

## Youth movements and public youth policies in Mexico: a conceptual approach

### *Movimientos juveniles y políticas públicas de juventud en México: una aproximación conceptual*

**Robert González García**

Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, México

[robert\\_gonzalez9475@uaeh.edu.mx](mailto:robert_gonzalez9475@uaeh.edu.mx)

Orcid code: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6166-5562>

**Juan Antonio Taguenca Belmonte**

Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, México

[juantaguenca@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:juantaguenca@yahoo.com.mx)

Orcid code: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9465-9951>

#### **Abstract**

*In recent years, new forms of youth political participation have emerged in Mexico. However, youth public policies continue to address the problems of the youth without their participation and in a deficient manner. The main objective of the article is to draw up a conceptual framework that allows us to think about public policies of youth from and for the young Mexicans themselves. The methodology is the documentary analysis and the hermeneutic of the social processes that star young Mexicans in the areas of political participation in recent years, intersecting it with the analysis of the response of administrations in the form of youth policies. The results show the emergence of a more participatory youth that, however, shows more continuities than changes in terms of political culture and that coexists with the persistence of youth public policies typical of previous periods. The conclusion is that moving towards participatory youth public policies is an important objective for the democratization and greater efficiency of the attention and service for young people.*

#### **Keywords**

*Political culture, youth, Mexico, social movements, political participation, public policies*

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### **Resumen**

En los últimos años emergen en México nuevas formas de participación política juvenil. Sin embargo, las políticas públicas de juventud siguen abordando la atención a las problemáticas juveniles sin su participación y de forma deficitaria. El objetivo del artículo es trazar un marco conceptual que permita pensar unas políticas públicas de juventud desde y para los mismos jóvenes mexicanos. La metodología es el análisis documental y la hermenéutica de los procesos sociales que protagonizan los jóvenes mexicanos en los ámbitos de la participación política en los últimos años, entrecruzándolo con el análisis de la respuesta de las administraciones en forma de políticas de juventud. Los resultados evidencian la emergencia de una juventud más participativa que, sin embargo, muestra más continuidades que cambios en términos de cultura política y que convive con la persistencia de políticas públicas juveniles propias de periodos anteriores. La conclusión es que caminar hacia unas políticas públicas juveniles participativas es un objetivo importante para la democratización y mayor eficiencia de la atención a los jóvenes.

### **Palabras clave**

Cultura política, juventud, México, movimientos sociales, participación política, políticas públicas.

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## **Introduction**

This article analyzes the citizen participation of Mexican youth and public policies that meet their needs, that is, that defines them as a social group with their own characteristics derived from their age range, biological motivation, which makes it necessary their subjection to specific actions of government institutions. This is justified by social division by age. This division specifies certain problems that differentially affect young people, adults and older adults. Hence, a specific institutional treatment for young people that is channeled through problematized social subdivisions: sexuality, health, work, leisure, culture and addictions are some examples of this.

The article focuses on young people, their participation and public policy. These three elements serve as a referential framework for the article. Likewise, it is oriented towards the analysis of public policies focused on youth. In this sense, the perspective of governance or network governance is adopted. It starts from the concept of participation, understanding it as any

collective action of individuals oriented to the satisfaction of certain objectives; and public policy, defined as government actions that are the product of a public agenda that emanates from citizen demands. It is also important to note that it is based on participatory and proximity governance, in its normative vision, as a more democratic and efficient way of articulating citizen participation and public policies (Blanco & Gomà, 2003).

First, relevant bibliography on youth participation that has taken place in Mexico in recent years will be reviewed, reflecting on a resurgence of the involvement of Mexican youth with politics. Both conventional (fundamentally electoral) and unconventional participation (especially that which is transmitted through social movements) will be taken into account, in order to detect if there are changes or continuities in Mexican youth political culture and in what sense. This will allow us to develop hypotheses that can be tested in future research. The conceptual orientation chosen by the authors of the article to address the conceptualization of youth is presented. In the second section, there is the emergence of new youth movements such as Yo-Soy132 or solidarity with the forced disappearance of the 43 of Ayotzinapa, as counterpoints to the disaffection towards the mechanisms of traditional representative democracy.

The third section analyzes whether changes in youth participation in Mexico have translated or not into substantive changes in terms of youth political culture.

