

Practices of Resistance in Zapatista Politics

By

Roman Joerger  
B.A., Mount Allison University, 1995

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Sociology

© Roman Joerger, 2004  
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy  
or  
other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisor: Dr. Rennie Warburton

## ABSTRACT

The Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico has captured global attention and generated a worldwide support network. As an example of innovative contentious political practice, the Zapatistas maintain an important position in the politics of resistance and collective action. Analyses of the Zapatistas generally focus on *why* the uprising took place. This thesis asks *how* certain practices enabled the Zapatistas' processes of mobilization and collective action. Following McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's (2001) analysis of mechanisms that 'transform' given social settings into sites from which collective action emerges, this thesis examines three crucial practices embedded in complex contextual conditions that have altered relations for the Zapatistas. These practices are the accessing and mobilizing of local grassroots organization in Chiapas, framing, and the dissemination of their messages through information technologies, particularly the Internet. It is found that the Zapatistas' mobilization of collective action depended on the strategic employment of combined preexisting elements.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Abstract.....</b>	ii
----------------------	----

<b>Contents.....</b>	iii
----------------------	-----

<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	v
-----------------------------	---

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

Introduction.....	1
The Zapatistas.....	2
Beginnings.....	5

### **Chapter Two: Zapatista Literature Review, Social Movement Theory and Embedded Practices**

The Existing Literature on the Zapatistas.....	11
Social Movement Theory and Causal Mechanisms.....	15
The Contextual Conditions.....	20
Mechanisms/Practices.....	21

### **Chapter Three: Accessing and Mobilizing Grassroots Organizations in Chiapas**

Introduction.....	24
History of Peasant Organizations.....	25
Religious Organization.....	28
The First Indigenous Congress of 1974.....	30
Peasant Organizations post-1974.....	32
Growing Frustration and Dissatisfaction.....	37
A More Radical Current Develops.....	39
Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional (FLN) and the EZLN.....	40

Conclusion.....	47
-----------------	----

## **Chapter Four: Framing**

Introduction.....	49
Accessing a Collective Historical Memory.....	50
From the “Cross-Pollination,” a Hybrid.....	54
A Collective Identity.....	57
Indigenous Symbols and Traditions.....	60
Demands.....	62
Dignity.....	64
The Zapatista <i>Realidad</i> and <i>México Profundo</i> .....	66
For a World With Many Worlds in it and Against Neoliberalism.....	68
Conclusion.....	70

## **Chapter Five: Zapatista Information Technologies**

Words as Weapons, The Media War Begins.....	72
The Internet.....	73
Civil Society.....	75
The Dissemination of Information.....	75
Decentralized Organization.....	78
Breaking the Cordon of Government Controlled Information.....	80
Establishing Networks.....	83
What is Different in this Uprising is Internet Use.....	88
Conclusion.....	90

<b>Chapter Six: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>92</b>
-------------------------------------	-----------

Context.....	94
Practices as Mechanisms.....	94
Outcome.....	97

<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>100</b>
----------------------	------------

<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>101</b>
-------------------------	------------

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my parents, Ute and Thilo Joerger, for their support and understanding, and Brock Pitawanakwat for all the encouragement and conversations. I especially wish to thank Jennifer Douglas for her patience, support, suggestions, listening and editing skills.

## **Practices of Resistance in Zapatista Politics**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

#### **Introduction:**

In recent years, corporate-led globalization, or globalization-from-above, has become increasingly contested. The promises of international trade organizations (WTO, IMF, World Bank) and agreements (NAFTA, FTAA, MAI) are being questioned, and alarms are being voiced about militarization, labour practices, racialized inequalities, and ecological issues. These questions and voices are coming from a growing global movement concerned with social justice (McNally, 2002). This so-called “anti-globalization” movement is comprised of both old and new players and has established itself through protests, campaigns, and publications. Highlighting inequality and oppression across the world, this movement counters the claims of the neoliberal ideology that posits subservience to unfettered markets and puts “into question all the collective structures capable of obstructing the logic of the pure market” (Bourdieu, 1998: 96). This global social justice movement is part of an “alternative strategy” of “globalization from below” (Stahler-Sholk, 2001; Brecher, 2000, 2003).

In the 80s and early 90s, Mexico was seen as the “golden child” of modernization, and with the fastest emerging markets was touted as a shining example of the successful implementation of neoliberalism (Holloway and Peláez, 1998: 2). New Year’s Day 1994 was publicized as Mexico’s official inauguration into the “First World” through the activation of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). However, the Zapatista uprising on January 1st 1994 exposed the myth of affluence and development engineered by government officials and the global corporate elite by calling NAFTA a

---

<sup>1</sup> On problems with this characterization, see McNally, 2002

“death sentence” for the indigenous *campesinos* of Chiapas and rural Mexico.

### **The Zapatistas:**

On New Year’s Day 1994, a lightly armed indigenous guerrilla army that called itself the EZLN (*Ejercito Zapatista de Liberation Nacional*) occupied four municipalities in Chiapas, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Altamirano, Ocosingo, and Las Margaritas, as well as the townships of Chanal, Oxchuc, and Huixtán.<sup>2</sup> After quickly retreating into the jungle, this army of ski-masked Mayan<sup>3</sup> guerrillas still managed to break the Mexican government’s and army’s physical and informational enclosure to appeal to national and international “civil society” for support.

After twelve days of intense military operations by the Federal Army, this support was given, and it pressured the Salinas Government to agree to peace talks resulting in the declaration of a cease-fire and the commitment to negotiations. Negotiations between government appointees and the EZLN resulted in the San Andrés Accords. Before the talks broke-off, the first plenary session of San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights, with a focus on autonomy, was completed. The agreement on the Indigenous Rights section was signed by both the EZLN and the government representatives in 1996.

Not until 2001 and the Fox administration<sup>4</sup> (PAN, *Partido Acción National*) did the Indigenous Rights section reach Congress to be enshrined as law. However, after realizing that this Law would grant to indigenous people control over resources including sub-soil rights, as well as some judicial, economic, and political autonomy, Congress

---

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of the first year of the uprising, see Ross, 2000 and Ross, 1995. For first hand accounts of the first days of the uprising, see Bartolomé, 1995; and Zapatistas, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Mayans of *Tzotzil*, *Tzeltal*, *Tojolabal*, *Ch’ol*, *Zoque*, *Mam* descent.

<sup>4</sup> The pro-business, right-of-centre Fox administration brought an end to 71 years of PRI-rule in the 2000 elections.

implemented, without consulting the EZLN or their support communities, a watered-down version of the signed Accords.<sup>5</sup> The EZLN then brought the issue before the Supreme Court. In September, 2002, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the government's amended law and rejected the EZLN's claims for implementation of the agreed-upon San Andrés Accords.<sup>6</sup> The government's Indigenous Rights Law went into effect in October, 2002. The situation remains unresolved and tension continues to rise.<sup>7</sup> Chiapas remains highly militarized with over a third of the Federal Army stationed in Chiapas, and the indigenous *campesinos* continue to suffer the effects of "low-intensity" warfare.

The EZLN uprising came from the depths of history, combining Indigenous culture and history with Mexican nationalism, culture and history. It is a movement embedded in the multiple flows and levels of historical socio-cultural experience. In their "Declaration of War," issued on December 31st, 1993, the EZLN proclaimed, *We are the product of 500 years of struggle ... But today, we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!* The EZLN's demands are simply articulated, yet resound with the exclusion they suffer. Unembellished, and unostentatious, these demands are not merely abstract principles, but are generated through people's lived experience (Harvey, 1999: 37) and social reality.

---

<sup>5</sup> Congress expressed concern that the reforms granted too much power to indigenous people and communities, which would curtail individual rights and national sovereignty. This led Congress to present a package in which rights were dramatically reduced. (Dan Murphy, 2001, "Reforms Falter for Mexican Indians," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9/5/2001, Vol. 93, Issues 197.)

<sup>6</sup> For a translated version of the San Andrés Accords, see [http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/san\\_andres.html](http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/san_andres.html). For an outline of the Accords, the negotiations, the proposals and counterproposals, see Paulson, 2001, "San Andrés Accords: Five Years Later," <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/>. For a description of the negotiations' proceedings, see Ross, 2000. For a report on the amendments, the 2002 court decision, and the Indigenous Rights Law, see <http://www.globalexchange.org/countries/mexico/news/349.html>.

<sup>7</sup> The San Andrés Accords are the anti-thesis to President Fox's Plan Pueblo-Panama (PPP) which will provide the infrastructure for the FTAA. The PPP puts the Zapatistas directly in the firing line of "development". "In a recent speech, Fox said his economic plan for the south, called Plan Puebla Panama, 'is 1,000 times more important than the Zapatistas or any single indigenous community in Chiapas.' Francisco Yanez, a Fox economic adviser, says the plan is to invest about \$4 billion in the southern half of the country in the next six years." From Dan Murphy, 2001, "Reforms Falter for Mexican Indians," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9/5/2001, Vol. 93, Issues 197.

“We have begun the struggle that is necessary to meet the demands that never have been met by the Mexican State: work, land, shelter, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace” (Zapatistas, 1994).<sup>8</sup>

The EZLN and their support communities, collectively referred to as Zapatistas, represent a shift from previous Latin American guerrilla insurgencies<sup>9</sup> (see Holloway, 1998; Cleaver, 1994; Fox, 1994; Collier and Quaratiello, 1999); they are different from the conventional form of “orthodox” guerrillas (Holloway, 1998: 161). They are not a guerrilla group driven by a single issue or grand scheme, seeking state power through violent insurrection. The EZLN has never sought state power. Furthermore, they espouse and continue to practice radical democratic decision-making and representation, meaning that all decisions are made at the community level. They profess autonomy instead of independence or secession, and have called on the Mexican Constitution while presenting themselves as Mexican nationalists. Their concerns are multiple, broad reaching, accessible, and resonate profoundly, not only with the indigenous of Chiapas, but also throughout Mexican society. The Zapatistas have taken change into their own hands by establishing autonomous communities, calling *encuentros*, staging marches, polling for popular opinion, and convening a National Democratic Convention. Calling on “civil society” to mobilize in the “space” they have opened, the Zapatistas demand discussion, debate, *la palabra*. And while relying on the dissemination of information, they fight a war of words, an informational war, rather than using conventional *foco* guerrilla tactics or

---

<sup>8</sup> The EZLN also demanded the resignation of president Salinas. “Unlike their Latin guerrilla predecessors, the Zapatistas did not ask for state power. They did, however, demand the renegotiation of NAFTA and the revocation of the revisions to Article 27. Other demands included the creation of an independent electoral authority to oversee the coming presidential process and the autonomy of the nation’s indigenous zones—in subsequent talks, autonomy would become the EZLN’s fundamental goal,” (Ross, 2000: 53-54).

<sup>9</sup> For example, *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) in Peru, FARC and ELN in Colombia, the Sandanistas in Nicaragua, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) in Peru, the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (FPMR) in Chile, the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG) in Guatemala, the Tupamaros in Uruguay, or Guevara’s *foco* strategy (Guevara, 1961, 1998).

continued violence. Largely indigenous, they are under exclusively indigenous command, and highlight the importance of “listening”; they will listen, and they want to be listened to, for in listening, many voices can be heard. Importantly, they *have* been heard. The Zapatista movement is particularly significant not merely because of its emergence, but also because it managed to capture the international spotlight to generate enormous support and discussion.

### **Beginnings:**

That the Zapatista uprising *began* on January first, 1994, is a misrepresentation and suggests that such an insurgency could be spontaneous, and haphazardly formed and rallied.<sup>10</sup> It must be emphasized that the EZLN are part of a long history of resistance; they are embedded in a history of struggle, revolt and rebellion, and the decision to take up arms was reached only after all other means to call attention to the situation in Chiapas had been exhausted. To some extent, the beginning of the EZLN (*Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación National*) can be traced to 1983 when a group of urban would-be guerrillas moved to the jungle to incite revolutionary uprising (Marcos, in Zapatistas, 1994: 289-291). Even earlier, however, in the 1970s, Maoist insurgents had been moving from urban centers into the jungles of Mexico to actuate revolution (Harvey, 1999; Womack, 1999). The first EZLN mobilization took place on Columbus’s quincentennial on October 12, 1992 in the form of a protest march under the guise of the *Alianza Nacional de Campesinos Independiente Emiliano Zapata* (ANCIEZ), which was a combination of other *campesino* and indigenous organizations and groups in the region (Collier & Quaratiello, 1999; Ross, 2000; Gilly 1998; Stephen 2002).

<sup>10</sup> In fact, such a representation is a tactic often used to disavow the legitimacy of a movement. In this case it can also be seen as ascribing a subtext of racism that presents the indigenous groups of the region as unable to fend for themselves or lacking the capacity to self-organization (See Ross, 2000: 18-19, and throughout).

A highly influential moment in the decision to take up arms was the reform to Article 27 of the Constitution by the Salinas Administration in 1992 to make way for NAFTA. The changes to Article 27, which summarily ended the possibility of land distribution<sup>11</sup> to the landless and paved the way for privatization of *ejidos*, were the final instigation for the communities to decide to proceed with armed struggle. They proved the boiling-point for the uprising<sup>12</sup> (Gonzalez, 2002; Marcos in *Zapatistas!*, 1994; Marcos, 2001).

Certain trends in organization and collective movements can be identified as having a particular influence on the socio-political atmosphere in Chiapas: the Indigenous Congress of '74 (Womack, 1999; Harvey, 1999: 76-78; Collier and Quaratiello, 1999); peasant organization from 70's to 90's (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999; Harvey, 1999); religious organization (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999; Womack, 1999); indigenous organization, which was often intertwined with peasant and religious organization (Nash, 2001; Stephen, 2002); and the suppression or co-optation by government forces of independent organizations. Thus, "the movements that gave rise to the rebellion are not isolated phenomena" (Harvey, 1999: 3).

In 1983, as Subcomandante Marcos recounts<sup>13</sup>, there was a "collision" between forces of Maoist-style guerrilla revolutionaries and indigenous cultural practices<sup>14</sup>. The EZLN is the hybrid outcome of this collision<sup>15</sup>, or "cross-pollination." This hybrid force

11 The seriousness of the effects of this reform were severely felt in Chiapas since it was the state with the biggest backlog of unresolved land reform conflicts and land distribution demands. This reform effectively curtailed the gains of the Mexican Revolution. For the Indigenous *campesinos*, "it is a backlog of broken promises," ending in dashed hopes after Article 27 was reformed (Fox, 1994).

12 With the reform of Article 27, "the state could no longer be seen as a potential defender of indigenous land rights" (Gonzalez, 2002: 440).

13 In Womack, 1999; in *Zapatistas*, 1994, in Marcos, 2001; in Marcos, 1995.

14 Marcos then plays the role of translator between the insurgent indigenous and European/Mexican, white/*mestizo* worlds.

15 At first, the EZLN acted as a protective self-defense force against large land-owners, ranchers and plantation owners, and their "security forces" who maintained repressive control over indigenous *campesinos* through acts of violence and intimidation. The EZLN then developed into the insurgent guerrilla force that rose up in arms with support from base communities.

situates itself in the material realm of economic exclusion, and guerrilla-style military uprising, while at the same time embedding itself in the symbolic realm of myth and mystery<sup>16</sup>. The multiple oppressive forces acting for years on the indigenous *campesinos* of Chiapas<sup>17</sup> reached a point where the oppressed cried “Enough is Enough!” *Ya Basta!* On January 1st, 1994, the Zapatistas burst onto the international scene, sounding the alarmclock<sup>18</sup> as a wake-up call to the rest of Mexico and the world. In the discourse of their *communiqués*, speeches, and declarations<sup>19</sup>, the Zapatistas have placed a mirror in front of the officially presented image which, for the marginalized indigenous *campesinos*, masks the nightmare of the reality they experience. The processes of mobilization and collective action of the Zapatistas are the outcome of particular crucial practices.

While all members are Mexican<sup>20</sup>, the Zapatistas are almost exclusively indigenous. The roots of the Zapatistas are firmly planted in rural Chiapas, and after the “collision” mentioned above, the EZLN organized in isolation from the Mexican left (Fox, 1994). Chiapas is home to a myriad of indigenous and peasant organizations and groups. Some of these are spiritually-based, while some are secular. Some are more radical, and some are reformist. These organizations have a variety of often conflicting focuses and demands and generally work independently of each other<sup>21</sup>. Frustrated by increasing oppression and by the ineffectiveness of the organizations and groups to bring about

---

<sup>16</sup> The *storm from below* flows down from *las montañas*. These terms are symbolic, express a mythical “reality”, and are culturally loaded.

<sup>17</sup> A history of micro-resistances enabled the EZLN to organize effectively. Chiapas is “a world in which many small acts of resistance created the conditions of possibility for the Zapatista uprising,” (Harvey, 1999: 3).

<sup>18</sup> The “Alarmclock” or *El Despertador Mexicano*, represents the wake-up call to those blind to the suffering in Chiapas, as well as being the name of the insurgent newspaper of the EZLN.

<sup>19</sup> Which are all a part of their mobilization strategy.

<sup>20</sup> The PRI government tried to blame foreign intervention for the instigation of the uprising, and charged that the guerrillas were made up of foreigners who were “professionals of violence”.

<sup>21</sup> This would change after the Zapatista uprising. The Zapatistas opened a “space” for the diversity of social and political organizations to form networks and work together. For example, the revitalized indigenous movement in Mexico.

change, many individuals have left them to join the EZLN, hoping that a new and more inclusive voice will help their struggle. The membership of the EZLN is thus a mix of ethnicities, religious affiliation, and politics. The Zapatistas are truly complex and multivocal in composition.

