

An Andean form of Democracy: Elucidating Correa's "Citizens' Revolution"

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May 20th, 2010

In the last two and half decades in Latin America the concept of citizenship has risen to prominence. As Evelina Dagnino points out, this process has been largely connected to the rise of social movements and their efforts at democratizing Latin American societies (Dagnino, 2003). Nonetheless, the neoliberal citizenship regime that prevailed in Latin America during the 1990s was characterized, “on [the] one hand [by] the participatory project constructed around the extension of citizenship and...on the other hand, the project of a minimal state, which requires the shrinking of its social responsibilities and the gradual abandonment of its role as guarantor of rights” (Dagnino, 2003: 7). In other words, as Barry Hindness (2004) eloquently argues, there is a definite downside to citizenship, one which manifests itself by cementing divisions within society. Much of neo-liberal citizenship and post 9/11 securitized citizenship regimes illustrate well this point (Hindness, 2004). Correismo, that is to say the process of political change that is taking place since the election of Rafael Correa to the Presidency of Ecuador in 2006, proposes to integrate all Ecuadorians into the construction of a national project through a citizens’ revolution in which all citizens, individually or communally, participate in the construction of a common future (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008: Preamble). To complement this objective Correismo proposes to incorporate indigenous epistemologies and knowledges in order to construct a new form of participatory, direct, Andean democracy. Hence, the new citizenship regime, formally and theoretically embraced by Correismo, is rooted in inclusive, participatory and direct ideals of democratic rule (see for instance, Constitution of Ecuador, 2008: Articles 95-107). In this context citizenship is fundamentally linked to the degree to which citizens participate in the construction and definition of issues pertaining to the public domain. Consequently, a fundamental question in understanding Correismo’s vision of democracy and citizenship is to inquire into what constitutes participation under Correismo. In which spaces is participation to take place? Who can participate and who cannot? Why? Which of these spaces allows for the purest or most ideal form of democratic citizenship to be best approximated? It is also important to ask, who sanctions those spaces, how and why?

In this paper I argue that Correismo’s citizens’ revolution is characterized by a series of internal contradictions that ultimately undermine the development of a truly inclusive citizenship regime and, thus, of an Andean form of participatory democracy. More specifically, I argue here that thus far, Correismo’s view of participation is rooted in two contradictory notions. On one hand, it is grounded in a view that regards participation as an essential component of democracy and citizenship; and, on the other hand, Correismo regards participation with suspicion and as a practice that needs to be controlled by the state. I contend that this phenomenon responds at least to two interrelated issues. First, to Correismo’s view of the state. And second, to the top-down, *caudillista* power structure that finds Rafael Correa at the apex of its pyramidal shape and that holds a technocratic view of politics which regards Correa and a group of subordinated technocrats as the sole possessors of the knowledge which will lead Ecuador to a better future.

I will develop my argument by focusing on formal-theoretical as well as practical aspects of Correismo. First, I will concentrate on developing an overview of some of the most important conceptual pillars of Correismo. Second, I will provide a critique of the way in which participation and citizenship are being conceived and constructed by Correa’s regime. This will lead me to an analysis of Correa’s views of the state as well as

on various aspects of Ecuador's Constitution and legal system. Third, I conclude by elaborating on the issue of Correa's personal leadership and the top-down, technocratic exercise of government prevailing under Correismo.

Introduction

The failure of neoliberalism in Ecuador witnessed the emergence of Correismo, a political phenomenon which promises to construct a new form of democratic politics based on direct, participatory democratic principles and indigenous influences. Characterized by a series of innovative concepts (for Ecuador), Correismo has promised to break with the past. This rupture with the past is not only in response to the failure of neoliberalism, but also to the perceived failure of a political system which has produced the marginalization and exclusion of large segments of the population. Correismo then, not only promises a new economic system but a political revolution rooted in the ideals of democracy, inclusion and the celebration of ethnic, racial, and political diversity (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008: Preamble).

Correa's citizens' revolution is largely rooted on the principles of an inclusive citizenship regime. Full citizenship under Correismo is grounded in the principle of participation, that is, that citizens govern and are governed. Another crucial element of Correismo is the return of the state as a primary actor in the developmental process of the country. A third aspect of Correismo that is worth mentioning here is that it incorporates into its formal conceptual structures various aspects of indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. There is, therefore, as Arturo Escobar (1995; 2010) puts it, an aspect of "post-development" politics built into the formal structures of Correismo. The formal conceptual structure of Correismo suggests that Ecuador has not only departed from neoliberalism, but that Ecuador is constructing and developing a new form of democratic politics based on participatory processes and indigenous thought. The question then becomes: can Correismo fulfill its potential?

