreover, the security bodies of the new regime began to jail functionaries of the old government and deputies of the MVR from the national assembly. All of this awoke a series of protests against the new regime by the partisans of the MVR, and also by those sectors of the opposition who were affected by the new measures, or who had been excluded from the new regime and had subsequently decided to withdraw their support from the new junta.

On the other hand there had been confusion as to whether the president had actually resigned, and therefore the commanders of the tactical units of the army (battalions), once they heard the decrees of the transitional president, demanded from their generals that they conform the high command of the army to a tradition of respect for the constitutional ethos, and hours later they announced their refusal to recognise the de facto regime installed the day before.

Elsewhere in nearly all of the barrios of Caracas there began spontaneous protests and disturbances in the days following the coup, in support of the government of Chávez. The police were ordered to put down these expressions of resistance against the new junta, and in the confrontations approximately 40 people died.

In some states in the interior of the republic, governors loyal to Chávez were removed from office, such as was the case with the governors of the state of Mérida, and the state of Táchira, who were ejected violently from their offices by security agents of the newly installed regime. But immediately came the reaction of other governors and of the population of these states; some governors refused to leave their offices, basing their refusal on their legitimation as a product of popular elections, as a rejection of the de facto regime, as happened with the governor of the state of Aragua, Didalco Bolívar who, together with Raúl Baduel, the commander of the Codazzi battalion which was based in this state, began to pressure for the restitution of institutionality. The state of Aragua is considered to be in the vanguard of the process of decentralization in Venezuela, and in this case the political autonomy of local power
conquered by the process of decentralization played a decisive role in the recuperation of central power, once the governors re-took control of the states, ratifying thereby their support for the president.

**Conclusions**

**First:**

The direction taken by the process of democratisation would move it towards a more participatory democracy than before. The dependent context in which this transition unwrapped was the crisis of representation, and this would be changed for a dependent context of hegemonic struggle. This indicates the sense of the process and its incidence on the dependent context, which in the Venezuelan case was very dynamic. In this change of route political decentralization and civil society have played a very important role, and both have counted on the support of democratic institutionality in combination with other external elements, as in the case of multi-lateral financing.

The direction proposed initially by the political actors, as can be appreciated later in the struggle for hegemony, was different from this. More specifically, they wanted to found a democracy in which civil society should be constituted as a support for the central state, and decentralization would continue down the route traced out by the multilateral financial organisms, even when their discourse alluded to local spaces and social capital. Nevertheless, political decentralization by devolution, as a component of governmentality (Slater 2002) has contributed to overcoming the framework of representative centralised democracy, and tipped the balance, at the end of the 1990s, towards a participatory democracy of mobilization.

But this has also been made possible thanks to the occurrence of events, outside the control of politics, which impacted on the political context and modified the proposed route. Here we should be re-emphasize the events of 27th February 1989 and 4th February 1992, as facts which deserve to be studied geo-politically in greater depth and as an expression of the presence of the power of the people. Each of these in its
moment has had an influence on this course and has contributed to changing the route traced initially in 1989 with the implementation of the “Economic Package”. These events, uncontrolled by the duly-constituted powers engendered the trend towards decentralization and acted to awaken civil society. In the second instance they re-articulated other elements present in the political system towards the formation of a new hegemony and achieving the road to the Constitutional Assembly of 1999. From the above, it can be noted that in order to change the route of the processes of democratization towards participation, it was first necessary to form a new political discourse which gave flexibility, firstly to decentralization of the relationships of power that opened spaces for resistance and plurality, and as a consequence also to the development of civil society.

**Second:**

Venezuelan democracy has seen itself strengthened by political decentralization through devolution. Political decentralization permitted the overcoming of difficult moments in the continuity of the democratic regime, and the reinforcing of institutionality when confronted by the crisis of representation. Equally, it contributed to the disarticulation of the control exercised by the parties over civil society, as has been reiterated throughout the text. Nevertheless, the most important aspect contributed by the democratising process is having contributed to the fragmentation of the parties, and consequently to the atomisation of the party system, which has been demonstrated quantitatively and qualitatively. The fragmentation of the party system fed diversity, as well as diversifying public opinion and discussion in the heart of the political system. This without a doubt had an important effect on the development of civil society.

The regional elections from 1989 to 2000 indicated the advance of the new neoliberal project and on the other hand the substitution or transformation of social democracy. Meanwhile, like a wedge between these two blocks, the alternative project of the new hegemony that would emerge towards the end of the decade in 1998 was being strengthened. The beginnings of the fragmentation of the parties began in the middle of the decade but concluded with the constitution of the Polo Patriótico in 1998. The Polo Patriótico was not a party so much as the unifying of a
series of political identities that conserved their independence; these same constituent characteristics were maintained by the Polo Democrático, which represented the neo-liberal project.

All of this makes manifest the way in which the new dependent context conformed itself in the hegemonic struggle. The other component is the political discourse and the unity of leadership; these aspects in particular marked the differences between the two poles, because whilst the Polo Patriótico practiced a unity of leadership and a discourse that supported popular civil society, the other pole had no clear leadership to give drive to the project that they wanted to develop, and their discourse was a neo-liberalism already accepted in the economically powerful sector of civil society.

**Third:**

Civil society in the decade of the 90s itself developed fundamentally within a dependent context outlined by the promotion of a neo-liberal ideology, the agents of which sought dominance over the national consciousness, through intervening more directly in the relationships between social actors. Nevertheless, in the period of the new hegemony the creation of new state and local institutions that were autonomous from the central powers had displaced the struggle for more democracy towards local spaces of power (state, municipal, parish, urban community, rural and indigenous spaces).

These new actors now share the spaces of discussion and politics in the midst of a civil society in formation, and within the context of a non-centralist conception. Cooperation and participation have begun 1) to mark the guidelines of the relationship in the local spaces as factors tending towards an equilibrium of power, just as proposed in the PEN project, and 2) to play a central role in the construction, shared planning and control of spaces of power, and public spaces. Nevertheless, these processes are still very much in their initial stage. The reality is signalled by a pre-eminence of differences over equalities, now more than before. The conflict at the heart of civil society (2001-2002) in the process of the hegemonic struggle has raised a ferocious confrontation derived from the competition between antagonistic projects of the state,
that of the neo-liberals and that of the revolutionary and progressive project represented by the leadership currently in government.

It may be suggested that civil society finds itself inevitably in a field of pressures and resistances from above and from below, but also at the same time in a field of discussion and dialogue in which diversity is indispensable. In this sense the presence of a pluralist, diverse civil society has also been a great support for the continuity of the democratic system, and its contribution to the democratic process has enriched the participatory proposal. Civil society has played a very important role in the framework of the hegemonic dispute.

Fourth:

One of the most important contributions of the new hegemony has been to give knowledge to civil society of an alternative for changing the representative democracy of elites that had dominated the political system, and in its' place to promote a more dynamic and socially more participatory democracy at local levels. Its' contribution has also been important in reclaiming political reality, with a more direct and popular discourse.

The proposal concerning the constituent assembly was a coagulating discourse that contributed to the homogenisation of public opinion, and gave an orientation to civil society. Morgan Quero (2002, p.77) maintains that governmentality is sustained by contract; this comes to constitute the theoretical base upon which it is possible to attain general principles of the art of government. Moreover, there is observable in basically similar terms a correspondence between governmentality and the principles now exposed by Flyvbjerg (see Chapter II), concerning the relationship between the dependent context and the process and synchronised plurality of forms of government, or decentralization of power.

The constituent assembly marries political and legal arenas to propose new forms of organization which are closer to the people, and to drive the Constitution of new spaces of power for democracy, as is demonstrated with the project of the social networks promoted by the new hegemony as the primary organizations of the state.
This would permit the continued presence of society in the political decisions beyond the co-active logic of the state and the presence of forms of representation of greater political efficiency, permitting the overcoming of the crisis of representation.

The mobilization of civil society in the public arena as an expression of a mode of resistance may also be connected to the idea of governmentality; the expansion of mobilization acquires from then on greater relevance. In the struggle for hegemonic control, all of the members of civil society are fully transformed into social actors (Grybwsky 1997, pp.20-22) and thus what is being dealt with is the constitution of movements of opinion that orientate the will of distinct social forces, in differentiated blocs. As has been previously indicated, each bloc in turn articulates an identity, with its protagonists and allies, which can be identified separately: the key in this definition is that articulation refers to a practice (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, pp.93-97). This comes to signify that mobilization as a practical expression of the political, passes to constitute a primordial element of political action, and may arrive at the formation of new forms of representation.

Fifth:

The institutional restoration of the exercise of power, in 2002, shows that the promoters of the coup d'etat had no consistency when confronted by the re-activation of the capacity for action of the citizen associations, and the re-establishment of the public political sphere. The relationships of the dominion of Empire have returned to menace the sovereignty of the country. This in its turn shows that power is localised in whatever dimension that individuals and groups form themselves into an image of their situation and society. It also shows that civil society is the legitimate and real representative of public power and democratic action, the practice that articulates pubic opinion against all those mechanisms that offer resistance to the effective exercise of equality, liberty and social solidarity.

In spite of the democratic process being interrupted for 48 hours in April of 2002, democracy was restored and defended by civil society. This shows that the notion of Venezuelan civil society diffused by some investigative organisms and communications media, that civil society is comprised solely of NGOs, business
organizations and the civil organizations of the middle and upper classes of the East of Caracas, is not the whole truth. The organizations of the popular sectors of the zones and barrios, which from 1989 onwards have begun to make themselves independent of the political parties and to support the new political project of the government of Chávez, also belong to civil society. The concept of civil society which must be understood is one which is not just limited to the separation of civil society from the state, but one which also must consider the context of social relationships and the field in which the verticality of power is located.
Chapter VI

Democratization in spaces of local power

The Municipality Libertador in the State of Mérida: Parish of Osuna Rodríguez

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to illustrate changes that have occurred at the local level with the application of political decentralization in terms of citizen participation. Civil society in Venezuela had been fighting for the incorporation of political decentralization and for greater participation in the political system. These demands came to occupy a significant place in discussions over the changes which would be introduced by the Presidential Commission for the Reform of the State of 1984. To this dispute between interests, was added the neo-liberal ideological proposals of the Washington Consensus, which alleged the necessity of "modernizing" the state administratively and guaranteeing governability. The discussion provoked confrontation between civil society and the political elites over the administration of government between 1983 and 1988. The latter attempted to draw support from the implementation of political decentralization, seeking thus to preserve its spaces and form of controlling power. Nevertheless, at the end of four years, consensus had been achieved and the project was partially approved in 1988.

Reforms towards local decentralization in Venezuela could be considered, following the proposal of Cabrero (1996), as a process of devolution and as a democratic decentralization. The most significant force for decentralization in Venezuela has been located in the promotion of political autonomy and the fiscal strengthening of local government. The first stage was directed towards the strengthening of the openings for political participation at the local level and included the elections for governor and mayor of 1989 as well as at parish level in 1992. A second stage of administrative decentralization led to the implementation of the Organic Law of Decentralization and Transfer of Competencies of Public Powers in 1993 and the
political reforms which were inaugurated by the constitution of 1999 whose proposals for participatory democracy strengthened political decentralization.

Parallel to this process of economic and political decentralization, the measures of structural adjustment which had been continuously postponed by the governments of COPEI and AD during the 1980s, were finally adopted in 1989. These measures brought a proposal for participation which substantially modified the predominant scheme of the conciliatory populist democracy of the welfare state. The neo-liberal reforms sought to discharge the state of the majority of its responsibilities in the resolution of conflicts and in attending to social demands. Civil society became incorporated into this process through the logic of social capital which attempted to transfer the state's responsibilities to it, thereby substantially altering the relationship between civil society and, at the same time, promoting the separation of two.

In order to achieve such objectives, neo-liberal policies placed emphasis on local spaces. Local municipal power had many possibilities to contribute towards the process of democratization, because the proximity of governor to governed facilitated politics of participation and the sharing of power; in spite of the risk of clientelism that might be provoked through this proximity. Nevertheless, the decentralization of social services to the local level has to be accompanied by the maintenance of at least part of the burden of these social policies at the national level, in order to counterweight the socio-economic differentiation between municipalities, through the regulation and redistribution of one part of public income (Castro 1996, p.107).

The process initiated by the Constitution of 1999, in underlining the constitutional importance of political decentralization, also alluded directly to the interaction between politics and the political. But not only this, it introduced principles that guaranteed that other forms of the organized expression of civil society, separate from the traditional political parties, could have access to the structures of participation. This was the case with social movements and other types of manifestation of the social sectors, who legitimately demanded to be an active part of the re-structuring of the powers of the state. Without a doubt, this also contributed to the development of a process of social mobilization and participation, which awoke and brought about
important changes in the form of that which is now understood and perceived as
democratic participation for Venezuelans.

It will be argued in this chapter that these new forms of seeing and valuing democracy
are most accurately analyzed through the study or investigation of particular cases.
Case studies imply underlining the specificity of those aspects related to the
dependent context, especially those which affected, in an immediate manner, the
existence of the individual and his/her family, the neighbourhood and the
organizations interwoven around it. These relationships constitute an important
element in the networks of power and in the connections of experience of individuals,
from which they elaborate their dialogues and their political proposals. Nevertheless,
in the democracy of conciliation, the public spaces of political actors were also
connected with certain mechanisms of intermediation that the political parties
employed, in order to control the organizations of civil society at a local level.

According to Allen (1999), modes of power (such as manipulation and incentives) are
combined in different ways inside the schemes of vertical domination of power, and
act to limit participation. Nevertheless, the Venezuelan political system has modified
its centralist scheme through political decentralization. The new hegemony in power
has projected participatory democracy and this could lead to the possibility of
changes in the intermediation of the two parties in civil society. This is an
undertaking in which political decentralization and participation remain intimately
connected with the problems of social values and power about which there is very
little information and in which the experience of democratic participation in
Venezuela is very recent. Moreover, the discussions undertaken in the previous
chapters concerning the changes to the Venezuelan political system are insufficient to
ensure that they have touched on the specific, individual relationships of power that
affect the development of civil society as much as that of the new social movements.

Nevertheless, in the consideration of the above ideas it is possible to ask how the
local leaders and members of each community valued the democratic changes and
how political decentralization has favoured local political initiatives. To this general
question can be added other more specific ones:
· How do local actors think that political decentralization has contributed to the modification of the party system and political participation at the local level?

· How do the members of the community value the intervention of the opinion-forming groups and NGOs in the process of local democratization?

· What do these actors think about the mechanisms of intervention (political clientelism) in the popular sectors of the municipality?

· How transparent do they think that the conduct of leadership, the use of resources, and the process of satisfying community demands is?

· What changes have they observed in the functioning of the neighbourhood committees? Have these given way to new participatory organizations?

· In the context of the new hegemony the parish councils are elected and have a more active role. How do they exercise their legitimacy in relation to the municipal powers?

· How do people participate through Parish councils, and how do they bring to fulfilment the planning of local demands?

In order to address these questions, this chapter proposes:

1) To configure the dependent context of the case study of the parish Osuna Rodriguez, to explore the evaluation of the process of decentralization by members of this community through interviews and enquiries.

2) To observe the changes in the systems of representative participation in municipal elections (at parish council level and in the areas of party hierarchy, alliance and abstention).

3) To observe the changes introduced by the new constitution of 1999 with respect to local levels of power.
VI.1 Theoretical and methodological antecedents for the study of local power

As has been observed previously in Chapter V, political decentralization allowed for the emergence of new leaderships and contributed to the disarticulation and fragmentation of the institutes of representation and political parties, as well as their future re-grouping. In this, the political elite (with some reason) feared the loss of local spaces of power which had been controlled by political parties and the state bureaucracy and, therefore, obstructed the promotion of decentralization which was able to affect the relationships underlying hegemonic party domination. In the period of the democracy of conciliation, these elites blockaded the implementation of political decentralization from 1958 onwards, arguing that in this way the consolidation of democracy would be guaranteed. (see Chapter IV Conclusions). Conciliation between a limited number of political actors to ensure the control of the decision-making system was, however, incompatible with political decentralization.