The Zapatistas present a new incarnation of an old struggle.<sup>22</sup> The newness of this movement makes a distinction, but not a dissociation, from the followers of Emiliano Zapata in the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). That the Zapatistas are the heirs of Emiliano Zapata's struggle during the Mexican Revolution is explicit in their name<sup>23</sup>. When discussing the process of mobilization and collective action of the Zapatistas as an outcome, I refer to the guerrillas that make up the EZLN, the EZLN militia force, and the indigenous support base communities that "emerged" on January 1st, 1994<sup>24</sup>, and have managed to sustain their collective action. This collective action continues to mobilize, develop and shift, and has become amorphous and vast with a support network of international proportions. For this intended analysis, when referring to the Zapatistas' processes of mobilization and collective action as outcome<sup>25</sup>, the Zapatistas are intended to mean this "core" of the EZLN and the EZLN support communities that have grabbed national and international attention.

---

22 Much debate has centered around the "newness" of this movement. The form of the debate has primarily focused on whether or not the Zapatistas are a "postmodern" insurgency. See Nugent, 2002; Burbach, 1994; Nash, 1995; and Johnston, 2000.

23 Which is a strategic move on their part. See Stephen, 2002.

24 More on these classifications of EZLN composition/participants in Stephen, 2002: 142-143.

25 That this project focuses on the Zapatistas' mobilization and collective action as outcome speaks to continual development and contestations, and not in terms of a single event: the uprising. This implies a *process* instead of a fixed end, that is, the *uprising* as fixed end. This analysis does not seek to posit the Zapatistas as emerging only on January 1st, 1994. For the purpose of this analysis, the Zapatistas' emergence is a process that continues to this day. The mechanisms and practices at play in the Zapatistas' "emergence" continue to affect and generate an outcome even after New Year's Day 1994. The Zapatistas' practices continue to play a role in the processes of mobilization and collective action. Perhaps a useful future analysis would tackle the differences between the Zapatista movement in early 1994 upon their first appearance into the public realm, and the Zapatista movement at future intervals, including today.

The Zapatistas have launched an important anti-hegemonic insurgency through collective action. They have posed both new and old questions while remaining innovative, playful, and open to change. They have managed to break local and national boundaries, and have attracted the attention of, and influenced groups and individuals across the globe. Their purpose and message resonated with many actors and have generated worldwide support. Thus, the Zapatistas are important as an example of successful collective action and mobilization.

This is an uprising of the forgotten and ignored from *Deep Mexico* which demonstrated enough innovation to resonate across the globe, and presented a compelling case for the anti-globalization cause. This uprising was a spark that encouraged and energized the old and the new aspects of the global resistance movement. The Zapatistas did not, as Holloway and Peláez (1998) claim, “reinvent revolution,” but rather *reinvigorated* revolution. In short, they represent “the renewal of hope” (McNally, 2002: 16).

Couch (2001) argues that there is widespread “cultural borrowing” of the Zapatistas’ symbolism and strategies by the contemporary global justice or globalization-from-below movement. Indeed, the Zapatistas are important players in this burgeoning movement. Their model, actions, strategies, and practices have not only generated support, but have had considerable influence globally. As an example of innovative contentious political action and successful political practice, they maintain an important and influential position in revolt, resistance, and collective action around the world.

How can one explain the Zapatistas’ innovation, influence, resonance, and subsequent success? What were the economic, political, and social conditions that led to the uprising? How did the Zapatistas generate support at local, national, and international

levels? What are the crucial practices enabling the Zapatistas' actions? How have the Zapatistas generated processes of mobilization and collective action?

To address and understand the Zapatista experience one must examine how they negotiated between the local and the global, and how they, as individual and collective agents, were influenced by and resisted structural forces and other conditions within the complex<sup>26</sup> social reality which they faced. Such an analysis emphasizes the importance of practices as embedded in contextual conditions. This thesis will examine three crucial practices at play in a complex context that have enabled the Zapatistas to mobilize for collective action. It is intended to extend the burgeoning body of work on this important movement of indigenous resistance.

The following chapter will introduce the literature on the Zapatistas, situate my analysis in social movement theory, and present the three practices I focus on in this thesis. Subsequent chapters will address these three practices in more detail: chapter 3 focuses on the accessing and mobilization of local grassroots organizations in Chiapas; chapter 4 outlines the Zapatistas' practice of framing; and, chapter 5 discusses how the Zapatistas disseminated their messages through information technologies.

---

<sup>26</sup> This complexity refers to the intertwining systems, processes, voices, actions, and relations that exist, in this case, in Chiapas, Mexico, within the context of the global capitalist system. This complexity includes interrelated political economic, cultural, historical, mythic, psychological, physical, social, spiritual aspects and flows at individual, local, regional, national, and global levels.

## **Chapter 2: Zapatista Literature Review, Social Movement Theory and Embedded Practices**

### **The Existing Literature on the Zapatistas:**

A vast body of literature on the Zapatistas exists. Much attention has been focused on the Zapatistas' use of media and informationalization<sup>27</sup>. The foremost and most often quoted analysis is Cleaver's "Zapatistas and the electronic fabric of struggle" (1998).<sup>28</sup> Other analyses present the Zapatistas as important players in a world where there is increasingly greater reliance on information technologies (Castells, 1997 and 2001; also see Russell, 2001; Martinez-Torres, 2001; Jeffries, 2001)<sup>29</sup>. While Ronfeldt and Arquilla (1998) proclaim the Zapatistas are the harbingers of a coming "social netwar," some analysts present the Zapatistas as masters of public relations through their media-based marketing of a "guerrilla chic" (Henck, 2002; Bob, 2001). Furthermore, Paz (2002) argues they are a "media spectacle," and Burbach (1994) labels the Zapatistas as the first "postmodern rebellion" due to their use of the Internet.

Many works focus on the role of women or analyze the Zapatistas through the lens of feminist studies (Millán, 1998; Rovira, 2000; von Werlhof, 1997; Stephen, 1995, 1997). In particular, Kampwirth (2002) stresses the importance of women making up a large portion of EZLN insurgents.<sup>30</sup> Many analyses have a political economic focus (Nash, 2001; Harvey, 1999, 2001; LaBotz, 1995; Nugent, 2002; Watson 2002) and present the Zapatistas as involved in an agrarian class-based struggle (Collier and

<sup>27</sup> Castells' term highlighting the economic transformation resulting from increasing reliance on information technologies (Castells, 2000: 99-100).

<sup>28</sup> Also see Hellman's (2000) reaction to this particular work.

<sup>29</sup> Castells highlights the economic transformation resulting from increasing "informationalization" (2000: 99-100).

<sup>30</sup> Kampwirth illustrates that women acting in guerrilla armies is not a new phenomenon in Latin America. However, she argues that in Mexico this was not historically the case, and the Zapatistas mark a break in the subjugation of women in insurgent organizations, particularly in Chiapas (2002).

Quaratiello, 1999; Veltmeyer, 2000; Petras, 1997). Some analyses focus on the symbolic or discursive aspect of the Zapatistas and their uprising (Long, 1999; Evans, 1999). In particular, analyses of this type focus on the cultural borrowing of the Zapatistas' images and symbols by other movements and players (Couch, 2001), the use of language instead of arms as a poetics of resistance in a Gramscian "war of position" (Bruhn, 1999; Navarro, 1996; Higgins, 2000), the subaltern reasserting itself through folkloric discourse (Rabasa, 1997), and the Zapatistas' resistance through the assertion and reclaiming of "history" in symbolic and discursive terms (Gilly, 1998). Others look at the specific example of the Zapatistas' reaffirmation of symbols appropriated by the government over 70 years (Stephen, 2002). Some attention has been given to their mobilization in terms of social movement theory (Johnston, 2000; Stahler-Sholk, 2001; Hellman, 1997; and to some extent Harvey, 1999) with Schulz (1998) providing an insightful analysis of opportunity structures and cross-border network capacities.

Many of these analyses overlap and focus on more than one aspect, for example combining a political economic analysis with the reassertion of identity (Nash, 1995, 2001) or with discourse (Harvey, 2001), or, combining globalization, international networks and opportunity structures (Schulz, 1998). Hellman (2000) calls for acknowledgment of the complexity of the Zapatistas and their movement and cautions about reductionist analyses particularly those which focus on the Zapatistas' use of the Internet (see Cleaver, 1998, and his rejoinder 2000). However, she does little to address or analyze this complexity. Analyses must move beyond merely paying lip-service to the complexity at hand, that is, they must undertake an understanding of the embeddedness of the Zapatistas in this complexity.

Numerous analyses of the Zapatistas, although informative<sup>31</sup> and acknowledging their own limited scope, focus on contextual descriptions<sup>32</sup> which are often oversimplified, and present important elements or situations that led to the uprising, but do not present the Zapatistas as a dynamic, shifting, contested *movement*. That is, they focus on the economic, political, cultural, social, and historical conditions, and often only one of these dimensions, in Chiapas and Mexico before the uprising, while painting the Zapatistas as a coherent, stable, and unitary subject. Further, analyses that do not follow this line, tend to focus on one aspect of the movement at the expense of other important aspects. For example, two analyses from differing angles are Veltmeyer (2000), who focuses on political economic aspects of the uprising in terms of class struggle, but ignores the richness of the symbolic aspects of the movement, and Esteva (1999) who espouses postmodern notions of identity politics, and argues that the struggle focuses on identity issues.

Many studies lack an adequate representation of the interconnectedness and multiple levels of the Zapatista movement. Generally, analyses of the Zapatistas focus on determining the reasons for the uprising. That is, they focus on *why* the Zapatista uprising took place. These analyses generally outline the contextual conditions that led to

---

<sup>31</sup> Informative in that the majority of literature devoted to the Zapatistas is descriptive, see Ross, 1995 and 2000; Weinberg, 2000; Womack, 1999; Fuentes, 1996; Weller, 2000; Barry, 1995; LaBotz, 1995; and Collier and Quaratiello, 1999.

<sup>32</sup> An example of such a contextual analysis: Harvey (2001) argues that the decision to take up arms is in response to “three main dislocations”. They are: alteration of the process, or end, of land reform; “the failure of the productivist alternative” when being integrated into new markets, or granting of government subsidies, insurance, guarantees, credit; and failure of government to support “associational autonomy” in communities for fear of losing support. Added to all this were the amendments to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution which were implemented to protect private landowners from land redistribution--there was a backlog of more than three thousand claims for land redistribution in 1992 (Harvey, 2001: 257). Then Harvey focuses on the EZLN’s discourse as strategy to garner support. The basic context then is the failure of rural development policies, for example, ARIC was organized to deal with the instability of, and created by, these policies. Though this analysis focuses on a group of factors, it fails to sufficiently address the complexity of the social reality in that it ignores cultural, symbolic, mythic, historical aspects, and posits the Zapatista movement as a reaction to the contextual failure of rural development, while focusing on the Zapatistas’ discourse as a singular variable.

the uprising, but rarely analyze the actions involved other than a brief mention of Internet use or local organization. Although these analyses are important for an overall understanding of the Zapatistas and their uprising, they tend to ignore *how* the uprising and the Zapatistas' subsequent mobilization take place.

Three particularly salient analyses that do focus to some extent on *how* are Gilly (1998), Schulz (1998), and Stephen (2002). Gilly situates the Zapatistas in a long history of rural rebellion. While embedded in historical cultural currents, Gilly argues, the Zapatistas resist a destructive modernity and demand inclusion in political and economic realms through the assertion and reclaiming of "history" in symbolic and discursive terms. Stephen similarly focuses on historical and symbolic issues. She highlights the symbolic aspect of the Zapatista uprising by undertaking a highly informative analysis of the reappropriation and mobilization of a culturally loaded symbol, that of Zapata, without ignoring everyday local political economic dimensions. Schulz acknowledges the importance of discursive and symbolic elements as part of their "communicative praxis," and argues that the Zapatistas were able to benefit from a moment of opportunity in the national political and economic structure.

This present analysis seeks to build on these three works by continuing the exploration of the Zapatista uprising in terms of the *how*, while recognizing the importance of analyses that focus on the *why*. By applying some concepts of social movement theory to the analyses of the Zapatistas, this project intends to focus on three important actions and forms of reasoning, i.e. practices, at work among the particular historical, cultural, social, political, and economic conditions in which the Zapatista movement was embedded. These practices are viewed as generative mechanisms which produced more or less effective mobilization and collective action.

### Social Movement Theory and Causal Mechanisms:

As Wilson indicates, a “*social movement* is a conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by noninstitutionalized means” (Wilson, 1972: 8), though some institutionalized means may be used strategically. Social movements are planned attempts to evoke change, not spontaneous aggregate action (Wilson, 1972: 11). Many are fragmented and heterogeneous (Tilly, 1984: 310). In moving toward or resisting “large-scale change in the social order,” movements seek changes in, or the maintenance of, their contextual conditions. “Social movements are often seen as the result of deep changes in the society around them” (Foweraker, 1995: 9). That is, social movements can be seen in terms of the context in which they act, and which they often seek to affect. For example, the Zapatistas’ collective action and mobilization seek to effect change in the context that the Zapatistas inhabit. This movement is a planned attempt to both resist the large-scale change administered by the Mexican government in an era of globalized neoliberalism, and to bring about changes in the current social order.

The study of social movements has been divided into two general camps: the new social movements approach and resource mobilization theory. The former focuses on macro-structural shifts or features and contesting collective identities, while the latter focuses on facilitation or hindrance of movement formation and processes of mobilization (Carroll, 1997: 8, Foweraker, 1995: 15-16). For Cohen (1985), new social movements theory is an identity-oriented approach, while resource mobilization theory is a strategy-oriented approach to analyzing social movements. Resource mobilization theory analyzes “the practicalities of mobilization and strategic interaction in pursuit of collective goods”

(Carroll, 1997: 14). This approach focuses on “*how* movements form and engage in collective action” (Carroll, 1997: 8), and the political problems of mobilization, organization, and strategic decision-making of actors constrained by institutional contexts (Foweraker, 1995: 15). New social movements analyses focus on “*why* specific forms of collective identity and action have appeared” (Carroll, 1997: 8), and these “new grievances” are seen as responses to structural changes in society (Foweraker, 1995: 15), or in Touraine’s analysis, the shift to “post-industrial society” (Touraine, 1981, 1988).<sup>33</sup>

This thesis is concerned with the processes of movement formation and mobilization. Therefore, this project will be informed by the approaches of resource mobilization theory, such as the work of Tilly (1978) who has highlighted the importance of favorable opportunities and resources, as well as informal networks and grassroots settings that structure and make collective action possible. For the critique of certain shortcomings and blind-spots present in resource mobilization theory, see Carroll (1997: 14-16) and Foweraker (1995: 16-18, 25).

Another approach is that of McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1999), who highlight the importance of political opportunities, mobilizing structures or forms of organization, as well as framing practices as factors in the emergence and development of social movements. They argue that generally scholars study only a single aspect of a movement, for example, movement organization or the political opportunity for successful collective action. My analysis follows their critique and focuses on multiple factors of collective action while acknowledging the relationship between these factors. Where analyses concerned with movement mobilization generally focus on resources such as labour, funding, land, and expertise (Carroll, 1997: 9), I shall focus on crucial practices enabling

---

<sup>33</sup> Recently there have been calls for synthesizing these two approaches, see Escobar and Alvarez (1992), Foweraker (1995), Canel (1997), and Otero and Jurgenitz (2003).

mobilization.<sup>34</sup> These practices include the actions, reasoning, and resources that are the mechanisms acting in contexts to generate outcomes.<sup>35</sup>

In their recent work, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), all major players in the development of resource mobilization theory, have shifted their focus onto “mechanisms.” Critiquing resource mobilization theory, including their own past work, they concede that the rational-choice model, on which it is based, is overemphasized and that “the centrality of deliberate strategic decisions” is “exaggerated” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: 15)<sup>36</sup>. They argue that combinations and sequences of multiple mechanisms produce processes. In their analysis, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly single out processes that “involve recurrent combinations and sequences of mechanisms that operate identically or with great similarity across a variety of situations” (2001: 27). One of their examples of such a process is “democratization.” Democratization could not be considered a single mechanism, they argue; thus they sketch democratization as a process “involving combinations or sequences of mechanisms producing moves toward (as well as away from) democracy” (2001: 27, Ch. 9).

Mechanisms are the “events that alter relations” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: 24). These mechanisms interact with one another and produce *concatenations of mechanisms* (Gambetta, 1998; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001)<sup>37</sup>. Mechanisms “involve general chains of causation that may [but do not necessarily] recur in a class of roughly similar circumstances”<sup>38</sup> and can be used in explanations of “the emergence of a

<sup>34</sup> While focusing on the strategic dimensions that are often ignored in analyses of the Zapatistas, this work will be informed by resource mobilization theory in its focus on *how* processes of mobilization and collective action are generated. However, it will not be constrained or limited to it. Following the critiques of the blind-spots of resource mobilization theory, this analysis acknowledges the importance of collective identities, structural contexts, “macro sociological transformations” (Carroll, 1997: 8), “stories” (Tilly, 2002), and social mechanisms. This project is not an all-encompassing analysis of resource mobilization theory.

<sup>35</sup> In his work, Pawson (2000) presents a framework in which “context + mechanisms = outcomes.”

<sup>36</sup> Also see Tilly’s (2002) shift to focus on “standard stories” as practices of contentious mobilization.

<sup>37</sup> Gambetta (1998) focuses on individual-level mechanisms.

