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*Artículos Científicos*

## La democracia universitaria en la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas y los límites institucionales: la UADY, 1922- 1980<sup>1</sup>

*Democracy in the school of anthropological sciences and institutional  
limits: the university of yucatán, 1922-1980*

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## Resumen

El presente artículo estudia la democracia universitaria en la Universidad de Yucatán (UDY), valor cultivado en esta institución. A lo largo del tiempo las características de la democracia se fueron modificando desde la participación restringida de estudiantes hasta una apertura más amplia por medio de la votación y la elección de sus representantes para el Consejo Universitario. Al respecto, en la presente investigación se revela que la democracia también se ejerció más allá de los órganos oficiales de gobierno universitario. Los Consejos Técnicos fueron los espacios en el que cada una de las dependencias incorporaron a profesores y estudiantes para la toma de decisiones.

**Palabras clave:** escuela, estudiantes, facultad, gobierno, profesores.

## Abstract

This article studies democracy in the University of Yucatan (UDY), arguing that democracy is a value that was cultivated in the UDY. Over a period of time, the specific characteristics of democracy have changed, from a restricted student participation to a broad participation by means of voting and election of student representatives onto the University Council. This research also reveals that democracy was exercised beyond the official bodies of university governance: technical councils in each university department became the spaces within which both faculty and students were incorporated into the decision making processes.

**Keywords:** School, Students, Faculty, Governance, Faculty.

## Resumo

Este artigo estuda a democracia universitária na Universidade de Yucatan (UDY), um valor cultivado nessa instituição. Com o tempo, as características da democracia mudaram, da participação restrita dos estudantes a uma abertura mais ampla por meio do voto e da eleição de seus representantes para o Conselho Universitário. Nesse sentido, essa investigação revela que a democracia também foi exercida além dos órgãos oficiais do governo universitário. Os Conselhos Técnicos foram os espaços em que cada uma das unidades incorporou professores e alunos para a tomada de decisão.

**Palavras-chave:** escola, alunos, corpo docente, governo, professores.



And bear in mind that the entire university environment [of the University of Yucatan] is waiting, since it is the first school to function as a university democracy (Faculty of Anthropological Sciences (1973-1986), Act of the Technical Council, 4 from January 1974).

## Introduction

Currently there is an extensive literature on student movements in Latin America. Since the late eighties, Renate Marsiske (1989) has been in charge of proposing the analysis of conflicts and problems in universities. Such inquiries, practically always coordinated by Marsiske, have explored lines that have characterized these movements as a reflection of the social system or students who were instruments of the political forces for their purposes (Carvajal, 1999). The paradigmatic case is that of student movements at the University of Córdoba (Argentina). The analyzes have built the history of this institution as an always open process that pits government forces against university students. Thus, history has passed between the world of protest, strike and university closure: a dead end fight for the defense of the values of the 1918 university reform: co-government, autonomy and democracy (Marsiske, 2006; Vera , 2006). In general, the investigations suggest the existence of two groups in conflict: students and authorities (university or political).

In this regard, it is worth indicating that this vision that has been built on the history of universities and their students has been focused from sociology and the history of education. In other words, in a few cases, attempts have been made to look at these student movements beyond their sphere of influence, so that education and university, national and economic politics have become blurred. In addition, these narratives have been raised, with rare exceptions (Pronko, 2006), from the so-called national universities, with which peripheral, state or provincial universities have been excluded. Therefore, this document aims



to show that state or provincial universities have their own history within this broad framework of modernizing universities.

Our case study is the Universidad Nacional del Sureste de México (UNSM) or Universidad de Yucatán (UDY), which has significant relevance for the following reasons: it was founded just four years after the student movements in Córdoba (Argentina) in the context of the post-revolutionary Mexican government - a reference among students in Latin America (Portantiero, 1978, Yankelevich, 2018) -, which had the difficult task of materializing the postulates of the 1917 Constitution. Therefore, it can be presumed that the Yucatecans They saw the birth of this institution as the cornerstone of progress (center of cultivation of rationalism, positivism and a new era for the Mexican nation and the universities). Given this reality, a question arises: how did the UNSM assume the values of the university reform promoted in Córdoba, Argentina?

On the other hand, the foundation of the UNSM was carried out in the midst of a local post-revolutionary government considered as socialist (Felipe Carrillo Puerto), with an inclusive and democratic discourse, which received a strong boost from the national government represented in the person of José Vasconcelos , who professed the idea that democracy did not imply autonomy. In fact, he was in favor of the intervention of the political government to establish the university's agenda, before which the following questions can be asked: what meaning did democracy acquire in the UNSM? And how were the governing bodies integrated into the university in Yucatan? In other words, what was the role of teachers and students in university government?