In the scheme of decentralised power, relationships of power are produced at all points of space, and through mobile and unequal interactions. Moreover, relationships of power must also be understood as relationships of resistance and, as such, part of power itself. The idea of multiple points of power-resistance is assimilated more clearly as an understanding of power originating from below, or from civil society. According to Bobbio (1997(a), p.43), the political sphere should be comprehended in a much broader sense than it is normally is, that is, it should be seen as encompassing the whole of social life. There is not political decision which is not conditioned by that which occurs in civil society.

Political decentralization is necessarily accompanied by the multiplication and incorporation of new spaces of power. Different voices with the power of decision making also arise themselves a result of changes in leadership, and greater participation and mobilization of political actors. This complicated the scheme of conciliation within the party democracy. In fact, the decentralization reforms generated a new dynamic in the party system at a local level and favoured the development and emergence of a new generation of leaders. The process of selection...
of these local leaders has been described as the closest link between decentralization and the broadening of democracy. The experiences of local elections in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela since the 1980s demonstrates that decentralization can contribute to the creation of democratic political practices, with the apparition of new parties and social movements (Lalander 1999, p.88).

From 1978 onwards, with the promulgation of the Organic Law of Municipal Regimens that gave legal status and power to the neighbourhood associations, the first steps were taken towards political decentralization (de la Cruz 1995, pp.5-17 cited in Lalander). From this point, the political system would begin to develop the mechanisms for accepting claims from civil society and progressively, these would be incorporated into the reform of the state. Local decentralization would appear then as a political decision, a measure which was impelled by COPRE in the context of the re-composition of the democracy of conciliation, not as a result of the actions of civil society political practices which sought to influence the verticality of power of the state and achieve a greater horizontality in power relations and, consequently, more democracy.

The lack of clarity on this point is derived from the duality present in the concept of civil society. Of the two definitions of civil society espoused by Bobbio (1997), the most utilized by the neo-liberal multilateral organisms and as a consequence, the most frequently employed overall, has been that which underlines civil society as the sphere of social relations which are not regulated by the state. Meanwhile, the less commonly employed definition establishes political relationships between civil society and the state, and considers civil society as the place where conflicts arise and develop that the state has the obligation to resolve. This last definition of civil society is precisely that which permits the drawing of more direct conclusions with respect to relationships of power, the displacement of the communitarian political tendency referred to by Lechner (1996) and considerations on new hegemonies made by Brown (2000). Civil society can in this way be linked to those questions of power and values, which are important for the local community and also for the investigation of social phenomena as processes.
The development of civil society in Venezuela does not present the same characteristics as the development of European civil society, nor the same force that certain social movements have had in other countries of the American continent. The communitarian tendency (discussed in Chapter I) noted in the new social movements and the re-organization of society (in the function of the growth of renovated forms of collective action) has only begun to be prominent recently. Nevertheless, there exists an organized civil society in Venezuela, and even though its critical emergence has been linked to the neoliberal tendency this does not render it unimportant (furthermore not all groups are linked to this tendency throughout Venezuela). The characteristics of these organizations have been covered in previous chapters, therefore, it is not necessary to delve further into them here, but without doubt the development of the communitarian tendency in Venezuelan civil society would be more closely linked to this type of organization in the future, through the power status taken by the parish councils in the country at the root of the decentralization of power.

Exactly for this reason, the most important point to underline is that the relationship between local political decentralization and civil society is to be found in the creation of conditions for the development of a new kind of civic associational activity and through the construction of public spaces which permit the re-valuing of new expectations and the meetings of the demands of social movements seeking to express themselves (Lechner 1996). This signifies that the creation and configuration of places for doing politics, and discussions about the problems referred to over power and values, would come to constitute a key point in the analysis of the process of democratization within which local spaces of power were experimenting, and trying to understand their limitations and the possibilities for their constitution.

An aspect, outlined in chapter I, which is connected to the limitations upon the creation and conformation of public spaces in which to make the political, is the socio-political reality of Latin America and in particular the notable tenacity and persistence of the cultural structures of the Iberian tradition and their social behaviour which are essentially authoritarian, elitist, hierarchical, Catholic and corporative. This has ensured the perpetuation of the markedly centralist and clientelistic character of political structures in the region (Oropeza 1988, pp.23-24). With respect to this
theme, Lalander (1999) has signalled the possibility of clientelistic behaviour occurring in decentralized government (Lalander 1999, p.94). In the passing of power from central state control to the lowest territorial levels, governors and mayors would certainly be able to construct their bases of support through a clientelistic system which interchanged social and economic benefits for political support in local and regional elections.

Clientelism is linked to corruption and other forms of interpersonal relationships. But in terms of the ideas which are being advanced here, our interest in clientelism lies in an understanding of it as a mode of power which de-mobilizes civil society and which is highly decentralised (Njaim 1988, p.126), because it contributes to the development of "centres of power" in local spaces. This means that clientelism has a notable impact on the constitution of local dependent contexts and specifically, on the possibility of constituting relationships of communitarian association at the local level, as well as strengthening democratic participation.

Hanes Rexene (1985) emphasizes that political clientelism, in principle, is the relationship between individuals of different statuses and resources, which once extended and woven in space form a network of strong vertical links (together with weak and insignificant horizontal linkages) making the recognition of communal interests between individuals difficult. As a consequence, it leads to the formation of local organizations. These networks form political branches, capable of complementing the functions of social welfare where the state is unable to provide protection of life, property and wealth. In Venezuela such forms of traditional clientelism (individual) and corporative clientelism (networks) were promoted by groups related to the state during the populist conciliatory democracy particularly in areas of few resources.

This permitted the incorporation of broad sectors into the political system through enormous networks composed of a multiplicity of smaller clientelistic networks (in their majority more of the traditional type than the corporative) that solved conflicts as that might arise (Hanes Rexene 1985, p.1-28). However, the new type of socialization that result from the eruption of neo-liberal policies introduced through adjustment programmes was directed in local spaces towards the replacement of
clientelistic relationships by purely utilitarian 'horizontal' relationships. These were expressed in multiple and unstable utilitarian contracts negotiated case by case, and for a defined duration. As Njaim (1996, p.139) notes, moreover, the neo-liberal form of association affected communitarian traditions created around the environment and the public goods of local spaces.

In the same manner that power can be modified, interpreted or practiced through different routes, however, political clientelism could also be considered one of the manifestations of modes of power. Allen (1999) has identified, 'close' relationships of power, domination, coercion, authority, manipulation, seduction and incentives within the different modes of power employed by institutions. In order that the power of dominion be effective, it has to have maximum legality and this is achieved through constituted authority (Allen 1999, pp.205-208). For this to occur, whereas domination is imposed through coercion, authority is a mode of power that is formally requested. It is an instrumental mode that can be used selectively in combination with other modes of power. When central power is distributed at other spatial levels of power (regional or local), it is modified by institutions employing different modes of power and different combinations of agreement over the proposed ends. This is because modes of power vary in terms of their particular reach or intensity.

The clientelist political practices employed by electoral candidates constitute a form of manipulation, since its offers depend on the victory of the candidate. Moreover, clientelism mediates mobilization and stimulates the contention of resistance amongst other factors. More precisely, from the perspective of Allen, it could be asserted that clientelism is a form of manipulation of power, employed by the formed political system in order to contribute to the assurance of approval when the authority of central power is not completely effective. Institutions frequently employ these different modes of power. Clientelism is also a political practice that permits the extension of power over space.

In such a manner, clientelism can be associated with the vertical structures of power that have predominated in Latin America. In the stage of the democracy of conciliation in Venezuela, clientelism was a form of power associated with authority. It legitimated relationships of power, every time that it was used to fix 'negotiations
and incentives' in the so-called utilitarian pacts between different actors of the political system (and between these and ordinary individuals). Nevertheless, whilst its importance has been highlighted through an understanding of the process of democratisation on the South American continent, it is interesting to see that it is not explicitly considered as another mode of power in the political theory of the west.


The Constitution of 1961 established the fundamental principles for the regulation of the municipality in Articles 25 to 34, and defines it as "the primary political unit of the municipality." These principles were developed further in the Law of Municipal Regimens of 1978. This law was a law of consensus sanctioned 15 years after its first presentation to the national congress and after many debates between the political forces represented in that legislature (Congressional Debates, LORM 1989, p.587). This law served to unify the twenty state laws that through transitory disposition of the constitution of 1961 had governed the spaces of local government.

Nevertheless, this had not been contemplated by Article 27 of the Constitution of 1961 which stated that, "The law may not establish a regimen for the organization, government and administration of the municipalities attending to the condition of the populace, economic development, geographic situation and other important factors. In all cases, the municipal organization will be democratic and will respond to the natural character of local government (Congressional Debates, LORM 1989, p.585)." This article, which guaranteed the diversity of the organizations of the organs of local municipal government and the democratic character of the municipality, had thus been reduced to a simple electoral act.

At the beginning of the year 1979, the government of President Carlos Andrés Perez introduced a project of partial reform of two articles, which was rejected by congress. Later this project was reformed partially in 1984 for the realization of the municipal elections of that year, followed by a more profound reform in 1988, of which only its
electoral aspect was put into operation, whilst the rest of it was postponed until the 15th June 1989 by mandate of that same reformed law.

By 1989 municipal politics had become discredited by their inefficiency and inoperacy. Local democracy had been reduced to the act of choosing councillors every 5 years and the forum that was supposed to have been developed through the so-called Open Councils (which had been consecrated in 1978 for the permanent linking of the municipal council and the civil associations and organizations) had not been translated into an expression of the community because of the interference of various party interests represented in the councils (Congressional Debates 1989, p.586).

Parish councils had not been seen as administrative units, but rather as a means of exercising representation of the latter through delegation. It would not be until 1989, when the inter-party accords were reached for the incorporation of the conditional election of members (according to Article 183) that they would become effective during the elections of 1992. In the bosom of congress a discussion was generated between the principal hegemonic parties (AD, COPEI and MAS) over the resistance of the first two to the incorporation of the reform of parish councils during the year of 1989, so that an expectation outlined a long time ago could be fulfilled (Congressional Debates, LORM 1989, p.618).

By contrast, the municipalities were autonomous in choosing their authorities, in the leadership of their affairs and competences, and in the creation, collection and investment of their resources. Nevertheless the Organic Law of Municipal Regimen (LORM) of 1989 in Article 14 signals that the municipalities and other local entities would be governed by the constitution and by the LORM, as well as the other organic and ordinary laws applicable under the Constitution and, moreover, by the laws governing the legislative assemblies. From this point, in particular, it can be seen how intermediation in the functioning of local authorities was structured by the political parties.

The most important (in terms of their impact at local levels) of the reforms to the LORM that occurred in 1989 were those that vindicated the central role of the
Municipality as a unit of political administration, that created the figure of the directly elected mayor, that fragmented large districts into autonomous municipal units of smaller sizes and that the recognized the demand for greater participation at a local level. In effect the political reforms permitted the creation of the municipality, delimiting its geographic space and its authority for the exercise of power at executive and legislative levels. To this authority they added the creation of the parish councils that permitted a greater proximity between the citizen and the municipal government.

More specifically in relation to participation, the LORM recognized the right of the organized community (neighbourhood, guild, social, cultural and sporting organizations) to participate in diverse aspects of the local political process. This was expressed in terms of open councils of the municipal chamber for the consideration of affairs of local interest but also, as proposed by the community, through the implementation of the referendum as a means of consultation and voluntary neighbourhood commissions related to the functioning of public services (LORM Articles 171, 175 and 180).

In equal fashion, LORM established the neighbourhood organizations as semi-corporative organizations. This signified that each urban sector could only be officially represented by an association fulfilling certain legal prerequisites that allowed it to be recognized by local government as representative (LORM Articles 172 and 173). The forms in which the political parties interpreted this type of neighbourhood semi-corporation (now they inserted and recognized neighbourhood authority) facilitated the intermediation and control of local power structures. This explains why the great majority of these associations maintained links with the political parties around their clientelistic relations. Even so, as has been demonstrated in Chapter V, there was no impediment to the growth of locally autonomous neighbourhood organizations.

For this reason the Law of 1989 included a unique aside to Article 172: "The municipal council will maintain, only for informational purposes, an updated archive of the neighbourhood associations legally constituted in their jurisdiction". This unique aside related to the interference of the political parties within the councils. Moreover, this aspect was submitted for reconsideration in congress by a senator of
the AD party so that the line "for informational purposes only" could be interpreted as a limit on the actions of neighbourhood associations, and not as a provision in their favour. This was particularly important given that the opinion of the associations was very powerful and would only grow more so in the future (Congressional Debates, LORM 1989, p.616).

Particularly interesting, however, was a reply from a senator of COPEI, "if we eliminate the unique aside and things remain as they were before i.e. that the council has to legalize the neighbourhood associations, then if we have a situation where a council is dominated by AD and it is considered that the neighbourhood association is dominated by COPEI, for example, or MAS, then the council would refuse to grant it legalization and would refuse to recognise it as a neighbourhood association, or the reverse... In order to avoid exactly this kind of problematic practice, it was established with great clarity that the municipal council will simply hold a register of an informative character" (Congressional Debates 1989, p.616). It would appear from this, therefore, that the legislators were aware of the problem of party intermediation.

**VI.2.1 The Constitution of 1999 and Local Power**

According to the constitutional tradition of Venezuela organized by the federally organised state, the Constitution of 1999 in Article 136 establishes that “the public power is to be distributed between municipal, state and national powers”. It complements this with the formula of collaboration or co-operation which is also picked up in Article 136 of the constitution, thus: “Each of the branches of the public power has its own functions, but the organs which are entrusted with their exercise shall collaborate amongst themselves towards the realization of the ends of the state.”

One of the novelties of the present Constitution is its call for the participation of all citizens (Article 62) freely in public affairs, either directly or through the medium of their elected representatives, something which consolidates the idea of a political, democratic, representative, participatory system. Moreover the Constitution reports that the participation of the people in the formation, execution and control of public
leadership is the necessary medium for achieving the protagonism that will guarantee its complete development (Brewer Carías 2000, p.69). As a consequence, the state remains obliged to facilitate channels or means for this participation.

The means or forms of participation of the people are enumerated in Article 70 of the constitution, as follows:

* In the political: election for public offices, the referendum, the popular consultation, the revocation of mandates, legislative, constitutional and constituent initiatives, the open council and the assembly of citizens.

* In the social and economic: the authorities for citizen attention, self-management, co-management, co-operatives in all their forms including those of a financial character, savings associations, communitarian businesses and other associative forms guided by the values of mutual co-operation and solidarity.

For communal purposes, the call to participation is consecrated in Articles 55, 168, 182 and 184 concerning neighbourhood groups (Garay 2000, p.13).

In Article 168, municipalities constitute the primary political unit of national organization, enjoying juridical status and autonomy within the limits of the constitution and the law. Municipal autonomy is understood as 1) The election of municipal authorities, 2) the self-management of the materials of its competencies, and 3) the creation, collection and investment of income. The actions of the municipality in the environment of its competencies must be fulfilled incorporating citizen participation into the process of defining and executing public management, and into the control and evaluation of the results, in an effective, sufficient and opportune form, in conformity with the law (Garay 2000, p.78).

So far as decentralization of competencies from states and municipalities in favour of neighbourhood groups is concerned, Article 184 establishes open and flexible mechanisms so that states and municipalities may decentralise and transfer to communities and organized neighbourhood groups the services that these manage if
they have having previously demonstrated their capacity for implementing them, thus promoting:

Participation in the management of services,
Participation in the formulation of policy,
Participation in the economy,
Labour participation in public businesses,
Co-operative and communal organization,
New subjects for decentralization, and
Participation in penitentiary management.

This article applies the principle of democratisation of power expoused in Article 158. The states as much as the municipalities would have to transfer certain services to the neighbourhood groups in the areas of health, education, sports, environment, co-operatives, self-managing mechanisms, etc. Article 158 perceives decentralization as a national policy that must deepen democracy, bringing power closer to the people and creating better conditions, as much for the exercise of democracy as for lending itself to effective and efficacious conduct of state tasks (Garay 2000, p.73).

