

# Stavenhagen and the Nation

## Ethnicity, Community, and Political Project

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*There is consensus in Latin America that the modern states of the region emerged from a communal project based on the existence of pre-national societies. It remains important, however, to ask who the actors behind this construct are and how they understand the discourse of the nation promoted by those states. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, who took a critical view of the processes of construction of this modern organizational form, approached the concept of the nation as a construct that took into account the coalition of prevailing forces and could be disputed by those seeking to play a leading role in it.*

*En América Latina, ya constituye un consenso afirmar que los estados modernos de la región emergen de un proyecto comunitario a partir de la existencia de sociedades pre-nacionales. Resulta urgente preguntarse por los actores que forman parte de dicha construcción y la forma en que reciben el discurso nacional promovido por el Estado. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, quien sostuvo una mirada crítica sobre los procesos de construcción de esta forma organizativa moderna, nos permite pensarla como una construcción que puede dar cuenta de la coalición de fuerzas vigente y ser disputada por aquellos que exigen tener un rol protagónico en la misma.*

**Keywords:** Nation, Multiculturalism, Latin America, Rodolfo Stavenhagen

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The sustainability of national identities in times of globalized trade and rapid communication has been widely discussed. Current studies on the representation of national communities argue that they serve as interpretative frameworks in the lives of their subjects (Grimson, 2007; Loza, 2013; Vernik, Salvi, and Loza, 2008). Love of the homeland, identification with a political community, and the construction of meanings around these concepts remain a source of struggle, demonstrations of support, strategies, and interpretations of the world.

The historical experience of the Latin American nations exemplifies the types of difficulties that this political and sentimental identification fails to resolve. There is consensus that the modern states in the region emerged from

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a communal project based on the existence of pre-national societies—groups with some cultural similarity but little political significance. These states have made use of particular traits, localisms, and historical narratives to build a new social and symbolic world shared by people who identify with it (Valenzuela, 1992). However, extreme inequality is a central feature of all of them, and therefore we must identify the actors involved in this construction and the ways in which they understand the discourse of the nation that these states promote. This paper begins an inquiry into the foundations of that inequality.<sup>1</sup>

The paper is based on the work of Rodolfo Stavenhagen, who addressed inequality in his nation, Mexico, and across Latin America. His work partakes of some of the most interesting debates on Latin America and the fates of its nations. His analysis of national processes provides the basis for an examination of who has been included in and who marginalized from national projects and of the different ways in which various sectors of the populace interpret the national culture. For Stavenhagen, the nation-state was always multiethnic and never corresponded to the homogeneous notion that every national culture seeks to reference. He argued that the nation, which regulated the practices and ideas of the subjects who experienced it and the institutions that constructed it, was inevitably caught in the conflictive relationships between the state, its peoples, and the land occupied by those who considered themselves the nation's citizens. Recognizing the inequality of the social world, his approach highlighted the capacity of actors to alter that reality.

### STAVENHAGEN AND LATIN AMERICA

Marxism took root in twentieth-century Latin America as part of a larger effort meant to match this theoretical approach with the construction of nations and address the subordination of the region as a whole. It also served as a framework for political processes taking place in South American countries and thus became linked to collective mobilization (Zapata, 1990). During the second half of the twentieth century, Latin American intellectual concerns focused on explaining the region's position in the global structure, and the idea of a global world system based on historical power struggles allowed the *desarrollista* (developmentalism) and *dependentista* (dependency) schools to combine some of these proposals with a scientific analysis of the region's situation. This type of analysis had important similarities to those developed by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>2</sup> and contemporary thinkers who situated Latin America within a global scenario in which it had not played an exclusively passive role. José Medina Echavarría argued that the region had an unfavorable position with regard to world powers.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1970s, when the dependency approach was widespread and hotly debated across Latin American academia, a new controversy emerged: the concept of internal colonialism powerfully questioned previous approaches. Identifying the two poles of a global dualism, Pablo González Casanova (2009) argued that the relationship between the center and the periphery took the form of a linkage that subordinated the backward to the advanced areas. This connection between poles was eminently cultural and not class-based and

revealed the existence of social, political, and economic relations of domination. Internal colonialism reproduced colonial forms of domination even after the creation of modern states. According to González Casanova, new Latin American societies preserved the dual character of colonial societies and their systems of relations.