The fourth section is devoted to addressing Mexican public policies aimed at the youth. In this regard, a historical synthesis is made based on their emergence and analyzing their development from the normative theory of public policy.

The four sections allow a comparative exercise between youth citizen participation and public policies aimed at the youth, on the one hand, with participatory and proximity governance, in their normative vision, on the other. This exercise is taken up in the conclusions.

Regarding the used methodology, the documentary analysis is defined as: "..., a work through which [...] we extract some notions of the document to represent it [...] To analyze, therefore, is to derive from a document the set of words and symbols that serve as representation" (Rubio, n.d). In our article we rely on bibliographic sources, mainly theoretical, and in the following categories of analysis: Youth participation, democratic disaffec-

tion, youth protest movements, YoSoy 132 and public youth policies, all of them applied to Mexico.

Regarding the hermeneutics of social processes, we understand this from a permanent reconstruction of individuals of: “their conditions and their worlds of life, [in which they learn] to recognize and appropriate the infinity of resources built by civilization in the different domains of social life. Resources and technical devices, and resources and symbolic devices” (Vizer, 2007). Here theoretical bibliographic sources were used and the analysis was implemented based on the socio-analysis procedure, which “allows us to understand the territory through a map of relationships and power structures that determine the interactions between the different agents, institutions and social groups” (Villasante, 1999 in Pérez, 2011, p. 26). In this regard, the effort was made to objectify the position of the studied young people with respect to politics.

## **Youth participation in Mexico**

Regarding the conceptual framework of youth participation, the first issue that arises is to define what is meant by youth. In this regard, there are studies that consider young people who are in a post-adolescent stage, a stage in which the individual can begin his emancipation process. In this sense, the border with children is established in the legal age for work and driving, which in Mexico is at 16 years old.

However, to analyze the electoral participation of young people it is necessary to consider, for the lower part of the hairpin, only those who are 18 years old, since before that age there is no political right to vote in the majority of countries, although a debate has been opened on the possibility of the right to vote from the age of 16 (Ruiz de Azua, 2010). Finally, the National Survey on Political Culture 2012 (ENCUP) delimited the range of young people between 18 and 29 years old (Gómez, Tejera & Aguilar, 2012). Taking into account the above, we will use this last rank to delimit Mexican youth in their relationship with politics. In this way, the criterion institutionally used for political participation is that of age range, which contains in itself the legal aspect of starting a political right as important as the exercise of election of representatives in the public sphere.

The above is not an obstacle for us to theoretically position ourselves in this article. There are currently several theoretical approaches to youth, of which we highlight the following, given the importance they have acquired.

- **Functionalist transition approach.** It is based on life cycles, in which youth is treated “as a social category [delimited by] demographic criteria” (Brunet & Pizzi, 2013, pp. 13-14). It is an approach that allows the administration of youth, by allowing their social categorization, making possible “the institutionalized exercise of singularized public policies in specific age ranges” (Taguenca, 2016, p. 186). Its variant is adult-centric, since it considers youth as a stage prior to adulthood and in which the youth is presented as a kind of incomplete adult, “who has yet to mature”. It is a paternalistic vision that analyzes young people “in negative”, that is, highlighting all those characteristics that they lack to reach adulthood.
- **Biographical transition approach.** It focuses on the biography of individuals and has a culturalist position strongly influenced by youth identity studies, and with little development on material issues that affect young people. This approach highlights the heterogeneity of youth biographical trajectories, the transitions they face - for example: school-work, parental home-own home - and three dimensions: biographical, institutional and socio-historical, as shown in the works of Coleman and Husen (1985) and Furlong and Cartmel (1997).
- **Normalist approach.** It collects the previous work of Mannheim (1993 [1928]), in which youth only constitutes a social group when it faces identical events in identical periods of life, and in which social origin acquires special relevance, for example, from social invention (Galland, 2011) or as a socio-historical category (Allerbeck & Rosenmayr, 1979 [1974]).
- **Generational conflict approach.** Part of Bourdieu’s ideas (2002 [1978]) about the conflict between young people and adults in different social fields, and that is a consequence of different social states that make up different productions of subjects differentiated by age, with the consequent unequal division of power and succession demarcation. A variant of this approach is that of the so-called youth radicalism, which emphasizes generational breakaways and its transformative potential.