What is Correismo? The Discourses of a New Political Phenomenon

To a large extent, the onset of Correismo responds, as mentioned earlier, to the historical configuration of events that responds to the failure of neoliberalism in the region. Correismo, as other regimes in the region, can also be understood by the prominence of social movements. Accordingly, one finds in the conceptual pillars of Correismo many of the discourses embraced by social movements (Conway, 2004; Constitution of Ecuador, 2008). Correa's citizens' revolution understands citizenship, in contrast to earlier political regimes, as being composed not only of social, political, and civil rights, but of cultural and environmental rights as well. This 'new' understanding of citizenship also entails a re-politicization of citizenship that marks a clear departure from the de-politicization of citizenship endorsed by neoliberal citizenship (Dagnino, 2003; Conway, 2004; Yashar, 2005).

The incorporation of indigenous discourses also expands the notion of Marshallian citizenship in Correismo. It introduces into the concept of citizenship the notion of a 'relational ontology' (Escobar, 2010). Based on the prevalence of the concept of community and a different conceptualization of the relationship between communities and nature, the new Constitution of Ecuador not only vindicates the right of communities to live in a rich cultural environment, but it invests nature with rights (Constitution of

Ecuador, 2008: Chapter 7). According to Arturo Escobar, Mario Blaser and Marisol de la Cadena (Escobar, 2010: 39), investing nature with rights is a notion that is

unthinkable within any modern perspective, within which nature is seen as an inert object for humans to appropriate. Its inclusion in the Constitution may thus be seen as an epistemic-political event that disrupts the modern political space because it occurs outside such space, as a challenge to liberalism, capitalism, and the State.

Thus, while incoherent from a liberal standpoint, giving rights to nature proposes a discursive shift aimed at the construction of “a different way of imagining life” (Escobar, 2010: 3); an imaginary through which “divides between nature and culture, us and them, individual and community; the cultural [and] political” (Ibid.) are eliminated. In other words, a relational ontology is formed. As Walsh (as cited in Escobar, 2010: 21) notes, “the integral vision and the basic condition of the collective wellbeing have been at the basis of the cosmovisions, life philosophies and practices of the peoples of Abya Yala and the descendants of the African diaspora for centuries; they are now re-apprehended as guides for the re-founding of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian state and society” These progressive changes demonstrate the enormous potential of Correísmo. These points also suggest that citizenship is a (if not *the*) central concept in Correísmo.

A Citizenship’s Revolution: The Formal Character of Participatory Citizenship

Citizenship can be broadly defined as a type of relationship between the state and society. Marshall’s now classic account of citizenship describes three forms of citizenship: civil, political and social (Marshall, 1963: 8). Debora Yashar (2005) lists four types of ideal citizenship, in order of inclusiveness: the Aristotelian ideal, *jus sanguis*, *jus soli*, and universality. The Aristotelian ideal establishes citizenship rights according to who is capable or fit to have citizenship; *jus sanguinis* refers to selection on the basis of national descent and national sovereignty; *jus solis* alludes to territorial and civic community as well as state sovereignty; and universality is in reference to the principle of open borders and no restrictions (Ibid.: 35-41). Today *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* are the predominant principles over which citizenship is organized. Janet Conway (2004: 347), lists some further crucial aspects of an inclusive citizenship regime:

- a) the creation of new, previously unimagined rights that emerge through specific political struggles and get articulated as new claims by social movements
- b) third, the new citizenship is not about access to a pre-given political (or economic) order; it is rather a claim to the right to participate in defining that system
- d) the new citizenship expresses ‘a project for a new sociability’, meaning public responsibility for the creation of more egalitarian social relations and implying widespread and reciprocal recognition of ‘others’ as bearers of rights and interests