This concept became controversial when Rodolfo Stavenhagen argued that internal colonialism was a kind of class-based domination masked by the domination of the colonial power. This system of domination had historical roots and was characterized by the presence of a group that identified with the national community while subordinating the rest of society. The class relationship managed to absorb interethnic relations, fracturing and destabilizing national integration. Rejecting dualism, this argument found distinctions within the social system that were related to a single historical process. Thus Stavenhagen emphasized class relations between racial groups and the intersections of these social distinctions (by showing that the race-based social distance between indigenous people and mestizos allowed these distinctions to become class relations) and their roots in the colonial differences between these groups.

Latin American dependency, according to Stavenhagen, was both intellectual and cultural, and this was the source of its underdevelopment. Imported concepts could not explain the complexity of the change required (Stavenhagen, 1972). Internal colonialism accounted for the two poles of a single historical process, modernity (capitalism) and feudalism. In other words, development and underdevelopment were linked both globally and within Latin America. The national bourgeoisies and landowning oligarchies were the dominant players at both poles and joined forces to maintain internal colonialism, thus preventing national integration. This was a subjective process that nevertheless depended on structural factors. Only the dismantling of internal colonialism would enable the development of a national consciousness.

Internal colonialism, then, was the main obstacle to Latin American development (Stavenhagen, 1972), and the role of the intelligentsia was to provide the regional peasantry and the proletariat with the information necessary for them to mobilize. Latin American intellectuals were to analyze the current system of dominance and expose the mechanisms of the elites rather than just studying the situation of the oppressed. The main contribution of the concept of internal colonialism was to point to the need to analyze the situation in the periphery and the relationship between center and periphery (Zapata, 1990). It was in the periphery that one found the class and regional polarization that prevented development and equality. The intellectuals who joined the debate contributed further elements to analyses of polarization and the interrelations among race, class, economic, and institutional elements (Chaloult and Chaloult, 1978).

Stavenhagen pointed out that in the Latin American nations that developed in parallel with the region as a whole and were rooted in the independence processes of the nineteenth century, the general populace had never played a leading role in the construction of national projects, and this was the reason for their impoverishment and their difficulty in exercising their citizenship. Racial and class differences governed the region, rendering invisible the masses of people who had no access to the political arena. The consequences of this

historical internal differentiation were palpable, and social equilibrium could not be achieved in the short term. The only solution seemed to be the (re)construction of these nations in ways that accepted their ethnic diversity, provided autonomy to the various peoples living in their territories, and strengthened the states by making them plurinational. This meant revising the concept of a national homogeneous culture and acknowledging that the foundational nation-state processes had been characterized by hegemonic relationships and attempts to assimilate and acculturate subaltern groups.

### STAVENHAGEN AND THE NATION

Stavenhagen's timeline for the emergence of groups with particular characteristics and the consolidation of nations began in the sixteenth century, when certain ethnic groups became the dominant majority and proceeded to exclude others. These ethnic groups began a process of political construction, usually focusing on the central features of identity,<sup>4</sup> that culminated in our current nation-states. Since the dawn of modernity, the nation has been characterized as a community based on recognizable, shared elements (language, territory, customs, history, etc.) that, with varying emphases, have persisted as its foundation. For several centuries, intellectuals have engaged with questions relating to its foundations, strategies for the dissemination and reception of its components, and the roles of its different sectors. In the twentieth century, theorists of the nation began to consider the fictional nature of this concept, its weight as a symbolic construction for its members, and its relevance in an unequal world system in which the nation took different shapes in different parts of the globe (with, for example, Latin American nations differing from those studied by European theorists, which were linked to the development of a modern bourgeoisie and the construction of an autonomous state based on a strong cultural component).

