

3.10. Mexico

These remarks on the media in Mexico must be viewed in the context of the democratic transition in Mexico. There is some resistance to the process of change and, of course, to the loss of privileges that were inherent with an authoritarian government where the actors involved accumulated and held power. The mass media enterprises accumulated great power under the auspices of the previously dominant party.

In spite of the obstacles, media enterprises are beginning to appear that show somewhat greater sensibility toward political diversity, which is in clear contrast to commercial television. This progress, unfortunately, is not homogenous, in either the media or the country. Today, the media has more freedom of expression and there is more plurality than in the past. Nevertheless, in the face of the new political constellation, there are now new actors and powers on the scene that are beginning to exert pressure on the media. When their particular interests are affected, the retention of advertising money and the use of organised crime can be used to intimidate the media. By now, these are beginning to pose a risk to freedom of expression in Mexico.

At the same time, the principle of legality is a fundamental theme for the media. There is no freedom at the law's margin. In Mexico the media unfortunately operate in an obsolete and inoperative legal framework.

I. General Conditions

According to the results of the General Population Census (2000), the Mexican population rose to 97,483,412; the projection for 2010, according to the growth index, is 112,2 million.¹ This substantial increase in the Mexican population will most likely create a great demand for services and infrastructure in addition to employment and education as 44 per cent of the population is below the age of 20.

According to the data gathered, the growth in population primarily took place in urban areas, i.e. in 24 large cities (cities with more than half a million inhabitants) with 43 million people in total; in 45 medium-sized cities (of 100,000 to 500,000) with almost 11 million habitants and in 295

¹ InEGI: *Agenda Estadística de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, Mexico City 2002.

small cities (15,000 to 100,000) with around 10 million inhabitants. While much of the population is concentrated in big cities, a quarter (27 million) is more widely dispersed, living in 196,550 localities of less than two thousands inhabitants.

Illiteracy and education The census also indicates an important change in the demography which is likely to affect the educational sector. Although the national illiteracy rate is 9.5 per cent, the problem of regional imbalances is highlighted by the three states (Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas) that have an illiteracy rate of over 20 per cent, while seven other cities have an illiteracy rate below 5 per cent.

This complexity adds to the linguistic diversity of 62 indigenous languages in Mexico, which can be found among more than the 12.7 million people (13 per cent of the national population) that constitute the indigenous population.²

Local media With regard to radio and television the Mexican state aims to administer the distribution of television and radio frequencies in an efficient and balanced way. However, it has not exactly kept its promise to do this since there is a clear predominance of the commercial model in few hands, which is why the model of local and community broadcasting is beginning to emerge forcefully.

TV, Radio Overall, there are 722 television channels and 1,470 radio stations in Mexico, i.e. a total of 2,192 broadcast frequencies.³ In television, 465 channels, i.e. 64 per cent, are for private and commercial use, and 257, i.e. 35 per cent, transmit cultural and educational programmes. In radio, 79 per cent, (1,164) are commercial (private) and 21 per cent (306) cultural and educational (non-commercial).

In the case of non-commercial TV, there seems to be sufficient coverage, nevertheless, 80 per cent of stations are granted to local governments. Seventy-two per cent of the cultural and educational radio broadcasts are operated by the local and federal governments. However, the local media in particular do not adapt their operation to meet educational needs and the demands for social participation that ought to be identified by the state media. Their operational policies

² Instituto Nacional Indigenista: *Programa Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Rublos Indigenas 2001-2006*, Mexico City 2002.

³ Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes: *Relación de Concesiones y Permisos*, Mexico City 2004.

have been inconsistent with each other, diverging from their objectives, making irrational use of the budget resources and providing repetitive and contradictory programming.

This has been aggravated by the scarcity of public resources given to them, on top of the fact that the public media is legally not allowed to obtain an income in any other way, which forces them to live on subsidies that not only marginalise and impoverish them but also limit their autonomy.

In the case of the restricted media such as cable TV 530 companies have registered their operations with the Industrial Chamber of Cable TV. Participation in the market is strongly linked to TELEVISIA, the main operator of electronic media with a 9 per cent share of the total market.