<sup>38</sup> An argument also advanced by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001).

phenomenon or its survival over time” (Cowen, 1998: 127-128). In focusing on recurrent combinations or features of mechanisms and processes in episodes of contention, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly seek to build on “classic social movement” approaches and move toward a “new program for research on contentious politics” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: 37, 27). For example, they present the Parisian revolution of July 1789 as an episode made up of mobilization processes generated by mechanisms such as “identity shift” and “polarization.” Other mechanisms they identify in their analysis include, “social appropriation of organizational structures,” “radical flank effect,” “scale shift,” and “cross-class coalition formation.”<sup>39</sup>

Moving away from simplified “cause-and-effect” analyses that provide “still photographs of contentious moments rather than dynamic, interactive sequences,” McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly focus on relational processes that generate what they name “episodes of contention” (2001: 18). In their call to reorient and broaden the field of social movement theory, an “episode of contention,” which they define as “an organized, sustained challenge to constituted institutional authority” (McAdam, 2003: 127), is presented as a substitute label for what is generally designated as a “social movement” in the literature (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, also see McAdam, 2003). They critique social movement models that fail to address *how* mobilization emerges. That is, how “routine social reproduction” shifts to processes of contentious action. In proposing dynamic mechanisms as “vehicles of emergent mobilization” (see McAdam, 2003: 131), McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly argue that “relational dynamics” have been ignored in analyses of social movements, and so they emphasize “relational mechanisms,” which combine with cognitive and environmental mechanisms (2001: 310). Through

---

<sup>39</sup> In his reply to critics, Tarrow (2003) emphasizes that he, McAdam and Tilly did not set out to present a “master set” of mechanisms (137).

environmental mechanisms, which they present as “externally generated influences on conditions affecting social life” (2001: 25), they acknowledge the importance of context<sup>40</sup> in which combinations or sequences of multiple mechanisms are embedded. This forms the crux of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly’s “process theory” (2001: 27), which also includes the “attribution of opportunity and threat, social appropriation, framing the dispute, and arraying of innovative forms of collective action” (2001: 28, also see McAdam, 2003: 131-132). The first three mechanisms in this list all entail an overall practice of framing, while the last mechanism suggests practices such as accessing and mobilizing grassroots organizational networks and the use of information technologies to disseminate messages. The present thesis will focus on these practices.<sup>41</sup>

In the following analysis, mechanisms are *practices* such as framing, mobilization of resources, the attribution of political opportunities or threats, accessing and mobilizing networks and organizational structures, production of collective identities, communicative action, and other practices that are important in “shaping the emergence of collective action” within particular contextual conditions which the Zapatistas seek to change, or to preserve. However, space restrictions limit the present study to asking: **How have these practices enabled the Zapatistas’ processes of mobilization and collective action?** **This thesis will examine three selected crucial practices at play in complex contextual conditions: accessing and mobilizing local grassroots organizations, framing, and the use of information technologies.**

<sup>40</sup> “How, we reasoned, could one ever hope to understand the political significance of movements without taking seriously the broader institutional context and set of actors that movements must confront to make change?” (McAdam, 2003: 127).

<sup>41</sup> This project does not seek to advance an authoritative, all-encompassing analysis and definition of “mechanisms.” It merely employs this framework to help make sense of Zapatista practices and processes.

### **The Contextual Conditions:**

As mentioned above, all practices are embedded in contextual conditions. Therefore, a brief outline of the context in which the Zapatista uprising is embedded is necessary. The political, historical, social, economic, cultural conditions experienced in Chiapas<sup>42</sup> form the context from which the Zapatistas' processes of collective action and mobilization emerged. The following chronology outlines the developing context in Chiapas. The Spanish conquest in the 16th century brought 500 years of colonialism and oppression to the indigenous inhabitants of Mexico. This oppression continued under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911), during which time a class of Mexican elites amassed great wealth and amounts of land. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) was a reaction to this amassed wealth and land. However, the Revolution had little impact in the state of Chiapas. For 71 years following the Revolution, Mexico was dominated by a single party's<sup>43</sup> hegemonic rule which implemented a plan of development and modernization that bred inequality and oppression, and a structure of state paternalism (see Warnock, 1995) that maintained a status-quo in favor of large land holders and local elites. During the 1980s neoliberal restructuring wrought havoc on small agrarian producers in Chiapas, culminating in the amendments to Article 27 of the Constitution to pave the way for NAFTA<sup>44</sup>. Chiapas was and continues to be a rich land, with paradoxically poor people who see their state's resources siphoned to other states and countries and receive few services and benefits in return (Benjamin, 1996; Marcos, 1994). Furthermore, localized systems and relations of control were established in which local *caciques* and large land-owners maintained control and enforced their rule through oppression, often by maintaining "traditions" that in fact perpetuate an oppressive status

<sup>42</sup> Chiapas is embedded in a wider context of a global capitalist market system.

<sup>43</sup> The PRI, *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*.

<sup>44</sup> This is generally considered the last straw or the boiling-over point for the indigenous *campesinos* (Harvey, 1996; Marcos, 1995, 2001; and in Zapatistas, 1994).

quo. These state-encouraged structures and relations enabled oppression as a means of control and dissuaded dissent. As a result of decades of domination, the indigenous *campesinos* of Chiapas had been excluded from effective democratic citizenship privileges such as access to electoral processes, basic social services, human rights and protection from violence, and economic subsistence<sup>45</sup>. In reaction to this continued oppression and inequality, and prior to the 1994 uprising, there had been years of social and political organization in the highlands and canyons of the Lacandón jungle. Since 1994 was an election year and economic instability was growing, the government sought to maintain the guise of stability at all costs for foreign investors and the passing of NAFTA.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, there was an increasing awareness of government fraud, corruption and the technocratic elite's self-serving interests across Mexico. These conditions provided the Zapatistas with a political opportunity for action (see Schulz, 1998).<sup>47</sup> The historical context of Chiapas includes ecological and technological changes, migrations, oil boom and bust and exploitation, political, religious and ideological conflicts, increasing poverty and environmental deterioration and an increasingly frustrated peasantry (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: xv).

### **Mechanisms/Practices:**

Embedded in the contextual conditions outlined above, the indigenous *campesinos* of Chiapas, through the use of resources, actions and reasoning, developed practices that not only created meanings and mobilized actors, but also garnered support from groups,

<sup>45</sup> Through, and in, structures, actors deny the agency of certain other actors. In the present case, the prime example is indigenous *campesinos*, who have historically been restricted and excluded from active participation in processes and relations by government officials and local bosses who represent the structures of class, the State and global market forces.

<sup>46</sup> This was especially exemplified in May 1993, when the federal army came face to face with EZLN insurgents. A fire fight ensued in which both sides suffered casualties. The official government line was then to deny the existence of any guerrillas in the Selva Lacandón.

<sup>47</sup> For more on opportunity structures, see McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1999; Tarrow, 1998.

organizations and individuals across Chiapas, Mexico, and the globe. Examples include, but are not limited to: the accessing and mobilizing of organizational structures and networks<sup>48</sup> that already existed in a context of religious, peasant and indigenous organization from the years of social and political activity in the area; recognizing, attributing and exploiting local and national political opportunity; the “collision” between Marcos and other revolutionaries with the indigenous cultural practices that resulted in a cross-pollination or hybridity; Marcos as “translator” and charismatic spokesperson; self-limiting and accountable leadership; effective military tactics; “frames”<sup>49</sup> that encompass a variety of “levels” and resonate with cultural meaning and national, historical symbolic codes such as *Votán Zapata, Dignity, mal gobierno, Aguascalientes* and *Caracoles*, Old Antonio and Durito, *Ya Basta!* and other meaningful symbols and images; collective memory used as a “resource” and mobilized in the memory of Zapata, of the history of revolution and rebellion, and of the collective historical experience of colonialism; the appeal to global audience or transnational movement networks which in turn put pressure on the national government, amounting to Keck and Sikkink’s (1998) “boomerang strategies”; building bridges of support and resistance through “chains of equivalence” (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), that are autonomous and that respect differences; physical mobilization of international observers, participants and “civil society”; the mobilization of resources; use of the media and information technologies, primarily the Internet<sup>50</sup>, in their “communicative praxis” (Schulz, 1998), as part of a “war of information”; production of an insurgent or “resistance identity” (Castells, 1997) and the assertion of identity as an act of resistance (Nash, 1995, 2001); producing political, autonomous “space” through *encuentros*, marches, conventions, and autonomous

<sup>48</sup> On organizational structures, mobilizing structures and networks, see McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> On “frames,” see Zald, 1999; Snow and Benford, 1992; Tarrow, 1992, 1998.

<sup>50</sup> An arena of struggle and contestation for inclusion into the flows of information, knowledge, and power.

communities in rebellion. These various and complex mechanisms are practices that all fall under the umbrella of the Zapatistas' strategy.

However, the practices in this list are too numerous to analyze in a Master's thesis. Therefore, *I will focus on three practices or mechanisms* that have generated the Zapatistas' processes of mobilization and collective action: 1) accessing and mobilizing grassroots organization networks. 2) framing to produce meaning and cohesive collectivity, and to strike a chord at local, national and international levels while articulating links between a local struggle and international issues. 3) the use of the Internet and information technologies<sup>51</sup> to access information flows and disseminate their messages. These three practices are mechanisms that interrelate, are embedded in a variety of levels of social reality, and work within a dialectic of structures<sup>52</sup> and agency.

This thesis explores these three crucial practices to understand how the processes of mobilization and collective action were accomplished by the Zapatistas. It employs a framework which incorporates aspects of social movement theory and posits practices acting in contextual conditions to generate processes. Such a framework has generally been overlooked in analyzing the Zapatistas.

---

<sup>51</sup> Communicative praxis related to structures of informationalization and information control.

<sup>52</sup> These structures include: global market structures and the austerity programs implemented at the national level; non-democratic, corrupt and clientelist governing structures; national structures of class relations and land reform, including agrarian laws, land distribution, and agrarian production processes; historical structures of ethnic or racialized inequality; structures of meaning production in terms of "tradition" and *indigenismo*; and local agents, *caciques* and large land-owners, imposing unequal social, economic, and political relations.

## **Chapter 3: Accessing and Mobilizing Grassroots Organizations in Chiapas**

### **Introduction:**

A crucial practice that enabled the Zapatistas' mobilization and collective action was the accessing and mobilizing of grassroots organizations in Chiapas. When analyzing *how* grassroots organizations were accessed and mobilized, it must be recognized that the historical landscape of peasant activism and organization in Chiapas is rich, complex and spans over three decades. This chapter takes that complexity into account as it traces the history of government-sponsored peasant organization, particularly the National Peasant Confederation, followed by the religious organization by Protestants and the Catholic Church. The First Indigenous Congress in 1974 will be identified as the watershed for independent organization in the region, resulting in a dense web of peasant activism and the emergence of multiple grassroots organizations. Despite the years of rural agitation and organization, little had changed in their situation. Given a choice between pursuing the institutional means for change offered by certain organizations, or the more radical avenues of direct action espoused by other organizations, many indigenous campesinos chose the latter. This chapter then traces the emergence and development of the EZLN after Marxist insurgents, including Subcomandante Marcos, arrived in the Lacandón jungle in 1983. Aware of the dissatisfaction but simultaneously recognizing the importance of these existing organization networks and the need for a large support base, the EZLN was able to provide an alternative organizational structure and to embed itself in local communities. As it did so, it espoused traditional indigenous practices and provided services in the form of literacy programs, vaccination programs, small jobs and protection.

By accessing the independent organization networks, and mobilizing their constituents, the EZLN were able to generate collective action. Without the backing of local communities and support networks the EZLN could not have accomplished a successful insurgency.

The Zapatista rebels who burst into the world's consciousness on New Year's Day 1994 emerged from a rich assortment of autonomous peasant organizations which developed during the 1970s and 1980s. These independent organizations arose out of several contexts: religious organizing, especially by the Catholic Church; government organizing, especially the CNC, or the National Peasant Confederation and the National Indigenous Institute, or INI; union organizing, in particular the teachers' union; and Mexican political organizers from outside Chiapas (Russell, 1995: 32). These "peasant organizations" would provide the network structure for the Zapatistas' organization.

### **History of Peasant Organizations:**

Most rural people in Latin America combine part-time agricultural work with other employment. In most cases, subsistence farming does not present a viable option (Mattiace, 2003: 30). Development is uneven in rural Mexico. The global economy brought opportunities for a small few, but undermined most others, especially agricultural peasant producers. As a result, "[t]he vast majority of peasant households now participate in some kind of wage work or commercial enterprise in addition to farming" (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 92). Indeed, the economic and labor roles of peasants in rural Chiapas are varied: from painters, carpenters, and storeowners, to laborers and craftspeople and tour guides. The very concept of "peasantry" is now stretched to new limits (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 92). "What has changed for peasants--as a

consequence of Mexico's ... development-- is the dramatic growth of nonagricultural work and the increasing integration of peasant economies into national and international markets" (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 92). However, even if there is less agricultural production, most peasants continue to identify as farmers. They possess a deep emotional tie to the land. The land, a part of their identity and culture, is also their basis for survival.

The campesinos' relation to the land has been historically mediated through government representatives. Starting in the late 1930s, the ruling *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI)<sup>53</sup> maintained a system of control based on clientelism by organizing the National Peasant Confederation (CNC), the National Indigenous Institute (INI), and the Mexican Workers' Confederation (CTM). These state-run confederations kept the peasants and workers separate in order to guard against a combined effort at organization and revolt. The CNC was divided into local branches that were tied to regional and, subsequently, national hierarchical organization structures (Mattiace, 2003: 30) that oversaw all government credits, funding, and land distribution measures. This structure of distribution funneled handouts in exchange for political loyalty at election time. While this system kept peasants from organizing a possible revolt, it also maintained state control at local levels. Fierce competition existed between peasant groups for *ejido*<sup>54</sup> titles, but most decisions were in favour of the CNC-affiliated groups (Harvey, 1999: 153). Any dissent on the part of peasant organizations was severely repressed while the governor used the force of the state police to protect private landholdings from being redistributed (Harvey, 1999: 155).

Although there was a marked increase in *ejido* land, and those employed on ejido

---

<sup>53</sup> The PRI was labelled the "perfect dictatorship" by writer Mario Vargas Llosa.

<sup>54</sup> Communal land holding.

land, between 1960 and 1970, much of the land was poor quality and actual yields decreased over that period, sparking an “agricultural crisis.” The Echeverría government’s reaction was to increase land distribution and to institutionalize intermediaries to oversee peasants’ access to commercial markets. These new federal agencies further consolidated the state’s control in the agricultural sector and in the production process, even at the local level. Furthermore, petrodollars, that resulted from the oil boom,<sup>55</sup> were used to fund development programs applied to calm dissent (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 73). These changes and handouts were already too little too late as peasant hostility began to ferment in the mid-1970s. President Echevarría soon had to soften his populist stance in the face of landowner and business interest pressures (Mattiace, 2003: 34).

An elite comprised of state governors and large landowners used the CNC and the “carrot and stick” to maintain a status quo in their favour, thereby “discouraging” and pacifying any indigenous campesino organization or resistance.<sup>56</sup> The “carrot” was in the form of credits and subsidies as well as promises for reform, support, and land distribution. The “stick” was reared by state police and large landowners’ thugs, such as the *mapaches* or the *guardias blancas*. Even in the face of intimidation, the state’s hegemony through the CNC was resisted: Peasant organizations emerged as early as 1949 (UGOCM, the General Union of Mexican Workers and Peasants) and 1961 (CCI, the Independent Peasant Central).

Along with the INI (National indigenous Institute) and its mandate of *indigenismo*<sup>57</sup>, the CNC was a promoter of the government assimilationist line. The CNC was assimilationist in identifying indigenous people as peasants only (Mattiace, 2003: 31). That is, Indians became Mexicans; the move was to assimilate them into Mexico’s

---

<sup>55</sup> Between 1972-77.

<sup>56</sup> This strategy also ensures a “docile” workforce, (Mattice, 2003: 31).

<sup>57</sup> See Nash, 2001: 13; La Botz, 1995: 23; Gilly, 1998; and Ramos, 1998.

*mestizo* culture. However, the state's assimilationist policies were resisted and the state reluctantly tolerated the unassimilated indigenous who were allowed to maintain their cultural practices as long as they did not interfere with government hegemony (Mattiace, 2003: 32).

Growing dissatisfaction with the government-controlled CNC resulted in the rise of independent peasant organizations that pursued struggles for land distribution, credit, improved access to services, product marketing, transportation, and technology (Gilly, 1998: 286). A major watershed of resistance would emerge from the 1974 First Indigenous Congress. But to understand the organization of the 1974 Congress, the influential religious organizing in Chiapas must be addressed.

### **Religious Organization:**

In the formation of solidarity among the disparate Mayan groups, Catechists provided a framework of linkages and fomented unity through Liberation Theology. The 1960s saw catechists, trained to disseminate the word of God, move through communities in Chiapas. But this “teaching” acted both to suppress native cultures and to encourage passivity rather than active engagement. These teachers became new *caudillos*<sup>58</sup> due to the power relations they enacted. Theirs was a top-down practice.

This practice was criticized at the Medellín Council of Latin American Bishops in 1968, which was attended by Bishop Samuel Ruiz of the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas. The Medellín, Colombia conference called for changes in church practices with the realization of the political and economic “obstacles to liberation” (Harvey, 1999: 71-73). The Liberation Theology approach acknowledged “the social suffering and inequity generated by free-market economics,” and encouraged “people to

---

<sup>58</sup> A leader who exercises undisputed control (Harvey, 1999).

be agents of their own history in the kingdom on earth" (Nash, 2001: 164). An outcome of this conference was the encouragement of priests "to move the faithful away from fatalism and the acceptance of poverty and marginalization in life on earth and towards becoming collaborators with God in the fulfillment of their destiny" (Nash, 2001: 164).