In the sixties and seventies, youth became visible claiming their place in society. The economic, demographic and social changes that were experienced in those times favored this phenomenon. In developed countries, this youth - which generated new cultural and consumption patterns - kept pace with the growing demand for spaces for vocational training. These young people "believed that things could be different and better, even if they did not know exactly how." Many of the claims culminated in the student movements that traveled the world in those decades (Hobsbawm, 1998; Revueltas, 1998). In Mexico, the student repression of 1968 gave way to a government policy that sought conciliation and "democratic openness" to attract university students (Sánchez, 2019).

In Yucatan, after approximately a century after henequen production became the most important economic activity, for the 1960s and 1970s it entered into an economic crisis



(Villanueva, 1985), to which the state government responded with policies of financial diversification, with which the industrialization process began. In the field of university education, the crisis of henequen cultivation and diversification policies joined the process of massification of university studies, hence the enrollment of the University of Yucatan (UDY) experienced unprecedented growth.

In the 1970s, the UDY offered professionalization courses in five faculties and nine schools (Cobá, 2019; Universidad de Yucatán, 1977). As for the university government, in the UDY the dispute for autonomy flourished until the eighties of the last century. According to Villaseñor (1988), everything seems to indicate that the desired autonomy became a “struggle of political-governmental and political-university bureaucracies” (pp. 334-335), rather than a dispute over academic values.

Contrary to this opinion, and according to a historical synthesis prepared under the care of the UDY, the institution practiced democratic values in the government of the university. Between 1935 and 1936, at the hands of the rector Jesús Amaro Gamboa, the UDY incorporated the “representatives of students and teachers from each of the schools and faculties into the university council, beginning a process of democratization” (Universidad de Yucatán, 1977, pp. 35-36), with which some questions arise: what were the problems posed to the UDY by the process of university massification and the emergence of young people who demanded university studies? Were these mechanisms of participation —election of representatives to the University Council - of students in the university government sufficient for the demands of the youth of the sixties and seventies? And did the student movement of '68 and the national government's policies of reaching out to young students have repercussions on the UDY university government?

The memory and history of Yucatecan students indicates that it was a sector of society in which the movement of '68 had little impact. According to Echeverría (1998), “among them there is not the slightest concern, not even the idea of conforming some nucleus that allows them to collectively discuss matters that are their responsibility as university students” (p. 24). In fact, only after the murder of Efraín Calderón Lara (1974) - a university student who advised the formation of independent unions - did an awakening arise from Yucatecan university students (Montalvo, 2014, pp. 174-175).

The present work, therefore, aims to analyze the decision-making process in a faculty that was founded at that time (1970): the School of Anthropological Sciences, better known



as the School of Anthropology. The importance of this case study lies in the fact that it experienced the harshest moments of the demand for university co-government and democracy, which implied the idea that students and teachers had the right to decide the government of their dependency.

Our hypothesis points to the fact that democracy as a value in university government took on various rhythms and nuances, and that unlike other studies that maintain that the democratic opening of the national government (1970) was a simple mechanism for co-opting student leaders (Sánchez, 2019), the history of the UDY School of Anthropology shows that the students assumed democratic practices, so it is in the last link of command that you have to look at it; that is, not in university discourse, but in daily practice.

The exhibition begins with a tour to characterize university government; from the review of university regulations we reconstruct the way in which the UDY government is integrated. Then we review our case study to show how the students of the School of Anthropology made use of democracy to govern that faculty. The central argument is that the UDY had mechanisms that imposed limits on democratic practice, not exclusive to the Yucatecan university, but to the university world. This means that public universities have tools to decrease the participation of teachers and students in the government of the institution.

## Method

The discipline that studies the "recent" historical processes calls itself the history of the present time. One of the most important characteristics of this is found in the difference with traditional history, which studies processes "distant" in time. This means that in the first one the subjects "would be at the same time actors, producers of interpretations-representations and public". This, however, has served to question its viability due to the lack of current sources (often oral) and because it is considered an ongoing process and subjective analysis (Santiago and Cejudo, 2018). Even so, in the Mexican case, one of the conjunctures that would give way to the history of the present would be the student movement of 1968.

In this work, two types of sources have been used: traditional historical sources (documents) and oral history as a complementary source (Garay, 2018). In both cases they have been subjected to rigorous criticism, particularly with oral history, with the aim of



establishing the truth of the facts. In the words of Sauvage (1998), in oral testimonies, as a method of obtaining information for the writing of history, both the historian (the one who knows) and the interviewee (the one who has the experience) introduce a set of subjectivities that it creates an atmosphere that can help to clarify the tracks or to muddle them. So a relationship of distance and proximity must be assumed between both characters. The first condition is intended to allow the interviewee "to read the past in full freedom", and the second "to ensure that there is a climate of confidence necessary to the true word."