Analyzing the creation of Latin American nations, he argued, required a deconstructive approach but one that did not overlook their actors' lived experience.<sup>5</sup> These formations shared an origin usually considered "modern" and experiences that were similar enough to suggest a certain uniformity but differed sharply among themselves in their fabrics of identity, some of which were still highlighted by their members to affirm the autonomy of their peoples. For Stavenhagen, the nation could be conceived as a territorial or civic construct determined by the legal framework that set the standards for citizenship. Nationalism as a political principle identified the nation with all the people who were legally part of the sovereign state, regardless of their ethnicity. A second understanding of the nation was based on ethnic criteria, and membership was defined in terms of cultural attributes such as language, religion, or the idea of a common history rooted in a constitutive myth. Membership in the ethnic nation was hereditary, and cultural identity was weightier than formal citizenship. Territory continued to be a necessary reference point but now as "the historical homeland out of which the ethnic nation emerges and to which it is forever tied" (Stavenhagen, 1996: 3). This meant that the construction of nation-states could not be seen as separate from a process through which those

practices acquired meanings that disputed the legitimacy of that construction. Historical dynamics such as those briefly mentioned created certain meanings in each country, meanings that allowed certain hegemonic practices and precluded others. An awareness of the coexistence of these differences and similarities was necessary to escape essentialist discourses that erased conflict and inequalities while failing to understand their situatedness (Quijano, 2005).

Stavenhagen's work strongly emphasized the prevalence of such conflicts in the form of the nation. He reminded us that ethnic constructions were usually discursive explanations that legitimized the existence of conflict and even its most violent manifestations. Constructed ethnic discourses drew on a group's need for a collective identity, appropriating historical elements from the collective consciousness. These narratives were powerful tools for ethnic-based ideologies and could be turned into elements of political mobilization for an ethnic group or an expression that achieved hegemony in the construction of nationhood at a particular time. This approach invoked the ideas of Ernest Renan and involved an appreciation of a shared past or at least the narrative of a communal past.

According to Stavenhagen, the spread of the European model of the nation into Latin America and Africa organized interethnic relations there. In many cases the establishment of the state preceded the creation of the nation, a communal construct that included the different contributions of the ethnic groups assimilated by the nation-state. In some cases the nation was made up of immigrants, the "transplanted peoples" mentioned by Darcy Ribeiro (2007) in his analysis of the construction of the Argentine and Uruguayan national projects. Stavenhagen did not, however, see the nation as subject only to state influence. There were ethnic groups that considered themselves nations without having states of their own. States themselves gave more or less recognition to these groups, and this is where we come across a staple of Stavenhagen's work: ethnic conflict. His later texts focused on the conflictive dimension of the construct of the nation. Building a sense of community, he argued, was not exempt from conflicts that could be termed "ethnic." He defined "ethnic groups" as historically determined communities with both objective and subjective features whose members saw themselves as sharing features such as language, culture, religion, and a sense of belonging. Ethnic borders were socially constituted and therefore permeable. Ethnic identity was the result of internal issues but also of the relationships the group established with other groups or with the state. An ethnic conflict was "the prolonged social and political confrontation among contenders who define themselves and others in ethnic terms" (Stavenhagen, 2001 [1996]: 4), and "ethnic terms" were any form of cultural identity: nationality, religion, race, language, etc. In other words, the constructed sense of belonging built around an organized community such as the nation could be a source of conflict between groups that had historically been part of a larger political community. At the same time, during the construction process conflicts might arise on the basis of language, religious, or racial differences within that community. Difference itself, said Stavenhagen, was the root of conflict insofar as distinctive attributes were given special meanings (in terms of beliefs and feelings). The origin of ethnic conflict lay in particular historical circumstances, and consolidation served particular interests. Stavenhagen rejected overly

functionalist analyses that located the origin of these conflicts in ancient tribal hatreds, apparently taking conflict for granted. A mythic and ahistorical explanation prevented the exploration of the interests that lay behind these stances and usually led to radical and homogenizing solutions.