Undoubtedly the postulates of the Constitution of 1999 seek to deepen democracy with the creation of new subjects of decentralization which includes reaching out to the communities, barrios and neighbourhood groups. It deals with a process of 're-decentralization' which is impelled now, not from the central government (above) but rather from an epicentre in the autonomous levels of local or municipal government (below). In other words, the municipality has to be the focus of decentralization which must be directed towards below where the people, the parish, the community, and the neighbourhood are. It deals with the constitution of the subjects of decentralization, with its juridicial status and, by relating it to the relations between state and society, with the question of legitimacy (which requires bodies capable of planning, executing projects, administering resources, conducting monitoring and rendering accounts) (Debates of the Constitutional Assembly 11/2/99, p.9).
VI.3 Case Study Area and Justification

Many elements combine to give a sense of unity to a community. Traditions and cultural aspects play a very important role, as the institutions around which this social reality is formed. The city of Mérida, which is the location of the municipality of Libertador in the state of Mérida and the parish Osuna Rodríguez are located on a terrace of the river Chama, in the central Venezuelan Andes, at 1800 meters above sea level (Photo-Mosaic 6.1).

The Constitution of 1999 considered the state of Mérida as part of the Western indigenous region (Seventh Transitory Disposition, Numeral 4). Nevertheless, since the end of the 1960s, technological diffusion has been incorporating new commercial practices and the region acquired a certain economic importance. Agriculture was orientated by preference towards a horticulture directed towards the markets of the centre of the country. Industrial activity has never been as important. The process of urbanization was initiated at the beginning of the 1970s, much later than other regions of the country and transformed a small city into a metropolitan area. The city has more or less the same characteristics as the principal cities of the Venezuelan Andes and its demographic growth has produced a population of approximately 232,614 inhabitants.

The Catholic Church and the University of the Andes are the two institutions that have dominated the course of development of the community. In reality, the characteristic that distinguishes this city from other Venezuelan cities is its quality of being a University City and hence also a site for tourism. Universities are an important component of Venezuelan political society but also of civil society. Moreover, they are the site of development for many civil organizations that are independent of the political parties. These include ecological or environmental movements, cultural groups, university and forest fire-brigades, mountain rescue groups, peace organizations and human rights organizations. In reality, a great part of civil society is linked to the university.
The ecclesiastical hierarchy also has political importance. Mérida was a region controlled politically by COPEI Christian socialism up to the 1970s and more recently it played an important role in the hegemonic struggle between the parties. The Church has frequently been located on the side of those in opposition to the government of Chávez. The Episcopal Conference of Venezuela is represented by the Archbishop of the city. Education policy in particular has affected its interests. In addition the Church in Mérida is owner of the television network of the Andes and, as such, is a member of the chamber of commerce of press and television. It is also linked with NGOs connected to the areas of health and the co-operative movement, which opens political spaces for the church at a local level.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that this city and its inhabitants have a high level of social mobilization and of political response to the great events at a local or national level. As an illustration of this, one of the most important precedents to the events known as the 27th of February (the El Caracazo) referred to in Chapter V took place in Mérida in 1987. During this year a social revolt took place over the killing of a university student by a lawyer. The protest extended to all of the neighbouring barrios in which students were joined by housewives, inhabitants of the barrios and workers of the city. There had been no precedent for this kind of stoppage in the entire country (López Maya 2002, p.207).

The previous section shows that the local dependent context presents a certain particularity to Venezuelan democracy. The area of the case study is located in the periphery of the country, where the social dynamic is dependent on centralized decisions, and on the oil rentier economy. The city is specifically a centre for services. There is only a slight presence of business sectors in comparison with other regions, which is one reason why the unions and other types of semi-corporative organizations are tied to the university. The university budget is for example greater than that of the state. As a corollary to this, it has greater potential to develop social movements in comparison with other Venezuelan cities, derived from the university cultural environment that dominates in the city.

There are several reasons for choosing of the parish Osuna Rodríguez as a case study. Firstly, through the centre of investigations at the Exchequer of the Faculty of
Architecture of the University of the Andes, there has been an investigation of the parish under way for several years. This work has unfortunately not been directed towards areas such as an exploration of changes in values, but rather an evaluation and a restructuring of constructed space. The focus of this thesis will give a new orientation to the work conducted here. In second place, the study deals with one of the biggest popular parishes (in terms of population) in the municipality Libertador and it was in the main constructed by the public sector. It is a recently founded community. The first houses were handed over in 1974, and the greater part was constructed during the epoch of centralist democracy, and to a lesser degree during the period of decentralised democracy. During the centralist democracy, the adjudication of these houses was marked by strongly clientelistic relationships and these effects will be shown as part of the local dependent context.

VI.3.1 Political Clientelism and Housing

During the whole period of representative, conciliatory democracy and, above all during the period of abundant oil and financial wealth, the basic responsibility for attention to the needs of the population (and in particular services and housing) were under the direct charge of the public administration through the relevant public powers (ministers, state governors), the legislative powers (national congress and legislative assembly), and the municipal councils and, indirectly, through the political parties.

Amongst the demands for services that the centralist state had to satisfy were the supply of electricity, health, housing, water, telephone services. The satisfaction of these necessities was always the object of programmatic proposals or propagandistic references in favour of the party attempting to claim the support of civil society (or as a means of criticism for incompliance, for the parties that found themselves in opposition).

One of the social demands that has most impact on the electorate at voting time (or when called on to evaluate the actions of the government) is the construction and allocation of housing. Since the constitution of the National Institute of Housing
called INAVI) in 1928, it had been the responsibility of the Venezuelan state to design housing solutions for the middle class and the social classes of lesser resources. In this way, housing came to constitute a political factor every time that it served the state to respond to those relationships between the sub-system of parties and whichever electoral sub-system that had greater impact over the conduct of the electors.

The solutions proposed by the state as regards the deficiencies in these services always constituted a difficult obstacle for it, given the urban development dynamic that the country experienced (population growth, the inefficiency in the maintenance of installations, and administrative corruption). Nevertheless, for good or ill the state was obliged to answer to these claims. For their part, in the meantime, the political parties of the opposition encouraged civil society in the claiming or demanding of better services and housing from the executive and legislative powers, or similarly stimulating land invasions in the rural and urban areas as a manner in which to reinforce their clientelistic structure.

The economic and institutional crisis experienced by the country from 1983 onwards modified this panorama substantially. For one thing, the state would be less and less able to resolve these problems on its own, it would see itself obliged to give up responsibility for these functions and to initiate privatisation policies of many basic services. It would develop new legislation and resort to the banks for the financing of the housing of the middle classes, promoting each time with less capacity the construction of housing for the poorer social classes.

The collapse of public services in the urban regions made the clientelistic structure of the political parties exercising central administrative functions less profitable (because they were held responsible for this fall off). These party structures had traditionally been linked to the demands and expectations of pressure groups through their actions in government and their electoral campaigns. In the mean time those parties distanced from central government gained from this situational framework. The direct impact of this situation showed, as has been indicated in previous chapters, in a weakening of vote reflected in the high levels of abstention, the substantial
modifications in the structure of the party system and the implementation of reforms for the re-structuring of the state.

VI.3.2 A specific case of Clientelism and control over neighbourhood associations of the Parish Osuna Rodríguez (Los Curos sector)

For the purposes of this case study, three interviews were undertaken with members of the community of the Parish, in the months of December and January 2000-2001. These interviews were organised into three groups made up three people. The first interview was with members of the parish council, the second with the councillor who represented the parish in the municipal chamber and two members of the community, and the third with three members of the community (two of them ex-leaders of the same community).

A table was elaborated so that the specific stages of urban development of the Los Curos sector could be presented as a continuous process. This table demonstrates the characteristics of type of housing, location of the sector, total number of houses constructed, and in which period of government. For the purposes of the thesis, the information of greatest interest is the date of adjudication of the properties. This data shows that the housing constructed by the state were adjudicated to the people selected by the parties in power at the time, especially during electoral campaigns or during the pre-electoral period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Type of Housing</th>
<th>Total No. of Houses</th>
<th>Date of Adjudication</th>
<th>Government of Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 - A</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>May 1974</td>
<td>COPEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 - B</td>
<td>block</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>block</td>
<td>29 blocks</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>block</td>
<td>576 flats</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>block</td>
<td>5 blocks</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>COPEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>COPEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 - A</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: INAVI-MERIDA)
In this manner, during the bi-party era governments in turn kept tight control over determinate electoral spaces, or increased their following, and constitutional right to housing was manipulated and transformed into an expression of clientelistic power by the party of government. This practice was widely used by both AD and COPEI in the sector of Los Curos in the parish in question. In the interviews undertaken in the community, there are testimonies that act as confirmation that the delivery of these properties was coloured by this type of practice.

In referring, for instance, to the opinions of the interviewees concerning the delivery of 644 properties of a single family type (Table No.6.1) during the first mandate of Rafael Caldera in 1974, it is notable that the influence of the parties was primordial for access to certain constitutional rights which, according to the Constitution of 1961 should have been guaranteed to the family:

“At the beginning of this period of the initiation of the housing project with one lot of houses, it seemed that what influenced the procedure in some way was if you belonged to the party of government, because the parties made these lists. In the case of (for example) the beginning of the government of Rafael Caldera, all of the lists came from the COPEI party, they were sent to INAVI which was the institute that governed all of the construction of housing here in Los Curos. In the whole of Venezuela there wasn’t any other institute, because it was a national institute and it was the only one. OK, so for the most part what I remember, (and those who I’ve talked with who’ve been here many years and who all know me) is that you had to go and get a letter of support from the party so that you could be given one.”

Member of community A

“I’m the son of peasants from the villages of the South, and in 1973 when we arrived for the first time in Mérida we had to find a family home. At that time they had opened a housing programme during the government of Rafael Caldera, who it was that made the first houses, and my mother was able to benefit, thanks to her having a brother who was the prefect of the southern villages, and who was a member of the party in power, and who gave her the house and therefore it was he, in a certain way, who intervened on her behalf.”

Member of community B
This practice was repeated by the new governments that alternated in power during the bi-party era. In the next periods of government of AD and COPEI between 1974 and 1989, the state constructed and promoted the delivery of housing using similar clientelistic proceedings and practices:

"In time the urbanization began to grow, and they made buildings that were more modern and that, in some way, obstructed what had been done by the governments that weren’t of the same party as that in power, which was the social-democrat government of Carlos Andrés Pérez. In 1976 they made 29 buildings to try in some way to distance themselves from the housing constructed in the previous government, and to obtain control of a parish which was growing and which was important. They used the same method, the people had to go and get direct support from inside the party of government, through a letter of recommendation by which the person could obtain their housing. They tried to take into account some sectors so that, in a certain way, they could disguise the fact that none of the deliveries of apartments were being distributed democratically. This was disguised by allowing other institutions of the state to take part, such as the Police, the armed forces, the unions would send lists where there were included police, firemen. Some guild members asked for instructions from the state. In the case of the National Institute of Sport they would send a list of trainers who had no housing. But above all, so far as these lists were concerned, they would ‘cleanse’ them to see who were of, or who belonged to their parties, and thereafter they would disguise the delivery of these apartments."

Member of community A

But in spite of this manner of disguising the delivery of housing through institutions and unions, it is possible to see how organizations that did not belong to the AD and COPEI parties, such as the case of CUTE(M (the Central Union of Workers of Mérida), a Marxist orientated union, were able to ensure that some of their members could take part in the property adjudication. Unions were strong organizations during the centralist period and CUTE(M was a well-organised union which fought hard for the welfare of its members:

"The mother of the interviewee lives in this sector and she’s actually a Chavista, and when she was asked how she managed to get hold of her property, the reply was through
the CUTEM union. CUTEM had conventions with the Workers' Bank, and sought the security of its workers through the use of the union."

President of the Parish Council

The testimony, as it goes on, describes the case of the father of a family who arrived in the community having come from a state located in the south of the country, with a party affiliation other than that of the government in power. The clever way in which this person arranged himself housing shows how the clientelistic (string-pulling and corrupt) political relationships are interwoven throughout the length and breadth of the country. At that time, an order of the AD party in whatever part of the national territory was an order:

“When I arrived here from the Amazonas I had papers for arranging my house to give to a certain man, and from there it went to the lists of the AD, and so the bloke in charge told me: “No, you’re a COPEI man”, and then they put me on to the list at number 20. So I went off and celebrated with my wife and my children and when I came back the next day, the Monday, I wasn’t on the list any more. So I went and argued and fought and all that, and they put me back on the list and I appeared then at number 13, and after all that carry-on I go back the next day at three in the afternoon and I’m not on the list again, and then they called me, they had the contacts: “What’s going on is, that you’re not in the party” and I said “So I don’t have any right to a house, I’m not Venezuelan, and so what about the Constitution? The right to work, the right to housing, to security, to defence and I don’t know what else, I’m going to show you that I’m an ADeco, what arrogance!” And I called Amazonas to some of my friends, to a top leader or the AD and he sent me a diploma where it said: “In recognition of Omar Patiño for services rendered in elevating Jaime Lusinchi to the presidency, signed and stamped by all the boys, as well as a blank receipt-book signed and stamped with seals and guarantees, I filled them in myself for 800, 300 bolivars; 800 bolivars at that time was the monthly salary of a professional; I signed them for 500 for I don’t know what, party finances, and then I went to see them again and I threw these things down on the desk as if they were real, but what it really is, is that I don’t like to be pissed about. And my friends, they’d really gone to town on this, the next day I had the key to my house, the next day I got the house.”

Member of community C
The construction of houses was renewed (two multi-family buildings were constructed in 2001) in the period of decentralized democracy of the new hegemony. In the opinion of members of the community the mechanics of delivery have changed and are considered on criteria of evaluation and assessing the rights of the family, and specifically those of women and of children:

"In 2001 they made two buildings and it did seem as though here there had been no influence used, because in the same building there were ADecos, COPEI- COpeñanos and Chavistas. I couldn't say if this was the line of the national government, but it certainly had a great influence that the person who was directing INAVI here was a person who tried in every way possible to help people who really needed it, respecting lists, taking into account who had more children; in the case of this apartment, say, she has four children, and so you can see that there are a lot of children here, in each building there are apartments that have 3 or 4 children, there are very few that have no children. All of a sudden there's only half of the "buddy-buddy" but the rest of the criteria are about the children, there's no other way, just necessity.

Member of community D

VI.3.2.1 The Neighbourhood Associations and party intermediation

As has been indicated previously in Chapter IV, the first neighbourhood associations in Venezuela date from 1936. They were, thereafter, constituted in every barrio in the country and were denominated as community councils. In 1961 there appeared in the urban areas of the middle classes and the upper-middle classes of Caracas neighbourhood organizations dedicated to controlling urban growth. In the low-income areas from 1965 onwards, service centres were created for public action that began to substitute for the community councils (Rivero 1995, pp.4-6). This differentiation of spatial contexts caused the communal organizations of Venezuela to appear to present two faces in relation to their forms of struggle, demands and dependence, with respect to the political parties. Whilst the organizations of the urban areas were formed for resolving problems of urban deterioration, lack of resources directed their demands towards basic necessities (property titles for land, houses, public services) making these more susceptible to party 'intervention' owing to the control that these had over such demands.
From the middle of 1975 up to 1980 the activism and demands of the neighbourhoods for institutional reforms grew at the local level. As an indication of the growth and importance of the struggle of these associations, in 1978 congress approved the LORM in order to legalize them. The political parties felt threatened by these emergent alternatives, and in 1979 congress established a partial regulation that put in place mechanisms for controlling the creation and action of these parallel associations and federations, such as the Communal Integration (IC) organization of AD and the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of COPEI for winning control of the neighbourhood movement (Rivero 1995, pp.7-8). The pressures exerted by neighbourhoods for more democracy continued and in 1989 the Municipal Law of 1979 was modified to include the election of mayors. The above-mentioned partial law was also modified to take into consideration local participation.

These general antecedents draw closer to the question referred to in the introduction, concerning the neighbourhood associations that functioned during the centralist stage, and their change towards new forms of participation in the case of the Los Curos sector of the parish Osuna Rodriguez. In this particular case, the space of action for the associations was formed by six sectors represented in the following aerial photograph (photomosaic: 6.2). Of these sectors, the most representative have been selected in terms of interviewees form the neighbourhood councils:

* The first council of neighbours that was legalized is that of sector 61 in 1986, called the Half Part. Later on, by community petition in 1990 a new sectorization was undertaken in which the Half Part was divided into two sectors: Albarregas F and sector 108. The boundaries of this space correspond to the housing of sector 01B and 05, which were built during the government of Rafael Caldera and that of Luis Herrera Campins, both COPEI governments.