To address the catchists' top-down practices, a shift from instruction to reflection was initiated. The focus on discussion and reflection laid the groundwork for possible collective action. The role of the church changed from overseeing and leadership to "accompaniment;" unlike *caudillos*, church leaders became "involved," generating the support of the people (Harvey, 1999: 75). Bishop Ruíz and Liberation Theology played a vital and large role in the undercurrents of social and political organization in the region.

The church stepped in to provide what the government did not (Stephen, 2002: 111). Bishop Ruíz called for the clergy to "validate indigenous cultures," while holding discussions and drawing out ideas in local indigenous languages. With an emphasis on class analysis combined with respect for indigenous cultures (Liberation Theology), Bishop Ruíz worked with many organizations outside the Church through the 70s and 80s.<sup>59</sup>

The Protestant Church also had organizational importance, since Protestants played a role in politicizing peasant communities. Protestantism fostered a sense of unity in communities, improved literacy rates, and made moves towards gender equality. Through literacy, indigenous peasants could better enter into the areas of law and politics (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 59). However, "animosity between the 'traditional' Catholic Indians and Protestants" in Chiapas, meant that Protestants were often expelled from villages for refusing to conform to "traditional" codes of conduct. In addition,

---

<sup>59</sup> Without knowing it he worked with the activists (cadres) that would become the EZLN (Stephen, 2002: 114).

nonreligious dissidents are often expelled from communities under a pretext of being Protestants (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 57). Ultimately, the presence of competing churches, Protestant and Catholic, in eastern Chiapas, meant that only a secular movement like the Zapatistas would be able to generate support across religious lines (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 56).

### **The First Indigenous Congress of 1974:**

In 1974, the Mexican government requested that Bishop Samuel Ruíz organize the First Indigenous Congress to honour the 16th-Century defender of indigenous rights, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. The government requested this Congress in the hopes that it would clean up their image after the student massacre in 1968, and because they felt that such a move would show their populist side (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 61). Harvey (1999) argues that the Congress was called by government in the hopes of co-opting indigenous leaders and controlling or subsuming indigenous organization. However, if this were the government's strategy, they were unsuccessful. The Congress stayed independent of the PRI. As Bishop Ruíz put it, "the Congress should be of and for the Indians" (Bishop Ruíz, quoted in Harvey, 1999: 78).

In preparation for the Congress<sup>60</sup>, people in indigenous communities were encouraged "to think about their current circumstances and difficulties and to delegate members of their communities to come to the congress and talk about their hopes, desires, and priorities for the future" (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 62). To ensure a "bottom-up" approach to the Congress, Bishop Ruíz went from village to village himself and held meetings encouraging discussions and raising issues, as well as asking representatives from

---

<sup>60</sup> It was expected that the Congress would also help the Catholic Church's image with respect to indigenous populations.

the villages to bring any other issues, which were decided on through consensus, to the Congress (Stephen, 2002: 115-116). In addition, Catechists travelled from community to community, creating a grassroots network joining indigenous communities in eastern Chiapas. Thus, Bishop Ruiz and the Catechists were able to bring together people from different ethnic and language groups at the Congress. According to Stephen, “the multi-ethnic and multilingual experience of the preparatory meetings influenced the culture of the congress and of subsequent organizing” (Stephen, 2002: 117). In contrast to the top-down organization of the government-sponsored INI and CNC, “the Congress provided a model of bottom-up organizing upon which independent peasant organizations subsequently drew” (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 63).

The demands tabled at the Congress<sup>61</sup> were very similar to what became the demands of the EZLN<sup>62</sup>. This shows that in the 20 years between the Congress and the Zapatistas’ uprising, little action was taken by the government to deal with the problems identified by indigenous leaders. Indeed, the EZLN point to 1974 as the start of radical agitation (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 65). “Years have passed, since about 1974, when we began trying to get land, dwellings, roads, rural clinics, but without any success. The only response was trickery and false promises” (EZLN, quoted in Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 66). However, the EZLN deny that Catholic priests played a role in their insurgency. Their claim seems likely, yet both Protestantism and the Catholic Church helped to instill the necessary tools or materials to *begin* resistance. They provided the awareness, the literacy, the networking, and the grassroots organization. The EZLN’s denial of Catholic involvement in their insurgency is likely a strategic move to guard against alienating Protestant constituents and to overcome deep-rooted divisions between

<sup>61</sup> For a summary of grievances, ranging from commercial concerns, to education, to health, and land issues, from the 74 Indigenous Congress in Chiapas, see Womack, 1999: 156-161.

<sup>62</sup> See Womack, 1999, and two statements compared by Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 63-65.

Protestant and Catholic communities.

Undeniably, the '74 Congress was a major catalyst for independent grassroots organizing in the Lacandon region of Chiapas. The Congress enabled networking and channels of communication between different ethnic groups, and provided indigenous activists with opportunities to acknowledge shared problems (Nash, 2001: 95). This was the process through which alliances were forged and by which the region was opened to new political and organizational currents. At the same time, organizers sought to gain peasants' support against the government by highlighting the government's failure to act on promises of land reform and delivery of services, and the litany of unmet demands.

#### **Peasant Organizations post-1974:**

Throughout Chiapas, the PRI government promoted the set-up of *ejido* unions (UE, *Uniones de Ejidos*) as part of its program to maintain control in the region. However, in Chiapas' lowlands, where most of these unions were formed, the PRI did not have enough influence to guarantee its control of the *ejido* unions, and so community members had more say in their organization (Harvey, 1999: 79). The UEs in this region were led by delegates who had attended the '74 Congress and resisted government cooptation. Some of the advisers used by the church in the organization of the Congress were members of the Union of the People (UP), a Maoist group (Stephen, 2002: 119, Harvey, 1999: 79). Another Maoist group, People's Politics (PP), sent out student activists to "go to the people" to build popular grassroots support bases for nonviolent socialist revolution through reaffirming grassroots participation and the establishment of "the horizontal flow of information between communities" (*Ibid.*). The UP and the PP, along with other non-violent groups, joined to form the Proletarian Line (LP). However,

the LP activists were soon “evicted” from local communities since it was thought that they were attempting to overthrow the delegates who had attended the Congress, and so were perceived as being pro-government (Harvey, 1999: 79).

The delegates from the Congress did not escape local criticism, however. They were accused of neglecting responsibilities and of forming a clique that wielded too much power (Harvey, 1999: 82-83). In 1980, the Union of Ejidal Unions and United Peasant Groups of Chiapas (UU) was formed as the largest independent peasant organization in Chiapas (Stephen, 2002: 122, Harvey, 1999: 83-84). For the UU, economics became key to political emancipation in that the UU called for the appropriation of the production process, including marketing and distribution processes (Stephen, 2002: 122 and Harvey, 1999). “This organization pursued the combined objectives of the growing independent movement of *campesinos*, those for land tenure and for the promotion of cash crops and credit” (Nash, 2001: 96).

Tensions began to surface in the UU with leaders being accused of *caudillismo* while the organization became increasingly factionalized (Harvey, 1999: 89). The UU’s factionalist in-fighting resulted in the people losing trust in this and other organizations. The EZLN would later re-build this trust.

In 1983, the UU split and a new organization was built: Unión de Ejidos de la Selva (UE de la Selva)<sup>63</sup> which then in turn would participate in the creation of the ARIC-UU which would become the local “de facto subterranean government” (Stephen, 2002; 124).

The 80s saw the beginnings of the dissipation of state protectionism. The Portillo government (1976-1982) began to shift its focus away from land redistribution to modernization of production and marketing (Harvey, 1999: 118). Along with the interest

---

<sup>63</sup>Harvey considers this the “most important organization prior to the EZLN,” (Harvey, 1999: 193).

and investment in cattle, coffee, bananas, precious hardwoods, and construction in Chiapas, the discovery of vast oil reserves fueled the drive towards industry privatization and resulted in the consolidation of a new elite class: the technocrats. As Gilly points out, “[p]rivatization of public companies, foreign investment, and entering NAFTA would complete the consolidation of a new leading elite in Mexico” (Gilly, 1998: 287).

The combination of economic liberalization and a lack of political democratization (Gilly, 1998: 287), with continued repression in the countryside, would prove to be explosive. The often violent confrontations with government forces and large landowners made local organizations realize that they needed to foster unity at the regional and national levels (Harvey, 1999: 131-132).

A plethora of mobilizations materialized as new organizations and networks were formed and resistance became more openly vigorous. Multiple tactics of mobilizing protest were employed: “marches to cities in the state and to Mexico City, vigils in urban plazas and outside public buildings, hunger strikes, demonstrations.” At this point, social movements were being re-invigorated and “modernized” from below with an emphasis on autonomous decision-making (Gilly, 1998: 287). However, any concessions had been exhausted and the government resorted to overt repression of any popular mobilizations, often through paramilitary forces, and the fostering of rivalries in the hopes of exacerbating internal conflicts.<sup>64</sup>

The State and the CNC’s increasing focus on industrial development and export production, combined with the “agricultural crisis,” peasant hostility and the breaking down of CNC credibility, led peasants to begin to search for alternatives that fell outside the realm of “official” peasant organizations. Independent organizations began to expand their concerns and demands beyond the economic sphere of credit and product marketing,

---

<sup>64</sup> For more detail on the repression, including specific events, see Gilly, 1998: 288-290.

to the political sphere addressing inequality, representation, and corruption, as well as to the cultural sphere to demand Indian rights and autonomy. The result was the synthesis of economic, material, and cultural demands by these political actors (Mattiace, 2003: 32).

Another organization, the CNPA (Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala) was a radical, anti-capitalist group concerned with land reform based on the *Plan de Ayala* which was drafted by Zapata in 1911. Many radical independent organizations joined the CNPA, such as COCEI (Coalition of Workers, Peasants, and Students of the Isthmus) from Juchitán, Oaxaca, the Unión Campesina Emiliano Zapata (UCEZ) from Michoacán, and OCEZ (Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata) from Chiapas. The latter was focused on land reform issues and on the eviction and relocation of *ejidos* due to dam development (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 70). All three organizations were “militant, class-based peasant organizations,” and, Mattiace argues, with a majority indigenous membership, they combined “demands for land reform with respect for indigenous language and cultural practices” (Mattiace, 2003: 35). These organizations strategically used ethnic revitalization in their political struggles for land reform, municipal democracy against *caciques*, human rights, and the recognition of ethnic identity and cultural practices. However, indigenous and peasant organizations were still seen as separate. The shared concerns of each were not addressed as such by the government or even by marxist intellectuals<sup>65</sup>, until, as Collier and Quaratiello (1999) argue, intellectuals began analyzing peasants and indigenous peoples as part of “Mexico’s agrarian class structure” (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 69-70).

Still another group, CIOAC (the Independent Central of Campesino and Agricultural Workers), which was formed in 1975, had ties to the Mexican Communist Party as a peasant-class vanguard in the struggle to unionize agricultural workers. This

<sup>65</sup> They considered ethnicity as “false consciousness.”

organization's strategy was to take legal action against ranchers and the government for better pay and working conditions (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 70-71). More orthodox in its political views in that peasants were presented as rural proletariat, CIOAC did not at first agree with presenting indigenous demands since, they felt, it may compromise the struggles for land reform and land distribution. A rift in the organization developed between those in favour of pursuing a struggle for indigenous rights, and those who were against it. Despite this split, which continued into the early 90s, the local CIOAC faction began and spearheaded the struggle for indigenous autonomy in the Tojolabal region of Comitán (Mattiace, 2003: 35-36).

Collier and Quaratiello's analysis (1999) contends that three types of organizations -- land-based, labor-based, and credit-based -- created a network that spread throughout Chiapas.<sup>66</sup> Sometimes they supported each other, at other times they were at odds with each other. The result was the enabling of political coordination and communication throughout the whole area. This would have vast implications for future organizations, primarily the EZLN.

Despite suffering internal divisions, OCEZ remained a combatitive organization while CIOAC mobilized protests and sought alliances with other organizations and political forces (Harvey, 1999: 157). As a result of CIOAC's mobilizations, the government acknowledged their demands and assured them action would be taken. That was the last word on the matter; the government remained inactive. New tactics were required since the current demands only fell on deaf ears. As the OCEZ, CIOAC, and the UU faction from the Quippec region continued negotiating with both state and federal government, and often suffering the co-optation or assassination of their leaders,

---

<sup>66</sup> Women's artisan cooperatives (e.g., for weavers or potters) emerged in the 1970s. These cooperatives often provided a space for women to participate in politics. These cooperatives are often overlooked by movement analysts (Nash, 2001: 96-97).

communities grew tired of years of failed organization (Harvey, 1999: 164). The government's inactivity increased the campesinos' frustration, and caused tensions to rise. Wary of conventional and legal strategies of negotiation with government and large landowners after years of co-optation, failure, and empty promises, some community leaders began to voice another option -- armed resistance.

### **Growing Frustration and Dissatisfaction:**

The Zapatistas fought against the poverty and exploitation imposed by a corrupt government and by the local effects of global market forces. However, as Collier and Quaratiello note, "the movement also developed in counterpoint to the dozens of other peasant organizations operating in the state" (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 54-55). Campesinos were disillusioned not only by the government and state-run organizations, but also by independent peasant organizations. They were frustrated with the more "peaceful" tactics endorsed by other groups or factions who sought changes through appealing to judicial avenues or "the law."<sup>67</sup> The Zapatistas set themselves in opposition to these organizations by rejecting their methods and ideologies. "Communities were tired of failure, manipulation, leadership rivalries, and ideological disputes" (Harvey, 1999: 164). The inadequacy of the government responses to peaceful demands led many campesinos to support an armed option. Stephen, through the example of Comandante Trinidad (Trini) and others, shows how many indigenous campesinos "gave up on

---

<sup>67</sup> The "law" is considered by many as the only way towards change. Many organizations tried this route. The EZLN, however, realize that sitting at this particular table would entail co-optation since it is the government that wields the power of the law. Collier argues "that the Zapatistas have rendered judgement against the fundamental tactic of two decades of independent organization--that of seeking change through legal channels. Time and again, the national state has shown its capacity to exercise the law as a toll for power, selectively and illegitimately, to thwart the revindication of indigenous, peasant, and worker demands" (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 80).

"Constitutional laws have not been complied with by those who govern the country, while, on the contrary, we peasants and Indians are made to pay for the tiniest error, under the full weight of the laws drawn up by those who are the first to violate them" (EZLN, quoted in Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 81).

independent organizations as a means of producing change, and decided to risk everything and join the EZLN” (2002: 104).

Political cleavages developed between three camps: CNC-istas (tied to the ruling PRI), CIOAC, and UU Lucha Campesina later to be affiliated with ARIC-UU (Stephen, 2002: 127). OCEZ and CIOAC demonstrations between 1983-88 were severely repressed by government actions, including the assassination of leaders. Members of organizations had few options for response; as Comandante Tacho recalls, “people didn’t have arms to respond. There were only words” (Tacho quoted in Stephen, 2002: 129). Organization members tried all forms of protest strategies from demonstrations and marches, to taking officials prisoner. No one took notice; nothing changed. They began to organize a path involving armed struggle. In the words of Comandante Tacho: “So for us the EZLN was a *pan caliente* [something desirable--literally, a fresh loaf of bread]. This was the solution. That is what we were looking for.... In the organizations, we couldn’t get anything. The only thing was that we learned how the government worked, how it deceives people” (Tacho quoted in Stephen, 2002: 129). And, as Marcos says, “avenues for political action were closing down, and the gap was growing between the two Mexicos .... So we decided that something had to be done” (Marcos, quoted in Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 84).

After decades of organizing, little headway had been made. Peasants were still subject to violence and repression from ranchers and their hired hands. However, membership in these organizations taught, or gave, individuals political experience. Through the network of organizations struggling for land reform and distribution, indigenous leaders came into contact with other indigenous people and campesinos, resulting in a base network for future political action and organization. The growing

dissatisfaction with unmet “needs” spawned the rise of networks of organizations “outside” the “official” or government-sponsored organizations.

### **A More Radical Current Develops:**

ARIC (Rural Association of Collective Interest) arose in the 80s and advocated on change through institutional avenues and reform, focusing on negotiation with the government. Divisions arose between ARIC, which pursued credits in exchange for *campesino* lands, and the more militant ACIEZ, which followed a path of resistance.<sup>68</sup> The Emiliano Zapata Independent Peasant Alliance (ACIEZ) emerged in 1989 as the EZLN’s “public face.” As tensions continued to rise in 1991, with the EZLN clandestine leadership (CCRI) in place, ACIEZ (Independent Peasant Alliance Emiliano Zapata) began to pull supporters away from ARIC-UU especially in the Cañadas and the highlands.<sup>69</sup> In 1992, ACIEZ added “National” to its name to become ANCIEZ after joining together with peasant organizations in six other States. ANCIEZ and its affiliated peasant organization began to advocate an armed uprising, (Stephen, 2002: 137).

ANCIEZ’s first organized mobilization was a march in Ocosingo to protest the changes to Article 27 and the impending NAFTA. They mobilized another march on April 10th, which was the anniversary of Zapata’s assassination. They took part in the protest coalition called “500 Years of Indigenous, Black, and Popular Resistance in

---

<sup>68</sup> The divisions resulted in a slew of expulsions from communities throughout the Lacandon and resulted in polarized settlements (Weinberg, 2000: 104).

<sup>69</sup> The government tried to appease (and co-opt) ARIC UU by delivering resources to help build infrastructure in the hopes of persuading peasants to support a less radical option than the EZLN. The move did not work. EZLN support remained high and the moderation of some ARIC leaders caused a split in the organization with half siding with the Zapatistas (Harvey, 1999: 214). Marcos and the Zapatistas then continued to condemn ARIC-UU (among other organizations) for selling-out to the government (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 78-79). The government also flooded the region with material resources in the hopes that this strategy would sway support in their favor, e.g., PRONASOL (see Warnock, 1995: 92-95). The government also used tactics to divide-and-conquer the support bases, e.g., they formed the State Council of Indigenous and Peasant Organizations (CEIOC) hoping it would limit Zapatista support. This tactic backfired when the CEIOC declared support for the EZLN (Russell, 1995: 58-59).