In Ecuador, important aspects of the formal regime of citizenship contain most of the elements mentioned above (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008). It is rooted on the notion of *jus solis* (Yashar, 2005); it incorporates Marshall’s typology of rights and contains in

its formal structures the elements of inclusive citizenship mentioned by Conway (2004; also see Constitution of Ecuador, 2008: Art. 10-34). At the same time the formal citizenship regime enacted by the Constitution goes further by, for instance, including the concept of cultural rights and the rights of nature. Culture as a right, according to Ágora Democrática (2009: 9) is about citizens constructing and maintaining

the whole array of customs, behaviors, habits, ways of life, features values and representations that distinguish [them] from others; [citizens] have the right to decide and manifest if [they] want to belong to one or more cultural communities, and to freedom of expression and the search of what [they] believe to be art and beauty, to know the history of [their] cultures, and to access [their] cultural patrimony, to transmit everything that [they] are and to access diverse cultural expressions.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the new Constitution conceptualizes nature as a ‘subject of rights.’ (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008: Article 10). Along these lines one finds the third set of non-Marshallian rights: the right to a healthy environment (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008: Article 14). According to Article 14 of the Ecuadorian Constitution, persons and communities have the right to a healthy and equilibrated environment (Ibid.). In other words, another defining characteristic of the formal type of citizenship prevailing in Ecuador is the right to a healthy environment rooted on a more sustainable and balanced approach in the relationship between individuals, communities and the environment.

Participation and Citizenship: Beyond the Enunciates of a Citizens’ Revolution

An additional aspect relevant to this paper regarding Ecuador’s formal political regime is the relationship between citizenship and participatory processes. How are these related in formal terms? The notion that citizens are active and fundamental agents in processes of public decision-making, planning and management is emphasized by the new Constitution (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008: Article 95). This means that participatory processes lie at the center of the attributes of citizenship and the character of Ecuador’s formal democratic system. Participation according to the Ecuadorian Constitution is a right that is exercised through the mechanisms of “representative, participatory, direct and communitarian democracy” (Ibid.).

In conjunction with these changes, the new Constitution of Ecuador creates a fifth power of the state: the Council of Transparency and Social Control. Part of this Council is the Council of Citizen’s Participation. This Council is in charge of promoting and encouraging participation. Participation itself is to take place through the organization and implementation of public hearings, public assemblies, consulting councils and other mechanisms that “promote citizenship” and it is the Council which is in charge of their organization (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008: Article 100). The Council of Citizen’s Participation represents, therefore, an effort at institutionalizing participation through and within the state.

An additional effort at institutionalizing participation is found in Article 101 of the new Constitution. The specific method through which this is to occur is the ‘empty chair’ mechanism. The mechanism of the ‘empty chair’ is applied in local government

sessions where an ‘empty chair’ is assigned to *one* member of civil society, or, more generally, to any citizen concerned with the issue being treated in local government sessions. Formally, what the empty chair mechanism seeks, at least in principle, is to give a space to autonomous voices outside of the state to express the interests of those represented by her/him within the state.

As can be seen, important aspects of Correísmo’s formal conceptual structure conceive citizenship, participation and indigenous knowledge as essential to the construct of a new, Andean democratic regime.

Analyzing Correísmo’s Treatment of Participation

Dating back to Aristotle, as Barry Hindness notes, the definition of citizens as rulers and ruled has been linked to the concept of citizenship (Hindness, 2004). The issue becomes how to turn this ideal into concrete practice. As shown above, Correísmo seeks to incorporate participation into the state as a way to make participation a reality. In this sense the question becomes to what degree this is desirable. Are the strategies of Correísmo in this respect conducive to the furthering of participation and participatory democracy? Furthermore, it would be worth asking, what has been occurring in practice? To begin answering these questions I will identify two processes within Correísmo that are worth mentioning: first, the statization of participation promoted by a totalizing view of the state, and second, the circumscription of participation by a technocratic view of government and politics.

The first aspect of the new citizenship regime in Ecuador that will be noted here is the importance of the state and its government in defining, delimiting and institutionalizing citizens’ participation. As mentioned earlier, citizenship can be viewed as a way of understanding the relationship between the state and society (Priebisch, 2007). As Bryan S. Turner (1990) notes, a theory of citizenship cannot be divorced from a theory of the state. Consequently, before one can come to a more complete understanding of the type of citizenship regime prevailing in Ecuador under Correísmo it is necessary to understand how the state is understood by Correísmo.