* The council of neighbours of sector 63, called El Entable, was legalized in 1987 and corresponds to the single and multi-family dwellings of sectors 7-A, 7-B and 8, built during the social democrat government of Jaime Lusinchi. Their inhabitants in the majority came from being landless from previous incursions (San Eduardo, Barrio Negro Primero).
Stages of Urbanization of the Parish of Osuna Rodriguez

Photomosaic 6.2

Enlargement of Aerial Photograph
Reference number: 010480-1989
* Sector 62, the first area constructed in this zone was the third to legalize its council of neighbours and establish its boundaries. This sector was constructed in 1974, late on in the government of Rafael Caldera, and is denominated the Lower Part, corresponding to phase 01-A.

* Finally, sector Albarregas 60 in the upper part of the urbanization constituted its council of neighbours in 1991, in spaces 02 and 03 of the urbanization. This sector brings together the modern constructed buildings delivered during the presidency of Carlos Andrés Pérez.

In the first and the third case the associations of neighbours were controlled by COPEI until 1998, and in the second and fourth cases they were controlled by AD. This refers to the previously noted exposition concerning the control that the municipal councils had over the legalization of the neighbourhood organizations. In general terms, the interviews indicate that the associations of neighbours in this popular urbanization have always been controlled by the leaders of the local COPEI and AD parties. The other national and local parties have no strong leadership in this sector of the city, as has happened in other areas, but nevertheless, with the hegemonic rupture the MVR and local organizations (as will be shown later on) have entered to compete with these parties in the struggle for control of these organizations. In many cases this is why the local leaders of COPEI and AD have transferred their militancy to the new hegemony.

The other aspect is the nearly precise coincidence between the boundaries of the sectors of the neighbourhood associations, and the boundaries of the different sectors built in each period of government. Thus with the case of the association of neighbours of sector 62, for example, which corresponds in a tailor-made fashion with the sectors 01A and 05, which were adjudicated in 1974 during the government of Rafael Caldera. Equally the coincidence between sectors 02, 03 and 10 which were delivered during the government of Pérez and Lusinchi, and the boundaries with the associations of neighbours of sector 60 (photomosaic: 6.3).
Neighbourhood Boundaries in Osuna Rodriguez Parish
Photomosaic 6.3

Enlargement of Aerial Photograph
Reference number: 010480-1989
The opinion of the interviewees coincided with the above analysis in relation to the control exercised by the political parties over the neighbourhood associations in this parish:

"This is a sector which has basically been ADeco or COPEIano the whole of its existence; for example, you see that when Luis Herrera commanded it was COPEIano, and when Carlos Andrés arrived it was ADeco, similarly when Lusinchi won - when Caldera won the second time it began to change a bit."

Member of community A

"With respect to the associations of neighbours, these were very strongly coloured by the leaders of the AD and COPEI, up to the point where these guys have remained four or five years and still they don't want to undergo the process of re-legitimization, which is to say that they don't want any new elections. Ourselves, we aren't too happy with the idea of new elections because we don't want to carry on copying this model and raise up a load of people from the MVR to propose two or three people from that movement who win, which would be easy because its the right time, but we don't believe we will because we don't want to carry on making the same mistake. We think that the space for decentralization and participation must be a lot broader, it has to be more democratic, where in reality any person who wants to participate, no matter if they be from COPEI or AD, or if they don't believe in any party, or if they're from MVR or whatever, so long as they want to participate and bring along their grain of sand for the community, they should be welcome to do so."

Council Circuit 3

This criterion is also reinforced by another testimony coming from a different sector indicated above, in which the term manipulation can be observed being used to describe the control that the political parties exercised over the neighbourhood associations. As has been indicated previously at the beginning of the chapter, from the viewpoint of Allen (1999) it can be asserted that clientelistic manipulation is a power relationship that employs politics to contribute to the assurance of approval, when the authority of the central power is not completely effective. According to Elías Santana, a national neighbourhood activist, the control of a neighbourhood association brought benefits to the party, giving it votes for the internal confrontations with existing leaders in promoting and permitting the exercise of their dominion over
the community. This gave them positions in groups opposed to the mayorality, which could be used according to whatever was perceived to be the necessity of the party. Specifically, the mayors and their opposition, or other potential candidates from the platforms of the municipal governments or their parties, dedicated themselves to the task of building control. What the parties had done with guilds and syndicates, they tried to do with neighbourhood associations (Elías Santana, El Nacional, 2002).

"With respect to the associations of neighbours, it’s no secret to anybody that they have been used as a trampoline, and the same system is very similar to what they use when the elections arrive. Whoever brings the most people from a specific party is the one who in practice is going to win in a pretty vertical structure, where two or three people assume all the responsibilities. And the same dynamic means that afterwards there remains only one person in charge, and that their work can be manipulated, they may have good intentions but become disillusioned. But the whole political business is very prejudiced, so to speak, if they follow the orders of the political party, if there’s a social programme it’s manipulated, here, we’re going to give you a grant but you understand who you’ve got to vote for, we’re going to give you a pension but you know who you’ve got to support, and so this part of participation is very prejudicial, and a mediocre participation is manipulative, it’s playing with hunger."

Member of community E

**VI.3.3 Organizations of civil society and participation in the parish**

The parish was founded in 1974, and in 1979 a community of the Claretian fathers arrived and began the construction of their church, with the support and participation of the neighbours, as a way in which to integrate themselves into the community. *La Capilla* (The Church) came to be the first conquest of the community. During the 1980s three more, younger priests arrived who had different perspectives and who formed the ANCLA, which is an international social organization orientated towards youth organization, with a specific ethos of developing Christian ecclesiastical aptitudes as well as personal development.

The 1980s were an epoch in which the community of Los Curos experienced a growth in ANCLA groups, which led to the formation of a co-ordinator of the groups,
managed by various organizations. In 1988 the Cátedra de la Paz, within which a health project had emerged because there were numbers of medical students at the university formed the idea of a neighbourhood centre for Los Curos. In this centre they also had the idea of developing newspapers to circulate in the neighbourhood for the period of a year, as well as the Anti-Drug Attention Centre (TAICOA).

The Cátedra de la Paz is a civil organization financed which was by the University of the Andes from the beginning, and also by some foreign consulates. The mission of the Cathedral is “to promote the values and the potentials of the human being for community participation as a function of sustainable local development, under the precepts of education for peace in the popular sectors of the state”. In the Municipality of Libertador it is one of the most important civil organizations, and a point of reference in the city for its achievements:

“Right now, the Cátedra de la Paz works along three basic lines; one is personal formation, they do every type of course, secretarial, computing, clothes-making and others. The second line is that after they’ve helped people to develop themselves they find them credit so they can plan what they’ve learnt, which is to say, they can put into practice what they’ve learnt. For example, if you needed credit for a computer, they would try and find you one with easy payments. If you did a course on clothes making, they would try and find you a sewing-machine. And the third and final line is trying to find work for people – at the moment, this civil organization is financed by the British government.”

Member of Community D

One of the interviewees gave an account of the financing:

“I asked the co-ordinator, who was called Walter Trejo, and he told me that the truth was that the English government had sent him 280 million bolivars from England, and he didn’t know what to do with it; he divided it up and he gave out some 300 credits and got them back. the people carried on paying and of the 200 and some coming back, converted them into 500, even though from experience here the people don’t pay them back, OK then, if they’re contributions from the government maybe things change. For me though really, this is perhaps the only NGO which is working here as a real mystery, they do things for the kids and the church is very close to them.”
Member of Community A

The relationship between international finance and the frontline assistance projects was also reflected in this interview, as being more influential now that the communitarian tendency with which this organization was begun, has really started to work:

"The Cátedra de la Paz was born of a group of young lads who were in the youth groups but stayed here, and from the point-of-view of functionality it works, but from another viewpoint they're very assistentialist right now. They do a lot more than just talk about services, they share in this, although in education and other things they don't really mix much with the community. They have very exact plans, like the holiday plan for the kids, and discussion groups about AIDS, education for being parents, sexual stuff, which are important activities, but really what they lack in the community are friends, you realize that what they need is people acting in solidarity with them, to work with them in a way which is more than just good plans."

Member of Community B

From 1995 onwards, new organizations were created in the parish that had characteristics and aims very distinct from those formed in the previous decades. These organizations were directed towards the environment fundamentally as rescue organizations. Thus there were the Rescue Brigade Libertador, the Rescue Brigade Tulio Febres Cordero (which have now been working for some six years) and there is also the Ecological Brigade and the Sports Brigade Cóndor de Los Andes. According to the database of SOCSAL (1999) the state of Mérida has a large number of social development organizations. Of a total of 931 organizations for the whole country, 68 are located in Mérida, which is a total only exceeded by Zulia (167) Monagas (105) and the Federal District (93).

Environmental organizations are also numerous, being 10 in comparison with 28 for the Federal District and 25 in the state of Miranda. Without doubt this is due to the presence of the University, which has the only Faculty of Forest Sciences in the country and is the centre of development for environmental activities involving local and national co-operation, such as activism, environmental education, rescue groups,
forest fire-brigades, and so forth. Additionally, the state has some of the most important national parks in terms of plant and animal refuges, as well as ecological and topographic characteristics that make environmental activity a priority in the zone.

But apart from these observations, in asking about changes from one decade to another in the orientation of the participation in movements and organizations, it must be realised that this is a community with basic problems still without resolution, and that there are various factors that are re-orientating these new organizations, not towards the promotion of diversification but rather more towards determinate sectors of participation which can be politically controlled or manipulated through their financing.

The structural adjustment programmes which were implemented during the second government of Rafael Caldera (1994-1998) were implemented through the “Agenda Venezuela”, through programmes such as the Pilot Programme of Support for the Political Initiatives of Civil Society (PAIS), which was designed in 1995 with the objective of creating and developing a pilot mechanism of public/private co-participation, and for the financing of projects and activities formulated and executed by organizations of civil society. In this context, so far as the environmental organizations are concerned, they are not as politically controversial, and therefore it is easier to find financing for them.

Additionally, the practice of intermediation that the political parties had been exercising since the centralist period affected communitarian initiatives and their orientation and initial proposals, directing them towards forms more adjusted to the concept of social capital; these practices favoured the mediation and demobilization of civil society, impeding the building of relationships of communitarian association at the local level.

The community of Osuna Rodríguez did not escape this type of problematic. The following account of a member of the community leaves it very clear that an organization, in this case a religious organization, latterly became controlled by the neighbourhood councils which passed as NGOs, in another type of assistentialism of
the 1990s. For the ends of the political parties, this type of organization was more convenient than having political and communitarian movements. This is shown in the change of a religious organization into the control of the neighbourhood councils. 

"There was something that happened to us with a health project when it was formed, because when we started it, it was supposed to be open for anybody, among them the neighbors and other people not linked to the church, and it started out like that but then others came along and took our places and we were left outside, because we understood things differently and our organization wasn't going to ask personal questions, but only to fight for health itself, but they were organizing it and arranged juridical status for this health organization so that it got to the situation where they took over the organization for themselves, in fact by manipulation, and it's called the Socio-Sanitary Council, which they called it and for which they named themselves to the council."

But who took it over? Here, the neighbourhood associations are commanded by the council of neighbours. Johny began the project with a group of medical students from the barrio, and sadly they saw themselves being replaced by the neighbourhood associations, and now that they've been replaced Johny and his group have disappeared, and the Socio-Sanitary Council is commanded by the neighbourhood councils. And the other one, in the case of the Catedra de la Paz there was a project that was an agreement between three Christian organizations and a mountaineering group (the catedra group and the GUM), and when they gave out the positions, the GUM bloke took our name, which was more an existential than juridical name, because we ourselves didn't have juridical status, in fact no organization of ours had legal status because we worked for the common good, we came from the church, and we were more transparent than the other organizations, we had a lot of credibility in Los Curos, we were much respected."

Member of Community D

VI.3.3.1 New forms of participation and decentralization in the Parish Osuna Rodriguez

With the putting into operation of the new Constitution, practices of participation in the open councils were re-born which dated from the colonial period and which had enormous influence on the process of democratisation in the first half of the 19th century. As has been discussed previously in Chapter 3, the council represented the
city and was the location of autochthonous political power. Also, at the end of the 1980s with the reforms to the LORM in 1987 and 1989, the municipal council or chapter could call a referendum of electors of the parish or municipality, with the aim of consulting them about ordinances or other affairs of collective interest. Nevertheless, even with juridical status the municipal councils had never implemented popular consultation. In relation to this, it is interesting to analyze the change of mode of participation that began to occur in the parish, from neighbourhood councils controlled by the political parties to popular assemblies and horizontal schemes of organization at the district level. To continue with the interviewees:

“One of the worries that had overwhelmed Johny and César is the bit about what exactly is participation. In view of this situation one of the things that we wanted to implement here in JJ Osuna was, in spite of the fact that we have many organizations, here we’re like everyone is in a separate parcel, and we don’t look at JJ Osuna as a whole. A short while ago I belonged to a sporting association and I was only interested in the sporting aspect, because the other bit of it was the rescue section, which was interesting, but we don’t actually sit round a table to discuss things, we have a dialogue about what could be going on in JJ Osuna in the next three, four, five years. And there are very good people in this organization, people who can think a bit further than just what the immediate thing is, and what action they want to take, and we’ve been getting together to try and work out a project”.

Council Circuit 3

In this case, two years ago a project of integrated urban development began with the Faculty of Architecture, which was a project of extending the University towards the community of JJ Osuna. The project had been presented to all of the relevant organizations at a local and national level.

“In this area the problem of the vertical expansion of housing to solve the problem of overcrowded families was expressed along with the collapse in the level of services, the lack of green areas or even planning for green areas. It is not just about responding to families simply in terms of a space to live. The educational facilities are all nearly saturated, collapsing, and the government is not going to make a proposal to us that is integrated to give solutions to these problems. All of this will force us to arrange a more
holistic project, over what exactly is the reality that we have here, and what it is we can actually do, and how we’re going to bring it about."

According to the parish council, what is interesting is that this project has been discussed through the use of the assemblies:

"More than thirty assemblies have been called in the different sectors of JJ Osuna in two years. What’s the mechanism? In general they send an invitation to the NGOs, they publicise them in the press, they make calls by the radio, send out written instructions with the time and place of the presentation of the project, they invite institutions that have set up shop in JJ Osuna, to the medical sector, educators. What’s the attendance been like? There hasn’t been a great deal of interest but it’s mainly been leadership, or representation. People came from the educational institutes, health, but in one way or another they’re people who want to bring their grain of sand to the project. The project is in a diagnostic phase, and it could be realized to solve the problems of vertical growth, of green spaces, educational institutes and other institutions."

The criticism of the opposition to the manner in which local politics is conducted in relation to these assemblies and open councils permits observation of the projects practices and modes of interposing participation into the actual management. They question the sectarianism of the MVR and they identify it with manipulatory practices that obstruct opinion and the formation of leadership. This could be interpreted as an expression of verticality of power emanating from the relationship between central government and local government, and the mediation of party politics:

"What it is with the open councils, is that the MVR is the one with the power, and it believes it's the only one with the right to give opinions or to request work, and no-one’s allowed to ask why without problems. When a person speaks this way in the name of the government and says: because we’re the revolutionaries, then there's always someone from the neighbourhood leadership who goes “what are you talking about, being a revolutionary, you’re ADeco, you’re COPElano, you’re from the Convergencia” and they form a ruckus and so the object and the aims of the meeting aren’t realized because they want to manipulate the council, for it to hear what they say, but they give the rest of us no opportunity."