Chiapas" (detailed account, Ross, 2001) on October 12, 1992 to protest against Columbus Day. Columbus's quincentennial (October 12, 1992) saw a precursor to the Zapatista rebellion, what Gilly (1998) called a "trial run" for the occupation of San Cristóbal<sup>70</sup>. In the Columbus Day protest, thousands of indigenous people marched into San Cristóbal de las Casas and pulled down the statue of the conquistador and "founder" of Chiapas, Diego de Mazariegos, and dragged it through the streets the very same way the conquistadors "punished" any rebellious Indians (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 18, also see Ross, 2000: 7). After the protest march, the members of ANCIEZ quickly disappeared. They would re-emerge on January 1st, 1994. By 1993, many of the ARIC reformists joined ANCIEZ and began EZLN military training (Stephen, 2002: 141). It was at the start of 1993 that ANCIEZ would go underground and many of its members would become EZLN *guerrilleros* (Gilly, 1998: 294).

#### **Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional (FLN) and the EZLN:**

Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional (FLN) was formed in Monterrey in 1969. They were raided by police and all but a small group of members were killed or imprisoned. Those who were left escaped to Chiapas and began training as the Emiliano Zapata Guerrilla Nucleus (Womack, 1999:190). Guerrilla training camps in Chiapas were wiped-out by police forces in 1974, but a cell still remained. In 1980, the FLN issued its mandate in which it called for the formation of a Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Womack, 1999: 191, 194).<sup>71</sup>

November 16, 1983 marks the date of the EZLN's inception. At this time, a small group of FLN organizers accompanied by indigenous Tzotzils established themselves in

<sup>70</sup> Marcos even videotaped the whole event in preparation for the "occupation" of the city just over a year later, (Harvey, 1999: 198).

<sup>71</sup> See Womack, 1999: 192-197, for the document on the FLN's statutes and demands. There is a strong similarity to the EZLN's demands that would be issued fourteen years later.

the *selva* Lacandón. Among these organizers was Subcomandante Marcos (Womack, 1999: 191). Marcos taught political economy and history to the local campesinos in the hopes of inciting a revolt. As Marcos recounts, “I went to teach what the people wanted: literacy and Mexican history. ... I joined the first group of indigenous *guerrilleros* in the mountains. They had a lot of political experience already, having participated in mass movements and they knew all about the problems of the left political parties. They had also been in prison, suffered torture, all of that. But they also demanded what they call the ‘political word’ [*la palabra política*]: history. The history of this country and of the struggle. So that was the task I arrived with” (Marcos quoted in Harvey, 1999: 165).

In teaching *la palabra política*, Marcos benefitted from a “cross-fertilization” of teachings. As he taught the history of agrarian reform and land distribution, he learned to listen and recognized the “political importance of patience” (Harvey, 1999: 166), mostly through discussions with *el viejo Antonio*, an elderly Tzeltal man who was the bridge between the guerrillas and the indigenous communities. Marcos began to realize that “the source of historical knowledge was the culture itself;” history was passed down from elders through stories. “The political message required a new language, and it was found in the convergence of the Zapatistas’ critical interpretation of Mexican history and the indigenous people’s own stories of humiliation, exploitation, and racism. Crucially, this convergence allowed for the [indigenous stories] to gain political direction over the movement” (Harvey, 1999: 166).

Though the indigenous people in the area agreed with the political, economic, and social critiques of the EZLN, they did not want to be led by “outsiders”. The EZLN rebels understood that they would get full support from the indigenous communities only when these communities had the final say as to the course of action. An overall command

structure was formed to cover the widely dispersed support groups. It was called the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee (CCRI), and it was, and remains, exclusively indigenous. The EZLN rebels realized that they could not proceed as a “traditional” movement directed by a cadre of “visionaries.” Instead they would need to rely on a large mass base. The years of organization in the area provided just such a base. The EZLN “inverted the traditional leader-masses relationship” by listening to that base and so “provided a distinctive model of popular and democratic organization” (Harvey, 1999: 167).

The EZLN won support in the communities by organizing from the bottom-up, recognizing that to ensure legitimacy and support there had to be an indigenous base to any organizing. Indeed, this recognition is one reason the Clandestine Indigenous Revolution Committee (CCRI) was established. This form of organizing also followed the familiar principles of Popular Politics and of Catholic Liberation Theology (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 85). According to Comandante Tacho, the EZLN underwent a clandestine process of development until it was firmly entrenched in local communities (Stephen, 2002: 136). Many of the Zapatista *comandancia* were members of campesino organizations before joining the EZLN. For example, Tacho was part of those who organized the ejido union Lucha Campesina in 1979, then became a member of CIOAC (Stephen, 2002: 120, 129).

With an organizational form that would garner support in place, the EZLN began a simultaneous campaign of providing services to local communities and military recruitment. They began a vaccination program, as well as health and literacy campaigns. They also undertook such projects as building ditches, digging latrines, cutting fire wood, etc. Their literacy program focused on teaching women to read (Stephen, 2002: 135). The

EZLN worked hard at recruiting women and youth, and held clandestine meetings away from villages, where, as compañeras persuaded others to join, their membership would swell, in some cases encompassing entire towns (Stephen, 2002: 135). Establishment of a Revolutionary Women's Law (see Womack, 1999) also drew the support of women from across the Lacandón. For many campesinos, women, men and youth alike, the EZLN offered a visible solution as it provided food, protection, equality for women, contraceptives, care for their sick, as well as vaccination and medication against malaria, diarrhea, and especially cholera during the 1991 epidemic (Weinberg, 2000: 99).

Most early EZLN members held dual posts in the EZLN and in local organizations, in which they would carefully distribute literature and discuss issues to entice new recruits. The EZLN offered military training to youths and young peasants from a variety of organizations, particularly those who were members of ARIC-UU. Military training for youth who had grown up watching the "security forces" of large landowners, belligerent polices forces, and local caciques' thugs intimidate campesinos for years, earned the EZLN many new recruits (Stephen, 2002: 135).

Originally the EZLN was formed for self-defense. The peasants needed to protect themselves from the large ranchers' "security forces"<sup>72</sup>. According to Marcos, "[a]s far as the peasants are concerned, the EZLN arose as a self-defense group to defend against the ranchers' hired gunmen, who try to take their land and maltreat them, limiting the social and political advancement of the Indians. So they took up arms so as not to be defenseless. Then, later, the comrades saw it wasn't enough to do self-defense of a single *ejido* or community but rather to establish alliances with others and to begin to make up military and paramilitary contingents on a larger scale, still for the purpose of self-

<sup>72</sup> Besides the violence suffered at the hands of ranchers and large landowners, CNC groups began staging violent attacks against communities where independent organization was taking place (Harvey, 1999: 164-165). An example of the extent of anti-independent organizing violence: between 1974-1987, there were 165 (documented) "political assassinations" in rural Chiapas, (Mattiace, 2003: 31).

defense” (Marcos, quoted in Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 87). Thus the EZLN was born as a “regional network of armed self-defense units” (Harvey, 1999: 165). The revamping of Article 27 then served as a catalyst to turn the self-defense force of the EZLN into an armed insurgency group.<sup>73</sup>

The authority structure of existing local communities generally consisted of three levels: a communal assembly, which held authority over a second level of elected officials, and under these officials, a variety of local committees (Stephen, 2002: 124). When the Zapatistas emerged, some communities were supportive, while in others a split resulted in three distinct types of authority: the Church, ARIC-UU, and the Zapatistas. This split was manifested at the second authority level, that of the elected officials. Therefore, the EZLN strategically sought to overcome the split by appealing to the communal assembly, or the highest authority level. In so doing, the EZLN confirmed the practice of decision-making through consensus and governing by obeying (*mandar obedeciendo*) (Stephen, 2002: 125).

Community identity and cohesion were strengthened through the recognition that before any action can take place, consensus must be established, and that leaders would govern by obeying (Harvey, 1999: 74-75). Any organization that adheres to a premise of governing by obeying as the Zapatistas did, would garner strong support in the Lacandón since such a “commitment to accountability beckons powerfully to people who have

<sup>73</sup> “The thing that most radicalized our compañeros were the changes to Article 27; that was the door that was shut on the Indian people’s ability to survive in a legal and peaceful manner. That was the reason they decided to take up arms, so that they could be heard, because they were tired of paying such a high blood tax” (Marcos, quoted in Harvey, 1999: 258). For the changes to Article 27, see Harvey, 1999: 187. “[T]he government had the brilliant idea of reforming Article 27 of the Constitution, and this was a powerful catalyst in the communities. These reforms got rid of any legal possibility for obtaining land.... This slammed the door shut for indigenous people to survive in a legal and peaceful manner. This is why they took up arms” (Marcos, in Zapatistas, 1994). Before the amendments to Article 27, peasants did hold out hope that one day they may be landowners. Salinas’ reforms put an end to this psychological safety valve. Estimates are that 15 million *campesinos* will be displaced by 2010 from their lands due to the impact of NAFTA. This includes domestic agricultural restructuring, forfeiting of land distribution, ending guaranteed prices, ending government subsidies for production and marketing (Barry, 1995: 194).

experienced decades of disenfranchisement in which politicians, bureaucrats, and power holders treat the populace as beholden to them rather than vice versa” (Collier and Quaratiello, 1999: 153). The EZLN rejected a *caudillo*-style leader and were part of a move toward decentralized forms of organization (Harvey, 1999: 69). The democratization processes of the EZLN and its decentralized organization were thus a part of a resistance to *caudillismo* (Russell, 1995: 42-43).

The decision-making process of the EZLN also corresponded to the modes developed in agrarian and indigenous communities in Chiapas (Gilly, 1998: 302). *La consulta*, for example put the EZLN leadership in touch with other visions and views. “*La consulta*, ‘consulting the civilian following’--which does not exist in other types of organizations--appears to have been the effective instrument for correcting or equilibrating [the EZLN leadership’s] perceptions and putting them in tune with different visions” (Gilly, 1998: 304). The process of *la consulta* guards against the leadership losing touch with the current demands and needs of the communities, and ensures that they are representing the communities democratically. In effect, it keeps them embedded in the everyday of the communities they represent. According to Marcos, this consultation process was used in the decision to go to war (see Stephen, 2002: 139-141).

Marcos and the other early EZLN members gained the people’s trust by living under the same conditions as those in poverty-stricken communities, eating the same food, and even subjecting themselves to harsher conditions in the mountains. Inhabiting *la montaña* brought a mythical cultural aspect that lent further credence to the EZLN among local community members. *La montaña* is seen as a “magical world inhabited by the whole of Mayan history, by the spirits of ancestors, and by Zapata himself” (Harvey, 1999: 166). Living in and coming down from the mountains had much more of

an effect than if the EZLN had come from the city or the university. In Spanish, *la montaña* is more than an elevated region, “it means the place outside political jurisdiction, the place of outlaws, what is called ‘the bush’ in Africa” (Bardacke, 1995: 257). Marcos and the rest of the EZLN gained peoples’ trust by living in *la montaña*, since to “live in la montaña was to inhabit a respected and feared place of stories, myths, and ghosts” (Harvey, 1999: 165). This is how, with the help of early supporters such as old Antonio (immortalized in many of Marcos’ stories), the EZLN were able to enter local communities and begin gaining support. After the contested results of the 1988 elections the EZLN would swell in numbers.<sup>74</sup> Then again, after the collapse of the coffee market in 1989, the EZLN saw a surge in membership as campesinos associated with more reformist organizations such as ARIC saw the need for more drastic measures and switched their allegiance to the EZLN (Harvey, 1999 and Stephen, 2002).

Harvey (1999) highlights how the EZLN differed from previous organizations in Chiapas: instead of seeking concessions from the state, the EZLN sought the dismantling of authoritarian, non-democratic, neocolonialist political framework, or structure, in Mexico and Chiapas; where the UU focused on an economic strategy, the EZLN sought political changes towards autonomous control of processes of production; where the OCEZ succumbed to factionalism and internal disputes, the EZLN “offer[ed] the possibility of solidarity and respect for different political traditions;” where CIOAC succumbed to *caudillismo*, the EZLN relied on consensual decision-making throughout hundreds of communities. According to Harvey, the Zapatistas’ innovation was their “political organization, strategy, and objectives” (1999: 227-228). What this chapter has attempted to show is that much of this innovation was in conserving what already

---

<sup>74</sup> “We *zapatistas* went from being hundreds to thousands in a short time: I’m talking about one year, 1988-1989. We went from being 80 combatants to 1,300 in less than a year” (Marcos, quoted in Gilly, 1998: 292).

worked in existing organizations and discarding what did not. The Zapatistas were thus responsible for opening spaces for “oppositional voices,” for placing indigenous rights and culture directly into the debate on democracy in Mexico, and for exemplifying a radical democratic politics. After decades of exclusion, the Zapatistas are seeking inclusion from the bottom-up. *Nunca más un México sin nosotros. Never again a Mexico without us.*

### **Conclusion:**

The support of local communities was crucial for the Zapatistas. These communities fed them, did not give up their whereabouts, and comprised their mass base. Without the support of the local communities the Zapatistas could not have lasted for ten years let alone undertaken a successful uprising. The key to initiating support from local communities was accessing and mobilizing the network of local grassroots organizations to present a viable alternative to the ineffective, corrupt, stagnant, and discordant peasant organizations in the Chiapan rural landscape. A long history of peasant organizations had not brought much change in the campesinos’ everyday conditions and demands remained unmet. Disenchantment with political organization was widespread.

The EZLN breathed life into political organization in Chiapas and Mexico by supplying an alternative that involved action. Against the “vertical lines of clientelistic control” (Harvey, 1999: 23), the Zapatistas present a horizontal web of network organization. By affirming collective indigenous community identity and cohesion, by organizing through horizontal collective democratic decision-making structures of concensus and consultations based on traditional models, by endorsing an accountable leadership that led by obeying, and by providing services, from protection and

vaccinations, to labour and literacy programs, to communities, the Zapatistas accessed and mobilized support through the network of independent indigenous campesino organizations in Chiapas.

This chapter has shown how the Zapatistas used an existing network of peasant organization to position themselves in the Chiapan political landscape. In order to expand this position, the Zapatistas understood that frames of reference that could speak to all of these factionalized individuals and groups would be necessary. The Zapatistas had to present themselves and voice their demands with enough resonance to garner widespread support and foster cohesion. The following two chapters will look at how the Zapatistas framed and broadcast themselves and their cause at the local, national, and international levels.

## **Chapter 4: Framing**

### **Introduction:**

Social movements “frame, or assign meaning to and interpret, relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow and Benford, 1988: 198). Framing is a means of organizing experiences and guiding individual or collective action by bringing meaning to events.<sup>75</sup> It is a “conscious strategic effort by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (Snow and Benford, 1988).

The Zapatistas’ frames incorporate the cultural and the symbolic, and their production is a strategic activity. These frames are expressions of a lived experience, they are embedded in social reality, and they are moves against hegemonic structures of meaning and information. The Zapatistas’ framing of issues, meanings, intentions is a “crucial practice” in their mobilization and collective action. Their eloquent, imaginative, often ironic, and poignant framing had an international and cross-cultural range, and their messages appealed to a global audience, winning support from across Mexico and from around the globe. These frames “resonate,” and allow the Zapatista uprising to avoid being pegged as merely a local issue.

The Zapatistas hit a common vein allowing people to identify with them and to feel they were justified in their rebellion. Even middle-class people, having had the experience of living through the economic difficulties of the 80s and of losing some security and status, could understand their plight. “Many Mexicans saw the rebels as people much like themselves who had been pushed to the wall” (La Botz, 1995: 5). The

<sup>75</sup> Frames are always shifting and are contested (Zald, 1999: 267).

Zapatistas communicated on a “frequency” that many people shared, and their words, ideas, and demands resonated strongly. As Marcos puts it, “There were many accomplices or, to use a radio term, there were many people tuned in to the same frequency, but nobody turned the radio on ... Suddenly they [the EZLN] turn it on and we discover that there are others on the same radio frequency -- I’m talking of radio *communication*, not *listening* to the radio -- and we begin to talk and to communicate and to realize that there are things in common, that it seems there are more things in common than differences” (Marcos, quoted in Holloway, 1998: 177). Through their evocation of dignity, myth, truth, and an ignored “reality,” the Zapatistas were able to link local issues with global struggles and global issues with local struggles. In building a bridge between the local and the global, they consolidated local collective identities with global support networks. Without their practice of framing, the Zapatistas would not have been able to successfully mobilize collective action. In examining the dynamics of the Zapatistas’ framing practices, this chapter will focus on their accessing a collective historical memory and the outlining of a collective identity and of opponents. It will then highlight the cross-pollination between revolutionary forces and indigenous cultural practices, while emphasizing indigenous traditions and symbols in the Zapatistas’ frames. The Zapatistas’ articulation of demands, and of the concepts of dignity, R/reality, *México profundo*, and of “a world with many worlds in it” will also be addressed.

### **Accessing a collective historical memory:**

To present themselves, justify their actions, and draw support, the Zapatistas accessed already present frames, re-affirmed them and re-appropriated them. By invoking the image and name of Zapata, the hero of the Mexican Revolution, the Zapatistas

accessed the accumulation of collective experience and used the ideologies and myths contained in the cultural codes of that collective memory to legitimize their struggle, demands, and uprising (Rajchenberg and Héau-Lambert, 1998: 20). As well, by accessing a “cultural basis” (Harvey, 1999:166), they were able to generate popular support.