Thus, the counterpart of these conflicts was the struggle of the dominant elites to impose, preserve, or extend their hegemony over other ethnic groups or their territories. These confrontations raised very controversial issues and often played out violently. Public opinion tended to view them as a result of ancestral tribal conflicts when what they really were was clashes between politically mobilized groups and a modern state. The common explanation was somewhat mythical in nature: that those hatreds had always been present but seemed to deepen when a strong institution acted weakly to control or prevent them. The roots of the conflict might be as varied as the attributes of each community, though Stavenhagen reminded us of the special importance of territorial interests, followed by religious ones. Conflicts of this type also arose when the strengthening of ethnic markers via the deepening of difference became a basis for political mobilization. In other words, the ethnic conflicts that characterized national communities had particular historical foundations. Stavenhagen's structuralist approach emphasized the link between these ethnic identifications and sharp socioeconomic inequalities. When different groups within a community were divided socioeconomically, conflict was much more likely. "When a community sees itself as a victim of economic exploitation as a cultural, racial, religious or ethnic group, it reacts as an ethnic group and constructs an ethnic discourse or counterdiscourse" (Stavenhagen, 2001 [1996]: 8).

According to Stavenhagen, when ethnic discourse was linked to a dispute over state power or territorial integrity it became ethno-nationalist. Ethnic conflict was always linked to the nationalist ideology of the modern state in that heterogeneous discourses coexisted and contended for hegemony over the concept of the nation. Therefore, ethnic identities competed against the modern national identity. At play was the sense of loyalty and belonging that held different groups together. The national ideology, however, was an ethnocentric ideology that sought to subsume all the subnational identifications within a territory. Although this issue had been raised in the political and, more cautiously, in the academic sphere, few nationalist discourses included any degree of ethnic diversity.

It was over interculturalism, Stavenhagen said, that cultural and ethnic-political conflicts often turned violent. "Here, the fundamental problem is that the hegemonic and widely extended concept of the mono-ethnic national state does not correspond to the cultural heterogeneity found in most countries" (Stavenhagen, 2006: 216). Conflicts, then, were usually tied to a state's inability to deal adequately with the ethnic diversity in its territory. The nation as an organized community was a homogenizing construct imposed on an inevitably multiethnic population.

In analyzing the construction of the nation and its discourses, we cannot overlook the fact that the ethnic conflicts that often characterize the history of a community are linked to the emergence of state policies seeking to integrate ethnic diversity into the national territory. According to Stavenhagen, "modern

nationalist ideologies have led to different types of assimilationist policies for ethnic minorities and subordinate, culturally different peoples. . . . National integration, as understood in these cases, requires that nondominant groups . . . renounce their respective identities in order to integrate into a broader national entity" (Stavenhagen, 2001 [1996]: 15). These organizational forms constructed particular collective identities, since national governments created, reproduced, and imposed on their citizens "a model nation that excludes and rejects all other different cultural models" (Stavenhagen, 2006: 219). Generally speaking, many minorities rejected these proposals, and enforcement only stoked conflict.

If the nation was an unequal structure, what were the possibilities for existing communities? Stavenhagen said that there was an increasing tendency toward the acceptance of intrinsic national pluralism. At least in recent years, this has forcefully emerged in discussions on ethnic policies for building pluralistic societies. It is significant that this tendency coincided with modern states' fear of self-determination for subnational groups. These groups' claims, however, instead of separatist vindication often seek the inclusion of their cultural identities within current state structures and the expansion of real opportunities for participation. The problem here is more analytical, since this claim challenges states to allow self-determination for some peoples in their territory while preserving the organizational form of the nation-state. Thinking in terms of separatism and sovereignty means a focus on the structure of the state, which must be altered to make room for more than one political and administrative entity.