Member of Community C
Nevertheless, the parish councillor explained in detail the development of new schemes of horizontal participation, which are different from those that have traditionally been propelled by the parties and where the members of the community can achieve a greater degree of social integration and political conscientization, for the strengthening of democracy. This is an aspect worth underlining now that decentralization is understood as a practice revolving around the people, more than a decision of central and local power, or a legal mandate. Further to this, he considers that this political practice, contrary to the manipulative forms of political clientelism, is essential in order to be able to speak of a true decentralization which it still has not been possible to achieve (above all at the neighbourhood level, at the schools and in other spaces of communal association):

"We are working on a new model that isn't vertical, that's much more horizontal and where we're going to apply by districts. That is to say, the Negro Primero sector is made up of districts, we get together as families and explain the whole process, and what participation really is, something really transcendental, and that this isn't simply a problem just for the parish councils, of the counsellors, of the mayor, or of the governor or the president but rather that we definitely have to all get involved ourselves, and that there are problems that we can solve at the family level. For example, that we live together in these six districts and we have problems over getting rid of the rubbish, at a time that isn't convenient and in receptacles that aren't adequate. There isn't really a space where we can say something about where to throw it but this we can solve at the level of these six families.

There're other solutions that the parish council can perform or the municipal council, the regional and national government, but also each one of us. We're going to say it like this, each has a responsibility and what we want is that everyone becomes aware of the process that we're living through. Definitely we can't resolve all our problems, but the organizations and the proposals that come from the community are going to be a lot more feasible in resolving the problems of the community. This is what has brought us to where we're recognising marvellous proposals from within our own community. One of them in the last few months, is where adults volunteer to prepare food, others deliver it building by building, or house by house, or deliver a little flyer that says where the operative is going to be. And the stuff that they don't use, they recover it and then take it back to the
Catedra de la Paz so that they can recycle part of it. So, we can see that definitely the decentralization models aren’t a question of what’s in the constitution, or in the LORM, but rather the fact we have to make it practical, which is to say go and talk. Like Jhony says, who’s more than just a councillor, he’s a friend, he says there are no more political colours, only a series of problems that we have and if we don’t get together and solve these problems then they’re going to get much worse. They’re going to be much more difficult in the coming days, the coming years."

There are also opinions from electors where participation is the key to having a true process of decentralization, above all at the neighbourhood and barrio level, and who consider that Venezuelan society still hasn’t arrived at that stage.

“Participation is an integral form so that people feel that they’re being considered: participation and decentralization. But I think that we’re at the first stage. A first theoretical stage: Where are we? How do we do this? what is it that we want? Today everything that’s being planned is just theoretical. There’s nothing in practice. You can’t really talk about decentralization. Firstly this is because there’s no real consciousness of it in the country and clientelism has been made into a cultural model, a custom of governments, since Guzmán Blanco and before. Guzmán Blanco designed his parties on a clientelistic base and from then on the whole thing just got more profound which is what we see in the mechanisms that we’re showing with the new communitarian organizations; trying to decentralise, and that’s what they’ve put into our heads is what is clientelism, and trying to construct new organizations with proposals for the future, as a real accompaniment to the communities. We believe that if we can’t get past this we can’t speak of decentralization, or anything. So participation is the key.”

Member of community E
VI.4 The context of the hegemonic struggle in the Libertador Municipality, and opinions on decentralization and participation in the spatial environment of the parish

The context of the hegemonic struggle at the local level has been defined by the framework of the ‘mega-elections’ of 2000, now that the Constitution of 1999, in contrast to that of 1961, has opened new spaces for participation at the parish level, moving decentralization closer to the communal environment of the barrios and the neighbourhood.

The spatial political units of the lower hierarchy, established by the LORM, are the parishes. In Chapter IV of this law (Article 32) they are defined in the following manner, “Parishes are demarcations of a local character, within the territory of the municipality, created with the objective of decentralizing the municipal administration, promoting citizen participation and the betterment of local public services.” According to Brewer Carías (2000) this has as its final end the guarantee of the principle of co-responsibility in public management and the development of self-management processes in the administration and control of state and municipal public services (Brewer Carías 2000, p.327). But in the context of the hegemonic struggle they have also generated conflicts at the local level by the interference that local governments impose at the point of distribution of the resources, which have to be assigned to the parishes according to the 1999 Constitution, and which form part of the decisions that have to be taken by the new local planning council.

41 They are called mega-elections (July 2000) because in a single electoral act they re-legitimated all levels of political powers following the promulgation of the 1999 Constitution. These were: the President of the Republic, the Latin American Parliament, the Andean Parliament, the Deputies of the National Assembly, the State Governors, the Deputies of the Legislative Councils and the Mayors. The Municipalities in terms of their Parish Councils and Councils were held six months later in December 2000. Never before such complicated elections been held in Venezuela with so many distinct seats or electoral spaces.

42 Article 182 created the Local Council of Public Planning presided over by the Mayor or Mayoress and composed of councilors, the Presidents of the Parish Councils and representatives of the
The important thing now, however, is that the people are informed in their disposition to participate in the control of the administration of public resources, and to collaborate in local management, as has been detected in the opinions expressed by members of the community in this chapter.


In the elections for parish councils of 1992 12 political organizations participated, including the national parties (AD, COPEI, MAS, NGD, OPINA, LCR, URD, MEP, ORA) and three local political groupings, the UVI (Independent Neighbourhood Unity), EPAP (The People To Power) and the PL.

The hierarchy of parties and alliances for the parish shows that AD and COPEI controlled the political space in the municipality. The 15 parishes of the Municipality of Libertador, COPEI occupied first place in 10 parishes with over 36% of the vote, reaching 49.57% of the vote in the parish of Lasso de La Vega. Whilst, in its turn the AD won in the five remaining parishes, 3 in the urban environment (Domingo Peña with 36.5% of the vote, Jacinto Plaza with 44.4% and Juan Rodríguez Suárez with 41.2%) and 2 in the rural environment (Parish Gonzalo Picón Febres and El Morro).

neighborhood associations and other sectors of organized society – according to the dispositions established by the law (Garay, 2000: 82).
Table: 6.2 Hierarchy of parties and alliances (Parish Councils 1992)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parishes</th>
<th>First place party</th>
<th>Second place party</th>
<th>Third place party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arias</td>
<td>COPEI 33.1%</td>
<td>AD 33.7%</td>
<td>MAS 16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagrario</td>
<td>COPEI 40.2%</td>
<td>AD 31.8%</td>
<td>UVI 9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milla</td>
<td>COPEI 41.8%</td>
<td>AD 33.8%</td>
<td>UVI 9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Llano</td>
<td>COPEI 37.4%</td>
<td>AD 35.5%</td>
<td>UVI 10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Rodríguez S</td>
<td>AD 41.2%</td>
<td>COPEI 35.6%</td>
<td>MAS 8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacinto Plaza</td>
<td>AD 44.4%</td>
<td>COPEI 41.1%</td>
<td>UVI 8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domingo Peña</td>
<td>COPEI 37.7%</td>
<td>AD 36.5%</td>
<td>UVI 14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalo Picón F.</td>
<td>COPEI</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>UVI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osuna Rodríguez</td>
<td>COPEI 42.1%</td>
<td>AD 32.6%</td>
<td>MAS – UVI 5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasso de la Vega</td>
<td>COPEI 49.5%</td>
<td>AD 26.5%</td>
<td>UVI 6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carracjolo Parra</td>
<td>COPEI 36.6%</td>
<td>UVI 25.5%</td>
<td>AD 22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariano Picón S.</td>
<td>COPEI 43.9%</td>
<td>AD 34.4%</td>
<td>MAS 7.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Spinetti D</td>
<td>COPEI 37.6%</td>
<td>AD 32.9%</td>
<td>UVI 7.75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical data of the Alberto Carnevali Popular University

Independent Neighbourhood Unity occupied third place in 9 parishes: Antonio Spinetti Dini, Domingo Peña, El Llano, Jacinto Plaza, Lasso de la Vega, Milla, Osuna Rodríguez, Sagrario and Gonzalo Picón Febres, with votes totalling between 14.4% and 6.6%. MAS came third in 5 parishes (Arias 16.2%, Juan Rodríguez Suárez 8.3%, and in Osuna Rodríguez and in El Morro equal to UVI with 5.1%) It is worth pointing out that for the UVI it was the first time they had participated in the state elections and it displaced MAS as the third political force in the municipality. In these municipal elections the mayoralty once again remained in the hands of COPEI.

For 1995, at the level of municipality there participated in Libertador 14 political organizations, grouped in the following manner: AD, COPEI, OPINA, ORA, MAS, MEP, PCV, Convergencia and the LCR, augmented by local parties or organizations such as U, MIO (Independent Organized Movement) FM (Mérida Force) and the UVI which were all new (with the exception of UVI which had already participated as an organization in the previous elections).

This time the political space of the Libertador municipality at the urban parish level was completely controlled by AD. AD won with more than 33% of the total of votes. COPEI occupied second place with 23 % of the vote, followed by the Convergencia in third place in the majority of parishes. It is worth noting that the Convergencia (the party that appeared for the first time in the presidential elections of 1993) reached third position at parish level and displaced MAS and the UVI. In 1995 the mayor favoured in the final results was from the AD which is to say that the parishes and the mayoralty belonged to the same party. If a comparison is made between these results
and those of the parish council elections of 2000 in the Libertador municipality, then an important change in the system of parties presents itself.

In the electoral system that applied in 2000 three members were elected by law for each parish, 2 by the uninominal system, which is to say 60%, and the other member by the list system of 40%. In the year 2000 the municipality was made up of 15 parishes, 2 of them eminently rural (El Morro and los Nevados). The results of the uninominal system by parish were as follows:

Table: 6.3 Hierarchy of parties and alliances – parish councils 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parishes</th>
<th>First place party</th>
<th>Second place party</th>
<th>Third place party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arias</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 25.3%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 24.6%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagrario</td>
<td>AD-Copei 25.4%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 24.3%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milla</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 30.2%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 28.5%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Llano</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 25.2%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 24.12%</td>
<td>AD 20.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Rodríguez S</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 26.5%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 25.8%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacinto Plaza</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 25.7%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 25.0%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 23.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domingo Peña</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 28.5%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 26.4%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalo Picón F.</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 31.2%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 30.6%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osuna Rodríguez</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 21.8%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 21.7%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasso de la Vega</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 26.08%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 24.0%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carracciolo Parra</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 24.47%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 23.3%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariano Picón S.</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 26.9%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 26.16%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Spinetti D</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 29.4%</td>
<td>MVR-MAS 28.5%</td>
<td>AD-Copei 20.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE)

In all of the parishes, with the exception of the Parish Mariano Picón Salas and the Parish of Sagrario, the MVR-MAS alliance obtained first and second place. Third place was frequently taken by the AD-COPEI alliance. Only in the Parish of Mariano Picón Salas did the AD-COPEI alliance win the two representatives, and one representative in the Sagrario parish. The percentage of valid votes varied between 21% in the Parish of Osuna Rodríguez and 31% in the Parish of Gonzalo Picón Febres.

Table: 6.4. Total voting, abstention, No. of parties and candidates - Parish councils 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total Voting</th>
<th>Abstention</th>
<th>No. of Parties</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arias</td>
<td>1892 23.9%</td>
<td>6010 76.0%</td>
<td>10 5 4</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sagrario</td>
<td>1053 22.0%</td>
<td>3730 77.9%</td>
<td>4 2 0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milla</td>
<td>2443 17.8%</td>
<td>11216 82.1%</td>
<td>11 5 0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Llano</td>
<td>1928 20.5%</td>
<td>7461 79.4%</td>
<td>11 4 0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Rodríguez S</td>
<td>2112 20.6%</td>
<td>8117 79.3%</td>
<td>4 1 2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacinto Plaza</td>
<td>2820 27.9%</td>
<td>7263 72.0%</td>
<td>10 4 1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domingo Peña</td>
<td>3800 22.3%</td>
<td>13430 77.6%</td>
<td>5 3 0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalo Picón F.</td>
<td>994 33.3%</td>
<td>1989 66.6%</td>
<td>4 2 0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osuna Rodríguez</td>
<td>2394 28.6%</td>
<td>5949 71.3%</td>
<td>4 5 0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasso de la Vega</td>
<td>996 22.3%</td>
<td>3453 77.6%</td>
<td>4 3 1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carracciolo Parra</td>
<td>2050 21.13%</td>
<td>7653 78.8%</td>
<td>4 3 0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariano Picón S.</td>
<td>1614 25.3%</td>
<td>4763 74.6%</td>
<td>4 2 0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Spinetti D</td>
<td>3136 23.7%</td>
<td>10088 76.2%</td>
<td>7 2 0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE)
The average for abstention in the 13 parishes was 76%, and the average number of candidates was 7. The Parish Osuna Rodríguez was the parish which showed the highest degree of electoral participation with 28.6%, whilst the lowest level of participation was in the Parish of Milla with 17.8%. The results from the list system by parish are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>First place party</th>
<th>Second place party</th>
<th>Third place party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arias</td>
<td>MVR 55.1%</td>
<td>AD 35.9%</td>
<td>MAS 3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagrario</td>
<td>AD 46.4%</td>
<td>MVR 43.2%</td>
<td>MAS 7.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milla</td>
<td>MVR 54.2%</td>
<td>AD 29.5%</td>
<td>COP 3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Llano</td>
<td>MVR 45.6%</td>
<td>AD 37.8%</td>
<td>COP 6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Rodríguez S</td>
<td>MVR 50.0%</td>
<td>AD 40.3%</td>
<td>COP 6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacinto Plaza</td>
<td>MVR 52.6%</td>
<td>AD 39.9%</td>
<td>COP 2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domingu Peás</td>
<td>MVR 55.6%</td>
<td>AD 33.7%</td>
<td>COP 4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalo Picón F.</td>
<td>MVR 58.4%</td>
<td>AD 36.8%</td>
<td>COP 2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osuna Rodríguez</td>
<td>MVR 46.1%</td>
<td>AD 37.2%</td>
<td>Vecinos en A 4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasso de la Vega</td>
<td>MVR 51.5%</td>
<td>AD 42.3%</td>
<td>COP 2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caracciolo Parra</td>
<td>MVR 47.9%</td>
<td>AD 40.0%</td>
<td>Amigos Con S 4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariano Picón S.</td>
<td>AD 49.3%</td>
<td>MVR 44.7%</td>
<td>COP 3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Spinetti D</td>
<td>MVR 51.4%</td>
<td>AD 34.4%</td>
<td>MAS 5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE)

The MVR was adjudicated a member of the parish council in 10 out of 12 parishes, and AD occupied first place in only 2 parishes (Sagrario and Mariano Picón Salas, with 46 and 49% of the votes respectively). The MVR got the highest vote in Gonzalo Picón, with 58.4%, and the lowest in Osuna Rodríguez with 46.1%. Second place was controlled by AD in the ten parishes in which the MVR won. Third place presents a more multi-party panorama with mainly new organizations with the exception of COPEI and MAS. In the parishes of El Llano, Osuna Rodríguez and Caracciolo Parra local organizations emerged: the Meridan Humanitarian Movement (MHM), Forward Neighbours, and Friends with Simonsi, who won between 4 and 7% of the vote as new movements. The presence of the AD in second place in 11 parishes with percentages of between 29% and 44% of the vote indicated a still-strong presence of this party in the local life of the municipality. In addition they remain in command of the municipality since the mayor-elect for the period 2002-2003 is from AD.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parishes</th>
<th>Number of voters</th>
<th>Abstention</th>
<th>Registered parties: National Regional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arias</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>6010</td>
<td>4 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagrado</td>
<td>1053</td>
<td>3730</td>
<td>4 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nillot</td>
<td>2443</td>
<td>11216</td>
<td>9 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Llano</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>7461</td>
<td>5 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juss Rodríguez</td>
<td>2112</td>
<td>8117</td>
<td>4 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacinto Plaza</td>
<td>2820</td>
<td>7263</td>
<td>10 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domingo Peña</td>
<td>3860</td>
<td>13430</td>
<td>4 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalo Picón</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osuna Rodríguez</td>
<td>2394</td>
<td>5949</td>
<td>4 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasso de la Vega</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>3453</td>
<td>3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carracciolo Parra</td>
<td>2050</td>
<td>76,5</td>
<td>4 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariano Pech</td>
<td>1614</td>
<td>4763</td>
<td>4 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Spinetti</td>
<td>3136</td>
<td>10088</td>
<td>8 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE)

But abstention was the real winner in these elections, given that the average rate of abstention in the 13 parishes was 76%, juxtaposed to the low level of participation of 23%. It is well known that in proportion to the manner by which electoral participation is circumscribed, abstention is high, but in Venezuela abstention had never reached such high levels, especially if comparison is made with the parish elections of 1992 and 1995.