One advantage in analyzing Ecuadorian politics under the current regime is that President Rafael Correa is also an academic and as such continues to express his views on the state, participation, citizenship and other crucial concepts in academic circles. As he often notes, he feels at home in the academic world and enjoys the activities this world entails (Correa, 2008). Consequently, some of the statements he has made in universities and other academic circles provide useful tools in analyzing the conceptual structures of the ‘revolution’ he is currently leading. One of such statements can be found in a conference at the University of Iran in Teheran where Correa laid out his definition of the state. Here Correa stated that the state “is nothing but the institutionalized representation of society” (Correa, 2008: 25). This entails that institutions are built around the “image” of society. Society’s diverse interests, preferences, cleavages and so on are, presumably, according to Correa’s definition, are built into the institutions of the state. Accordingly, one could conclude that state actions are always legitimate representative of society insofar as its institutionalized actions are reflective of society.

Given Correa’s influence in the development of the conceptual and ideological structures of his party, Alianza País (Correa is not only one of the most visible founders of Alianza País, he is, undoubtedly, the undisputed leader), and given the influence of his

charismatic leadership over the entire process of the citizens' revolution, it would be reasonable to assume that his ideas about the state have influenced the initiatives that were put forward by his party during the 2008 Constituent Assembly (where they had a notable majority) where Ecuador's new Constitution was written. Therefore, Correa's definition of the state is a useful analytical tool in drawing conclusions about the current political regime, including the status of citizenship and participation.

Citizenship, Participation and the State

Before exploring this issue it would be worth providing a brief historical contextualization of the state in Ecuador and in Latin America. The state in Ecuador is fundamentally characterized by the lack of what Guillermo O'Donnell (199) calls "horizontal accountability." That is to say, that there is no real separation between state powers. This lack of horizontal accountability generally leads, as O'Donnell points out, to an overpowering executive that often interferes with the job of the other two powers. In this respect, one of Correa's statements about his role as the leader of the executive branch would be illustrative here. On March 9th 2009, Correa stated that being the head of the executive branch is the equivalent of being the head of state and that being the head of state is the equivalent of being on top of all powers of the state (El Universo, March 12, 2009).

A second aspect concerning states in Latin America, including the Ecuadorian state, is that, again as O'Donnell puts it, there is a sharp divide between the formal institutions of the state and the informal (practiced) institutions of society. In other words written norms, rules and legal instruments are not followed in practice. Therefore, it is in this context of a lack of horizontal accountability and a tradition of clientelism and corruption that Correa's definition of the state and the Constitution that emerged from the last Constituent Assembly must be placed.

Returning to the issue at hand, it should be noted that a critical issue with Correa's definition of the state is that it curtails the necessity of an autonomous civil society. By defining the state as the institutionalized representation of society Correa is effectively denying that the institutions of the state may, at times, not be representative of society. In this sense, Correa is denying the need for actively contesting the state through autonomous mobilization. Moreover, according to his definition it would be not only unnecessary but illegitimate to contest the institutions of the state given that the state is legitimized on the basis of its ability to represent the public good. Correa's definition of the state demonstrates a high degree of confidence in the capacity of the state to actually represent the society. While I am aware of the need to not over-emphasize Correa's words, it could be argued that this conception of the state is being reflected in the way participatory citizenship is actually being constructed under Correismo. There are a few reasons why. First, it would appear to be the case that Correismo's political reforms aim to capture and control participation by incorporating participatory processes into the state apparatus. This becomes evident when one looks both at the Council of Citizens' Participation and Social Control and the empty chair mechanism.

There are a few issues with the Council of Participation and Social Control that are worth noting. First, the Council not only has the power to limit to a certain extent the degree to which participation is possible, but also has the power to indirectly sanction which form of participation is desirable and which is not. By being in charge of the