The press in Mexico is widely dispersed, with 21 newspapers being published in Mexico City. Of the 304 daily newspapers that are published in Mexico, 34 per cent of them are concentrated in five cities. This proliferation of newspapers cannot necessarily be interpreted as plurality and journalistic coverage, as their circulation – and this is a mystery which remains unsolved – is low. Newspaper sales are minimal; survival depends on political bargaining with the local powers or the sale of advertising space, mainly to the government. Print

Information about newspaper circulation is hard to come by in Mexico, because of the fear that advertisers would then decide not to invest in them. The biggest newspaper is *La Prensa* with a circulation of 500,000; the second most important newspapers in public opinion have an average circulation of 140,000.

In February 2003 the government published the criteria for the allocation of advertising space, asking the publishers to certify their circulation by hiring a company of their own choice, rather than responding to a social demand of many years to create an independent body that could verify copies published and sold.

The legal framework for the written press is unique because it is governed by the Law of Press that dates from 1917 and has not been updated. This law regulates the printing houses and its sanctions refer to the Penal Code of the Federation.

Media ownership	However, it is important to note that the political parties do not have their own newspapers or radio and television channels. Their main relationship is through investment in advertising during electoral periods. ⁴ In 2003, the Electoral Federal Institute (IFE) spent US\$ 1,433,694 on advertisements in the written press.
Internet media	Last but not least, the use of the Internet by the press can be seen in the many commercial and non-printed newspapers that are offered by various journalist associations, universities and social organisations. It could be assumed that the voluntary work done by many among these is due to financial limitations that prevent them from delivering better service and reaching a higher degree of diffusion. It has not been possible to obtain information about censorship from the government.
Media access	We know, thanks to the survey 'Habits of the users of the Internet in Mexico, 2004', that the average number of Internet users is about 16,995.4 million, with 49 per cent using it to read the news and 22 per cent to listen to the radio. ⁵ Given these preferences, one can assume that the number of Internet gateways will increase during the next few years. On the other hand, the coverage of information via the Internet is mostly reduced to the same news published by the written press, because in general the Internet is not widely used throughout the country; only 10 per cent of the population has Internet access.
Internet	
Print	By now we know that 43 of the 304 published newspapers are on the web, 11 of which are from Mexico City. In the case of the radio, there are only 57 stations that transmit online, 27 of which are from Mexico City.
Radio	
TV	As for cable TV, satellite and microwaves, according to data obtained from the Federal Commission of Telecommunications, 3,819,000 people have a subscription, i.e. 66.4 per cent to cable television, 26.7 per cent to satellite TV and 6.9 per cent to TV via microwaves.
Media consumption	The use of media as a source of information varies considerably among the Mexican population. Television is watched daily by 79 per cent of Mexicans. ⁶ Of the two

⁴ The PRI presidency candidates affirm that 80 per cent or US\$ 22 million of their budget is spent on media campaigns.

⁵ Aristegui, Carmen: 'Televisión – the reality increases audience', *Periódico Reforma*, Mexico City 2003.

⁶ Ibid.

<p>existing television enterprises in the country, TELEVISIA occupies first place with 46 per cent, and TV Azteca 32 per cent, although the opinion surveys show that 78 per cent consider Channel 11 and Channel 22 (cultural state TV) as very good TV channels, even if they are not the most watched. Concerning TV news, more than 60 per cent of Mexicans are reported to watch it. Television is thus used <u>very often</u> [4] as an information source.</p>	TV
<p>The same survey reports that more than 70 per cent listen to the radio every day. Regarding the news, 42 per cent get their information reportedly from listening to the radio. Radio is used <u>often</u> [3].</p>	Radio
<p>The National Survey on Culture Policy and Citizens' Habits, carried out annually by the government, illustrates the role of the media in providing information for citizens. The replies particularly stand out when asked the question 'Which medium do you use to get informed about politics?' Television came first with 60 per cent of the answers, followed by the radio with 22.1 per cent, the press with 9.6 per cent, and the verbal exchange of information with 2.2 per cent.</p>	
<p>When asked about how often they read newspapers to learn about politics, 41.7 per cent of the people polled replied 'never', which means that 41.7 per cent do not use the newspaper as a predominant source of information about policy [<u>almost never</u>: 1].</p>	Print
<p>As far as electronic media are concerned, we found a radically different answer as the citizens who access them daily represent 46.2 per cent. The Internet is thus used <u>occasionally</u> [2].</p>	Internet
<p>The political influence of the media on the formation of political opinion in Mexico is <u>highly significant</u> [4], especially with the electronic media; the public agenda is remarkably organised and defined by television and radio.</p>	Media influence on political opinion
<p>For that reason economic investment in the electronic media especially by political parties during electoral campaigns is not uncommon, nor is the use that the federal government makes of the electronic media to promote not only social campaigns but most of all the image of the government's most important employees. As an example, around US\$ 180 million have been spent on publicity by the government, 60</p>	State-owned media

per cent allocated to radio and television and 10 per cent to the press.