From these approaches, we opt for the biographical transition, also known as the life cycle. In this, childhood, adolescence and youth are considered as sections in the biographical process of the subjects towards taking positions in family roles and other vital sections until old age and subsequent decrepitude (Casal, García, Merino & Quesada, 2006). Its specific methodology is that of itineraries and social trajectories that often translates into biographies. It is recognized that the youth section has structural and institutional determinants.

Noting the youth approach that serves as a reference to this article, it is time to place the perspectives of approaching political culture and youth political participation. In relation to this, it should be noted that in recent years the debate on the role of young people in politics has gained unusual interest due to mobilizations such as: 15M, in Spain (Minguijón & Pac Salas, 2013; Romero, 2015), YoSoy132, in Mexico (Brachet, 2014) and the Arab Spring (Blanco, 2011; Roque, 2015), which took place in 2011.

These mobilizations have shown that young people have assumed, in various countries and continents, a leading role in the processes of political change (Gómez, Tejera & Aguilar, 2012), denying the cliché of postmodern young people as uninterested in politics, passive and interested only in hedonism through consumption. This cliché has been gradually abandoned, and has given way to multiple studies on youth involvement in politics (Benedict, 2008; Soler-i-Martí, 2014; Villa, 2015; Taguenca, González, et al., 2018).

Given the above, it is worth asking whether we are really facing a new cycle of youth political participation based on a change in their political culture, more civic in terms of Almond and Verba (1963), and certainly more vindictive in political terms.

There is no doubt that the youth reality before the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) was substantially different from the current one. The consolidation of political neoliberalism and economic globalization, to which new information and communication technologies - the Internet, through social networks, above all - have favored their diffusion on a planetary scale, have radically changed the public and private spheres, and the psychology of individuals, radically transforming, both materially and symbolically as in their principles and values, societies and the young people who inhabit them. To this we must add the loss of centrality in the world of work, which is linked to consumption as a new center for individuals.

The adoption of a post-Fordist production system has resulted in profound socio-economic and structural changes that directly affect youth. We highlight: the delay in youth emancipation, due to the “universalization of higher education”; the change in emotional relationships, which have gone from emotional stability to “fast entry and easy exit” relationships; the increase in labor flexibility, converted into job insecurity and informality; the increase in spatial mobility, for training and labor reasons, especially; the proliferation of new forms of youth participation based on flexibility. However, the most significant change has taken place in the cultural field, and it has to do with the gradual replacement of the traditional relations of production, centered in the labor world, by others related to consumption exercised in leisure time, which has become the backbone of personal and collective identities. It is in this sense that the concept of “idle youth” arises (González et al., 2004), which has been used as a synonym for “apathetic youth”.

All this set of social transformations has brought about important changes in the biographical transition of individuals, which went from being linear and almost deterministic to being open and uncertain. We speak of linear biography to refer to the predominant *modus vivendi* in the Contemporary Age, based on the achievement of more or less common vital stages for all citizens that would be determined by stability (formative stage during adolescence, incorporation into the labor market with indefinite work, mating through a traditional family nucleus). On the contrary, the concept of open biography refers to vital stages that are neither consecutive nor common to the majority (lengthening of the formative trajectories until well into adulthood, sentimental instability and formation of different family nuclei throughout life, constant change of work due to labor flexibility and changes in habitual housing). These open biographies are more common in the Postmodern Age in which we are immersed. In spite of the substantial change enunciated, that of the biographical transition of the individuals, which goes from the closed linearity to the opening that produces uncertainty, we must not forget that the objective conditions of exit remain decisive and that, therefore, the passage of Linear biographies to open biographies do not mean the possibility of a change of status or of a social change by itself (Furlong, 2012).

The opening of the biographical transition can lead to a change in the political culture of young people, making these individuals more participatory and bearers of a social change in which their participation in political affairs is more active than that of previous generations.

The electoral participation of young Mexicans, at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, helps us to corroborate the previous hypothesis. Of course, we must take additional methodological measures, since the indicators we have are not exempt from some problems. For example, more than 70% of the young people surveyed stated that they would vote for one of the candidates in the 2012 presidential election, although its result (with a 63% participation) revealed that this data was somewhat biased (Gomez, Tejera & Aguilar, 2012). Let us not forget that participation in elections through voting is the most common form of political participation of young people.