In their first Declaration from the Lacandon jungle, the Zapatistas situated themselves in a history of struggle spanning from Conquest to the present. They inserted themselves into the history of indigenous resistance to domination and exploitation: “We are the product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery; then in the insurgent-led war of Independence against Spain; later in the fight to avoid being absorbed by North American expansion; next to proclaim our Constitution and expel the French from our soil; and finally, after the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz refused to fairly apply the reform laws, in the rebellion where the people created their own leaders. In that rebellion Villa and Zapata emerged--poor men, like us.” With these words, the Zapatistas located themselves within the Mexican historical context and identified themselves as legitimate, committed, and justified in taking-up arms.

Zapata, the popular hero of the Mexican Revolution, was claimed by the Mexican government for decades as an image of validation for their agrarian policies, until he was reappropriated by the EZLN and reconfigured as a symbol for resistance and struggle (Stephen, 2002: 147). The EZLN recognized Zapata as the “hero who [would] best symbolize the traditions of revolutionary struggle” for the Mexican people<sup>76</sup> (Womack, 1999: 196), since he was the “defender of the peasants who died for his ideals” (Rajchenberg and Héau-Lambert, 1998: 19). Thus, by incorporating Zapata into their struggle and into their name, the Zapatistas present themselves as his heirs in the Mexican collective experience. *Zapatismo* invokes a common national history not in political

---

<sup>76</sup> The use of “popular imagery” resonated with people throughout Central America (Fox, 1994).

rhetoric, but in a language easily accessible to all.<sup>77</sup> The Zapatistas “address both the present and Mexican memory” (Gilly, 1998: 309).

The historical memory of Mexico acknowledges that the nation was formed through two revolutions in 1810 and in 1910 (Gilly, 1998: 309). Therefore, the image of thousands of masked indigenous soldiers “taking up arms” held symbolic strength, striking powerfully at this collective memory.

“Taking up arms” is not merely a rhetorical expression. Mexican cultural, social and political history abounds with images of “taking up arms” as part of a deep historical experience of revolt. In one analysis, Gilly uses an often-evoked image of a peasant turning over his arms to President Cárdenas in reaction to his redistributive land reform process. This omnipresent photograph represents for Gilly an aspect of latent revolt in Mexican culture and polity. The peasant laying down arms when land distribution is effected is also an expression of its inherent opposite, that is, the taking up of arms when the land distribution process is abandoned. Gilly sees “taking up arms” as an expression of a “right”, a symbolic and historical expression with vast material and political ramifications (Gilly, 1998: 269), that is interwoven into the very fabric of Mexican cultural history, life, and experience.<sup>78</sup>

The Zapatistas’ uprising, apart from being a physical event, was also a symbolic gesture against a seemingly insurmountable, all-powerful state-party apparatus. The

Zapatistas denounced the technocrats’ rhetoric of “democracy” and “law” as false and

<sup>77</sup> Like Zapata, the Zapatistas issued “revolutionary laws,” yet organized themselves based on “reality” instead of a “text.”

<sup>78</sup> In their Declaration of the Lacandon, the first order for the military forces of the EZLN was to “[a]dvance to the capital of the country, defeat the Mexican Federal Army, protecting and liberating the civilian population along [their] liberating march, and permit the liberated peoples to elect, freely and democratically, their own administrative authorities” (EZLN Declaration of War, Zapatistas, 1995: 53). The proclamation that they would advance to the capital was taken as a (blatantly suicidal) threat to taking state power through force. The advance to Mexico City, however, is a deep rooted symbolic act and it must be understood in this dimension according to Gilly (1998: 277). This symbolic act activates the collective memory of a tradition of this type of strategic maneuver. Also see Tutino, 1986, on similar historically loaded moves.

self-serving. Someone had stood-up to the one-party State, and ignited a new radical pole on the left in Mexico (García Aguilar, 2001: 185).

What was important for the Zapatistas was to articulate local concerns and specific cultural meanings to an audience across regional and national boundaries, and to connect these concerns and meanings to broader struggles. In order to do so, the Zapatistas encouraged the unification of disparate and heterogeneous actors; all those subject to exploitation, oppression, injustice, and domination would join together under the banner of Zapata. Thus, the Zapatistas brought a multiplicity of resistances and struggles into their uprising, and thereby asserted themselves as a valid part of a global web of resistances. The following quote by Marcos exemplifies this strategy: “Marcos is gay in San Francisco, a black in South Africa, Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Isidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, an indigenous person in the streets of San Cristóbal, a gang member in Neza, a rocker on campus, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in the Department of Defense, a feminist in a political party, a communist in the post-Cold War period, a prisoner in Cintalapa, a pacifist in Bosnia, a mapuche in the Andes, a teacher in the National Confederation of Educational Workers [a state-run union], an artist without a gallery or portfolio, a housewife in any neighbourhood in any city in any part of Mexico on a Saturday night, a guerrilla in Mexico at the end of the twentieth century, a striker in the CTM [state-run trade union confederation], ... a woman alone in a Metro station at 10 p.m., a retired person standing around the zocalo, a peasant without land, an underground editor, an unemployed worker, a doctor with no office, a non-conformist student, a dissident against neoliberalism, a writer without books or readers, and a zapatista in the Mexican southeast. In other words,... Marcos is every untolerated, oppressed, exploited minority that is resisting and saying ‘Enough!’” (Zapatistas, 1995:

310-311).

Days after this proclamation, hundreds of thousands of supporters in Mexico City's *zocalo*, and around the world, would proclaim, "We are all Marcos!" "We are all Zapatistas!" Having effectively brought together different struggles that already existed (Holloway, 1998: 16), the Zapatistas established "chains of equivalence" (Lacau and Mouffe, 2001) between their local struggle and those struggling against oppression everywhere. The Zapatistas' proclamations were seen as sincere and were widely supported. They tapped into everyone's struggle. Everyone's struggle became theirs, their struggle became everyone's. As Comandante Ana María proclaimed in 1996, "behind us are the we that are you. Behind our balaclavas is the face of all the excluded women. Of all the forgotten indigenous people. Of all the persecuted homosexuals. Of all the despised youth. Of all the beaten migrants. Of all those imprisoned for their word and thought. Of all the humiliated workers. Of all those who have died from being forgotten. Of all the simple and ordinary men and women who do not count, who are not seen, who are not named, who have no tomorrow" (Comandante Ana María quoted in Holloway, 1998: 189). By engaging "traditional radical themes [the Zapatistas] developed a discourse that spoke not only to the most down trodden people in Chiapas, but to disadvantaged Mexicans throughout the republic" (Hellman, 2000: 166), and, ultimately, across the globe.<sup>79</sup>

### **From the "cross-pollination," a hybrid:**

The Zapatistas resisted framing themselves in the terms of the traditional revolutionary vocabulary. Terms like "proletariat," "socialism," "vanguard," and "seeking

---

<sup>79</sup> For a discussion on the "global exchange of symbols," as well as the borrowing of Zapatista discourse, frames, symbols and images, primarily by the anti-globalization movement, see Couch (2001).

[of] state power” were not stressed. Instead they continuously highlighted the importance of dialogue, specifically strategies for “listening,” and continuous questioning. Marcos describes this lesson of learning to listen: “That is the great lesson that the indigenous communities teach to the original EZLN. The original EZLN, the one that is formed in 1983, is a political organization in the sense that it speaks and what it says has to be done. The indigenous communities teach it to listen, and that is what we learn. The principal lesson that we learn from the indigenous people is that we have to learn to hear, to listen” (Marcos, quoted in Holloway, 1998: 163, and in Couch, 2001: 250). Focusing on “listening,” which involves having leaders that led by obeying their constituents and who engage in a process of reflexive questioning results in a cross-pollination between Marxist insurgent language and indigenous cultural practices. This cross-pollination provided frames<sup>80</sup> that crossed local, regional, and national borders and resonated with a global network community of Zapatista supporters.

At its emergence in 1994, Zapatismo was a hybrid, blending local and national elements. Marcos claims that “it was a very vague initial synthesis, a mixture of patriotic values, of the historical inheritance of what was the clandestine left in Mexico in the decade of the 1960s, of elements of indigenous culture, of military elements of Mexican history, of what were the guerrilla movements of Central and South America, of national liberation movements...” (Marcos quoted in Stephen, 2002: 149). Marcos and the cadre of early revolutionaries who sought to incite a revolt in rural Chiapas unexpectedly encountered indigenous “realities”: “Our square conception of the world and of revolution was badly dented in the confrontation with the indigenous realities of Chiapas. Out of those blows, something new (which does not necessarily mean ‘good’) emerged, that which today is known as ‘neo-Zapatismo’” (Marcos, quoted in Holloway, 1998: 161).

---

<sup>80</sup> It is important to note that this cross-pollination is a frame in itself.

The cross-pollination resulting from the collision between revolutionaries and indigenous cultural practices was traced in the previous chapter.

A symbolic example of this cross-pollination is the unifying symbol of *Votán-Zapata* which cuts across ethnic groups, by blending a cultural icon with a national historical hero-figure, to bind support between a variety of groups. *Votán-Zapata* is the guardian of the heart of the people<sup>81</sup>, and is the unifying symbol for the “true” and “genuine” people (*hombres y mujeres verdaderos*) as the Zapatistas refer to themselves and their supporters. The hybrid symbol of *Votán-Zapata* was accessible to, and resonated for, many different individuals and groups by linking the specific and local *Votán* to the collectively-held national historical-cultural symbol of *Zapata*. The resulting hybrid symbol resonated not only for indigenous people, but also for all those suffering injustice, misery, and oppression; it became the symbol for all the marginalized who struggle (Stephen, 2002: 158-169).

Marcos, in *Questions & Swords* (2001), narrates how the gods *Votán* and *Ik’al* learn to walk, co-exist, and to move forward together. This narration is intended not only as “a metaphor for the Tzeltal people but also suggest[s] a path for others who want to know the answers to their question: how do we move together? The answer they provide is: together, but separated and in agreement” (Stephen, 2002: 162). *Votán* and *Ik’al*’s question is fundamental for establishing and mobilizing collective action (*Ibid.*).

Combining the symbol of *Votán* with that of *Zapata*, Marcos was able to cover over local differences and conflicts, and to unite indigenous culture with a variety of players, from *ejidatarios* to urban students. However, as Stephen cautions, unifying people in Chiapas,

---

<sup>81</sup> “It was, and is, his name in the named things. His tender word stops and starts inside our pain. He is and is not in these lands; *Votán Zapata*, guardian and heart of the people... He took his name from those who have no name, his face from those with no face; he is sky on the mountain. *Votán*, guardian and heart of the people. And our road, unnamable, and faceless, took its name in us: *Zapatista Army of National Liberation*” (in Zapatistas, 1994: 210-213).

or anywhere, sacrifices certain local cultural differences and uniqueness (Stephen, 2002: 174).

This emphasis on cross-pollination, on a transformation or hybridization through an encounter with indigenous culture, and of having to adapt marxist politics to a new language blending indigenous “stories” of history and experience, is a means to express and communicate the lived experience of indigenous people in Chiapas and thereby legitimize the EZLN and their struggle. Marcos’ narratives<sup>82</sup>, his words, are a product of this cross-pollination, and served to create bridges between worlds. In doing so he produced a new “poetics of cultural resistance” (Higgins, 2000: 359-360).

### **A Collective Identity:**

As can be seen from the symbolic framing of Votán-Zapata, the Zapatistas emphasized indigenous cultural codes, myth, meanings, and practices. This is important not only for the appeal and resonance of their frames in national and international spheres, but also at the local and regional level. Votán-Zapata, as the hybridization of different ethnic groups and languages, helped the Zapatistas frame a pluri-ethnic collective unity. A political unity was fomented through the affirmation of an ethnic identity, already in place through “practice and experience” (Gilly, 1998). The Zapatistas presented a political unity with strong community cohesion despite the many linguistic and cultural differences. Reference to common experiences of exploitation, suffering, landlessness, and the intermingling of diverse indigenous languages and traditions confirmed a common identity (Couch, 2001: 250). As such, an identity of resistance, or insurgent identity, was created as a vital step in maintaining a coherent and consolidated

---

<sup>82</sup> With his stories of old Antonio, mirrors, beetles who study neoliberalism, fables, poems, and children’s stories, Marcos has developed a narrative style all of his own.

insurgency. It established a “we”, “who we are,” and also a “them,” an “enemy”. It defined the insurgents’ relation with global forces, the state and federal governments, as well as local authorities.

Framing at the local level to attract support involves framing “enemies.” In this case the enemies were *caciques*, ranchers and large landowners, the government<sup>83</sup> and its officials, and paramilitaries.<sup>84</sup> An entire network of organizations were already involved for decades in struggles against these “enemies” (see above). This meant a support base for these struggles was already present in rural Chiapas. The Zapatistas were able to link these local struggles into a collective political unity.

The Zapatistas presented themselves as not merely a revolutionary cadre, but as an entire “community in rebellion,” or rather a community of communities, implying organization through traditional cooperative and collective practices<sup>85</sup> (King and Javier Villanueva, 1998). As Gilly writes: “The Indian idea of community (territory, language, and history) is rooted ‘in the sacred order (of religious beliefs, symbols and practices)

<sup>83</sup> Identifying the government as the enemy, *mal gobierno*, activates a collective memory of government oppression and corruption. It fixes the Zapatistas in a historical context justifying their uprising. “They are the same as those who opposed Hidalgo, Morelos, those who betrayed Vicente Guerrero; they are the same as those who sold more than half of our land to the foreign invaders; they are the same as those who brought in a European prince to govern us; they are the same as those who formed the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz and his technocrats; they are the same as those who opposed the Petroleum Expropriation; they are the same as those who massacred the railway workers in 1958 and the students in 1968; they are the same as those who today are taking everything, absolutely everything away from us” (Zapatistas, 1995: 52). These references are familiar to all Mexicans, and at the same time, the indigenous of Chiapas assert themselves as part of this history, a history from which they are often forgotten (Rajchenberg and Héau-Lambert, 1998: 28).

<sup>84</sup> For peasants in Mexico, the *objects* identified as enemies are the hacienda, the large land-holdings converted to feeding grounds for cattle instead of food for people, the transformation of land into commodity, the economic and political oppression, the inequality and extortion--in general all that depletes their autonomy and dignity. These enemies are personified in the large landholder, the *cacique*, the tax collector, the government official, the federal army, the security forces (Gilly, 1998: 327). This places the enemy in local and national terms.

<sup>85</sup> Collectivization of production, for example, as stipulated in the Zapatista Agrarian Law which sets limits on the amount of land that can be held (see Womack, 1999: 252-255), is a struggle against individualism. Collectivization as a strategy builds support: when some commit to work collectively, others see how productive and efficient it is. This then fosters support for this particular strategy of organization and influences decisions to join the EZLN. Furthermore, collectivization keeps people together while they work the fields, which is a protective measure against army or paramilitary violence (Stephen, 2002: 157).

where dominion over a locality is anchored (the political structure and history of the place) and where its time (from “immemorial times” to the historical present) is calculated.’ ... Respect for human beings is rooted in respect for this [community] order [an order that is traditionally hierarchical and not necessarily egalitarian], which defines the traditional norms of reciprocity, rights, and responsibilities within the community” (Gilly, 1998: 280-281, and quoting Van Young, 1995: 164, not seen by me). Harvey, too, highlights the importance of “community” for social solidarity, which “enables people to see each other as members of an oppressed collectivity” (Harvey, 1999: 33).

In all their actions, in everything they did from dress to their leadership and symbols, the Zapatistas emphasized and recalled indigenous identity, history and culture (Gilly, 1998: 310-311), and legitimized themselves through this identity, history, and culture. Though the conflict takes place in the present, *zapatismo* is legitimized through the past, the “time before.” The Zapatistas and the communities experience these two times together as *myth*. Timeless myths are expressed in the discourse as representations and demonstrations of communities’ identities. “This mythic thought is not a literary recourse or a nostalgic romance about the past. It exists --it lives-- in the Indian community, inextricably woven into the rationality with which that community has to confront the world of the state and the market” (Gilly, 1998: 324). The employment of this myth became a form of resistance. The use of myth, as well as stories, jokes, songs, when framing, is what Scott (1990) calls the “hidden transcript” that is used to subvert the dominant. It is part of what Harvey (1999) calls the “infrapolitics of everyday forms of resistance,” and is produced through framed cultural meanings.

### **Indigenous Symbols and Traditions:**

"[O]ur truth cannot be hidden because it is the truth of everyone..." (Zapatistas, 1994: 306-309). In justifying their uprising, their demands, and themselves, the Zapatistas framed themselves as presenting the truth. This "truth" is not merely a euphemistic moniker. For positions or claims to be true, consensus must be reached on their validity in the communities. That is, through discussion and dialogue in the communities, words are judged "true words"<sup>86</sup> (Gilly, 1998: 325).

The Zapatistas also used the words "truth" and "lie" as symbolic currency when they countered the government's "lies" with "true words".<sup>87</sup> The notion of "truth" and "the genuine" resonate in local indigenous languages and cultural meanings. In the Tojolabal language, "the name for Tojolabal breaks down into *àb'al*, or word/language, and *tojol*, meaning real, genuine, authentic. Speakers of the language are *tojolwinik*--real or genuine (*tojol*) people (*winik*). [...] Thus, the notion of *hombres y mujeres verdaderos* that accompanies the icon of Votán Zapata is built on linguistic categories from Tojolabal

<sup>86</sup> Gilly argues that this type of decision-making and discussion is not a useful model for urban democracy (Gilly, 1998: 325).

<sup>87</sup> "In spite of the risk to their lives, our delegates will be present at the determined location and will represent with honor and *truth* the minds and hearts of the men who walk in *truth*.