Currently there is no regulation that establishes criteria to maintain objectivity and distance between the government and the editorial line of their media. This has led to the government media developing in an irregular and heterogeneous way, with direct dependency on the government as well as insufficient resources.

Moreover, their decision-making mechanisms, if there are any, are formed by governmental authorities and with the exception of one radio station, the Radio de los Ciudadanos (the Radio of the Citizens) of the Mexican Radio Institute, which has a plurally constituted Broadcasting Council which influences its programming, all the other state media have neither consultative nor institutional mechanisms for social participation.

The state currently does not have any print media of its own; its information activity is handled by the news agency NOTIMEX, which provides general information on the country to the national and international press. There has been general discussion over the past few years about giving it greater autonomy to increase its credibility or even privatising it altogether.

The state maintains an ample infrastructure for electronic media that in the past has not fully realised its cultural and educational potential. The electronic media have not responded to real public policies because they have been pretending to serve governmental interests.

It is important to note that in the past two years, the role of the public media has been part of an important national debate that has developed in Mexico about the mass media and the need to update its legal framework. The public media have already engaged in this debate by demonstrating a real will to change its programming. It makes it possible to venture the opinion that they are beginning to fulfil their function since they have gained an audience and credibility.

The different types of state media are: the Mexican Radio Institute (IMER) with 20 radio stations; Radio Educación, an AM radio station and the pioneer of the state radios; and the National System of Indigenous Broadcasting, with 26 radio stations located in regions with a predominantly indigenous population, which transmit in original languages. In TV,

there are Canal 11, with the greatest prestige and audience, and 50 years experience; and Canal 22 (UHF), whose programmes are characterised as being 'high culture'. The state has other resources in the area of television, like the satellite system EDUSAT, which broadcasts educational and cultural programmes produced by the Ministry of Education, and the General Direction of Educational Television that produces television material which is sent by satellite and can then be used by other regional television broadcasters.

In local governments there are 38 radio and television stations, organised by the National Network of Educational and Cultural Broadcasters. We can say that the success of some of these media has been temporary and has depended on the will and commitment of the person who holds the director's position to advance and to establish a greater opening in the media.

Because of the predominantly commercial character of the electronic media model and because the largest coverage is provided by the private media, who for a long time were the exclusive suppliers of radio and television, the population has been socialised by the contents of dynamic and commercial formats. In this sense, the private media's influence is fundamental and much greater than the government media could exercise. There is a hegemony of private media in the market.

State-owned
media and
published
opinion

Public opinion and the public agenda are shaped by the two large private TV companies. In the past, government control over contents used to be an instrument of 'permanent negotiation' between the PRI, the then-governing party, and the owners of the private media. This changed with the democratic transition when a period of greater openness and criticism of the government and political actors (political parties and legislators) began that has sometimes even been described as irresponsible and extreme. Since then, the role of the government with regard to the media has mainly been that of witness or source of information. Thus, the relationship and behaviour of the media in general – but especially the electronic media – could be described as very critical towards the government [-2]. In the case of the printed press, there was more heterogeneity corresponding to the editorial line of each paper, and their influence instead finds its expression in political opinion. So in reality, the political class is guided by what is published in the written press.

Finally, it is also important to mention that important differences exist between the press in Mexico City (called national) and the papers produced in the rest of the country, where there is greater 'proximity' to local government. This finds its expression in particular in the authorities' existing interest in paying for advertising in the local press, a situation that allows local government to maintain, to a certain point, indirect control of newspapers' contents. In contrast, the press of Mexico City is on average much more critical of the government and more professional.

Government
press
conferences

It is not a common practice for there to be press conferences with government representatives. These take place only to provide economic information and when the government faces particular problems and want to inform the public about actions or decisions that have been controversial.