The method used was a semi-structured interview. Although it is true that part of the story we know because we were actors in the process or because we lived with its actors, the truth is that reading the written documentation - consulted before the interviews - has served to take advantage of oral history as a means to build our source based on a problem (Aceves, 2017; Chinchilla, 2017).

As for the written sources, the legal ones and those of the study community itself can be mentioned. In the first case we refer to university legislation, documentation with which we reconstruct the process of university government to look at its transformations over time. The second were the minutes books of the first University Council and the Technical Council of the School of Anthropological Sciences. These pieces have been fundamental because they were built in the daily life of university institutions, so that they serve to know the opinion of the actors, some of whom were later interviewed. This way of proceeding led us to combine the written source with the oral one.

## Results

### **The UDY government: university democracy**

The founding decree of 1922 of the UNSM established a collegiate body (the University Council) for the government, which was made up of the rector (as representative of the state government), a representative of the federal government, the directors of each of the faculties and the secretary general. In addition, the directors of the schools (other than faculties) and a representative of the students would have a seat on the University Council (the latter would only attend with an informative voice) (Bulletin of the National University of Southeast, 1922), since they did not have the right to vote on board decisions. The first University Council was made up of the following people:



**Tabla 1.** Consejo Universitario, 1922

Eduardo Urzaiz	Rector (representante del gobierno estatal)
José de la Luz Mena	Representante del gobierno federal
Bernardino Enríquez	Director de la Facultad de Medicina y Farmacia
José Castillo Torres	Director de la Facultad de Jurisprudencia
Manuel Amábilis	Director de la Facultad de Ingeniería
David Vivas	Secretario general
Conrado Menéndez Mena	Escuela Preparatoria
Florinda Batista	Escuela Normal Mixta
Filiberto Romero	Escuela de Música
Alfonso Cardone	Escuela de Bellas Artes
Max Peniche Vallado	Representante de los estudiantes

Fuente: *Boletín de la Universidad Nacional de Sureste*, 1922 (pp. 6-8)

According to the previous table (Table 1), only half of the individuals that made it up would intervene in the decisions of the council (with the notable absence of student representatives). In the absence of the student representative, on March 1 the University Council met to constitute itself; Immediately afterwards they agreed to "direct an official letter to the Yucatan Student Federation to invite it to designate the person to represent the students of the schools that depend on the university." But the issue of the appointment of the student representative opened the debate on whether that federation controlled "the majority of the students," that is, their ability to be representative. The solution was to invite the other student societies to also propose candidates so that later "the students were invited to the election of their representative".

In this way, the Federation, the Jurisprudence Students Circle, the Minerva Society, the Yucatan Students Circle, the Beethoven Student Society, the Fine Arts Students Circle and the Medicine Students Circle nominated their respective candidates and the University fixed the time and place for the election. Voting would be in an assembly that would gather students to name their representative. The elected candidate was Max Peniche Vallado (Navarro, 2015).



As can be inferred, at first, the university authorities had left the appointment of their representative to the students, but by expanding the student demos to all the corporations belonging to or incorporated into the university, they not only made it more democratic, rather, they attracted and controlled the electoral process, since it set the precedent to establish the rules of the game.

In addition to this, and outside the case of the appointment of the student representative, we can see that none of the members of the first council obtained their position by voting, since all were appointed (including the directors of the faculties). Instead, the student representative was elected, although his weight in decision-making was limited, since his character was merely consultative.

In addition to this, it is worth commenting that article 6 of the founding decree was based on a clear fact, since the UNSM had a nature that distinguished it from its precedents: that is, from the Literary University, the University Civil College and the Literary Institute. In the first case, the government had a scent of an old regime; Although it was a collegiate government (cloister of doctors), it included personalities from the high clergy and secular doctors (doctors of law and medicine), excluding students.

On the other hand, although the ecclesiastical hierarchy was excluded from the government at the University Civil College and the Literary Institute, they were under the scrutiny of the state government; Even the organization of the curriculum was sanctioned by the local legislature (Castillo, Domínguez and Serrano, 2017). Unlike these, as of 1922, the state government deposited in the UNSM (headed by the council) the professional, preparatory and normal education, "limiting itself from now on giving all its moral and material support". Given this unprecedented fact, article six recognized that "for this first and only time, and while establishing university practices, the rector of the University and the directors of each of the faculties that comprise them" would be appointed by the state government (Bulletin of the National University of Southeast, 1922, pp. 6-7). Without a doubt, unprecedented practices were inaugurated that needed to be regulated and that would be established by the University Council. A university inspired by new foundations and ideals:



The National University of the Southeast, organized in accordance with a plan inspired by the ideals and trends of this struggling and reformist era, has an essentially democratic character and will fulfill its high educational mission as a social function is exercised; it opened its doors to everyone and abolished the old scholastic dogmas and the swollen classical forms whose sterility has been confirmed by time, since they have only served to form contemplative beings, who like eastern saints, consume their lives in the dense mists of mystical ecstasy ruminating slowly the enervating haxis of dreams of impossible realization (*Boletín de la Universidad Nacional de Sureste*, 1922, p. 11).