The word of *truth* that comes from the depths of our past, from our pain, from our dead that still live among us, will fight with dignity on the lips of our chief. The mouths of our rifles will be silent so that our *truth* can be spoken with the words of every person. Those who fight with honor, speak with honor, there will be *no lies* in our hearts, being *true* men.

Our voice will carry the voice of the majority, those who have nothing, those condemned to silence and ignorance, ripped from their lands and their history by the sovereignty of the powerful, of all good men and women who walk in a world filled with pain and rage, of the children and the elderly who died from solitude and abandonment, of the humiliated women and the small men. The dead, our dead, will speak through our voice, so alone and so forgotten, so dead and yet so alive in our voice and in our steps. ...

For us, the smallest beings on the earth [littlest ones of these lands], faceless, with no history, armed with *truth* and fire, we have come out of the night and out of the mountains, *true* men and women, the dead of yesterday, today and always ... for us, nothing. For everyone, everything.

If the *lies* return to the mouths of the powerful, our voice of fire will speak again, everything for everyone.

Receive our blood, brothers and sisters, so that all this death is not in vain, so that *truth* can return to our lands. Everything for everyone. Freedom! Justice! Democracy!" (EZLN, communiqué Feb. 16, 1994, "On the opening of the Dialogue," in Zapatistas, 1994, pg. 194-195, emphasis added). Also see the communiqué from March 15, 1994 in Zapatistas, 1994, pg. 258-259, "Government lies about the outcome of the Dialogue." The use of "Truth" and "true words" is found throughout the communiqués from the dialogue.

language” (Stephen, 2002: 165).<sup>88</sup>

The Zapatistas framed their words as the words of those who are armed with truth and fire [*la palabra de los armados de verdad y fuego*]. As this quote from Holloway illustrates, even analysts become caught up in the romance and valour of the Zapatistas’ symbolic language. “The fire is there, but the truth comes first, not just as a moral attribute, but as a weapon: they are *armed* with truth, and this is a more important weapon than the firepower of their guns. Although they are organized as an army, they aim to win by truth, not by fire. Their truth is not just that they speak the truth about their situation or about the country, but that they are true to themselves, that they speak the truth of truth denied” (Holloway, 1998: 194).

The consensual construction of truth has a cultural basis and is presented as a frame to legitimize and justify the Zapatistas’ actions. Not only is “truth” produced collectively, but decisions are also collectively generated. Consultations and discussions are held on all decisions and involve the whole community. Leaders can be recalled if they do not live up to the community’s standards and do not follow *mandar obedeciendo*, or “command obeying.” In guarding against deterministic, instrumentalist approaches that prescribe a set doctrine to be followed through to a set end, the Zapatistas frame a self-reflexive approach: *preguntando caminamos*, “asking we walk.” This “revolution advances by asking, not by telling; or perhaps even, revolution *is* asking instead of telling, the dissolution of power relations” (Holloway, 1998: 164). For Holloway, the Zapatistas

---

<sup>88</sup> According to Nash, the use of Mayan poetics in the communiqués (primarily from the CCRI) echo the ceremonial language often employed in the region. This language resonates within the cultural codes and traditions of the poor indigenous peoples of Mexico, while at the same time, appealing to a global audience. The incorporation of “primordial roots” into their discourse, while at the same time representing their situation in terms of rooted political processes, embeddedness in a semi-subsistence economy, and resistance to *cacique* control, all fuse into a multivariate configuration applicable in numerous situations to numerous audiences on a variety of issues from “tradition,” to political representation, to economic and cultural autonomy, to Constitutional reform, to specific local effects of implementing neo-liberal policies (Nash, 2001: 133-134).

represent a new theorization of revolutionary practices (Holloway, 1998: 165). Their frames, originating as they did from indigenous traditions<sup>89</sup> and cultural practices, were instrumental in generating support at the local, national, and international level since they resonated with individuals and groups, indigenous and non-indigenous, at all these levels.

### **Demands:**

On January 1, 1994, the EZLN issued a “declaration of war” against the Mexican federal army, demanded that the “illegitimate government” of Salinas be deposed, that an interim government be chosen until the transition to a democratic system was complete, and proclaimed that they would “advance to the capital,” Mexico City. This opening frame was not voiced in terms of warfare, but in terms of democratic transition. As part of this vocalization they issued their fundamental demands: “work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace.” These demands were basic, persuasive, understandable and could not be denied. That these basic demands should be met was recognized across the globe as they tapped into a master-frame of basic human rights.

The Zapatistas framed their uprising as though they had no other choice but to take up arms.<sup>90</sup> They had exhausted all other avenues of demanding changes in the conditions<sup>91</sup> in which they were forced to live. They had had “enough!” This was a final

---

<sup>89</sup> *Tradition* can be a problematic term. In Chiapas, structures of inequality have been upheld in the name of tradition. Government forces and *caciques* label dissenters as “enemies of tradition” to justify repression. However, maintenance of traditional practices remains a central demand for the Zapatistas and the national indigenous movement. Labeled *usos y costumbres*, uses and customs, the traditional practices are open to a critical reappraisal to discard those that perpetuate oppression, for example, gender inequality. This is critical reappraisal is what Alfred (1999) calls “self-conscious traditionalism,” or the “translating and adapting of traditional concepts to modern realities.”

<sup>90</sup> The EZLN “has never claimed that its form of struggle is the only legitimate one. It’s just the only one we were left. The EZLN salutes the honest and necessary development of all forms of struggle that will lead to freedom, democracy, and justice. ... In fact, we organized ourselves this way because we were not left any other way” (January 20, 1994 communiqué, in Zapatistas, 1995: 92-93).

<sup>91</sup> These socio-historical contextual conditions are outlined in the introductory chapter above.

cry of resistance in desperate conditions. *Ya Basta!* “We are denied the most elementary education so that they can use us as cannon fodder and plunder our country’s riches, uncaring that we are dying of hunger and curable diseases. Nor do they care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, no decent roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health, no food, no education. We do not have the right to freely and democratically elect our own authorities, nor are we independent of foreigners, nor do we have peace or justice for ourselves and our children. But *today we say enough!*” “*Ya Basta!*” (Zapatistas, 1995: 51-52). In his narratives, Marcos describes the life in communities and the experience of hunger and death. He describes a child dying in his arms from a fever, an easily curable infliction with basic medical care. But this is a death of someone who did not even exist since she was issued no birth certificate. This is a poignant comment on a hegemonic structure that condemns a section of the population to oblivion. The “*Ya Basta!*” was resistance to oppression and to being condemned to oblivion; it was the negation of domination, in terms that no one could deny as valid.

However, in direct opposition to many previous guerrilla insurgencies, the Zapatistas were not seeking to install themselves as state rulers, nor were they seeking secession. Although the Zapatistas critiqued the authority of the dominant state hegemony by questioning the notion of “the nation,” their demands did not propose to “subvert” the Mexican State. They did not seek state power, but sought to replace the existing structure of inequality and exclusion by discarding the current political regime and its detrimental economic policies. Still, they were not against or above the law, since the Constitution remained central to their demands (Gilly, 1998: 310), as they evoked Article 39 of the Constitution<sup>92</sup> to justify these demands. They focused on a *national* identity by

---

<sup>92</sup> Article 39 of the Mexican Constitution states: “National sovereignty resides, essentially and originally, in the people. All public power emanates from the people, and is constituted for the benefit of the same. *The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify the form of their government.*”

framing themselves in terms of a national history and by carrying the Mexican national flag<sup>93</sup>. This made it clear that they were not a secessionist movement. Instead, they provoked a debate on national identity affected by the current forces of globalization, in particular trade deals such as NAFTA and the increasing integration with the U.S. economy and foreign investment.

### **Dignity:**

In a “vast symbolic language directed to the rest but above all to their following,” the Zapatistas addressed the complexity of the interacting historical, political, and cultural issues with which their struggle was intertwined through their “declarations, gestures, spatial movements, clothing, [and] attitudes” (Gilly, 1998: 279). This “vast symbolic language” that included myriad elements from traditional cultural codes to strategically essentialized identity-positions, found its generalization in the oft-repeated Zapatista word-concept: *dignity*. This concept or articulation was often misunderstood, or not understood, by those in power, that is, by *caciques*, government officials, and state representatives. Its use was strategic in that it was a rallying point and cry. As well as being both universal and abstract, making it easily maneuverable, this concept of “dignity” was not expressed in terms of the individual, but in collective terms. It called forth and was based on the beliefs and desires of an “occult history” and collective lived experience in the communities. “It is this lived and inherited dimension, the communitarian idea of what it is to be human--which is to say, dignity as definitive of and inherent to the human condition--that nurtures the ultimate base of the moral economy of this and other rebellions of the oppressed” (Gilly, 1998: 280). By using the word “dignity” as similar to

---

<sup>93</sup> The Zapatistas struggle with the government for the re-appropriation of these national symbols, see Stephen, 2002.

the notion of “freedom,” the Zapatistas had chosen a new word, one not yet fully co-opted by the ruling elite.

*Dignity* acted as a powerful tool in the face of one of the Zapatistas’ presented “enemies.” Dignity resisted the callous, compassionless ideology imposed from above which they identified as neoliberalism. To the Zapatistas, neoliberalism does not take into account the everyday lived-experience, or micro level of individuals and communities. It is a cold, calculating force that bulldozes livelihoods and lacks any moral character or respect while imposing a sentence of humiliation, injustice, exploitation and death. Dignity stood in direct contrast to this force, and implied self-emancipation (Holloway, 1998: 186). Marcos articulated its importance: “More than the redistribution of wealth or the expropriation of the means of production, revolution starts to be the possibility that human beings can have a space of dignity. Dignity begins to be a very strong word. It is not our contribution, it is not a contribution of the urban element, it is the communities who contribute it. Such that revolution should be the assurance that dignity be realised, be respected” (Marcos, quoted in Holloway, 1998: 191).

According to Couch (2001), the Zapatistas’ “politics of dignity,” implies a “politics of listening,” and a “politics of mutual recognition” (2001: 254). This struggle for “dignity” was also relevant to areas outside Chiapas. In its framing, “dignity” was connected to historical experience, to the “depth,” to the “roots,” or the “from below,” that evoked an ancestral and traditional past, recognized by indigenous groups inside and outside Mexico.

In organizing their uprising, the Zapatistas asserted indigenous dignity (Holloway, 1998: 166). However, they made it clear that it was not just a movement for indigenous people, but for a broader cause; their demands were for all as part of a “national”

liberation movement (Holloway, 1998: 167). The assertion of dignity was joined to the struggle for citizenship, democracy, and human rights in the face of a framed illegitimate power confronting dignity and seeking to negate it.

Dignity, for von Werlhof (1997), is the central concept of the Zapatistas and their uprising. Dignity became the voice of the voiceless, and was the cry of the ignored (Holloway, 1998: 170). The Zapatistas spoke the truth of truth denied. As they proclaimed, “Us they forgot more and more, and history was no longer big enough for us to die just like that, forgotten and humiliated. Because dying does not hurt, what hurts is being forgotten. Then we discovered that we no longer existed, that those who govern had forgotten us in the euphoria of statistics and growth rates. A country which forgets itself is a sad country, a country which forgets its past cannot have a future. And then we seized our arms and went into the cities where we were animals. And we went and said to the powerful ‘here we are!’ and to all the country we shouted ‘here we are!’ and to all the world we shouted ‘here we are!’ And see how odd things are because, for them to see us, we covered our faces; for them to name us, we gave up our name; we gambled the present to have a future; and to live ... we died” (communiqué from March 17, 1995). It would be difficult to co-opt or compromise these poetic frames; to do so would be to deny what should not be denied.

### **The Zapatista *Realidad* and *Méjico profundo*:**

Mexico embodies duality: the Mexico of below, rooted in the indigenous pre-Columbian past, and the veneer of the prosperous nation of assimilated indigenous and *mestizos*, pursuing “progress.” This latter Mexico is the “imaginary” Mexico based on the myth of modernity, against which Zapata is a symbol of “deep” Mexico resisting the

culturally monolithic myth of modern Mexico. Marcos engages this duality and evokes *México profundo*<sup>94</sup> to legitimize the Zapatistas' uprising. "The storm... It will be born out of the clash between the two winds, it will arrive in its own time, the coals on the hearth of history are stoked up and ready to burn. Now the wind from above rules, but the one from below is coming, the storm rises...so it will be..." (Marcos, *Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds, A Storm, and a Prophecy*, in Zapatistas, 1994).<sup>95</sup> *México profundo* represented the lived reality of Zapatistas as indigenous people struggling against the illusion of assimilation and progress.

At the Intercontinental Encounter in 1996, Marcos welcomed those present to *la Realidad Zapatista* (Marcos, in Zapatistas, 1998). *La Realidad* is the name of a Zapatista autonomous community, and the site of the Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. *La Realidad* was not only a name however; it was also a reference to the "reality" of the lived experience of the indigenous people of Chiapas, and by extension of Mexico and the world. It represented a lived experience of domination, exclusion, suffering, and inequality that does not correspond to the government's image of indigenous reality of quaint roadside artisans and nostalgic museum curios. The Zapatista "reality" stood in stark contrast to a government-engineered reality, to a reality that did not include them, a reality that encircled them and fenced them in. In *La Realidad*, and through *La Realidad*, the Zapatistas were able to break the barriers around them materially and symbolically.

Marcos called on all Mexicans to wake-up from this reality-myth, "In this country everyone dreams. Now it is time to wake up" (Marcos in *A Storm and a Prophecy*, in Zapatistas, 1995: 50). The Zapatistas' *Realidad* countered the State's

<sup>94</sup> *México profundo*, or "deep" Mexico, is part of the collective cultural memory (see Bonfil, 1996).

<sup>95</sup> This wind from below, from deep Mexico, from the grassroots, then dovetails well with the globalization-from-below, or anti-globalization movement.

“imagineering” and presentation of the Mexican “reality”. The reality-myth imposed by the technocratic elite and broadcast around the world through images of tourism, quaint indigenous historical roots, and stable sites for foreign capital investment, was shattered by *La Realidad* of poverty and Third World conditions. Marcos criticized the Mexican self-image in its failure to recognize the injustice and poverty upon which the national ideology was built. He taunted, “I’ve said that I will take off my ski mask when Mexican society takes off its own mask, the one it uses to cover up the real Mexico. Then Mexicans would see that the self-image they have been sold is false, and that the reality of Mexico is much more terrible than they’d ever imagined. And once they have seen the real Mexico --as we have seen it-- they will be more determined to change it” (Marcos in Katzenberger, 1995: 70).<sup>96</sup> The Zapatistas’ foregrounding of a true “reality” arising from *Méjico profundo* was the cry of the excluded and ignored for inclusion and recognition.

### **For a World With Many Worlds in it and Against Neoliberalism:**

At the time of the 1994 uprising, the indigenous campesinos of Chiapas were marginalized due to restructuring in the name of a global free market.<sup>97</sup> “[P]easants and Indians [found] themselves weakened and unprotected in the confrontation with globalization--a faceless process against which there [was] no legal recourse, no constitutional protection, and no acquirable rights” (Gilly, 1998: 331). Unlike “the state” or “landlord” or *cacique*, this “faceless progress” did not make for a concrete enemy-

<sup>96</sup> “Like yesterday, when we covered our faces in order to show the world the true face of the Mexico of the basement and after washing with our blood the mirror in which Mexicans can see their own dignity, today we hide our faces to escape treachery and death which follow the steps of those who say they govern the country. We are not fighting with our weapons. Our example and our dignity now fight for us” (Marcos, 2001: 266).

<sup>97</sup> “To the Powers that Be, known internationally by the term ‘neoliberalism,’ we did not count, we did not produce, we did not buy, we did not sell. We were a cipher in the accounts of big capital. Then we went to the mountains to find ourselves and see if we could ease the pain of being forgotten stones and weeds” (Opening Remarks at the Intercontinental Encounter 1996, Zapatistas, 1998).

subject. Therefore, it had to be linked to the local experiences of its effects. The Zapatistas resisted the loss of collective resources and presented an alternative to being subsumed in global capitalist circuits as faceless, voiceless and forgotten people, condemned to oblivion (Nash, 2001).

In a global context, the Zapatistas framed neoliberalism as their prime enemy<sup>98</sup>. They linked their local, particular experience of this global phenomenon to its effects on local experiences around the world. Neoliberalism's program destroys all obstacles that impede capital's free movement and an unfettered market (Holloway, 1998: 5). In direct contrast stood the Zapatistas' concept of "humanity." "Humanity" represented that which is not commodified, consumerized, privatized, bought or sold. In this framing, the unipolar drive of neoliberalism and its repressive machinery becomes inhuman. To be subsumed under the banner of neoliberalism is to be its slave, to lose one's dignity, one's freedom, one's very being. Marcos expressed this in his closing speech at the International Encuentro: "In any part of the world, there are men and women who stop being human and take their place in the gigantic market that trades in dignities" (Marcos, in Zapatistas, 1998).

The Zapatistas called for alliances that would surpass borders between all those resisting this common enemy by recognizing a shared collective identity: "humanity." By linking resistance movements across the globe, the Zapatistas were able to affirm their particular struggle within a network of other struggles. They were able to meaningfully articulate and transmit their struggle across national, informational, and cultural borders, and to maintain their differences and localized particularity, while at the same time unifying under a banner of collective resistance a group of globally disparate actors and

---

<sup>98</sup> For the Zapatistas, the globalization of neoliberalism is the Fourth World War, the Cold War being the Third World War.

collectivities. Marcos summed this up in his closing speech at the International Encuentro saying, “a world made up of many worlds found itself these days in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. A world made of many worlds opened a space and established its right to be possible, raised the banner of being necessary, fastened to the middle of the earth’s R/reality to announce a better future. A world of all the worlds that rebel and resist the Power, a world of all the worlds that inhabit this world opposing cynicism, a world that struggles for humanity and against neoliberalism” (Marcos, in Zapatistas, 1998).