### STAVENHAGEN AND THE NATIONAL ISSUE IN MEXICO AND LATIN AMERICA

The construction of the nation in Latin America includes diverse experiments across the continent. For Stavenhagen, the need to build national cultures in the emerging states contradictorily coexisted with a project of regional cultural integration, but he did clarify that this search for elements of regional identity served Latin American intellectuals as a tool for critiquing the U.S. development model. In this sense, "looking inward highlighted national distinctiveness in contrast to the common cultural traits shared with other countries" (Stavenhagen, 1986: 447). Nonetheless, the construction of independent national cultures has not been completed.

Stavenhagen saw the construction of a national culture as fundamental for the consolidation of the state and the national economy—for economic development. The construction of a symbolic framework that expressed the national will coexisted with highly polarized and fragmented social structures, and the emerging national culture coincided with the social project of a small creole ruling class that championed independence. This led to the consolidation of mechanisms that sought to exclude the popular classes (peasants, indigenous groups, slaves, and blacks) from the political system (Stavenhagen, 1986). Indigenous peoples began to be seen as an obstacle to national integration and a threat to the power of the creole elites. This was the basis for Stavenhagen's

critique of Latin American nation-building processes, and he warned of the reflection of a “racial ideology” in state policies such as physical extermination of indigenous inhabitants in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile in conjunction with the systematic promotion of European immigration that contributed to the “whitening” of these national populations. Therefore it could not be said that Latin American history was free of racism: “The idea of the ‘nation’ in Latin America is based on the denial of indigenous cultures” (Stavenhagen, 1986: 453). A community’s ethnic diversity conflicted with the pursuit of homogeneity inherent in the construction of nation-states.

Violations of the human rights of indigenous people in Latin America were primarily a matter of expropriation of indigenous lands via decrees or policies that turned them into private property. This meant that they faced a threat to both their economic and their cultural survival. Linguistic and cultural rights traditionally went unrecognized by national governments, and communities that resisted sought to reorient government educational policies toward bilingual and bicultural education. All these aspects were condensed in indigenous demands for participation in political power, especially in decision making that involved them directly. This demand for full participation in the development of Latin American nations called into question the traditional notion of the nation-state, challenging the idea of a single homogeneous national culture in favor of a multiethnic, multicultural society. The incorporation of indigenous cultural rights was central to current debates regarding the concept of the nation (Stavenhagen, 2006).

Stavenhagen traced the emergence of indigenous organizations across the region back to the 1960s; they demanded changes in public policies and respect for and recognition of their culture and identity. These expressions and the support they received from intellectuals revealed the need for a reformulation of the national issue and cultural nationalism (Stavenhagen, 1986). These demands emerged with the failure of developmentalist policies that addressed neither poverty nor social inequality, giving indigenous peoples a role as “new” historical actors with new demands (Stavenhagen, 2002). Their collective action revealed the diversity within a national territory and the differing impacts of a national project on different sectors of the population.

As we have seen, Stavenhagen held the concept of the nation-state itself responsible for ethnic conflicts, past, present, and future. Going beyond intellectual controversies over whether nation-states were a historical necessity or a form of political organization, the reality was that our world was divided into political territorial units that had become the main players on the international stage. Modern nation-states consisted of more than one ethnic group, and this diversity was a challenge to governance and the nation-state concept itself. All states contained ethnic, national, racial, linguistic, or cultural groups that did not identify with the dominant model or were not fully accepted as part of the nation that the model represented. One of the main problems was that states, in general, did not legally recognize their territories’ intrinsic ethnic pluralism and/or attempt constructive engagement with it.