From the previous quote we can establish the assumption that democracy understood the access to the university of the entire population, without distinction of class, and the approach of the university to social problems, that is, a university with a social dimension, such as it was raised by the national government. As for democracy as a government, it was understood as collegial decision-making (University Council) and the monopoly of the power of this authority in the organization and administration of professional studies. Undoubtedly, the university was inspired, in some way, by the reforms of the Argentine university and its rejection of religious dogmas in teaching, but also by the ideas of Vasconcelos and his national university policy, since university democracy did not exclude to the representatives of the State, since - as Vasconcelos argued - the intervention of the government was of utmost importance to link the university with the social needs to train professionals who were interested in the good of the nation, and not in personal affairs (Fell, 2009; Vera, 2006).

In fact, these UNSM characteristics were praised by Argentine reformist student leaders Alfredo Palacios and Alfredo Alberti when they visited Yucatan: Alberti “spoke [in Yucatan] of the Argentine university revolution, in which students fought for the reforms he has found implanted in the Southeast University”, that is, a secular and democratic Yucatecan University, but with limited co-government (Land. Organ of the Central League of Resistance, 1923/2011, p. 28). But what are the mechanisms to integrate this democratic government that involves the participation of the members of the university community (professors and students)?

The 1942 statute sheds light on the characteristics of the democratic university government, and introduces substantial transformations. The *Orbe* magazine, in its second



period, greeted the university students by making an apology for the new stage of their life, and remembering that the university should not be reduced to "being the seedbed of educated men", but should be linked to the "resolution of the economic, political and social problems of the region ", without forgetting the foundations on which it was founded: "a very free and democratic philosophy ". These statements are understandable in the framework of the industrialization process that was promoted by the national government (De la Peña and Aguirre, 2006). However, perhaps a somewhat late transformation - in the case of the Michoacana University, closer to Lázaro Cárdenas - had to do with the rethinking of its functions and practices of internal government (Gutiérrez, 2018) to respond to Cardenista policy.

Now, returning to the analysis of the statute of the UDY, the democratic government of the university was defined in article 7. The supreme authority, but not legislative, was in the hands of the University Council. The members of the University Council and the form of appointment changed significantly with respect to 1922. First, the members of the council were in charge of appointing - by means of absolute voting and secret scrutiny - its president: the rector. In addition, the rector stopped being the representative of the state government within the council, and became the legal representative of the university.

The appointment of the other members also changed. In the case of the directors of faculties, preparatory school and general secretary, their appointments, as proposed by the rector, were in the hands of the council. But the most evident sign of a democratic process is found in the appointment of the representatives of teachers and students within the council, since these would be elected by their peers (all of the above would have a voice and vote in the council's resolutions). Unlike the previous ones, the treasurer and the directors of the other departments would have "a seat on the council, with an informative voice." The sample of the democratic exercise of this corporation perhaps is in the decision making: "The resolutions of the council will be taken with an absolute majority of votes of the directors present; and in the event of a tie, the rector will decide with the vote that he had previously cast ", that is, the decisions were made by majority vote (Orbe, 1942, p. 13). In the following table we show the members of the council in accordance with the statutes of 1942 and 1947.



**Tabla 2.** Consejo Universitario de la Universidad de Yucatán, 1942 y 1947

			Director		Consejero maestro		Consejero alumno	
	1942	1947	1942	1947	1942	1947	1942	1947
Rector	1	1						
Secretario general	1	1						
Facultad de Jurisprudencia			1	1	1	1	1	1
Facultad de Medicina			1	1	1	1	1	1
Facultad de Ingeniería			1	1	1	1	1	1
Faculta de Química			1	1	1	1	1	1
Facultad de Odontología			1	1	1	1	1	1
Escuela Preparatoria			1	1	1	1	1	1
Instituto de Extensión Universitaria (1942)			1		1		1	
Escuela Preparatoria nocturna (1947)				1		1		1
Totales	2	2	7	7	7	7	7	7
Porcentajes	10 %	10 %	30 %	30 %	30 %	30 %	30 %	30 %

Fuente: *Orbe*, 1942 (p. 13) y UDY, 1948 (p. 5)

As can be seen in Table 2, the composition of this collegiate government body had equal representation by faculty or school. Another very important feature is the disappearance of the representative of the federal government. In addition, both the rector and the directors were Mexican professors who are members of the UDY community, which is why we are facing a case of over-representation of professors on the University Council, since only a third of the advisers were students.