organization of participatory processes, the Council becomes a de facto judge in determining which process are worth encouraging and which ones are not. If the Council, as Correa would put it, is nothing but the institutionalized representation of society then its judgments would be legitimate and pertinent. However, even for the most optimistic observer, it would be difficult to argue that the Council is representative of “society.” In particular, the Council is not an elected body. Its members are selected through a meritocratic, point-based system that is conceived and developed within the state, not by civil society. Furthermore, and even though the pool of candidates is taken from civil organizations, the number of possible candidates that can emerge from such process can hardly be thought of as being representative of “society.” In this sense it can be argued that an important role of the Council is to control participation. Which forms of participation will be encouraged? As mentioned earlier, horizontal accountability is generally absent in the Latin American state (O’Donnell, 1995). Accordingly, it would be reasonable to assume that the expressions of participation that will be encouraged are those which are deemed desirable by the President of the republic. In the case of Correa there are visible signs of this taking place. He has been very critical of and repressed the indigenous movement, his former ally, for expressing their discontent with some of the laws promoted by his government (see for instance, *Diario Hoy*, 2010: <http://www.hoy.com.ec/noticias-ecuador/indigenas-acusados-de-terrorismo-406420.html>) . Similarly, Correa’s government has raised its voice against those civil society organizations, such as *Acción Ecológica* (a non-governmental organization that was shut down and re-opened by the government), and civil society representatives, including Alberto Acosta, co-founder of *Alianza País*, for, for example, expressing their disagreement with Correa’s large-scale mining policies (Nomberto, 2009).

Similarly, the empty chair mechanism provides an open but very limited space to non-state actors to participate in the act of government; in this sense it opens participation while at the same time legitimizes and makes acceptable this very restrictive space for participation. The empty chair mechanism is in principle a positive tool for citizens to participate in the act of government (Pachano, 2010). However, the empty chair mechanism allows for *one* non-state actor to be represented in governmental processes. This is a problem insofar as one representative is clearly not enough. At the same time, it would be worth asking, how many would be enough? That is clearly another issue with the empty chair mechanism: one is not enough but determining the exact number of civil society representatives that would suffice for the mechanism to be a true space of participation is a difficult task. Finally, as Simón Pachano (2010) has pointed out, the empty chair mechanism, while positive in principle, could serve to perpetuate the overrepresentation of certain groups in governmental processes. Specifically, by containing a first-come-first-served procedure for inscribing empty chair representatives, the process is prone to let the most able or agile organization register its candidates first, leaving less-organized, poorer or simply more geographically distant organizations out of the process (Pachano, 2010). In this sense, the empty chair serves more the function of a technique of government that uses participation as a legitimizing (and controlling) force in the exercise of government.

An additional aspect is more conceptual. It relates to the notion that participation must be “institutionalized” by or into the state. In principle, the objective of institutionalizing participation comes from the participatory ideal that citizenship entails

to govern and to be governed. However, the incorporation of participation into the state apparatus is not necessarily a way of achieving this goal. Being attentive and receptive to the voices emanating from the spontaneous participation of social movements would be one way of accomplishing this without incorporating participation into the state. Autonomous self government, like indigenous peoples' governance practices is another example. A fuller participatory citizenship could also be accomplished by extending in scope and degree the empty chair mechanism into areas such as the elaboration of the national development plan. Legitimizing the state as the most appropriate space for participation is denying the importance of spontaneous participation by social movements and other non-state actors. As important theorists of social movements have aptly pointed out (Offe, 1985; Tilly, 2004; Escobar, 2006), a defining element of a social movement is its spontaneous, decentralized nature. In this sense, and given that social movements represent one of the purest and most important forms of political participation that has been crucial in bringing the very concept of citizenship to the fore of Latin American politics (Dagnino, 2003), the question of whether or not participation should and could be schematized, organized, and ultimately institutionalize by and into the state becomes all the more relevant. Moreover, as Conway (2004: 374) puts it, the development of a truly inclusive citizenship "involves struggle against hegemonies by the excluded. Citizenship is secured from below through the active struggle of people claiming political subjectivity"; and "the emerging paradigm recognizes that citizenship must be established in civil society itself."

In other words, the ideal of citizenship in participatory democracy requires an active participation of groups of citizens capable of challenging the state by exercising their capacities of reasoning, discussion and socializing. In other words, participation implies a degree of autonomous reasoning, deliberation, and political expression. Moreover, as Agnes Ku points out, citizenship can be defined as "a set of cultural, symbolic and political practices through which individuals and groups claim new rights or struggle over existing rights (Ku, as cited in Preibisch, 2007: 99). The struggle over rights implies the need to open political spaces where struggles can take place. I should point out that by autonomy I do not mean that political reasoning is formed in a vacuum. Neither do I mean that individuals as free agents can be conceived independently from the state and/or the political communities they live in. Autonomous action, especially in view of a semi-authoritarian government, can be conceived as: "(1) organizational autonomy from the state; (2) trying to propose forms of administration of policies without the participation of the state" (Avritzer, 2009: 11). Autonomy also entails that the political or ideological position of non-state actors be respected by the state. In this sense, the achievement of substantive democratic citizenship regimes in the context of democratic systems demands a certain degree of political autonomy from the state (Keane, 1988a).