The President uses the media for special official news (from the Christmas message to his position with regard to actions of other countries that affect the image or interests of the president). President Fox promised during his campaign to maintain a weekly press conference; however, these have never been called.

In contrast, the head of the government of Mexico City, which is run by a different party from the President's, offers press conferences daily at 06.00 to which all the media are invited. It has great coverage and marks the first news of the day.

II. Legal Environment

Freedom of
expression

From the promulgation of the Mexican Constitution in 1917, freedom of expression has been guaranteed in article 6 as part of the fundamental rights of the citizens.⁷

This constitutional guarantee has been amply exerted in the past few years. Sometimes, because of the absence of legal rules or even a code of ethics, the media has tended to excesses that must be balanced with a certain maturity both as a professional and as a citizen. Nevertheless, the lack of a law that guarantees concrete mechanisms to protect

⁷ Article 6: 'the free manifestation of ideas will not be subject to any judicial or administrative inquiry, unless it infringes on moral values or the rights of third persons, causes crime or disturbs the public order. The right to information will be guaranteed by the State' (this last paragraph was added in 1977).

journalists and allow them to exercise their rights, will lead to these same rights always being subjected to the will of the authority, which is not a full guarantee.

On the other hand, the freedom of the press is also established in the Constitution in article 7.⁸ This constitutional guarantee has also been exercised in the past few years.

Media
coverage

However, the Printing Law that dates from 1917 is unworkable. In particular, its guarantees for journalists' work, rights and obligations are not included in any legal instrument, which is why the mere constitutional guarantee is insufficient.

As far as defamation is concerned, it is classified as a crime according to the Penal Code and follows, in consequence, the established judicial procedures; nevertheless, there have been very few cases where it has been applied because of the difficulty of providing evidence.

Regulation
of media
coverage

In the case of laws about access to information, important progress has been made since the Transparency and Access to the Public Information Law, which was fully implemented in June 2003. The principles that this law upholds are: the information in possession of the state is public; reserved information constitutes an exception according to clear rules established in the law; personal data should be protected, the interpretation of the law will have to favour transparency; information delivery is not conditional on motivation or justified use, nor is it required to demonstrate specific interests.

Furthermore, this law determines that the subjects forced to provide information are the state bodies and that the direct beneficiaries are the citizens. The creation of the Federal Institute of Public Information Access (IFAI), which is a plural body of the state, is of fundamental importance. Although it is not yet independent, it has the authority, according to the law – a series of rules guarantee the autonomy of its management, budget and decisions – to pressure the different government levels into respecting its

⁸ Article 7: 'The freedom to write and to publish writings on any matter must not be violated. No law or authority can establish censorship, nor demand guarantees from the authors or printers, nor to limit the freedom of the press other than by those means already imposed by the respect for privacy, moral values and public peace. In no case can the press be abused like an instrument of crime'.

decisions. One of the IFAI tasks is the settling of controversies between citizens and authorities as well as the supervision of compliance with the law.

The main users of this law within the first 18 months have been academic researchers (24 per cent), companies (23 per cent), the governmental sector (12 per cent) and the mass media (10 per cent).

In addition, the promulgation of this law has stimulated the promulgation of laws in the regions that guarantee citizens' access to information from local authorities. At present there are 14 regions that already have access laws and in 15 more they are in the process of being approved in the local congresses.

Although there is a chapter in the Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information that regulates and defines the limits of access to information in order to protect personal data, it is necessary, as is happening in the Senate, to promulgate a specific law that regulates the protection of personal data, as well as a law of archiving that allows conservation of and access to information.

With regard to the legal regulation of media coverage, there are at present no legal parameters to guarantee the coverage of the printed press, which is why the laws of the market and political profitability are what determines the existence of publishers.

In the case of electronic media there is a legal provision for the state to guarantee the service. Nevertheless, the legal framework for the electronic media is seriously obsolescent; it is regulated by the Radio and Television Law (1960), which after 40 years has stopped being a suitable instrument. This law does not permit direct censorship; it merely determines the characteristics that would not allow a programme to be broadcast. It also establishes the timetables and contents for children's programmes as well as further rules for general broadcasting, although with vague criteria.