The reasons for this phenomenon can be found in the following arguments: a) the temporal separation (six months) of the municipal and parish council elections and those of the governorship and mayoralty which on previous occasions have been done as a single package; b) Electoral ‘intoxication’, that is to say, the process of having 6 sets of elections in two years: regional, presidential, referendums, constituent assembly and the ‘mega-elections’ of July 2000 where all public powers were re-legitimised. All of this combined to create an atmosphere of electoral apathy, as well as a preference for voting in the elections for positions of high power. This was augmented by the comparatively brief life of the regional elections as a consequence of the recent nature of the process of decentralization. It has been suggested that authorities elected under such low levels of participation cannot be considered very legitimate. There is a suggestion that ‘Chavismo’ was unable to arouse and convince the electorate as it had been successful in doing previously, because it is the presidential figure and not the followers which had activated the vote of the MVR.
In observing the data it is possible to see that the parishes with greater participation are Gonzalo Picón (33.3%), Osuna Rodríguez (28.6%) and Jacinto Plaza (27.9%). These are parishes whose inhabitants have a relatively low level of socio-economic position, and which moreover are zones where the residential structure is of public origin, allied to a tendency in the case of Osuna Rodríguez and Jacinto Plaza towards a greater diversity in the system of local parties and alliances. This would appear to indicate that the population feels it necessary to organize through its own bodies, so as to guarantee the satisfaction of basic demands.

A counterpart to this electoral behaviour are the parishes of Juan Rodríguez Suárez and Milla with high figures of abstention at 82% and 79%. Juan Rodríguez Suárez, for example, is a parish in which an urban structure of uni-family residences predominates, with a population belonging to the middle and upper-middle classes of the municipality. It is also a parish where the party structure is more in accord with the national party structure. The absence of local parties might appear to indicate, in a certain sense, that the demands of this population are heard and resolved directly by the organisms of local government, and that their political struggle is easier and expedited through the influence of their social condition.

In conclusion, the elections for parish councils of the municipality Libertador during the year 2000, through the nominative system and the voting list, gave to the MVR total control in 11 parishes, and in the remaining two the AD triumphed. In such a manner the ‘Chavista’ hegemony was imposed at this level. In contrast to the elections of 1992 and 1995, however, in which the members of the parish councils and the mayor all belonged to the same party; this time the mayor is from the AD.
VI.4.2 Conflicts of power between the mayoralty and the parish councils

As has been shown from the description of the electoral results of 2000, at the local level the mayoralty was controlled by leaders of the old AD hegemony, and the parish councils by leaders of the MVR. Furthermore, given the opinions of this emergent leadership concerning the necessary horizontality of relationships of power, it is not difficult to understand the level of conflict that soon began to energise municipal politics.

One case that will illustrate the conflict present in the community was the taking of the mayoralty of the municipality Libertador in May of 2001. For the first time in the history of this municipality the communities organized themselves to claim their rights through the parish councils. The mayoralty had not fulfilled the assignation of the budget and, furthermore, was refusing the constitutional mandate to form a local planning council, which had come to be an important step in the achieving of an active political and administrative democratisation and participation of the community in the exercise of local power.

Documents drawn up by the parish councils argued that the mayor was acting outside the law, and was affecting the interests of the community by taking unilateral decisions for the convenience of his party without considering the opinion of the community.

43 At the times leaflets were circulated suggesting that the Mayor was acting illegally in the following ways.

- The Mayor was acting outside the law because
- He increase the transport fare without consulting the people.
- He had not installed the Council of Public Planning.
- He smothered the Municipal Chamber + the Parish Councils
- He moved funds destined for social works in the Municipality
- He increased bureaucracy affecting the overall budget.
- He did not complete the ordinances.
- Environmental and visual pollution had all increase.
- The city was abandoned, dirty and not look after.
- He did not present minutes or accounts of his activities.
citizens and violating municipal ordinances. It may be doubtful whether this conflict was per se an expression of the hegemonic struggle, but it does reflect the initiation of a change from the political conduct that had underlain the framework characterising decentralization by devolution, when the control of the parish councils was in the hands of the hegemony of the traditional parties (1992-1995). It also came to represent the beginning of new forms of resistance to the verticality of power, which had previously been absent from the political context.

The citizenry were now no longer interested in the improvement of services such as the ornamentation of the city (or the conditioning of sidewalks and parapets and streets), which had reflected the alliance between local powers and regional construction businesses. Because of this one interviewee speaks contemptuously:

"They called on the mayors of the IV Republic and the existing ABC (sidewalks, parapets and ditches), which is to say because they hadn't given any air to the most important problems. The existing mayor of the municipality hadn't even seen FIDES (the intergovernmental fund for decentralization) or FONVIS (the social investment fund), and so at a level of the co-ordination of the parish councils of the municipality it was that they had been able to get funds for doing the works necessary in the parish through FIDES and FONVIS, in spite of the fact that the parish councils were supposed to get 20% of the municipal division. It was the regional government which had done all the improvements in the city, the mayor did nothing; for example the installation of fences for the signalling system was financed by the national government; they hadn't completed the works."

President of the parish council

The parishes had re-animated the political context of the municipalities and in the opinion of the leaders they were going to play a very important role in the new dimension that they brought to political decentralization. Nevertheless, the main problem continued to be the mentality of the old leaders over a form of governing that was remote from the people:

"With respect to the parish councils, they're going to play a transcendental role in what decentralisation is, but because they were won by the MVR, let's say that the mayor hasn't given any support for them to address some of the problems of the community in
an effective and efficacious manner. When the parish councils were originally created, they were like a trampoline, they were simply spaces conquered by leaders of a political party, so that they could drive them down the party line and nothing more. Today the parish councils are at a constitutional level, now they have insitutionality, but sadly here the mayor is from the AD and so the council has only had a little, let’s say, he’s given nothing, hasn’t respected anything and hasn’t implemented anything for the council to be able to work effectively.”

Councillor of Circuit 3

IV.5 Appreciation of democracy, decentralization and participation in the parish of Osuna Rodríguez and the parish Juan Rodríguez Suárez

The intention of this section is to refer to the results of a small sample, of a survey realized during the mega-elections of 2000, in which it is sought to detect opinions on decentralization and participation in the parish of Osuna Rodríguez, and then to compare it with the parish Juan Rodríguez Suárez, a parish adjoining the former in the same section of the city, but which presents different characteristics from the former. Furthermore, for these elections both parishes formed the same electoral circuit: Electoral Circuit No.3 of the Libertador municipality, which chooses a councillor for the municipal chamber.

The parish of Juan Rodríguez Suárez expanded outwards during the 1970s from a centre denominated merely ‘The Parish’, which dated from the 19th century and in the rural part of which large fields of sugar cane belonging to the oligarchy were situated, in a part that was later urbanized. The residential structure of the parish is predominantly uni-family habitations, designed and constructed by the private sector and with an urban infrastructure of better quality than many other residential areas (see photo-mosaic: 6.1).

In the case of Osuna Rodríguez 8 people were interviewed and in Juan Rodríguez Suárez 10, on the same day as the elections took place, which is to say with the intention of living the political experience in vivo. The inquiry on participation was divided into two blocks of questions, one concerning political participation in parties
and participation in movements and NGOs, and the other block concerning
decentralization at the local level. To these blocks were added at the beginning some
general information about the interviewee (age, location and activities) and as a
conclusion some evaluations about decentralization and democracy. Open questions
were formulated such as: "Do you consider that we are in a true decentralized
democracy? - Why? - What would be required so that the country could move
forward to a true decentralized democracy?"

Concerning the first block of questions, the survey showed that:

- Citizens in general have a high level of information about, and interest in,
national electoral politics and also in local electoral politics, even though this is not
reflected in a desire to be a member or militant in political parties. In this latter, in the
case of Juan Rodríguez Suárez this was not comprehensive, but in the case of Osuna
R. the majority responded negatively, however there was an affirmative response
which would appear to reflect the clientelistic tendency of this community.

- There exists an advanced democratic tendency, and the intention to vote was
directed towards the change of actual democratic conditions.

- The participatory and practical relationship with parties is inverted; when one
is a member of a party generally one is not a member of an NGO, and vice-versa; this
would appear to be expressive of a civic culture. When the question is put if the
person knows of or would like to take part in an NGO, they response is always
affirmative. In this last question there were differences to be found between the
parishes; in the parish of lowest socio-economic status there is an affirmative
response as a whole, whereas in that of the higher socio-economic status only the
majority responded affirmatively, which has a certain logic given that the majority of
NGOs are directed towards low-resource communities. In so far as diversity, or area

44 Amongst the questions of the first block were:
Do you discuss politics? 2. Do you attend to rallies? 3. Do you follow programmes on public opinion?
4. Do you intend to vote? 5. Are you a militant with in any political party? 6. Are you thinking about
joining a political party? 7. What has motivated you to vote or not to vote in this occasion? 8. Do you
belong to an NGO? 9. Do you know of any NGOs? 10. Would you like to participate in a social
movement or an NGO?
of work, of the organizations of civil society is concerned, there are also differences; in the parish of O. Rodríguez there is more thematic variation, environmental, religious, neighbourhood and cultural, whereas in the parish of Juan Rodríguez Suárez, the community is more commonly affiliated to guild-type organizations (Figure: 6.1 and 6.2).

Concerning the second block of questions:

-The interest in the elections for local government is always high, but the perception that is held of them is not always the best.

-When asked if in agreement with the way in which services are provided, the answer is always no. Nevertheless, there is a certain recognition that public services have improved since the community was able to elect its own authorities, and all are in agreement with participating to improve them through organizations of the civil society and NGOs. But the perceptions are different between the two parishes; in the case of Osuna Rodríguez where the socio-economic statues is generally low, the more positive affirmation refers to basic services such as sports, transport, housing and sources of employment. In the parish of Juan Rodríguez Suárez the valorisation refers more often to traffic, security, health and housing infrastructure. In other words, even though the economic, social and political crisis has affected every social sector, it is also still true that the parish of Juan Rodríguez Suárez depends less on the political parties than the popular sectors of Osuna R., insofar as services and sources of employment are concerned.

- As far as the administration of resources on the part of local government goes, the interviewees of Osuna Rodríguez all responded negatively, whereas in the other parish among the higher socio-economic levels, the response was more divided: 4 negatives, 3 positives and 3 no replies; the 3 without replies differentiated between

45 Among the second block of questions were: 1. Will you vote for candidates in all of the different elections? 2. Since the community has directly elected its authorities (governors, mayor, councillors) in which of the followings areas have you noticed improvements (health, education, transport, employment, housing, sport) 3. What do you think of the management of local government: satisfactory, average, unsatisfactory. 4. Do you think that the governor and the mayor administer resources effectively?
Participation in Mega-elections 2000
Participation in Mega-elections 2000
the governor administering the resources which was good, and the mayor, who was not good. The reasons for this were the alleged diversion of funds towards other ends.

Nevertheless, to verify the results of the enquiry, they were then cross-referenced with the information from interviews done in December of 2001, with the Councillor of Municipal Chamber No.3, where he was asked about the role of the mayor and his responses to problems of the community, what demands had been answered, and which parish has been paid attention to the most, he replied the following:

"They've listened more to Los Curos (parish of Osuna R.), precisely because they're a bit more organized, there are more needs which are beyond the local organisms, and the struggle is a bit more intense. This year (2001) what 'oxygenated' local government was the national government through FIDES and through the LAE, as well as through FONDUR and through OCEPRE, where they got more than 4000 million bolivars for the municipality of Libertador. 63 million bolivars arrived through FIDES for the parish of Osuna R., for a sewage reclamation unit, and set up a covered pitch in the sector which arrived from regional and national government through FIDES."

This opinion was contradicted by an inhabitant of the parish Osuna R:

"You see, a while ago in Los Curos something very unpleasant happened to us, when they were planning the council sessions: what did the mayor do? He called his co-religionaries, and shared out the credits to his fellow party members. I don't share the opinion of Hugo (the councillor), I differ from his opinion, that all of a sudden the attention of the mayor is better towards Los Curos than towards Juan Rodríguez Suárez, because he hasn't listened with attention, but of course he's come to hear us! He hasn't done anything, what he's done is to take money from FIDES, and he's chucked us little drinks of warm water; that's not attention in its truest magnitude, and it hasn't been. And so how should we think about decentralization if people like the mayor, this gentleman, and including people in our own party who are accustomed to behaving like this, people who if they get into government produce exactly the same situation; retention of funds, creating money for other things and there's no transparency."

Question: "In the case of the parish of Juan Rodríguez Suárez, which are the sectors (health, traffic) for which requests are made, and for which something is received?"
"Let's say that, even in the most powerful sectors of the parish, generally the housing construction services have collapsed, whereas some of the house are 20 or 30 years old, the roads are all obstructed and the tubing through which the drinking-water runs is also obstructed, and things like that, this is where there's greatest demand, and also security, they want security points because of the question of the insecurity in which they live."

Question: “Concretely, what have they given to the Parish J.R. Suárez?”

"In the parish some resources came through FIDES for the Cultural Centre, which cost some 45 million bolivars in the Casco de la Plaza where the Prefecture is, they put a second floor on it and they're going to put all of the cultural organizations residing in the parish in it, and some pavement in the La Candelaria section."

Question: “Are the neighbourhood associations working?”

"There are neighbourhood associations but the participation is much more timid than in Osuna R., you find associations where there are only 2 or 3 people all the time, trying to look for solutions, knocking on the door of other organizations, talking to the mayor. The NGOs that are strongest are the sporting and the cultural ones, the one that does the football and the one that does dancing."

Concerning the valorisation of democracy and decentralization:

Valorisations of decentralization and democracy are concerned mainly with accusations of lack of relationships between governors and governed, the control of central power over local power and the lack of participation. When they are asked what they could do about this, the majority propose more participation, more autonomy and less corruption. But there are very marked differences between the two parishes, so far as the road to follow to achieve these things is concerned. In spite of this there is a block in both parishes that considers there to be no truly decentralized democracy right now, and the low-resource parish considers that this might be achieved through citizen participation; Juan Rodríguez Suárez recommends that this is a problem of better management of resources and of obtaining more autonomy - two very distinct manners of seeing the political.
Conclusions

The process of Venezuelan decentralization has converted local municipal spaces and their organs of government into the principal channels for the aggregation of interests. According to both Constitution of 1961 and that of 1999, the municipality and the parish are the primary instances of the state immediately closest to individuals, to their problems and aspirations as well as their organized expression. Furthermore the importance acquired by the organizations of civil society and particularly neighbourhood groups, as legal intermediaries of the citizen in an emergent democracy, have had the impact of making the state pay more attention to their demands. The political parties and the organizations associated with them continue to be important, but the current tendency is to give more recognition to civil society. Decentralization has been important in bringing the notion of civil society closer to the life of the city.

This case study of Mérida has allowed as to get close to the local particularity of community and neighbourhood spaces, which is where civil society in reality develops its practices, its dialogues as well as its different interpretations and forms of participation. The neighbourhood has been understood as the smallest unit that a municipality uses in its distribution of services etc. As a result, the neighbourhood can be seen a an important area for the playing out of social relationships, where different forms of relationships of power and resistance interact.

One aspect to underline in relation to this context of relationships is the change produced by the Constitution of 1999 in creating new spaces for participation, such as the local planning council and the revocatory referendum, as well as the proposal to incorporate the new subjects of decentralization into a Law of Participation. The postulates of the Constitution of 1999 sought to deepen democracy with the creation of new subjects of decentralization even down to the community, barrio and school parents' association and representatives' levels. It dealt with a process of re-decentralization which is now impelled, not from central government (above), but rather horizontally from the autonomous levels of local or municipal government.
In other words, the municipality, together with the social movements and the community must be the focus of decentralization.