Finally, if participation in Ecuador is the concern of *Correismo*, then there should be no concern at all: Ecuador, as Simón Pachano (2009e) notes, has quite a rich history of participation (participation understood as popular mobilizations and popular demands placed on the state). Not only does Ecuador have an important tradition of popular participation, but, also a high level of social capital. For instance, in a study about social capital Martin Paldam (2005) found that in 2005 each Ecuadorian belonged to 1.75 civil society organizations. This placed Ecuador (also the poorest country in the study) second

out of 21 countries as the country with the highest number of voluntary organization memberships. Thus the issue here is not participation as such. As Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller argue, the act of government is a problematizing activity: “it poses the obligations of rulers in terms of the problems they seek to address” (Rose and Miller, 1992: 181). Following a governmentality approach this entails finding areas to be governed and techniques to govern them with. Along these lines it could be said that even though participation in Ecuador has been relatively healthy, it has been problematized by the government; it has been deemed to be insufficient or inadequate and has become, therefore, an area where the government has a role to play in fixing it. Consequently, the incorporation of participation into the state provides the government with the politico-discursive tools to legitimize some participatory process and not others. In this sense, the incorporation of participation into the state implies a form of control that is, in effect, a road block to the development and/or maintenance of meaningful participation.

The following section analyzes some of the legal mechanisms supported by Correa’s regime. In it I further analyze not only the incorporation of participation into the state, but also illustrate the various means through which participation is being curtailed.

Laws and Participation

A closer look at the laws of Hydraulic Resources (hereafter the water laws) as well as the laws of Participation, Communication and Higher Education which are being supported by the government also suggests that active participation outside of the state is regarded with suspicion. While not all of these laws have been approved, it would be worth mentioning some of the elements that have characterized their different stages. The case of the water laws is perhaps most striking. Again, while positive in many instances, this law ultimately promotes a view of governance that centralizes decision-making power in a Council that is ultimately vulnerable to the influence of the central government (again, it would be worth reiterating O’Donnell’s point about the lack of horizontal accountability in Latin American states). According to the head of CONAIE, Ecuador’s most important indigenous organization, the water laws centralize all decision-making with respect to access and administration of water sources (Jijón, 2010). This means that “thousands of potable water councils are given no real recourse as their members are now merely consumers subject to the Sole Authority of the state that controls the entire hydraulic network” (Zibechi, 2009: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/6521>). In other words, participation is curtailed because it limits an ancient practice within indigenous communities where communities through participatory processes manage their water supplies and because it effectively eliminates the very act of self-government which the Constitution and Correa so actively defend. As a consequence of this law, Raúl Zibechi (2009: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/6521>) reports:

the Confederation of Ecuadoran Indigenous Nationalities ... began a new front against a water law that they were not permitted to participate in. The government law went to parliament in mid-August but CONAIE had already put together its own initiative in 2008 that was never taken into account by the administration.

This battle continues to this day which means that the indigenous movement has spent the last six months battling against a law which they consider undesirable. The case of participation with the Water Laws is particularly striking given that the most vocal opponent of the Water Laws is the indigenous movement, one of Correa's most significant former political allies and one of Ecuador's most important social movements whose input in legitimizing the concept of participatory citizenship during Correa's election was fundamental.

A similar phenomenon, albeit less dramatic, can be found in the case of the laws of citizens' participation, communication and higher education where centrally managed Councils have been proposed as means of controlling participation, communications and education. These Councils would constitute a de facto elimination of the autonomy of many civil society organizations (Bustamante, 2009; Burbano de Lara, 2009; Pachano, 2009d, 2010). One of the drafts of the law of communications went so far as to discourage "citizens' journalism." That is, it sought to regulate the spontaneous participation of civil society in the generation and distribution of information by obliging those who practice journalism to possess a university degree. These issues likely respond to the fact that, as Alberto Acosta notes, "in the elaboration and passing of laws a central principle of the new Constitution: citizens participation, has not been guaranteed" (El Comercio, 2009: September 27th). In reference to the first draft of the law of communications, it would be worth quoting Burbano de Lara (2009: <http://www.hoy.com.ec/noticias-ecuador/periodistas-y-ciudadanos-369069.html>) at length:

The control over the press contemplated in the [first law project] is the clearest expression of the poor conception of citizenship of the citizens' revolution. Behind the law there is an inadmissible objective: the idea that television watchers, and readers are a conglomerate of persons without any capacity to critically discriminate the messages and information that they receive...carrying out a revolution in the name of citizenship would presuppose recognizing the critical capacity of people in order to render them as permanent subjects of a dialogue that is reflexive and critical...