As for censorship, media coverage is regulated by law in Mexico. However, since the Printing Law was promulgated in February 1917 and none of its articles has since been modified. Furthermore, it has no rules for establishing procedures and it contains many ambiguous concepts. The law's unworkability allows the authorities a great margin of discretion when applying it to particular cases. Another problem affecting the Printing Law is that media work does

not enjoy certain legal protections under penal law. It does not guarantee or even mention the rights and obligations of the journalists. This means that the ambiguity of the Printing Law can be used as an instrument of censorship as it lacks regulatory clarity.

The requirement for scheduled programmes to be previously classified by the authorities has been questioned by organised sectors of society. They argue that it is a kind of censorship, as it is an excuse for the exclusion of politically sensitive material.

The law prohibits the churches and political parties from having their own media; these constitute the sectors that are legally prohibited from having access to electronic media.

Furthermore, the law does not lay down conditions for being a journalist; anyone can work as a journalist without having any kind of certification or authorisation.

The Communications and Transport Ministry has the power to administer and grant frequencies for the electronic media, while the Home Secretary surveys their contents. In Mexico there is no single authority, let alone one with a democratic council, that regulates the media.

In the past five years not a single law referring to the media has been modified [no change in quality: 0]. In 1998 a proposal to update the printing law was put forward in Congress, which updated the fundamental principles that need to be incorporated. Yet, the printed press (or rather their owners) and the Inter-American Press Society (SIP) campaigned against any change to the law calling it a 'gagging law', which persuaded the deputies not to approve it.

Changes in
the past five
years

The regulation (secondary penal code) regarding radio and television was updated in October 2002. However, these modifications have not led to any democratic improvements. On the contrary, the changes abolished a few requirements placed on the private media, so exclusively benefited this sector, which is why the modification could be called insignificant for the media in general. Since 2002 an integral reform of the Federal Law of Radio and Television has been under scrutiny, which is about to be submitted for approval. However, there are already signs of pressure from the private media owners to maintain the status quo, as they have enormously benefited from the current arrangements. In addition, the absence of rules will facilitate the

incorporation of digital versions. In sum, the vacuum of legal requirements de facto allows them to pursue their own interests.

However, the quality of free media coverage has not suffered significantly [no change in quality: 0]. Furthermore, the impact of 9/11 has not had any repercussions on the Mexican media sector.

Censorship
under the
law

Mexico is undergoing a deep transformation. The traditional media try to adapt themselves to the new demands and the recent ones appear to have a fighting independent spirit. That has also brought about excesses and a kind of journalism where an interest in sensations, scandals and superficiality is becoming common practice, reflected on many front pages. In any case, the old and corrupt ways of doing journalism are on the way to extinction. Any remaining forms of censorship, would now be at an economic level (advertisers) rather than political.

Legally, censorship is not recognised as such, although it could be said that censorship mechanisms mostly consist of extra-legal agreements that favour some and marginalise others. Also, the advertising investment provided by the government has clearly worked as an informal mechanism of censorship. As there is no censorship law as such, there are no legal consequences for journalists, media companies or organisations that act against the rules.

Media
licences

In order to broadcast, the electronic media have to apply for a concession (for commercial use) or permission (for cultural or educational use without commercialisation) from the government through the Ministry of Communications and Transport. None of the authorities that give permission for publication or broadcasting are independent of the government.

The electronic media have to apply for a licence from the government through the Ministry of Communications and Transport. Reasons for not granting licences are the non-availability of frequencies, the lack of adequate financial support and a foreign nationality. The law stipulates that 'the authority is free in its judgement to decide about granting authorisation'. The authority is also under no obligation to give reasons for its decisions. In fact, the authority often refuses to grant permissions, especially when the applicant is a social organisation or university.

Journalists do not require authorisation; in the case of radio and television, they only need to be registered. The government does not hold 'public meetings' frequently but journalists who cover government business usually have logistical facilities for their work. Also, they generally receive press bulletins. In the case of Congress, journalists are allowed to attend the sessions without any restriction. Furthermore, Congress has its own cable TV channel which broadcasts the plenary sessions in their entirety and also pre-recorded sessions of some of its commissions.

Journalists'
status

Those who act in defence of the rights of journalists are mostly civil human rights organisations or networks of organisations that denounce aggression against these professionals. However, journalists do not have any particular legal resources, as their rights are not guaranteed by law.

Article 28 of the Constitution prohibits monopolies, so all laws have to comply with the prohibition. Nevertheless, in the case of private radio and television there is a virtual monopoly (in fact, it is a duopoly).