The new statute of 1947 did not introduce substantial changes. As can be seen, the number of members of the University Council established by the statute of 1947 was similar to that of 1942; the difference is in the exclusion of the University Extension Institute, which made the council a governing body made up of representatives of schools and faculties.

We have located the regulations of the university council that allow us to draw the general lines of the organization and operation of this body. We consider important the characteristics of electoral processes as the sign of democracy. In the case of professors, they would have to be professors from the same faculty and be elected by their representatives. On the other hand, the representative of the students of faculties and schools would have to be a regular student, not be an employee of the university and elected by majority vote. The

electoral process would be headed by the council, who would appoint a representative from within it and from outside the faculty. The objective was to guarantee the absolute legality of the act. The council would convene teachers and students at least a week in advance. The "assembly members [meeting on the appointed day] will freely designate a discussion board made up of a president and secretary." The representative of the teachers of said faculty was the one who obtained a majority of votes. Said election would be validated by the board of directors and the representative of the council (Universidad de Yucatán, 1948, 22). The regulation decisively excluded any "teaching, student or mixed group" from the process of choosing teacher and student advisers, thus breaking with the 1922 rules. Without a doubt, guaranteeing the freedom of the individual and the exclusion of teachers' corporations and students is the hallmark of this democratic voting exercise for the election of representatives, which may have had negative effects on the consolidation of student groups. In spite of everything, as we have indicated, this organization endowed the University Council with the character of a representative body of teachers and students; and most importantly, it gave way to more open democratic practices within schools and colleges.

Now, regarding the operation of the council, the regulation established that for the sessions and their resolutions to be valid, the assistance of two thirds of the council was required, as well as the rector, the general secretary, three directors of faculties or schools, a teacher and a student (Universidad de Yucatán, 1948). In other words, for there to be a quorum, at least seven members had to be present; however, the rector and secretary general were always planted among them (in both cases, the latter's accidental faults could be covered). Therefore, neither the professors of the faculties nor the students by themselves or in agreement could form a council. In addition, neither in the case of the faculty nor the students, as independent bodies, could they take any resolution, because according to the regulations, these "will be taken by an absolute majority of the directors present; and in the event of a tie, the rector will decide according to the vote that he had previously cast".

According to the figures in the table above, the representatives of teachers and students constitute the same proportion: 30%. Consequently, the members of the council who obtained their place in it, through voting, would necessarily have to reach agreements, but even so, they would have to negotiate with the highest authorities to bring together two-thirds, since they did not they were qualified majority. In fact, only two representatives emanating from these electoral processes (a teacher and a student) were required to meet. So



far the characteristics of the university government. But how were the faculties governed within them? Was democracy exercised?

## Discussion

### **The Technical Council and the democratic government in the School of Anthropological Sciences**

The Technical Councils in the faculties were the institutional spaces that gave space to democratic decision-making ideas, since they were the collegiate governing bodies in the faculties. We know little about them, but the regulations of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry of 1948 can help us to outline their characteristics. In accordance with the regulations of said faculties (University of Yucatan, 1948), a collegiate corporation that was formed by the director, the secretary, the master representative of the faculty before the University Council and four professors. It is worth clarifying: in the Faculty of Medicine, the teacher representatives were the product of an election by the teachers' board, while in the Faculty of Dentistry, their appointment was the responsibility of the director; no doubt there were different practices in each of them.

It is important to note that on those same dates the regulations of the faculties of Engineering, Jurisprudence and Chemistry were sanctioned, where they did not join these collegiate bodies. Surely, more jealous of the university regulations, the faculties adhered to the statutes that did not contemplate said governing bodies. But, in practice, the executive authority and president of the university council - that is, the rector - recognized these collegiate bodies; This explains why this guiding body had among its obligations "to study and [issue an opinion on] projects or initiatives presented to it by the rector, the principal, the teachers and the students". Let us consider that said regulations were aimed at regulating collegial decision-making practices that were part of the daily life of these faculties; practices that although the statute did not sanction, the rector, the directors and the students used as a decision-making body.

On the other hand, these Technical Councils were responsible for formulating draft regulations, studying study plans and programs, although they could not establish communication by themselves with the supreme bodies of the university government, since the draft regulations and their opinions to the study programs would be submitted to the



University Council through the director of the faculty; in other words, as advisory bodies they were not resolute. In the case of the Faculty of Medicine, it enjoyed a certain executive authority, since one of its powers was to determine the extraordinary professors and to ensure that the professors complied with the requirements established by the faculty regulations.