A New Democracy?

At this point it would be worth addressing the question of whether Correismo's approach to participation is furthering democracy in Ecuador. More importantly, however, it would be worth asking if a new form of Andean democracy is developing in Ecuador. In answering this question it would be useful to return to Correismo's definition of the state. I argue here that there are a few issues, besides those mentioned above, with Correa's views of the state that imply a constraint to the deepening of democracy. First, it could be said that Correa's views of the state are totalizing. Correa's conception of the state seems to reflect a view of the state which does not establish a discernible separation between the interests, images, concerns and preferences of the state and those of non-state actors, or more generally, to employ Correa's terms, of 'society.' And even though some state theorists, such as Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller (1992) and Joel Migdal (2001), have pointed out that analyses made of the state are often mistaken in drawing too sharp a line between the state and civil society, it is also clear that, even though these two entities (the state and society) are interrelated and co-constitute each

other, they are not identical to each other and must be somehow conceptually differentiated. Civil society should thus be differentiated from “the steering mechanisms that coordinate action in the economy (money)” and “formally organized bureaucratically structured organizations (power)” (Cohen and Arato, 1992). Second, Correa’s definition assumes that changes in society and changes in the state are always congruent with each other; however, historically and theoretically this is very difficult to sustain. Third, it is difficult to conceive that in Latin America where there has been a severe (and widely recognized) crisis of political representation by the state (Mainwaring, 2006), that the state be conceptualized as the institutionalized representation of society. Finally, it can also be said that Correa’s conceptualization of the state is gender, ethnically and racially blind. As Wendy Brown (1995) has eloquently argued, the state is inherently patriarchal and, therefore, could not be defined simply as the institutionalized representation of society, but rather, as the institutionalized representation of male-patriarchal society. A similar case can be made of indigenous peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians whose distinct societies have been largely underrepresented by Latin American states. In view of these issues it can be said that insofar as Correa’s views of the state prevail in the construction of a new citizenship regime, democracy will not be deepened.

This second set of observations regarding Correismo’s definition of the state lead me to the my final point, namely, that Correa’s views of the state are congruent with the character of his regime, as Carlos de la Torre (2009) notes, as a paradigmatic case of a top-down process of political change. By being a vertical, top-down process of change, Correismo often finds it difficult to incorporate into its power grid the propositions and initiatives emanating from social movements that are not in accord with Correa’s ideas of what development, politics and the state ought to be. Furthermore, the power structure that can be observed in Correismo is a process through which the legitimacy of the entire project of change hinges on the charismatic presence of a single leader: Rafael Correa. This goes in accordance with Ecuador’s long love affair with populist caudillos whose charismatic rule and populist discourses (pitting the people or *el pueblo* as a whole against a small ‘evil’ oligarchy) have been the norm in Ecuadorian politics for decades (de la Torre, 2009). In this respect, it would be possible to state that the logic of *caudillismo* as a top-down process of political change rooted in the charismatic, personalistic leadership of an individual inherently regards most, if not all expressions of autonomous non-state actors’ participation in public affairs, with a high degree of suspicion and mistrust. As Turner notes, when citizenship rights are extended from above, it is often the case that citizens become mere subjects instead of active “bearers of claims against society *via* the state” (Turner, 1990: 200; emphasis added). Similarly, as Manuel Chiriboga (2009) notes, one of the characteristics of the process of Correismo is the deep conviction of its leader that he alone knows what is best for the country. This leads, according to Chiriboga, to a form of rule in which “consulting and reaching agreements with social actors like the indigenous movement is regarded with distrust” (Chiriboga, 2009: <http://www.eluniverso.com/2009/01/04/1/1363/413BDA2241F54A3597857B4D5A303C56.html>). Consequently, it can be said that participation and the full realization of participatory citizenship hinges on how far or close a social movement’s or a civil society organization’s political positioning comes to Correa’s views of what is right or wrong, desirable or undesirable.