Monopolies
and cartels

This imbalance in the predominantly commercial characteristics of the media becomes more worrying given that 80 per cent of the total of commercial television channels is operated by only two companies, TELEVISA and TV Azteca. As for radio, 80 per cent of the commercial stations in the country are owned by only 15 radio companies. There are 30 groups holding radio concessions of which 10 have 70 per cent of the granted frequencies.

In the past few years there has begun to be a tendency to form overlapping media holdings, which is not prohibited in the 1960 law.

The reasons for such a monopolistic concentration are fundamentally economic although the power that these groups gain obviously allows them to negotiate 'political favours' to pursue their interests.

The government authorities generally yield to the interests of the private media, giving them real power. For example, the private media owners mobilised against attempts to modify the legal framework in which they operate, using the media to campaign against these initiatives. They threatened politicians that they would 'remove them from the media agenda', without which they would not be able to progress politically, as it is said that politicians disappear if they do

not appear in the media. They also threatened to initiate campaigns against those who dared to put their economic interests at risk.

III. Political Conditions

Coverage of
marginal
groups

The popular groups, indigenous communities, workers' organisations, social organisations and the radical left are, among others, the most isolated groups with regard to media coverage, not only when it comes to their political interests but also with regard to the presentation of their interests and demands. This is especially true for private television as these groups' interests do not generate 'ratings' and their demands are not shared by the owners of the communication companies. On the contrary, when there is a large demonstration in the streets of the city organised by some of these groups, the coverage focuses on the way it affects the traffic and the economic loss sustained, etc. There is never information about why the demonstrators are making their demands, thus generating an unfavourable view of these groups among the general public. These are thus excluded from exercising their right to freedom of expression.

One topic that has recently been the subject of public debate are social organisations which have demanded their right to express themselves by applying for permits to operate community radio stations and which have never been given an answer by the authorities. In addition to that, the legally established requirements to operate community radio stations are the same as those for the large private media companies, although the former lack financial and technological resources. Furthermore, the law prohibits the generation of income from radio stations, which excludes groups without independent financial resources from exercising their right to freedom of expression in response to community needs.

In August of 2004, Eduardo Bertoni, Special Rapporteur of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights for the Freedom of Expression, established in his observations that: 'the Mexican state, as the administrator of the radio-electric waves, would have to promote regulations that allow it to assign the radio-electric frequencies in accordance with the democratic criteria that guarantee equal opportunities to all the citizens to participate in this kind of media, because the establishment of discriminatory legal markers that are an

obstacle to access to frequencies for community radios is inadmissible’.

Only those who have the economic strength to buy ‘the machines’ can legally exert their freedom of expression in this country, because Mexico has laws that actually allow the exclusion of all others for technical and economic reasons.⁹

For that reason some of them have decided to broadcast illegally. For the past year, efforts have been made by the World Association of Community Radios (AMARC) to apply again for the authorities’ permission to broadcast legally. The main opposition to solving this issue comes from the private media owners, who pressure the government into not granting the permissions, as they do not want to share their privilege of radio communication.

The self-censorship of the newspapers’ owners is principally determined by the financial interdependence of the media with the authorities (through adverts), which is why on many occasions and especially in the regional media they avoid producing information that could be inconvenient for the authorities.

Self-censorship

These commercial conditions affect the decisions on what to publish. Because of this the media censor themselves, for example by not covering issues that could be inconvenient for their advertisers’ economic interests. Subjects like fraud in private banks or even the names and last names of the main shareholders of the banks that have been in the public debate since 1997 have never been mentioned in connection with politics as, of course, the banks constitute an important source of advertising income.

As for the journalists their self-censorship is exercised in line with that established by the company, since they do not want to put their jobs at risk. This phenomenon is less prevalent among radio stations, for example, or in large media enterprises that have alternative ways of negotiating with the authorities.

⁹ Compare this with the international standards of freedom of expression, in particular article 13 in the American Convention: ‘it is not possible to restrict the right of expression by indirect routes, such as the abuse of official or particular controls of paper for newspapers, radio-electric frequencies, or of equipment used in information dissemination or by any other directed means to cut or interrupt the communication and circulation of ideas and opinions’.