The electoral participation of young people is important for what we are examining here, because it allows us to observe if it is significantly different from that of other age cohorts and if one opts for different political options, and also what is their tendency.

Regarding the above, the academic literature on political behavior indicates that there are differences in voting by age: young people vote more for new and radical parties. There is also a generational effect on the vote for certain options, which responds to the atmosphere of the moment (Anduiza & Bosch, 2004).

In the case of Mexico, most studies found no relevant differences in the orientation of the vote according to age. However, Moreno (2003) showed that linked to the process of democratic transition we can distinguish between an older, more rural and less educated voter - which would be the electoral base of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) - and another younger voter, urban and with higher levels of education, which would be directed towards the National Action Party (PAN) or the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). The level of income would be a differentiating variable between these last two.

## **Democratic disaffection and new youth protest movements in contemporary Mexico**

In the National Survey of Political Culture 2012, practically 90% of Mexican youth expressed little or no interest in politics. Also 90% said they had never participated in any kind of political organization or social movement, not even in any collective action. The survey cannot measure the



effects that the YoSoy132 movement could have had in 2012 - or only partially - since it was carried out in various phases, although only some of them shortly before it (González & Hernández, 2017). On the other hand, according to the same survey, the family is still the main agent of political socialization of Mexican youth.

In addition, in terms of disaffection and distrust towards the political class, 90% of the young people surveyed consider that there is corruption, economic waste in non-relevant actions and excessive cost of them. The lack of interest in the institutional policy of young Mexicans is evident. For example, in the middle of the 2012 presidential election campaign, only 25% had informed themselves about it. Instead, the young people interviewed had information on the most important topics of the YoSoy132 movement (Gómez, Tejera & Aguilar, 2012).

At this point it is important to introduce what politics means for young people. In this regard, in a 2006 study, Megías distinguishes between different types of youth according to their perceptions and orientation towards politics. It is possible to differentiate two great types of young people, subdivided in turn into sub-groups, which results in five typologies.

In the first place, there are young people who show great disinterest in politics, considering that this is not their business or at least it is not yet because of their young age; a second group shows rejection towards the formal mechanisms of politics and extends it towards everything political; a third shows distrust towards the effectiveness of political action and political actors; the fourth and fifth group show interest in politics, but some with a clear adherence to the status quo (parties, governments and formal institutions) and others, on the contrary, have a strong commitment to social transformation from alternative media to parties, prioritizing social movements and non-formal structures. The young supporters in Mexico are not many. In 2016, of the 8.07 million affiliates to five parties (PAN, PRI, PRD, Citizen Movement and MORENA - National Regeneration Movement -), there were only 15% of young people (Ollin, 2016). As for activists in social movements, although it is difficult to quantify them, we are going to take the movement. YoSoy132 as an example of this type of novel youth participation.

In the context of the electoral contest of the year 2012 - in the month of May - a student movement unexpectedly and originally broke into the Ibero-American University. The trigger for this social outbreak took place in the context of the assistance of the candidate for the presidency of the PRI,

Enrique Peña Nieto to the Universidad Iberoamericana, when at the end of the session he was approached by a group of students who questioned the excessive support that was receiving from the media (in particular from Televisa). Young students from private and public schools joined in the protest and established their demands, while manifesting themselves as an inclusive movement, which refers to the Zapatista principle of forming a “World in which all Worlds fit” (Díaz, 2013).

It can be affirmed that in Mexico there has been a particularly significant emergence of new social movements in recent years, among which we would highlight: the YoSoy132 (Rovira, 2014), the protests for the disappearance of the 43 normalists of Ayotzinapa (Hernández, 2015), the strike of the National Polytechnic Institute and feminist mobilizations against gender violence since April 2016. The success of these movements in the face of the proven failure of traditional participation mechanisms (such as political parties) is especially relevant for analyzing youth participation.