In this sense, the recent appearance of indigenous communities in the Mexican press constitutes a challenge to the national government by bearing witness to the oblivion they have been assigned within the nation. Collective



resistance is always linked to inequality, especially with the implementation of neoliberal policies that have only deepened those differences. The emergence of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation coincided with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement on January 1, 1994. According to Stavenhagen, the two events were poles of the same phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> A not yet fully formed Mexico was seeking to be a modern, technologically advanced country, but this pursuit of development was allowed to coexist with serious problems of marginalization, poverty, and historical polarization. The Zapatista uprising was a way of expressing dissatisfaction with the absence of development policies that involved indigenous communities and demanding that the state be inclusive (as expressed in the Zapatista motto “A world where many worlds can fit”).

Mexico today is fiercely debating new energy policies. Triggered by the proposal of a new energy law, this debate revolves around the ownership of land and energy resources in a country where the agrarian revolution carried out at the beginning of the twentieth century failed to resolve the expropriation of resources from indigenous communities and where national ownership of energy resources has played a major role in the construction of national identity.<sup>7</sup> Along with many other Mexican intellectuals, Stavenhagen denounced the privatization of mining lands. Private capital pressured the state to provide access to natural resources in indigenous territory populated by communities that resisted this exploitation. The context speaks of what is clearly neocolonization that exacerbates the country’s conflicts. According to Stavenhagen, the dialogue between indigenous groups and the Mexican state, suspended in 1996 after the agreements in San Andrés Larrainzar, Chiapas,<sup>8</sup> urgently needed to be reopened. At the same time, education had seen visible progress: indigenous people were clearly recognized by public institutions that defended human rights, and there were several intercultural universities and even a training program for translators of indigenous languages to aid in administrative procedures.<sup>9</sup> These policies, however, were insufficient, since students educated in the bilingual system were often discriminated against when it came to entering the workforce.

Stavenhagen (2002) was also critical of the so-called *indigenista* policies of the Mexican nation-state. These policies sought assimilation and integration via the strengthening of communications, including the building of roads into indigenous areas and the inclusion of indigenous people in the national educational system. According to Stavenhagen, these strategies for indigenous modernization and inclusion in citizenship did not lead the urban mestizo population to accept the indigenous elements of the national culture. They did, however, recognize the rights of indigenous people to education and information and grant political and legal status to their communities.

### FINAL THOUGHTS: MULTICULTURALISM AS A PROPOSAL

This paper has provided an overview of Rodolfo Stavenhagen’s critique of the concept of the nation, an analysis that is inextricably tied to contemporary political and social processes in the Latin American context. Stavenhagen saw

the nation as a political project spread by modernity and built around a hegemonic concept that constructed, deployed, and reproduced a model of national culture. This historical process, which also led to the national community's administrative expression, the state, established the hegemonic idea of a national identity through the segregation of the different ethnic groups inhabiting the territory. Indigenous communities were acculturated under assimilationist policies, since the modern nation rejected diversity. This process was not devoid of conflict, and this was Stavenhagen's focus. Clearly, the experience of the nation was usually detrimental to those who were not directly involved in the national project.

Stavenhagen's proposal, timidly sketched in his recent writings and press appearances, was more concerned with changing the conditions under which the nation as a historical and functional formation was constructed, eschewing a single culture or national identity to include the diversity of actors involved in this political project. New collective claims by indigenous peoples were proposing a national identity based on multiethnic and cultural diversity to replace the national homogenizing myth (Stavenhagen, 2002). The recognition of indigenous rights would take place only if it occurred alongside a total revision of the nation-state and its symbolic construct, the idea of the nation.

As a framework, multiculturalism allows us to readdress and potentially reorder social and political relations. In that sense, it is a call to action. Multiculturalism can become the new point of departure from which a new national project can be constructed. We must urgently rethink the model and idea of the nation that we share and reproduce, but multicultural citizenship goes beyond mere discursive expansion to require the political and legal recognition of all groups. This is not merely a matter of "celebrating difference" but one of ensuring the human rights of those who have been historically subordinated. In other words, we need to change our ways of thinking as well as our institutions—to construct a new state with a new national project. Meanwhile, multiculturalism "is taken as a flag of struggle, announced as a form of resistance to assimilationist policies and discrimination, and . . . a way of doing politics" (Stavenhagen, 2006: 223). As a new political ideology, multiculturalism becomes the basis for a new national project, and this means that we must rethink citizenship so that those who regain their cultural rights can participate in national political life with equal opportunities.