	<p>Self-censorship in the electronic media is mostly done to avoid harming the owners' interests, rather than those of the government. This is common practice for these companies when they do not want to handle a particular topic or when a politician is interviewed or mentioned in their frequent bulletins. Thus, journalists naturally opt for self-censorship rather than putting their jobs at risk.</p>
Illegal state repression	<p>On the other hand, the state no longer represents one of the main sources of the authoritarian use of power or repression. In reality market interests as well as drug trafficking have very much begun to replace it. Illegal state repression is now <u>rarely</u> used against the media.</p>
Obstacles to Internet access	<p>The state does not intervene to hinder access to the Internet; the main hurdle is the fact that not all the sectors of the population can get access to the net for economic reasons or because of illiteracy and lack of education.</p>
Changes in the past five years	<p>In recent years repression by the federal government has been reduced to such a point that it is no longer feared [<u>extreme improvement</u>: +3], which, however, is not the case in some regional areas, where such repression is still present and gets ever-more sophisticated. The situation of small media companies could thus be described as having become <u>slightly worse</u> [-1]. The attitude towards respect for freedom of expression by the government has changed; in addition society begins to play an important role in denouncing such attempts and discrediting the authority in moral terms.</p>
Government control over print media	<p>Last but not least, it needs to be pointed out that controls over production and distribution of the printed press have long been abolished.</p>

IV. Economic Pressures

State subsidies	<p>Of the US\$ 5,928,080 the federal government spent on advertisements in 2003, the main beneficiaries were large private media companies with 67 per cent, followed by the radio with 18 per cent and the printed press with 15 per cent.</p>
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The opportunities for the media to be self-sufficient through market income are minimal; only those with a long tradition and credibility, which are few, could subsist without the income generated by governmental advertising and by political parties during electoral periods. Despite the significant advertising investment by the government which

benefits the largest private media groups, little intervention has recently been noticed with regard to the information they carry and their editorial line; in general they behave very critically towards the government [-2].

V. Non-state Repression

Drug trafficking is a factor that increasingly produces self-censorship and the repression of journalists as in the past few years, especially in the north of the country, near the US border, many journalists have received threats; some have even been assassinated. These murders were evidently linked to tactics by the drug trafficking business, so that risky and sensitive information about drug trafficking activities could not be published. This kind of repression is used often.

Repression
by non-state
groups

Before the recent death of several journalists in the north of the country, the Attorney General's Office (PGR) announced that one of their lines of investigation was to target members of the Sinaloa drug cartel.¹⁰ The data indicate that the murders of journalists are related strongly to the investigations they had been doing about drug dealers. The murder of journalists has increased and it is very difficult to obtain information to solve the cases; this has generated a reaction from social organisations, who demand the authorities' immediate action. The authorities talk about commitment but the results of their actions equal zero.

Last but not least, job insecurity and above all pressures by organised crime organisations – especially drug trafficking – represent a strong aggravation [-2] with regard to non-governmental pressure.

Changes in
the past five
years

VI. Conclusions

Overall, it can be said that freedom of expression in the media has increased considerably within the last four years [+2: strong improvement].

Evaluation
of media
coverage

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation has always been supportive of the development of projects that promote and stimulate the democratisation of the media and journalist

KAF
support

¹⁰ In the first trimester of 2005, 190 executions with the typical characteristics of organised crime were carried out in 14 Mexican states. They included the executions of 17 journalists.

activity in general. It has supported public debate in Congress on fundamental issues through assistance for international conferences about the performance of the media and state reform, which have taken place for seven consecutive years. In doing so, the KAF has succeeded not only in putting certain topics on the agenda but also in making progress with the corresponding legislation.

Given the dynamic of this topic, it is particularly fundamental in Mexico to continue with the development of programmes and projects for democratic media reform. These concern, above all, training, exchanges with German journalists and advice for transformation of the public media.

Freedom of
the media:
general
situation

Major
obstacles

To sum up, the media in Mexico enjoy freedom with minor restrictions. However, the biggest obstacles to free media coverage are the lack of legal guarantees for the professional work of journalists, as well as the tendency towards a concentration of private media without real alternatives. It is also necessary to reform the corresponding regulatory authorities in order to guarantee transparent decision-making, thus reigning in their powers and any extra-legal negotiations.

Beatriz Solís Leree

Beatriz Solís Leree is professor at the department of education and communication at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Xochimilco, Mexico City.

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