These are movements with a very flexible structure. The absence of rigid structures makes each young person find their place according to their willingness to be involved. Away from the culture of sacrifice, typical of classical social movements and even of the new social movements of the 70s. These movements, like previous ones, such as the Zapatista, work with a system of direct democracy: they have an assembly structure that allows everyone who wants, to participate in the decision-making process. Without entering into the contradictions or problems of this model of direct democracy through the assemblies; at the outset, the perception that those who participate take is that they *can have* a much more relevant role and greater decision-making capacity than in the traditional structures of representative democracy through political parties, which is less flexible and with less capacity for participation in decision making, especially of young people.

They are also movements adapted to the current rhythms and ways of life: the call and information process is done electronically, so there is only presence at the key moments of decision making and collective action. Even the debate and deliberation can also be virtual: through social networks, blogs and virtual platforms (González & Hernández, 2017).

Finally, the current youth movements work based on partial identity processes, without requiring the young person to share with all other members of their society a global and coherent vision of the world, based on which they act, which favors participation. In addition, the fact of raising participation around

specific issues that seek immediate solutions allows people with completely different worldviews, but who share the vision of this specific aspect, share spaces for participation. In summary, as in the traditional mechanisms, the movement itself sought the coherence of its actions and offered individuals a worldview, the new mechanisms offer more partial visions and dilute the traditional collective identities (class, gender, ethnicity, etc.). It is the individual himself who must endow his actions with an internal subjective coherence, and not society through his institutions that will guide them through a holistic globality formed by socio-historically confronted dualities. The important thing here is to emphasize that the individual is organized in his political participation, unlike in the old model in which the agency belongs to very broad and conflicting social subsets, which are also inserted in the logic of representation.

## **Changes and continuities in Mexican youth political culture**

Despite the emergence of novel movements such as the YoSoy132, in Mexico we still find strong continuities in regard to the political culture that relates to the party vote. Even so, it is still too early to know if these movements of criticism of the formal political system can crystallize in new ways of doing politics from the citizenship and at the service of it. In fact, the possibility of presenting citizen candidates, which has barely begun in Mexico, can be a window of opportunity for these experiences. On the other hand, the first analyzes on the spectacular electoral change that has led to the victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador and MORENA in the 2018 elections, point to an important participation of young people in this political turnaround (Consult Mitofsky, 2018).

In any case, as regards the parties and voting in presidential or legislative elections, in Mexico the parties have adapted to the political culture of the PRI after the changes that allowed competition and electoral alternation. One could say that everyone learned to play with the same rules of culture of the 70 years of hegemonic party (Gómez, Tejera & Aguilar, 2012). Not even the new political formations such as the Citizen Movement, MORENA or the Humanist Party have brought any novelty to PRI's client and corporate practices, to which the PAN and the PRD are also partakers.

In the investigation carried out we find the following paradoxes: although young people mostly distrust politicians and reject intermediation as a way

of solving problems, at the same time they do not hesitate to show predilection for any of the candidates in a presidential election. On the other hand, according to data from the ENCUP 2012, young Mexicans manifest themselves mostly undefined (32%) and right-wing (32%), but instead their political-ideological positions on certain issues (privatization of PEMEX, welfare state, etc.) place them mostly on the left (González & Hernández, 2017).

Mexican youth political culture presents important gaps and not a few contradictions. Young people say they are from the right, but they express opinions from the left; they distrust politicians, but show clear preferences for the various candidates in presidential elections. According to Gómez, Tejera and Aguilar (2012), a possible explanation of these contradictions may be the incidence of family and social networks in the positions on political parties, electoral institutions and the government.

In summary, young Mexicans are not emancipated in terms of political culture and are strongly influenced by previous generations, which reminds us of the hypothesis that socialization is an explanatory variable of political culture. Regarding socialization, Cot and Mounier (1978, p. 280 cited by Smith-Martins, 2000, p. 94) report that:

In the perspective of an established political system, the function of political socialization is to guarantee the continuity of the political system throughout the generations. Through socialization, the system instills the new generations with the values and political behavior of previous generations, in order to guarantee permanent reproduction.

Mexican society experiences more continuities than changes in terms of political culture and youth participation, perhaps because democratic institutional change has not resulted in the corresponding political culture change. It remains to be seen if Mexican student movements, which have historically contributed dynamism and change to the political sphere, can lead to initiatives that overwhelm the dominant political culture, characterized by its authoritarian features (Hernández, 2008).