In spite of the influence that neo-liberal policies have had over the country, constitutional rights to housing continue to be protected by the state. However, the employment of clientelistic practices related to these rights seems to be changing; in the stage of decentralized democracy of the new hegemony (2001 onwards) the criteria of valorisation privileges the rights of the family, of women and children. In another sense, the interviewees have underlined that the initiative must have come from the official of the responsible institution for the assignation of housing, and do not establish any relationship with the presence of a social movement (be it feminist or human rights-based), which might have motivated this change.

In relation to the neighbourhood associations and party intermediation, changes seem to be related to the presence of the new hegemony which has modified the control that the AD and COPEI maintained over determinate local electoral spaces. Nevertheless, the valorisation of these democratic practices shows that there is also a new conception of politics within an emergent leadership that is beginning to co-ordinate local spaces. In this discourse, spaces of political decentralization and participation remain closely linked to the process of democratisation and the community, distancing themselves from vertical and manipulatable neighbourhood organizations.

In relation to the organizations of civil society and participation in the parish of Osuna Rodríguez, in the 1990s there has been a change in ideological orientation of the movements and organizations away from the communitarian and towards the assistential and sectorized. This is linked to the programmes of structural adjustment in their version of 'Agenda Venezuela', applied conjointly with the PAIS organization mentioned above, during the second government of Rafael Caldera (1994-1998). The objective was to create social capital and develop pilot mechanisms for public/private co-participation, in order to finance projects and activities that would be formulated and executed by organizations of civil society. In such a sense, environmental organizations were not politically controversial and as a result found it easier to attract funding.
Furthermore, the intermediation of financing by the international organisms and the influence that the traditional political parties still have, generate apathy, uncertainty and incredulity in civil society over the future of the organizations with a community base. The stated aims of both types of organization is to develop a-critical assistential organizations, and not political and communitarian social movements. This has had an impact, for example, on communitarian organizations of religious orientation, which have lost their space for development by being controlled by the neighbourhood councils, and have begun to reconstitute themselves as NGOs of an assistentialist type typical of the 1990s.

Another change underlined by the local analysis is the participation of the community in open chapters and assemblies. Moreover, the parish councils now have a more active role and are channelling the demands of the community. In addition, the neighbourhood councils controlled by the political parties are ceding place to the popular assemblies and schemes of horizontal organization at the district level. Conflicts of power are observable between the spatial level of the parish council and that of the mayoralty, which are obstructing and retarding the solving of problems of the community.

By way of a conclusion to the comparison between parishes it is possible to indicate the following tendencies:

As has been observed in the treatment of the previous chapters, in Venezuelan society there has been progressively articulated since 1983 a rejection of the political parties. In spite of this, the survey outlined above has shown a greater inclination to participate in political parties in the most clientelistic space (the parish Osuna R.), than in the less clientelistic space (the parish Rodríguez Suárez). If it is true that the crisis has affected both spaces, it is no less true that the social sectors of the less clientelistic environment now depend less on the political parties than the clientelistic sectors.

The new political situation generated by the hegemonic change in the political system has awoken greater expectations in the social sectors of lowest resources, than in the middle sectors of society, which have yet to be convinced. Electoral
participation and the incorporation of communal organizations is greater, and the same thing is true of NGOs; this would appear to indicate the tendency of civil society towards constituting itself as a new agent of change.

In relation to the process of decentralization, the questionnaires as much as the interviews undertaken with members of the community have affirmed that a true decentralized democracy does not yet exist in the municipality, and this is owing above all to a lack of priorities and transparency in the management of resources, which are not fulfilling the satisfaction of demands. In relation to this, it must be understood that it is necessary to introduce new political practices that are linked to decentralization in order to widen the horizontality of relationships of power within communities, including the fact that decentralization must be understood as a political practice, more than a decision linked to the central organisms of the state, or an agreement between parties.

Lastly, it is interesting to appreciate the way in which individuals in their dialogues have been interweaving the relationships of the modes of power assimilated in the theories of the west, and their own modes of power that are practiced in the dependent context where they develop their social and political relations. In this sense, the relationships between manipulation, which is one of the modes of power underlined by Allen, and clientelism, can be observed. Even though in the dialogues (and in their practices) both modes of power appear, in some cases they give the impression that clientelism is to be understood as a form of manipulation. This is also observable when individuals relate manipulation with another political practice, sectarianism of individuals and organizations, but in other cases clientelism appears as a mode of power which has its own, different characteristics. In all cases, what appears to be the situation is that there is a total recognition that clientelism is an obstacle for the development of horizontal relationships of power, and a limitation for communitarian association.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The objectives and research questions of this thesis which were set out in Chapter II linked to concerned the most important aspects of the relationships between decentralization and the process of democratisation in Venezuela and, more specifically, how relationships of democratic power have been modified and how decentralization has intervened in this process. This led to a focus upon the links between political decentralization and the process of democratisation over the period 1989-2000, and its impact upon the spaces of local power and upon the experience and practice of politics of individuals in the neighbourhood community.

To meet the goals of this research and elucidate its central objectives and questions, the investigation followed a political approach towards decentralization linked to relationships of power. This is why the thesis only considers the technical aspects of decentralization at an informative level. Modern politics are spatial politics, and this requires the development of a new vision within the field of the social sciences. An understanding of the relations within the scheme of the spatiality of power, together with a consideration of the dependent context and political practice or action, permit the formation of a vision that puts the socio-historical process together with the experiences of the individual.

An image of the distribution of relationships of power and resistance as an infinity of points, allows us to understand the articulations of power and space from a double perspective: on the one hand, it suggests that power is de-centrally distributed and this infers a new manner of understanding the dynamics of the process of democratisation. On the other hand, it suggests that power is practiced and, as a consequence, is all around and between us, rather than being located in a centre, or ‘enclosed’ within the individual. The contributions of this thesis are therefore orientating by nature, in the sense that previous models of the spatiality of the relationships of power only took into consideration binary schemes, and did not make these differences explicit.
As a consequence, the first task that had to be undertaken in order to understand the relationship between decentralization and democratisation was a detailed outlining of the process of territorial formation and the formation of the Venezuelan state. Without the establishment of these two historical aspects it would have been nearly impossible to relate the study to the current process of democratisation with its renewed vision. Based on this premise, a re-reading of Venezuelan history in order to re-organize a perspective on territoriality and the decentralization of power founded in the thematic of the spatiality of power was of vital importance.

However, one of the greatest limitations encountered in this thesis was that the majority of socio-political and historical studies have been more interested in the interrelationships woven by economic variables, in order to give a response to social and political problems, and far less in the themes relating power and space. This suggests the necessity of putting more of an obligation in this area of investigation onto the social sciences.

Over and above this limitation, it was a priority to establish the connection between the formation of the state and its territorial form. The defining event was the political programme of the Constitution of 1864 that gave continuity to the project of the liberal state, debated in 1811, and which first imposed the federalist doctrine. This was the moment of greatest democratisation of the 19th century. Later, its reformulation in the 20th century would serve as the base of the project of the state of representative democracy which began in 1945, indicating the meaning of the tendency towards the deepening of political democracy in the country.

In a different vein, one aspect that was to impart specificity to Venezuelan territoriality was that provincial identity and diversity preceded national identity, this is a key point for the initiation of any attempt at interpreting the spatiality of power in Venezuela. The centrality of the state continues to be based upon the political division of territory which was constructed almost entirely in the first half of the 19th century over the spatial fragmentation present since colonial days. Diversity had generated very specific forms of political and cultural cohabitation, which inevitably conditioned the distribution of power.
It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the combination of centralism and federalism became a constant during the 19th century, whilst during the 20th century the centralist state would predominate until 1989 (the details of these themes have been discussed in their respective chapters). Nevertheless, the new context of centralism and decentralization created by liberal democracy permits a comparison of at least two aspects that could be of interest in orientating future research. These aspects are strongly inter-related, and linked to the presence of contexts signalled by processes of democratisation.

The arrangement of a pact of power between the central administration and other levels of government is an aspect that links space and power. The scheme of pacts between regional caudillos (1870–1888) that led to centralism, for instance, strengthened centralism with the support of the provinces. Meanwhile, in the 20th century liberal democracy had the intention of strengthening state and local government so as to re-organize the national administration and its institutions. By comparing the scheme of power of the 19th century with that generated currently by liberal democracy, it is possible to derive a series of questions that permit us to think more deeply about the problems of the spatiality of power from a viewpoint much closer to Latin American reality.

In the scheme of the 19th century, the power of the caudillos preceded the establishment of central power. The political and social context was marked by a species of decentralized power, or local centralism, where central power did not control everything and saw itself obligated to make pacts. This combination of power was interrupted by the dictatorship at the beginning of the 20th century and from then on the centrality of the state was the dominant scheme. The democratic experiment of 1947 would distance itself from political decentralization, in favour of administrative de-concentration. This route would be taken again in 1958, but it would be accompanied by a corporative scheme for the distribution of power. Administrative deconcentration came to be the form of distributing economic power that corresponded with the scheme of corporative power. All of this led to the control by the central administration over local power that was exactly the opposite of that which had occurred in the 19th century.
This without doubt was to have an important effect on the mentality, or instrumentalization for governance, of the leaders that emerged from the generation of 28. The central administration were to promote administrative de-concentration from above until 1989. From that date forward, a political decentralization was proposed which came to modify the vertical scheme with new forms of relationships between the different levels of power. However, when the effects of political decentralization had an impact upon the verticality of power and promoted new forms of social democratization, parallel to the greater autonomy and management capacity of regional and local government, the political system reacted with other practices, or 'instrumentalized' other modes of power.

This connects with a second aspect; the continued way in which the dictatorship and its foreign supporters tried to obstruct every outbreak of demands for more social democracy, paralyzing the process of democratization and installing de facto governments. This theme seems to have been of no interest to western political theory, although without doubt these interventions are recurrent phenomena in non-western countries. This occurred with the restoration of presidential elections in Venezuela through the universal, direct and secret vote, the establishment of municipal autonomy (in the Constitution of 1893) and with the emergence of new democratizing tendencies at the end of the 19th century. It can also be seen in the phase of continuity of the process of democratization, which has been referred to as the democracy of mobilization, as well as in the democratic experiment of 1947 and, lastly, in the process of democratization and mobilization initiated with the Constitution of 1999 and the hegemonic struggle.

It is important to observe this last aspect when trying to appreciate the impacts of political decentralization and the change of hegemony. It is not possible to completely understand these specific types of change in power relations through a binary domination-resistance diagram of power relations. This is related to a sense of democratization as process, and to how the effects of political decentralization are articulated by civil society.

The resistance of civil society to the renunciation of its constitutional rights in April 2002 and the support given to the governors when confronted by the demands for
their resignation by the de facto government, gives ample evidence that political decentralization strengthens democratic solutions. The mobilization of civil society and its resistance against the interim government played a decisive role in the restitution of the political autonomy of local government, which had been achieved through the process of decentralization, and in the legitimacy of the local powers that had demonstrated their support for the president.

During the period of representative democracy, referred to above as the ‘democracy of conciliation’, in which civil society was subordinated to the political parties, the situation had been quite different. In this project, the organizations of civil society had rapidly become controlled by the political parties even where their original formation had not been promoted by the party leaderships. In this way, the verticality of power, achieved through the intermediary of party centralism, was also repeated at the level of civil society. The political parties during this period were progressively strangling the pronunciation of the plurality of the social context, and concentrating all of their political activity in electoral representation and the vote. Meanwhile, the potential for resistance and mobilization in civil society was buried by the manipulative practices of political clientelism.

In the middle of the 1980s, liberal democracy announced its presence and began to have an impact on the specificity of national space, and the context of social and political relationships became marked by the introduction of structural adjustment measures, as well as new forms and techniques for governance that were channelled through the medium of a proposed reform of the state. Both measures came to signify the impact of the relationships of global dominion over territoriality and sovereignty. The structural adjustment measures had an imposed economic character through the employment of the ‘economic package’ that the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez agreed in February of 1989. The reform of the state was, however, subjected to a context of power relations which gave rise to a scenario of opposing opinions in the heart of the commission for the reform of the state and a mobilization of resistance within civil society in February of 1989.

On one side, as has been shown above, the institutional space open for the discussion of the reform of the state was essentially constituted by two discourses: a) The
opinions of a business sector that considered the welfare state to be incompatible with the development of initiative and private enterprise, and b) opinions that criticised more openly the weakness of the state when confronted by economically powerful groups, and the control that the political parties exercised over civil society. These last proposals promoted the principle of decentralization in order to augment the efficiency of the state in the provision of services to communities.

Nevertheless, it was the positions most closely linked to the universal strategies of liberal democracy that from the start accompanied the proposed reforms:

1) A critique of the welfare state as being unable to give positive responses to the demands of communities, and the promotion of efficient democratic government with a minimal state and privatisation.

2) The articulation of an anti-bureaucratic discourse which attempted to project the new parties of liberal democracy and the new political initiatives as the unique legitimate representatives of civil society.

3) The economic decentralization of public services by de-concentration, directed at reinforcing the position of local government so that, by gaining greater administrative control, they might achieve greater efficiency than the national level.

4) More recently, the recipe of building social capital and equality of opportunity in order to attack the problems of inequality across the continent. This discourse brings together different cultural, political and economic aspects, binding them within social participation networks and new initiatives for social co-operation including the social movements, presenting them as a route for the projection of the values of liberal democracy on civil society.

This set of ideas, with the support of Venezuela’s major economic groups and international co-operation, progressively achieved a political space in the process of democratic decentralization that began in 1989, but not in pursuit of more democracy for the people, but rather to reinforce the power of the elites in strengthening even
more the power of the business organizations and individual businesses. As Parekh (1992) underlined, this signifies that in actuality liberal democracy gives more importance to the liberalism component than to the democratic component.

On the other hand, the measures of adjustment encountered strong resistance from Venezuelan civil society and most particularly from the popular sectors of the central region of the country. There are two points that can be considered in relation to this mobilization of the 27th of February, designated as the beginning of the end of the old regime by Gott (2000). Without doubt this event was an expression of the conflict generated by the deepening of socio-economic inequalities, but it was also an expression of the rejection of the verticality of power derived from the montage of neo-liberal policies aimed at minimizing the state. The mobilization not only acted to alter the political context, but it also added to pressure for the implementation of a political decentralization that the hegemonic parties did not want.

This issue merits being studied further in the future from the perspective of geopolitics, within a sense of territoriality, as an expression of the place where power is localised and regionalized. This is an aspect that has not been considered when these and similar events are analysed. What this thesis has sought to underline is that such events have a spatial dimension that permits the discovery, in a complex situation of conflictual relationships of power, of the presence of power everywhere.

From this view, liberal democracy has been unable to achieve completely its intentions, because the majority of people resisted the implementation of its economic and political measures. After the coup attempts in 1992, with the advance of political decentralization and the process of party fragmentation, civil society began to support other forms of alternative government and regional leaderships which might promote formulas of greater participation. This suggests that the process of democratization can also give rise to a democracy which is closer to the people. Pickvance (1997) has put both aspects at the centre of the debate on democracy To change the nature of the processes of democratization towards greater participation requires the formation of a new political discourse that gives flexibility to relationships of power and opens spaces for resistance, plurality and, as a consequence, for the further development of civil society.
According to Bobbio (1997), the point of contact between democracy and liberalism is in universal suffrage. But he does not give importance to the vote and political representation, considering that the process of democratisation goes more towards social democracy than towards political democracy. This leads to his well-known diagram of ascending power (or the political) and descending power (or politics: Bobbio 1986). Social democracy is linked to the ascending power which acquires its importance from the social relationships where the individual is considered in the diversity of their status and specific roles. This favours the articulatory dynamic and the assembling of different social practices and dialogues, and comes to explain the coincidence in this new phase of democratisation of multiple spaces, voices and social movements for the conducting of politics and the dynamic of social change.

From all of this it is possible to conclude that the problem of the achievement of more democracy, rather than more liberalism, cannot ignore the significance of the opening of new spaces where the people can exercise democratic practices and relationships of power, separated from the relationships of dominion. This takes us to the heart of decentralization, to an autonomy of decision-making which, taking into account the diversity of the social context, formulates new democratic practices independent of the subordination of the agencies of central power. From this is derived the proposal of forms of democratic participation removed from the manipulative or clientelistic practices of the elites. This is the point that links political decentralization with the new forms of participation and the emergence of civil society in the present day.