Those governing bodies were initially formed with teachers through an elective process. However, in the context of student mobilizations against authoritarianism in teaching and in demand of greater participation in the formation of the curriculum, in countries such as the United States (Berkeley, 1964), France and Mexico (1968), among others (Revueltas, 1998), a student who served as president of the Circle of the UDY Faculty of Medicine and the representative of the students of that faculty before the University Council demanded to join the Technical Council to participate in decision-making. This initiative was approved and endorsed interim by its members, pending the approval of the University Council, instructing the director to endorse the proposal as a member of said university body (Faculty of Medicine [1965-1973], minutes of January 12, 1968). In this context, the School of Anthropology was founded.

In the first years of operation of the School of Anthropological Sciences we found certain practices that are framed within the democratic tradition that guided decision-making, which were expressed in the speeches of the authorities and in the interpretation of academic actors of the school. It should be noted that the school was born as the first space for the training of social scientists to meet regional needs, under the influence of prestigious national schools (such as the National School of Anthropology and History and the Universidad Veracruzana), which allowed teachers like Andrés Medina and Andrés Fábregas offered courses and seminars that gave the School of Anthropology a particular stamp. It is important to highlight that the presence of these specialists is explained by the shortage of professionals trained in the social sciences in the state. In this context, the Technical Council became a key figure, since - as we have seen - it could determine the extraordinary hiring of teachers to teach the courses, but this governing body took on certain nuances in the governance of the school.

We have not found the regulations that help us to reconstruct the characteristics of this collegiate body, although we have obtained information that allows us to establish the general lines of how it was practiced. As in the case of the Technical Council of the Faculties of Medicine and Chemistry, this body was made up of the director, the secretary, the



professors and the students. However, in the case of the School of Anthropology (as it was called on a daily basis) the number of representatives expanded: at the beginning, elections were made to appoint teacher and student representatives for each school year; then, due to the growth of the student population, one student was appointed for each group, so that the representation was practically equal (Santiago, Magaña and Rodríguez, 2015). Even so, in practice the council was an open body, since visiting professors were invited to its meetings and it was open to all students, despite the fact that only the representatives who had obtained their appointments by signing the minutes signed the minutes. voting (interview with L. Vázquez, February 6, 2019). In the following table we can see the members of the Technical Council of the late 1970s.

**Tabla 3.** Integrantes del Consejo Técnico de la Escuela de Antropología, 1979

Salvador Rodríguez Losa	Director
Alfredo Barrera Rubio	Secretario
Iván Vallado	Representante de alumnos de primer año A
Guadalupe Cámara	Representante de alumnos de primer año B
Federico Castro	Representante de alumnos de segundo año A
Iván Franco	Representante de alumnos de segundo año B
Georgina Rosado	Representante de alumnos de tercer año A
Lourdes Rejón	Representante de alumnos de cuarto año Antropología Social
Carlos Bojórquez	Consejero maestro
Patricia Fortuny	Representante de maestro de primer año
José Tec Poot	Representante maestro de segundo año
Luis Amílcar Vázquez Pasos	Representante de maestro de tercer año

Fuente: Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas (1973-1986). Acta del Consejo Técnico, 18 de diciembre de 1973

Although the number of members of the Technical Council of the faculty should lean in favor of the professors due to the presence of the director, the secretary and the master advisor, in practice the students gained strength within this representative body and were a fundamental part in decision making, as we can see in the previous table. In fact, of those attending the session in the late 1970s, half were students (Table 3). Several of the teachers had work commitments in other institutions that did not allow them to attend the meetings, causing an imbalance in representation. A matter that was not minor, especially since the votes to make agreements were nominal, which denotes a horizontal organization. Let's look at a paradigmatic case that shows us the strength that a student-dominated Technical Council acquired.



On December 18, 1973, a commission appointed by the Technical Council went to meet with the rector to ask him to manage the transfer of the premises occupied by the School of Anthropological Sciences to the University and to report "on the restructuring of the technical council of the school, since that the technical advice did not work". It is important to highlight that the Technical Council claimed powers that were not its responsibility. Firstly, he had no powers to communicate with the rector and, secondly - and more importantly - he had convened a general assembly that agreed to appoint a commission to expose the above problems to the rector. We can assume that this general assembly gathered all the students and by nominal vote decided the steps to follow. This outburst of authority upset the director of the school, as it usurped his functions. At that meeting held on the morning of December 18, when the commission arrived to meet with the rector, he found Alfredo Barrera Vázquez, the school's director, present, who upon hearing the last reason for the meeting was displeased, so "He verbally resigned from his post as director of the School of Anthropological Sciences." An issue that remained unresolved (Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas [1973-1986], Acta del Consejo Técnico, 18 de diciembre de 1973).