## **The emergence of public youth policies in Mexico**

The emergence of youth policies occurs in parallel to the imposition of the neoliberal globalization and governance model throughout the world.

But globalization is not a phenomenon that imposes itself in an absolute way, it does not represent a one-way movement, but it provokes contrary movements, which compensate, in some way, for its perverse effects. The first of the movements identified is that of the tendency to strengthen local powers, as a space for the construction of collective projects that deepen citizenship. Some political scientists have referred to this movement as a process of politicization of the local sphere (Brugué & Gomà, 1998).

Local governments seem to abandon their traditional operational roles and their residual position in government processes. On the other hand, local agendas expand to emerging fields of public policy, as in the case of youth, and to more traditional areas, such as education and employment.

The concept of governance expresses a general transformation, that of the ways of articulating government processes in post-industrial society, and the emergence of new ways of articulating social conflict in the local space. This section summarizes the stages of youth policies that arise and develop in Mexico in parallel to these processes.

In Mexico, official programs aimed at youth begin in the first half of the twentieth century, and are due to international conditions referred to: the expansion of the capitalist system, the new world geopolitical system, defined in the two world wars, the demographic explosion and the complex processes of urbanization and industrialization, as well as the social and cultural consequences that derive from all this, and which are closely related to the economic and cultural diversification of Western societies.

The years between the 1930s and 1950s represent the explicit recognition, by Western governments, of the existence of youth as a separate category (with their own issues) of children and adults. This promotes efforts to define it objectively and operatively, in order to establish specific institutional policies (Marcial, 2012).

Various stages of youth policies in Mexico can be established for analytical purposes, taking into account changes in government-youth relations for them. We will go on to synthetically detail them.

*1st stage 1938-1949.* “Emergence of the young.” This first decade was characterized by the reduction of youth policies to educational policies designed to address the problems of university students. In this period, a non-governmental agent, the Catholic Church, stands out, who, from his privileged institutional position with the education and leisure of young people,

fosters a socialization of Mexican youth focused on obedience and subordination to adult-centric values.

*2nd stage 1950-1988.* Integral attention and co-optation. In 1950, President Miguel Alemán promulgated the founding decree of the National Institute of Mexican Youth (INJM), through which it was intended to give labor, cultural, citizen and physical training to Mexican youth (Marcial, 2012). During this period, INJM policies focused mainly on the Federal District (D.F.) and a few rural areas. The INMJ programs were used as a mechanism for the co-optation of young people, pursuing the suppression of the student movement as a specific objective, especially in the 60s and 70s. During the six-year period of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), the INJM changed its name and was renamed the National Youth Institute (INJUVE). With the change of name, the government's willingness to open up to diverse youth expressions was revealed. Despite these intentions, the reality of government policies continued to be repressive with respect to the student movement and the cultural content itself, as is the case with rock concerts. On the other hand, in this period the city of Guadalajara was the scene of the main confrontations between urban guerrillas and porrile groups - youth clash groups sponsored by governments or even university rectories, cord of those in the case of universities Mexican states- and paramilitaries (Aguayo, 2001, p. 170).

During the six-year term of López Portillo (1976-1982), with the intention of organizing young people "from above", the National Council for Youth Care Resources (CREA) is formed. Despite its hierarchical design, young people are thought beyond the classroom for the first time and a youth social policy is established. With CREA, a governance perspective begins to be adopted, involving civil society and young people (Pérez-Islas, 2000). The 2nd stage ends in 1987-1988 with the state, municipal and regional decentralization of CREA. Emphasize that, throughout this period, sports and tourism act as limits of youth policy; and that, despite the more social agenda and decentralization, the strategy of cooptation of young people by the PRI hegemonic political system remains, as evidenced by the case of the Popular Youth Council of Mexico City (Marcial, 2012).

*3rd. Stage.* 1988-1999. The lost decade. After the electoral fraud of 1988, the Government of Salinas de Gortari imposes the neoliberal doctrine with an iron hand. For youth policies this means sports reductionism and budget cuts. The neoliberalism that is installed in government policy to

this day implies, in practice, government abandonment and disinterest for youth. Despite this general trend, in 1996, already in the Zedillo sexennial, the Causa Joven program implies the recognition of youth diversity. Always from an adult-democratic perspective, control and correction measures are proposed, which correspond to the predominant adult vision that considers young people as a problem. Finally, in 1999 with the birth of the Mexican Youth Institute (IMJUVE), and not by chance in coincidence with the UNAM Strike, youth policies are resumed.

