LOS MEXICANOS DE LOS NOVENTA
(Mexicans of the Nineties)
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END-OF-CENTURY MEXICANS

Mexican society has gone through significant changes over the last few years. Suffice it to say that as the end of the millennium approaches, the country has clearly become predominantly urban, its economy has diversified and new forms of social organization and political participation have emerged. Undoubtedly, these transformations have been accompanied by important changes in the way in which Mexicans perceive reality and in the perceptions underlying their judgements and attitudes.

It may be argued, then, that there is a correlation between the transformations in society and individuals' systems of values and attitudes. However, assuming that this correlation is horizontal would negate the complexity which has permeated Mexico's social development in the last few years. The exploration, then, of just how large an impact the changes in society have had in individuals' perceptions and value judgements was until very recently lacking in Mexican social science.

The six studies presented in *Los mexicanos de los noventa*, therefore, fill a void in the debate and thinking about the changes in Mexican society in the last few years. The essays are the result of the analysis of a national survey designed to determine whether the changes in society, particularly in value systems and attitudes, have a modernizing dynamic or not.

With a review of the main theories about the topic, a comparative outline was set up including three dimensions of the general characteristics of social organization in modern Western countries: a liberal economic model; a political system based on competition in a

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procedural democracy; and the formalization of an individualistic dynamic for action on a societal level. On the basis of this three-component model, a methodological and analytical instrument was constructed to make it possible to examine the manifestations and signs of a complex, heterogeneous social framework. Undoubtedly, one of the major successes of this research is precisely its multidisciplinary focus and methodological rigor.

In theoretical and analytical terms, the model used to evaluate the data is another useful contribution to research into value systems and attitudes. The authors, starting from the premise that judgement systems should be conceived of as a network, manage to surpass the rigid pyramid schema which establish a sort of inverted scale whereby values are consistent and lasting while their expression (opinions) are unstable and specific. By using the logic of networks, judgement systems are understood as a social code and, to that extent, as systems open to the conflictive, complex dynamic of reality. Therefore, it is possible to observe large and small transformations in evaluations, attitudes and opinions without their contradictory nature implying a lack of logical coherence in the perception of reality.

In the first essay, "Modernización" (Modernization), Yolanda Meyenberg explores her topic and the sense of change in Mexican

society, contrasting it with the attitudes of the people polled about the rules of the market economy, formal democracy and individualism in the formation and evaluation of social actions.

In "Coordinación social" (Social Coordination), Fernando Castaños delves into the relationship between change and social order in Mexico through four models of coordination: community, state, market and associations, each of which has specific dynamics and rules which structure the partici-

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pants, define what is pertinent and legitimate and establish a series of rewards for playing by the rules of the game.

"La esfera de lo político" (The Political Sphere) looks at judgements and attitudes regarding the political system. The author emphasizes the contradictory perceptions about the functions of public insti-

tutions and the growing role played in the public's judgements by expectations of participation.

In "Cultura" (Culture), Julia Isabel Flores explores cultural change. Her analysis shows the paradox of tradition and modernity in Mexico and, more than pointing to ambiguities in the culture, speaks to irregular adaptation patterns according to class, identities, beliefs and traditions.

"Comunicación" (Communication), by Fernando Castaños, establishes the degrees of correlation between communications systems and the lexicons of different social groups. From there, he suggests the existence of a series of contradictions, tendencies and potential limits to people's changes in attitude. Particularly noteworthy is the point he makes about the need to see change as subject to informational and discussion processes, and how, therefore, it depends on the concourse of multiple communications systems and on the growth in credibility, the discussion of ideas and their being taken on board by the public.

In the last essay, "Modernización y políticas públicas" (Modernization and Public Policy), Ulises Beltrán explores the basis for consensus or disagreement in the transformation of the Mexican state during the Salinas de Gortari administration. He collates this with an analytical index of modernization to establish just what correlation exists between the changes in the country and the assumption

of new values and attitudes as modern.

An important conclusion can be reached from the analyses and abundant statistics in each chapter: Mexicans of and in the 1990s have significantly changed their values and attitudes. They have, very simply, changed their way of perceiving themselves as active members of society. To this extent, while not all the changes have been made at the same pace, there is a tendency to take on the values and patterns of the so-called modernization as a key part of the ways [people] integrate themselves into society.

Mexico's so-called modernization can be evaluated on different levels: it is much more prevalent in the political sphere than in the economy; it can be seen in the plurality of codes available in society and in the complexity of personal codes; it is a constitutional part of the paradox of community practices combined with processes of individualization. In sum, it is a complex process for responding to end-of-century Mexican society's heterogeneity. Understanding this and the different ways of interpreting it are the undeniable merit of the authors of this research.

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ON THE TRACKS OF MIGRATION AND COOPERATION