That same day, at six fifteen in the afternoon, the Technical Council strengthened and met in the school building and discussed the "possibility of asking Barrera Vázquez for his written resignation." In addition, they addressed the need to elaborate the school regulations within the framework of the university statute. They undoubtedly sought to formalize the government practices they were exercising with rules. On the Day of the Holy Innocents, the Technical Council met to discuss the issue of possession of the building, a meeting attended by members of the defunct Institute for Fundamental Research in Social Sciences in Yucatan AC. Some of the members of this institute were Barrera Vázquez, Víctor Arjona Barbosa and Antonia Jiménez Trava. It should be noted that the first did not appear as the director of the school, so we can presume that his resignation was a fact, while Arjona Barbosa was secretary of the School. At that meeting, he read the minutes of the last session of the institute in which his disappearance was established. At the end, the Technical Council asked him to resign as secretary of the school for not "attending the council meeting, especially during these times when the school has serious problems to solve and needs people interested in them", request that I agree. With this act, the Technical Council left the school headless, since the highest authorities - director and secretary - had resigned their positions (Faculty of Anthropological Sciences (1973-1986), Act of the Technical Council, December 28, 1973).



Barrera Vázquez's resignation contains a matter of utmost importance. It must be remembered that the School of Anthropology was born at the time when young people demanded to be part of the design of the curriculum and of a national government that preached "democratic opening". Those early generations of students strongly believed that texts of Marxism were lacking in the school's curriculum, but Barrera Vázquez - whom they considered a conservative - opposed this idea (interview with L. Vázquez, February 6 2019). We can consider that the resignation of Barrera Vázquez opened the door for this type of texts to be introduced in teaching and, above all, for the Technical Council with students and teachers to obtain interference in the formation of the curriculum. An example of this was that some years later, subjects such as Materialism and Dialectical Logic, and Historical Materialism were included in the study plan (Faculty of Anthropological Sciences [1973-1986], Act of the Technical Council, September 5, 1977). In short, the young students who participated in this process achieved part of their goals.

Now, regarding the problem of the appointment of the new director, at the session of January 2, 1974, the Technical Council assumed these functions, so it proceeded to prepare the budget for that year. In said projection, an amount was included for the future director with the argument that it could come from within the republic, for which a commission made up of Salvador Rodríguez Losa, Luis Vázquez and Alfredo Barrera Rubio was appointed, who had to present the rector the draft budget. On the morning of January 4, in the interview with the rector, the latter refused to receive the budget and to give them a copy of the previous one, arguing that they lacked powers that were only the responsibility of the director. The rector's comment was used to address the problem of the director's resignation.

Everything seems to indicate that at this point the rector took for granted the resignation of the director who had obtained the Technical Council, for this "reason made it clear the urgency that on Monday the school should have a director, especially for the administrative issues of the beginning of the month, and remembering that he [the rector] had the power to name him, he proposed to C. Salvador Rodríguez Losa. This rejected the proposal arguing his personal reasons, which the rector accepted. Behind this personal decision, several reasons were hidden. On the one hand, there was a rumor that Rodríguez Losa had orchestrated the director's resignation, so that if he accepted that position he would confirm the suspicions (interview with M. Uc, January 17, 2018). On the other hand, we can argue that Rodríguez Losa rejected the offer because it involved taking a unilateral decision,



outside the Technical Council, which at that time was attributed the powers of the highest authority of the school. Therefore, and consistent with democratic practice, he hoped to reach the Technical Council so that, as a governing body, it would be decided what to do, since the task entrusted to the commission was not the appointment of the director.

On the afternoon of January 4 the council met to hear the commission's report. In the case of the director, it was agreed that on Saturday the candidates for the interim positions of director and secretary would be presented to the rector. Thus, the appointment at a general assembly of those who would permanently fill those vacancies was pending. The Technical Council assumed all the assumptions behind the idea of appointing the new authorities in a "democratic" and horizontal general assembly, since there would be no difference between the vote of a teacher and a student. It should be borne in mind that the facts of the resignation of the director and the secretary were presented in the context of the December holiday period, so under the assumption that all the members who participated in the assembly would vote to appoint the director, they decided to raise awareness among the Students of the problem they faced:

Then the agreement was made to inform the students by means of a mimeographed flyer that would summarize the sequence of the previous events that occurred, and a commission was appointed to prepare said flyer, formed by C. Cynthia Gutiérrez Martínez, C. Luis Vázquez and C. Leonel Cabrera. It was also agreed that the assembly to vote on this agreement [the appointments] would take place on Tuesday, the 8th of this month at 4 p.m. (Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas [1973-1986], Acta del Consejo Técnico, 4 de enero de 1974).