*4th stage.* 2000-2006. Selective attention. In the year 2000 the alternation in the presidency of the Republic takes place for the first time in 70 years, with the electoral victory of Vicente Fox, candidate supported by the PAN. In this six-year period, the aim was to give continuity to the youth policies initiated by IMJUVE. However, it is observed that in the course of it there is a shift towards the neoliberal and globalizing “right” in youth policies (Marcial, 2012). During this six-year period, the National Youth Program begins, a mechanism of centralized and controlled participation “from above”. It also responds to the demographic and social change with the extension - above and below - of the ages included in the concept of youth, which is between 12 and 29 years. Finally, an excellent, though often underutilized instrument, the National Youth Survey also begins during this period.

*5th stage.* 2006-2018. Drifting youth: neglect and repression. Both the Calderón administration (PAN), 2006-2012, and Peña Nieto (PRI), 2012-2018, represent a return of partisanship and the capture of the youth policy network by the Government. The old authoritarian practices of the use of youth organizations, such as the mechanisms of control and repression of youth movements, already used in the seventies, returned; and they did so in the midst of the accentuation of the neoliberal program and its consequent abandonment of structural policies aimed at young people (Macías, 2012).

The profound political change produced in the 2018 elections with the victory for the first time in Mexico of the leftist opposition in almost all areas of government (Presidency, Congress, Senate and most local congresses) open the possibility of a sixth stage, where a priori the participation of young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of youth policies, should be more active.



## **Conclusions and proposals. Towards participatory public youth policies**

Most of the history of youth public policies in Mexico has been characterized by youth policies without extensive and qualitative participation of young people. The social and economic changes of the last decades, as well as the emergence of a more active youth with expressions such as the Yo-Soy132 movement, open the possibility of participatory youth policies that are inserted in multilevel government processes, that is, of all Government scales -from the federal to the municipal, and through the state level- with mechanisms of confluence in a good part of the public actions of youth. On the other hand, the involvement of Mexican youth in politics in recent years shows that for there to be youth policy there must be action from and with young people, predominantly technocratic criteria and actions for young people are no longer valid.

The idea and discourse of participation are present in recent times in Mexico, which not in vain presided over the Alliance for Open Government in 2015. However, the implementation of participation has been unsatisfactory, supported by a marginalization of young people in the field of political participation. The model of the Youth Institutes, as a strictly associative or partisan participation scheme, with little influence on the definition of problems and decision-making, and with an intermittent and fairly centralized operation, is a model that must be clearly surpassed. In the context of the participatory reconsideration processes that some municipalities are doing today and in the context of the new instruments of local democratic innovation, it is possible to raise some clues as to where the new youth participation schemes should go.

In this article, new conceptual elements have been raised to think about youth policies focused on the youth subject itself and their capacity for agency. First, the characteristics of youth movements that have emerged in Mexico in the last decade, such as the flexible and predominantly horizontal structure, the use of new technologies or fragmented and partial identities, serve as a conceptual basis for new policies public based on youth participation. Likewise, the sociocultural changes within the framework of post-Fordist capitalism that affect the biographical trajectories of young people — making them flexible, non-linear and continuously adaptable to change — also affect the senses and orientations of public policies of youth in Mexico.



Consequently, youth public policies need to overflow the formal associative and partisan participation to involve unorganized youth and those active in social and community movements. Secondly, they must guarantee their relevance and effectiveness, that is, to become the central spaces for defining youth policies, introducing the participation and use of new technologies at all stages of public policy, from the definition of the problem, to the design, implementation and evaluation of them. Thirdly, they need to be rooted in the dynamics of youth communities, much more flexible and adaptable, far from the rigidity and aversion to the change of institutional centralism. These normative criteria will be elements for future empirical analyzes that do not fit in this article, focused on exposing the topic and providing a conceptual and analytical framework. At the moment, with what has been described, there is much room for improvement for youth policies in Mexico.

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