The focus upon the spatiality of power permits an approximation of the effects that political decentralization has upon participation. To begin, we can observe that political decentralization through devolution should improve the taking of decisions by ascending power. Meanwhile, from the perspective of the decentralization of liberal democracy, participation is a facilitating instrument for the planning and execution of projects at the local level. Nevertheless, in situating the two essential interpretations that sustain the debate concerning political decentralization within the schemes of the relations of power proposed by Allen, three additional aspects can be extracted:
Firstly that the "new" social reforms and decentralization are clearly developed in an interweaving of the relationships of power centred on and within a diagram of the mobilizing power of the resources of individuals. This superimposition of diagrams of power creates difficulties in distinguishing the pre-eminence that the binary relations of centred power have in these reforms. This allows the political and ideological proposals of the reforms to be discharged and extended over a wide space of relationships of power, without raising the least suspicions.

Secondly the operations of the multilateral entities are supported in the diagram of relationships of power for the mobilization of resources and social capital, and NGOs are preferred for the realization of their operations. For such institutions, NGOs are synonymous with civil society.

Thirdly that within the tendency of the non-western vision of political decentralization, even where this is situated in the formulation of a diagram of the relationships of power, the conceptual elaboration is still weak and needs to be more explicit. Meanwhile, the western vision of decentralization does not conceive of the possibility of the development of political decentralization as independent of administrative decentralization, but rather as its result. This critique is directed explicitly against the diagram of the generator of practices and the notion of political decentralization.

These points of view approximate the discussion on democracy and decentralization in the period of decentralized democracy (1989-1998) in Venezuela, because both tendencies towards decentralization had co-existed, even though their effects carried contrary meanings. On the one hand, liberal democracy orientated decentralization towards the promotion of a new leadership linked to the elites who held economic power, to the reorganization of the political parties, and towards the development of the NGOs and social capital, as well as other institutions, as has been verified in this study, at the state and local levels. On the other hand, political decentralization contributed to the fragmentation and weakening of the hegemonic parties and, as a consequence, to the strengthening of mobilizations, participation and the new political culture of the people. These aspects would become enmeshed in the phase of the process of democratisation inaugurated by the Constitution of 1999.
At the end of the 1990s the process of democratisation took another direction. From a centralist democracy it moved towards a democracy of mobilization and participation. In this change of route decentralization and civil society have played a very important role. Political decentralization, through the direct election of governors, mayors and parish councils, opened new spaces of participation and autonomy and defined the route for the new hegemonic struggle. There are at least four elements within the arguments for visualizing the impact of political decentralization on the construction of the new hegemony:

1) Political decentralization (together with the effects that the electoral reforms had inside the political parties, the political pressure of the 4th of February and the role played by civil society) has acted as a component of force upon the whole political system. Concretely, this has contributed to disarticulating the old hegemony and, at the same time, to exercising pressure for new forms of democratic participation. The articulation of these elements has altered, progressively, the power that the old hegemony exerted over the state and its institutions and in the control over state and municipal spaces of power.

2) Political decentralisation has strengthened the hegemony of several state and municipal initiatives. The most relevant cases have been mentioned in previous chapters: the first effects were shown by Proyecto Carabobo, promoting the decentralization of services in the state of Carabobo, and by Causa R’s support of the democratisation of the syndicalist struggles in the state of Bolivar. More recently, La Causa R and the popularity of the leaders of the 4th of February uprising achieved control of the state of Zulia. Meanwhile, the Convergencia replaced the Social Christians in the state of Yaracuy. For its part the MAS came to exercise a type of hegemony in the state of Aragua y Lara, whilst later on it also controlled local power in Portuguesa, Delta Amacuro and Sucre. The PPT between 1992 and 1995 came to control the Alcaldía of Caracas, the governorship of Anzoátegui and the new state of Vargas. All of the above is without even considering the details of all of the possible alliances of the political game. During 1998 the majority of the states in the country, within which were concentrated the greatest quantities of the population, either were, or had been, controlled by opposition
to the hegemonic parties of AD and COPEI. All of these cases were the results of the effects that political decentralization had upon the vertical controls of power. They show the importance that local powers came to represent in the formation and the supremacy of the new hegemonic tendencies.

3) Another of the effects of political decentralization was in the reformulation of the institutional struggle. Institutional pressure, in the Venezuelan case, began to be exercised by local powers towards the achievement of greater financial autonomy or simply for the satisfaction of community demands. This was channelled through the new governors and mayors associations. Meanwhile, the characteristics of financial dependence and the reduced capacity for the generation of income at the local levels made it possible that non-compliance in the satisfaction of service provision was translated directly, by means of such associations, to the central power. This in turn had the effect of deepening the unhappiness of the communities with respect to the party cúpulas.

4) In a similar fashion, political decentralization and the uninominality of the vote increased the pressures exerted by local leaders for greater political autonomy from the traditional party leaderships. The distribution of power to a certain degree began to fracture the dependency of local leadership upon the political elites of the centre from the moment that it became clear that continuity in the exercise of power depended more upon that local leadership than the cúpulas. This greater independence would have an impact on the formation of new local political organizations, in many cases through with a breaking free from the parties and their leadership and, in other cases, through the emergence of new leaders. As a consequence, the integrating agents of the old hegemony were weakened by the atomisation that multiplied the spaces of power and, with these, there was an unavoidable growth in the number of strategic alliances needed to achieve agreements at the levels of the national congress, and between the political parties and the civil associations and federations.
For its part, the attempted coup of the 4th of February gave evidence that the contract guaranteeing the permanence of the democracy of conciliation had arrived at an end, and this had a direct impact on national public opinion, as well as the emergence of another possible route. This is to say, the most significant contributions of the 4th of February was that it contributed to the re-vindication of the political act, or the right of resistance, that is an element of the relationships of power and which the political parties, by means of clientelistic manipulation, had immobilized. At the same time, it vindicated the political discourse by substituting the project less political-ideological discourse of the elites for a more direct and popular discourse that connected the leaders with the people. That is to say that the new discourse was accompanied by the theme of the constituent assembly which contributed to the homogenisation of public opinion and gave it a political orientation towards the individual.

Something else that is important to point out is that, as a result of all of these processes, political decentralization seems to have encountered more conditions for impelling social democratisation in the new dependent context generated by the hegemonic struggle. This, as is common to social phenomena, could not have been foreseen before the disentangling of the hegemonic struggle. It is precisely in the formation of this scenario where political decentralization makes its greatest contributions in reinforcing the mechanisms of the organization of society through its social networks, such as is the case with the implementation of the schools network linked to the Educational Project and the Bolivarian Circles studied in Chapter V. Without doubt this project was related to the linking of ascending power and the diversity of status and the specific roles of the individual. It also finds its legal basis in the political rights of the citizen and in the constitutional norms that promote political decentralization. This point could in the future initiate an interesting discussion concerning the relationships between the new Venezuelan hegemony and its project of social democracy.

Nevertheless, a comparison of this process with the opinion of the spokespeople of the multilateral financial organizations reveals an opposing understanding. According to these organizations, political decentralization by itself does not contribute to the stimulation of participation and political practices that help the development of a democratic culture. These sources inform us that all citizens, by being contributors,
have the right of opinion over the destination of their taxes, from which are derived their arguments for linking decentralization and democracy. This chain of ideas, presented as a universal truth, has nevertheless a markedly exclusionary character.

This supposed support for fiscal or administrative decentralization remains linked to the elite and bestows exclusive rights to those sectors of civil society with greatest economic resources. In the spatial context, it directs its resources towards those states with the greatest comparative advantages and with the greatest concentration of the population. This is a fact which is clearly present in Venezuela today and which contrasts with the map of social inequalities, above all after the application of the structural adjustment measures. The most characteristic feature of the Venezuelan social situation during 1997, eight years after the implementation of decentralization, was the deepening of the process of impoverishment of the population, which is one of the most worrying and potentially most explosive aspects of our reality. The growth in extreme poverty rates passed from 19.72% in 1990 to 21.74% in 1997, and society, rather than becoming more diverse, seems to be segmenting into very unequal and segregated strands and divisions.

The transference of resources and competences from the central government through the Situado Constitucional, the intergovernmental fund for decentralization (FIDES) and from the Law of Special Assignations is of little help to those states in which the levels of extreme poverty are increasing. The comparison of poverty indexes from the year 1997 (Map: 7.1) with the consolidation of resources of the year 1998 shows that those states with transfers of between 0 and 4% for the consolidation of resources are those states with the highest levels of extreme poverty: Amazonas, Delta Amacuro, Apure, Guárico and Portuguesa. This can be attributed to the presence of the markedly exclusive character that the administrative decentralization has had in orienting privileges to determinate points in space and to determinate sectors of the population.

Nevertheless, the obtaining of a better distribution of resources is a problem that could be resolved directly through political decentralization through the promotion of the horizontality of ascending power. This implies the opening of new spaces for the discussion of community problems and the development of political practices which
could lead to a greater equilibrium in spatial relationships of power, breaking away from vertical control. This suggests that the fundamental difference between the two conceptions of decentralization and democracy relates to their effects upon the new political culture of the individual and the development and strengthening of social movements. This does not signify that the state ceases in its functions of contributing to the resolution of problems in the community. This is another aspect that liberal democracy has presented as a universal truth, and which it has manipulated to confect the dichotomy between local powers and the national state. But about quite how the wider relations between the state and civil society might be conceived, and through what types of practices they might be instrumentalized, we can say little about the specific Venezuelan case, except for the references that have already been mentioned. This would be a point of interest for future investigations.

Nevertheless, the democratic experience is extremely valuable for understanding how manipulative practices obstruct the advance of civil society. In the welfare state, democracy has the capacity to give attention at different levels to a diversity of interests and moreover, to stabilize representative democracy. This is, however, conditioned upon a deepening of the verticality of power and without the necessity of implementing political decentralization. In its place forms of intermediation by civil society were instrumentalized. The references for the explanation of these aspects are generally economic; the so-called ‘utilitarian mechanisms’ linked to the oil rentier economy and the bipartisanship linked to a reduced number of semi-corporative organisations. Both articulate diverse interests and process their demands towards organisms of decision with the aim of avoiding conflicts in the distribution of resources.

This is also the viewpoint from which political clientelism has generally been analysed, which has scarcely ever been associated with the spatiality of power. As a consequence, an aspect that it is important to underline now, is that of the notion of manipulation as a mode of power within the literature on the spatiality of power, and the relationship that can be established between that notion and that of political clientelism. This is a relationship that has not been present in Western political theory, in spite of the importance that it has for understanding the Latin American
political context. It is a relationship that articulates directly with the dialogues established in this work.

Clientelism is a mode of power that contributes to the extension of vertical power over space. It is a political practice of domination that contributes to the development of “centres of power” directed at the control and de-mobilization of organizations of civil society at the local level. Or, in the words of Allen (1999) it could be said that clientelism is a form of manipulation of power that employs politics to contribute towards the assurance of approval, when the authority of central power is not completely effective; said that is to say that political clientelism is a manifestation of the modes of power in Latin America.

In the dialogues that were undertaken within the community of Osuna Rodríguez, references and concrete cases were found that demonstrated the manner in which the parties of bipartisanship manipulated and instrumentalized different forms of control over individuals, and the effects that this had upon the organizations of civil society. References were also found to the new types of practices that were introduced by the liberal democracy in local spaces in order to replace clientelism. These “purely utilitarian” relationships were expressed by multiple and unstable contracts, negotiated case by case and of definite duration. The modification of the rules of the democratic game which have been contained in the project of participatory democracy approved in the popular referendum in Venezuela in 1999, could lead to new thinking on the possibility of change in the intermediation of the political parties within civil society, or whether this has simply been placed displaced towards the state and municipal levels of government. Nevertheless, the experience of participatory democracy in Venezuela is very recent. Moreover the appreciations expressed in this work in the preceding chapters about the changes within the Venezuelan political system, are not sufficient to assure that they have also touched on specific relationships of power, like clientelism, which have had so much affect on the development of the new social movements.
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APPENDIX ONE
1. QUE EDAD TIENE USTED:___________________AÑOS.

2. EN QUE SECTOR DE LA CIUDAD VIVE:________________________________________________________

3. ESTA TRABAJANDO. SI NO

4. A QUE SE DEDICA:________________________________________________________

5. USTED PARTICIPO EN EL PERIODO PRE-ELECTORAL DE ALGUNA DE ESTAS MANERAS:

5.1 HA DISCUSIDO SOBRE POLITICA. SI NO

5.2 HA ASISTIDO ALGUN MITIN POLITICO. SI NO

5.3 HA SIDO RADIO-OYENTE O TELEVIDENTE DE PROGRAMAS DE OPINION POLITICA. SI NO

5.4 HA PARTICIPADO DE ALGUNA OTRA MANERA:_____________________________________________

6. PIENSA VOTAR. SI NO

7. SIEMPRE HA VOTADO. SI NO

8. QUE LO HA MOTIVADO A VOTAR O NO VOTAR ESTA OCACION.

__________________________________________________________________________

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9. MILITA EN PARTIDOS POLITICOS. SI NO

9.1 PIENSA SER MIEMBRO DE ALGUN PARTIDO EN EL FUTURO. SI NO
10. PERTENECE A ORGANIZACIONES NO GUBERNAMENTALES.  

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10.1 A CUAL DE ESTAS:  
- AMBIENTALISTA  
- RELIGIOSA  
- CULTURAL  
- DEPORTIVA  
- SINDICATOS  
- GREMIOS PROFESIONALES  
- VECINOS  

10.2 DESDE CUANDO:  
- MAS DE 5 AÑOS  
- ENTRE 5 Y 2 AÑOS  
- MENOS DE 1 AÑOS  

11. TIENE CONOCIMIENTO DE ALGUNAS DE ESTAS ORGANIZACIONES:  

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11.1 LE GUSTARIA PARTICIPAR.  

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12. USTED VA A SELECCIONAR CANDIDATOS A TODOS LOS CARGOS.  

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<td>(si responde no pasar a 12.1; si responde si, pasar a la 13)</td>
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</table>

12.1 A CUALES DE ESTOS Y POR QUE?  
- PRESIDENTE DE LA REPUBLICA.  
- PARLAMENTO LATINOAMERICANO.  
- PARLAMENTO ANDINO.  
- GOBERNADOR DE ESTADO.  
- DIPUTADO A LA ASAMBLEA NACIONAL.  
- DIPUTADO AL CONSEJO LEGISLATIVO.  
- ALCALDE.  
- CONCEJALES.  

13. CONOCE LOS CANDIDATOS A GOBERNADOR, ALCALDE Y DIPUTADOS AL CONSEJO LEGISLATIVO Y SUS PROGRAMAS DE GOBIERNO.  

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14. DESDE QUE LA COMUNIDAD ELIGE DIRECTAMENTE EL GOBERNADOR, EL ALCALDE Y LOS CONCEJALES EN CUAL DE LAS DE LAS SIGUIENTES AREAS DE SERVICIO HA NOTADO USTED MEJORIAS:

- SALUD
- VIVIENDA
- VIALIDAD
- EMPLEO
- EDUCACION
- DEPORTE
- TRANSPORTE
- NINGUNO

15. COMO SE SIENTE USTED CON LA GESTION DE LOS GOBERNANTES LOCALES.

- SATISFECHO
- MEDIANAMENTE SATISFECHO
- INSATISFECHO

16. CREE USTED QUE EL GOBERNADOR Y EL ALCALDE ADMINISTRAN BIEN LOS RECURSOS ECONOMICOS. 

Diga porque:

SI NO

16.1 USTED ESTARIA DE ACUERDO EN PARTICIPAR A TRAVES DE ALGUNA ONG EN LA PLANIFICACION, CONTROL Y EJECUCION DE LOS RECURSOS ECONOMICOS.

Diga porque:

SI NO

17. USTED CONSIDERA QUE ESTAMOS EN UNA VERDADERA DEMOCRACIA DESCENTRALIZADA.

Diga porque:

SI NO

17.1 QUE SE REQUERIRIA PARA QUE EL PAIS PUEDA ADELANTAR UNA VERDADERA DEMOCRACIA DESCENTRALIZADA.

OBSERVACIONES.

MERIDA 30 DE JULIO DEL 2000