For Stavenhagen, the nation was a political form burdened with conflict and based not on origin myths but on extreme inequality in the distribution of economic and social resources. This inequality translated into exclusionary and isolationist policies and an exclusionary construct of the nation that was applied, in the guise of an instrument of civilization, to all the inhabitants of the national territory. Just as the construction of a Latin American culture has required more than a century of intellectual effort, the constructs of the nation of the region's individual countries are unfinished political projects. They need to be rethought in the light of emerging collective claims that decry the inequality that characterizes them. Our intellectual efforts, then, must focus on the ways in which resisting actors can come to play an active role in the building of their national communities.

## NOTES

1. According to Grimson (2007), experientialist thinkers addressing the (always unfinished) process of nation building and its transmission point to the sedimentation of historical processes identified by the constructivists as configurations of shared cultural elements. The nation ceases to be purely symbolic and becomes the product of a social process (Williams, 1980). Though ideologically heterogeneous, it develops relationships between members and outsiders, a common language, and other shared cultural elements. Its people share a series of historical experiences that constitute its modes of action, cognition, imagination, and feeling. In short, discussions of the nation have bypassed its foundational elements to focus on the historical process of its construction, transmission, reception, and sustainability.

2. ECLAC was created in 1949 as an initiative of the United Nations and headquartered in Santiago de Chile. Contributors included the likes of Raúl Prebisch and took a historical but mostly proactive stance with regard to Latin American development (e.g., applying strategies such as import-substitution policies) based on the exploration of urbanization and industrialization.

3. Mexican academics played a leading role in these debates. Medina Echavarría, for example, explained the relationship between the continent's modern and traditional worlds not as the mere juxtaposition of foreign models and indigenous realities, as seems to have been the consensus at the time, but as a structural dualism: a parallelism between precapitalist and capitalist elements with no connection between them. This led to the idea of economic development as the tool for national integration and nation-state consolidation and eventually supranational integration and the construction of a regional identity.

4. Partha Chatterjee (2008) says that different discourses compete in the formation of modern nation-states until an elitist one manages to dominate a national alliance, excluding subaltern movements from this coalition of power. Thus anticolonial nationalist movements are capable of building "sovereign spaces" in the spiritual field, beyond political battles.

5. Questions regarding the sustainability of large national ideas, even fictional ones, gain added force in the face of contemporary racial and ethnic conflicts. It is the postcolonial theorists, especially those who deal with violent contexts, who have raised the question who constructs these ideas and whether symbols that appear ambiguous and exclusive have conflicting representations. Eugenia Mallón (2003), whose work focuses on nationalist sentiment in Peruvian and Mexican peasantries, argues that it is possible to analyze nationalist expressions outside of the state and that they should be understood as analytically different but historically connected. Acknowledging that there is no single, "real" version of nationalism means including expressions that go beyond the constraints of bourgeois projects while constantly negotiating with them on the premise of an inclusive citizenship, as well as understanding that subaltern sectors are actively involved in the construction of national ideas.

6. See <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/06/25/politica/006n1pol>.

7. In 1938 President Lázaro Cárdenas expropriated oil resources and production from foreign capital, turning them into the property of the Mexican state. This was the result of a long conflict over the exploitation of workers by firms established on Mexican soil. The expropriation involved 17 oil companies and led to the creation of the national oil producer PEMEX, still a source of Mexican national pride.

8. See <http://zedillo.presidencia.gob.mx/pages/chiapas/docs/sanandres/acuerdo.html>.

9. See <http://mediosenmexico.blogspot.com.ar/2013/12/lamentan-poco-cambio-en-tema-indigena.html>.

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