The agreements to appoint the principal and the secretary were concluded at meetings of the Technical Council and at round tables made up of teachers and students. In these two possibilities for choosing the director were discussed: on the one hand, it was proposed that the director be local, while on the other hand it was estimated that it could have its origin in an "institution within the republic". After the discussions in which arguments were presented in favor and against both proposals, the General Assembly, "highest internal authority of the school", met to appoint the principal. That assembly agreed to elect Celinda Gómez Navarrete as director and, on the latter's proposal, Rodríguez Losa as secretary (Santiago et al., 2105). This General Assembly emulated those practiced by French students and from



other regions of the country, with a horizontal organization that erased the differences, such as the committees of struggle of 1968, where decisions were made collectively and in assemblies.

## Conclusions

The National University of Southeast Mexico was born at a key juncture for both universities and the Mexican nation, hence its design had to meet the demands of modern universities (secular, democratic and co-government). This, in addition, faced the challenge of harboring within it the precepts of the Revolution and the Constitution of 1917, so that its organization of government adjusted to these requirements, although with certain characteristics that make it unique. In other words, the University Council, as the highest authority and made up of directors, teachers and students, gave it the qualities of a democratic body, despite the fact that such democracy was characterized as a process of change and continuity, and not of rupture.

On the one hand, the integration of students into the council by means of an election was an important sign of democracy, although it is worth noting that their participation only as an "informative voice" affected their active participation in decision-making. In addition, the other members of the council were appointed by the same body, as proposed by the rector. In these terms, without a doubt, the University Council was not a body designed with a balance in representation, since young people were considered with little decision-making capacity. Therefore, we would have to wait until the statutes of the 1940s to observe more significant changes.

One of them was the expansion of the representation of teachers and students whose appointment did not depend on the council or the rector, but on a choice of their peers in each of the schools and faculties. In this way the democratic process was expanded, although it was transferred to other areas: faculties and schools. Although it is true that the University Council preserved democratic practices - such as collegiate decisions, where the majority vote was the mechanism for deciding - it also integrated mechanisms that reduced the capacity of teachers and students in decision-making. The sample is the way to integrate the quorum, the appointment of directors according to the proposal of the rector and the casting



vote that was deposited in him. In short, democracy walked between changes and continuities.

This practice of transferring democracy to schools and faculties generated new decision-making mechanisms. The Technical Councils - some integrated by election and others by appointment of the director - became spaces where collegial decisions on local issues were common practice. Therefore, the curriculum, the academic load, the situations of indiscipline, among others, remained in the hands of the representation. Although this space was born as a monopoly of the teachers - in the heat of the student movements in the sixties and seventies - the UDY students claimed their place in this space, which was consolidated, although it opened a box from pandora. The example is the democratic practices of the School of Anthropology.

The integration and performance of the school's Technical Council show that university students have always been linked to debates about their role in dealing with social problems and the university's work - since the University Reform of Córdoba, Argentina (1918), until the student movements of the second half of the 20th century. On the one hand, although the Technical Council was made up of professors and students, the way of fixing the number of representatives shifted the balance towards the latter, also introduced practices of horizontal democracy, since the vote was nominal, without imposing voting quality. In this way, students acquired the ability to speak on internal issues such as the curriculum, the distribution of academic burdens and the hiring of teachers, aspects to which the student movements always aspired. In fact, his powers were expanded by being able to participate in the appointment of director. Facing this challenge was quite a challenge for the highest university authorities because the appointment of the directors was in the hands of the University Council as proposed by the rector. This, in other words, constituted a head-on collision.

To understand the cunning of students and teachers, we have to frame it in the process of "democratic opening" that the country was going through as a result of the student movements of 1968, hence the students had a certain "permissiveness". Perhaps for this reason the matter was not directly assumed by the Technical Council, but was transferred to the general assembly, an unknown space in the democratic practices of the UDY, with the participation of the entire community of the School of Anthropological Sciences. In this place - and by show of hands (in a horizontal democracy) - the new director was appointed.



Studies are lacking to show us what was the practice for the appointment of principals, because this unprecedented fact had undermined the attribution of the rector to propose the appointment of principals, becoming a channel to communicate to the University Council the decision of the community of each school or faculty. Perhaps this is why these Technical Councils disappeared from the UDY. In short, and between changes and continuities, democracy has been present in the UDY, and history shows us that its privileged place has been the school or faculty.

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