Moreover, in addition to the presence of a single charismatic leader, one of the characteristic features of Correísmo is the development of a technocratic view of politics and government (Escobar, 2010; Pachano, 2009e). This leads not only to the idea that the President and the government's technocrats know better than the rest of the population but that technical knowledge certified by university degrees is more valid than other forms of knowledge. In Escobar's words (2010: 24, 26),

Rafael Correa prizes the role of academic knowledge in illuminating social change ...this means his government is seen by some as based on urban middle sectors and that it marginalizes non-academic knowledges, such as those of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian minorities ... many indigenous organizations see Correa's government as upholding an alternative modernization based on academic knowledge, with insufficient participation of indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, and workers despite its anti-neoliberal stances.

However, the implications of Correa's technocratic views extend beyond the undervaluation of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian knowledges. A clear example, as mentioned earlier, can be found in one of the earlier drafts of the law of communication in which informal, spontaneous, citizen-journalists were effectively deemed less desirable than formally-trained journalists (Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de Comunicación, September 2009). Similarly, as mentioned before, the Council of Citizens' Participation is selected on the basis of technical, merit-based tests.

The significance of these points, I should note, is not only whether or not university titles should confer a higher degree of legitimacy to knowledge-based practices than non-academic knowledge, but also, that by virtue of its limited reach in Ecuadorian society, formal training cannot be a precursor of participation. Furthermore, the overvaluation of technical knowledge suggests the presence of a *de facto* citizenship regime in which technically trained technocrats are in better structural conditions to participate, and therefore, to fulfill their status as full citizens. In this sense, the actual (not formal) citizenship regime existing in Ecuador under Correísmo is not much different than the exclusionary citizenship regime which prevailed under neoliberalism.

In view of these issues it would be worth asking: what about citizenship? Critiques of universal citizenship based on participatory conceptions of democracy (Young, 1998), argue that democracy requires that "citizens...awake from their privatized consumerist slumbers, challenge the experts who claim the sole right to rule, and collectively take control of their lives and institutions through processes of active discussion that aim at reaching collective decisions" (Young, 1998: 403). Moreover, and perhaps more relevant for my purposes here, Young states that, "[i]n participatory democratic institutions citizens develop and exercise capacities of reasoning, discussion, and socializing that otherwise lie dormant, and they move out of their private existence to address others and face them with respect and concern for justice" (Ibid). Autonomous deliberation, active and open dialogue are therefore crucial instances in the development of a true participatory form of democracy. In view of these issues it would be possible to assert that Correísmo, while innovative and well intentioned in many respects, is characterized by a considerable democratic deficit emanating from its relationship with participation and citizenship.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion it could be said that Correísmo is doing little to dispel Robert Michels's concern that "modern organization-through its technical, sociological, and psychological processes-renders participatory democracy impracticable because it invariably results in leaders dominating followers" (Wolfe, 1985: 370). Indeed, the authoritarian and technocratic tendencies of Correísmo are preventing it from fully embracing the commendable political ideals of inclusion upon which its revolutionary spirit is promulgated. In sum, as Alberto Acosta, co-founder of Alianza País, former political ally of Correa and former President of the Constituent Assembly has noted,

[Correa] is assuming the role of the bearer of collective political will and he doesn't realize that in large part the earlier historic process is the explanation for the positive results of Correa and Alianza País... that he is there, in the presidency, thanks to the great effort made by Ecuadorian society (El Comercio, 2009: September 27th).

Nonetheless, and notwithstanding the critique developed by this paper, many of the formal political institutions developed are still praiseworthy; from the *plurinational* character given to the Ecuadorian nation-state, to the assignation of rights to nature, and the Constitution of Ecuador which is, as Zibechi (Ibid.) one of the most advanced in the world. In sum, there are many positive aspects contained in the pillars that constitute the conceptual structures of Correísmo. Notwithstanding important contradictions, I would qualify many of Correísmo's formal conceptual structures as positive and as having the potential of deepening democracy. However, to cite O'Donnell once more, Correísmo is still contending with the persistent divorce that has existed in Ecuador between formal and informal institutions in Latin America. For this reason, as Gudynas et al. (2008) have argued, there is still a notable gap between what progressive South American regimes promulgate and what they actually do.

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