*A world with many worlds in it* is an often repeated theme throughout the Zapatistas’ speeches and communiqués: “We want a world in which there are many worlds, a world in which our world, and the worlds of others, will fit: a world in which we are heard, but as one of many voices” (EZLN quoted in Holloway, 1998: 4). This is the articulation of the Zapatistas’ desired pluricultural coexistence. This vocalization appealed to audiences the world over and was instrumental in drawing support for the Zapatistas (Nash, 2001: 134). The Zapatistas demanded that this pluricultural coexistence be enshrined in law in the Mexican Constitution. By maintaining an insistence on plurality and on difference, at the same time as making citizenship claims, the Zapatistas effectively linked themselves to a myriad of other actors in other struggles while preserving their particularity.

### **Conclusion:**

From the beginning of their uprising, the Zapatistas framed themselves in a national historical context and justified themselves by activating the memory of cultural codes and collective experiences. Born of a cross-pollination between marxist

revolutionaries and indigenous cultural practices, the Zapatistas produced hybrid frames. In expressing the concerns of a collective political unity through a framed collective indigenous identity, the Zapatistas were able to link these concerns to global issues to form a global support network of autonomous groups and organizations that share common goals. That is, they were able to establish what Laclau and Mouffe call “chains of equivalence” between their local struggle and others struggling against oppression across the globe, thereby bringing together different pre-existing struggles. Through a clear and understandable poetics of resistance, the Zapatistas’ messages articulated undeniable demands that referenced global human rights norms and a multitude of other frames, including: their cry of *Ya Basta!*, the evocation of dignity, myth and truth, their unmasking of an indigenous Mexican “reality,” their insistence that they were not seeking state power, accountable leaders, consensual decision-making, the linking of local struggles under a global banner of resistances against neoliberalism and for humanity, and the dream of a world where many worlds fit. Each of these frames struck a chord with individuals and groups around the world. In organizing experience, guiding and legitimizing collective action, bringing meaning to events, and garnering support, framing was a crucial practice that enabled the Zapatistas’ collective action and mobilization. But how did the Zapatistas disseminate these frames? This is covered in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Zapatista Information Technologies**

### **Words as Weapons, The Media War Begins:**

Appearing on January 18, 1994, the Zapatistas' response to the government's offer of a pardon was framed in the form of a communiqué written by Subcomandante Marcos<sup>99</sup>. This stinging and fierce communiqué began a war of words in which the Zapatistas shifted from military moves to discursive political moves<sup>100</sup>; they used words as weapons. These "weapons" allowed the Zapatistas to break the boundaries, both physical and informational, imposed by the government and federal army (King and Javier Villanueva, 1998). Using a slew of information technologies, including faxes, radio, newspapers, magazines, television, videos, murals, graffiti, and most famously the Internet, the Zapatistas were able to disseminate messages that resounded world-wide, thereby building a national and global support network.<sup>101</sup> The Zapatista uprising was "the first revolution of the electronic age" (Cleaver, 1998).

<sup>99</sup> "Why do we have to be pardoned? What are we going to be pardoned for? Of not dying of hunger? Of not being silent in our misery? Of not humbly accepting our historic role of being the despised and the outcast? Of having picked up arms after we found all other roads closed? Of not having paid attention to the Chiapas Penal Code, one of the most absurd and repressive in history? Of having demonstrated to the rest of the country and the entire world that human dignity still lives, even among some of the world's poorest peoples? Of having been well prepared before we began our uprising? Of having carried guns into battle, rather than bows and arrows? Of being Mexicans? Of being primarily indigenous people? Of having called on the people of Mexico to struggle, in all possible ways, for that which belongs to them? Of having fought for freedom, democracy, and justice? Of not following the example of previous guerrilla armies? Of not giving up? Of not selling out? Of not betraying ourselves? Who must ask for pardon and who can grant it? Those who for years and years have satiated themselves at full tables, while death sat beside us so regularly that we finally stopped being afraid of it? Those who filled our pockets and our souls with promises and empty declarations? Or should we ask pardon from the dead, our dead, those who died 'natural' deaths of 'natural causes' like measles, whooping cough, breakbone fever, cholera, typhoid, mononucleosis, tetanus, pneumonia, malaria, and other lovely gastrointestinal and lung diseases?" (Marcos, in Zapatistas, 1995: 81).

<sup>100</sup> This particular communiqué was the first major support booster for the Zapatistas. It even swayed some of their strongest critics, e.g., Octavio Paz (see his quote in Fox, 1994: 7). This communiqué was particularly effective in establishing their legitimacy in the eyes of Mexican civil society.

<sup>101</sup> They also physically broke the cordon by inviting "civil society" into Zapatista territory, as well as undertaking symbolic moves such as establishing autonomous communities outside the cordon and effectively surrounding the federal forces with Zapatista Autonomous Communities.

The government's main tactic had been to attempt to isolate the Zapatistas by painting the uprising as merely a local issue, in the hopes of first trivializing then co-opting them into the state hegemonic structure.<sup>102</sup> The use of information technologies allowed the Zapatistas to present their struggle as more than localized and so, was a crucial practice enabling their collective action and mobilization.

Much has been made of the Zapatistas' use of the Internet. Though their use of it was both strategic and symbolic (see Brysk, 2000: 160), its use should not eclipse other aspects of the uprising. Rather, the Internet represented an area of contested terrain of globalization (Stahler-Sholk, 2001: 505), and was one of the areas in which the Zapatista struggle was played out. The media and information technologies were the mechanisms by which global attention was brought to a local rebellion.

After briefly introducing the Internet and "civil society," and how the Internet's structure mirrors the Zapatistas' organizational structure, this chapter will outline how the Zapatistas disseminated information, broke the government's physical and informational isolationist cordon, established support networks that linked the local and the global, while using the Internet as an organizational "space" and the terrain for an informationalized struggle.

### **The Internet:**

In his study of the Zapatistas' Internet use, which is the most widely referenced and cited work on that subject, Cleaver (1995) presents the Internet as "a highly flexible, geographically dispersed web of multiple linkages. The organization of that web allowed specially formatted information to move from any point to any other point through

---

<sup>102</sup> "The Mexican state community does not ignore counterhegemonic pressures and cultures: it integrates them and, in that very movement, negates and trivializes them" (Gilly, 1998: 314-315).

many, many possible routes,” and was originally designed for military use (Cleaver, 1995: 4). Information flows are restructured through this flexible web into a decentralized network of nodes.<sup>103</sup> This structure allows localized resistances and antagonisms to disseminate their messages throughout these information flows to reach other players. As a global interactive communication structure, the Internet is important for organizing dissent. In Cleaver’s opinion, it brings a new dimension to revolution and counter-revolution. It has opened a new space for political discussion (Cleaver, 1995), as well as political practice. Entire struggles can take place in cyberspace that then have real and concrete effects on the daily lives of people.

In his vast work on the emerging network society, Castells argues that the organizational possibilities of cyber-networks for grassroots or localized players are congruous and advantageous, and can be used to challenge global governance networks. Networks emerging from local sites resist the power of top-down imposed networks, and seek a reconfiguration expressed from the bottom up (Castells, 2001: 143).<sup>104</sup>

The Internet has had a profound effect on the production of social relationships, while reformatting the nature of relational exchanges. At the same time the Internet itself has been transformed. It is no longer a tool only for business and communications, “it becomes a lever of social transformation as well” (Castells, 2001: 143). The outcome of this “social transformation” is never fixed, it can be positive or negative. Although it has deeply altered processes of interaction between individuals, organizations and movements with its “flexibility” and “compression of time and space” (Harvey, 1989; Lash and Urry,

<sup>103</sup> Cyberspace remains contested ground as states and corporations vie for control of “new electronic frontiers” for the purpose of profit and maintaining hegemony. Attempts to control and further commercialize this “space” are sought through the establishment of “intellectual property rights” and copyright standards, as well as by filtering access to the Internet through gateways that charge for use (Cleaver, 1995).

<sup>104</sup> “The processes of conflictive social change in the Information Age revolve around the struggles to transform categories of our existence, by building interactive networks as forms of organization and mobilization” (Castells, 2001: 143).

1996), the Internet does not exist independently of its “users” (Cleaver, 1995).

### **Civil Society:**

The economic dimension of globalization, supported by the ideology of neoliberalism, moves towards a global integration of markets. At the same time, globalization has also stimulated an emerging global civil society (Stahler-Sholk, 2001). This global civil society is composed of the new social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with human rights, gender issues, environmental issues, and consumer issues. In Mexico, “civil society” emerged in reaction to the government’s inaction during the aftermath of the 1985 earthquake (La Botz, 1995). Describing this phenomenon, famed Mexican writer and commentator Carlos Monsiváis wrote, “*civil society* is the communitarian effort at self-organization and solidarity, the space which is independent of the government, or more exactly, a zone of antagonism to it” (Monsiváis, quoted in La Botz, 1995: 70). It is a social justice movement that struggles for human, civil, and political rights, and is multi-class in composition (La Botz, 1995: 72). For the Zapatistas, “civil society,” encompasses all those who do not participate in political parties and “power politics” (see EZLN, Fourth Declaration from the Lacandon jungle, Feb. 1996, in Hayden, 2002). In the following sections, after describing how the Zapatistas and their supporters disseminated information, this chapter will focus on how the Zapatistas used the Internet to garner support from civil society.

### **The Dissemination of Information:**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Zapatistas framed their concerns and issues so that they fit into many contexts and experiences and therefore bred discussion

and support. In order to foster connections and generate global support, the Zapatistas circulated these frames widely through various media and information technologies. Castells (1997) calls the Zapatistas “the first informational guerrilla movement,” and attributes their success to their communication strategy. Their staging of media events to draw attention to themselves worked not only to circulate their message, but also to avoid all-out warfare. Alliances made and maintained over the Internet and a “relentless media connection” ensured the protection of the Zapatistas (Castells, 1997: 81). Thus, it is not only the content of the frames discussed earlier that is important, but also the strategies with which they were transmitted. Castells argues that the Zapatistas’ arms were mostly symbolic in that they “used arms to make a statement, then parlayed the possibility of their sacrifice in front of the world media to force a negotiation and advance a number of reasonable demands” (Castells, 1997: 79). This approach differed from traditional propaganda campaigns, and the state was not prepared for it, nor was it prepared for the fallout.<sup>105</sup>

The Zapatistas are most famous for their Internet use. However, it was not the only means of disseminating information in their communication strategy and praxis. Faxes, newspapers, magazines, videos and movies, murals and graffiti, radio, and television coverage were all used in addition to the Internet.

The image of Subcomandante Marcos seated at a laptop in the jungle connected to the World Wide Web is a romanticized one. Marcos’s communiqués were typed or handwritten and the process of disseminating these communiqués after they had been written involved smuggling them past army checkpoints to supporters who had access to fax machines and the Internet. The first newspaper to carry all Zapatista communiqués

---

<sup>105</sup> The result has been a shift in security policy in the U.S. and in Mexico in light of this strategy, see Ronfeldt, Arquilla, et al., 1998.

was the small independently-run *El Tiempo* in San Cristobal. Supporters would deliver or fax packets containing a few communiq  s and the newspapers would publish them within twelve hours, after which they would be put on the Internet and subsequently translated. When the network of supporters grew, it became easier to disseminate the Zapatistas' "words."

Newspapers have played an important role in disseminating the Zapatistas' communiq  s, in particular those that were independent of the government, which included: *El Tiempo*, *La Jornada*, *El Proceso*, and the Zapatistas' own newspaper, *El Despertador Mexicano*, the Mexican alarm clock. This last was an underground newspaper in which the EZLN first published their Revolutionary Laws (see Womack, 1999: 252). While Internet email newsgroups circulated the Zapatistas' messages, speeches were broadcast on television, radio and web simulcast, and reporters traveled deep into the jungle for a chance at an interview.

At the local level, and to some extent the national level, radio coverage became important, since state-controlled television distorted events or did not report them (Stephen, 2002: 301). Independent radio stations in Chiapas and surrounding states broadcast information to indigenous communities that was omitted from the "official" media outlets.

Information and events that were ignored by the commercial media were also widely reported on the Internet. In a co-operative effort, supporters pooled information on a number of "valid" Internet sites, and translated communiq  s from Spanish into many languages.<sup>106</sup> These Internet sites also enabled a vast circulation of "analytical and critical assessments" on the uprising and its origins and meanings (Cleaver, 1995: 8).

Through the initiative of supporters around the globe, "the words of the Zapatistas and

---

<sup>106</sup> Many of the communiq  s quoted herein are examples of such transmitted messages.

messages of their communities have been diffused from a few gateways throughout much of cyberspace" (Cleaver, 1995: 7). Furthermore, the increased speed of transferring information, and also the increased speed with which information, or dis-information, can be refuted, as well as the increased ease of verification of factuality, added to the usefulness of the Internet as a strategic tool.

Those who were "without voice," the "forgotten" and condemned to "oblivion," used the Internet and media to disseminate their framed messages, as well as to call and organize meetings, *Encuentros* and consultations.<sup>107</sup> They subsequently used the same media to report on these meetings and consultations and to disseminate the information that came out of them. This double-pronged media use was successful in maintaining public attention on the Zapatistas, and thereby injected them into the very information flows from which they were being excluded, flows of information that are increasingly defining and shaping a globalized world order. In this instance, a movement demanding inclusion in the political, economic, and social spheres aggressively included themselves in the flows of information.

### **Decentralized Organization:**

The structure of the Internet and the "web" mirrors the Zapatistas' organizational structure in that their forms of non-hierarchical self-organization correspond to the "openness and mutability" of the Net (Cleaver, 1995: 5). The Internet's horizontal, rhizomatic, and network-system structure is well suited for the Zapatistas as an organizational and communicative tool.

The Internet enabled the Zapatistas to expand the processes of networking and

<sup>107</sup> In addition, by linking resistance movements across regional and national borders the Zapatistas were able "to catalyze the formation of transnational protest against neoliberal globalization" (Schulz, 1998: 604).

coordination of strategies beyond the confines of geographical locations to an international arena. The importance of an international support network for the Zapatistas' uprising and continued collective action was reinforced during the Intercontinental Encounter Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity, when the Zapatistas proposed an international resistance network without a set organizational structure and without hierarchy (Zapatistas, 1998). This network would communicate through the Internet as a structure of horizontal nodes connected into a web of networks.<sup>108</sup>

The creation of an international support network, combined with the Zapatistas' collective decision-making and extensive consultations, provided a framework for resistance in the cyber-terrain of the Internet. In avoiding an imposed centralized all-encompassing control and command both on the net and in Chiapas, they have activated a fluid space where a cooperative system of self-determination can flourish. Cleaver argues that "the experience of the circulation of the Zapatista uprising can teach us much about the ways in which rhizomatically organized, autonomous but linked groups can replace 'the organization' with its rigidities and hierarchies." However, he cautions against a single formula for organizational forms and warns that even though it has evolved from a failure of previous organizational forms, the "rhizomatic pattern of collaboration" is only a partial solution to "the problem of creating and recreating effective connections along a growing number of dimensions and directions of movement" (Cleaver, 1995: 16). In the case of the Zapatistas, their decentralized organizational structure combined with the decentralized terrain of the Internet, allowed for a unique form of political contention.

---

<sup>108</sup> It must be noted that *access* to the Internet is an important issue that is raised by the Zapatistas themselves. That is, who has access to the Internet? Citizens in industrialized nations have easier access to the Internet than individuals in poorer countries.

### **Breaking the Cordon of Government Controlled Information:**

Cleaver (1995) argues that the new space created by cyber-networks for discussion, dissemination of information, and organization, produces a crisis of “governability” for the state and for ruling elites since “virtually every historical mechanism of domination is ... challenged and ruptured from below” (1995: 9).<sup>109</sup> This cyber-political space allowed the Zapatistas to sidestep the traditional means of domination employed by government forces seeking to repress and co-opt dissenting actions and voices.

In Mexico, the commercial media monopoly, led by Televisa and TV Azteca, reports the government line. The pro-government media attempted to frame the Zapatistas as drug-traffickers, terrorists, “outside” instigators, and “professionals of violence,” while presenting the uprising as a local issue involving internecine power struggles. This was a media-based government strategy to isolate the Zapatistas so they could be co-opted or wiped out. Although the government could control information on state television, it could not control the spread of information from independent sources.

Weller (2000) provides an overview of media coverage of the uprising in Chiapas and is critical of the mainstream press (2000: 57-62). For example, the mainstream media suppressed the Zapatistas’ “Declaration of War,” which meant that the reason for the uprising was not immediately made clear (Cleaver, 1995). By withholding this information, the government was able to subdue the possible mass support for the uprising, while isolating the Zapatistas. Overcoming this blockade of information by the government and commercial media became integral to the Zapatistas’ struggle. It symbolized the very voicelessness and oppression or suppression of truth and “reality” that led to the cry of *Ya Basta!* This meant that overcoming the blockade, which was

---

<sup>109</sup> This seems like a somewhat over exaggerated argument.

accomplished by using the Internet to disseminate information and to link to support networks, became the first victory of the struggle. By undermining the traditional spheres of control over information, Internet use by grassroots sectors empowered and emboldened the individuals and groups in these sectors (Cleaver, 1995: 10), and opened a new political space.

The Internet was not only used to overcome the government's media blockade, it was also used to "attack" the government directly through "swarming" government email addresses and altering government websites. This cyber-insurgency was undertaken by Zapatista supporters from Mexico, the U.S., and Europe. The Zapatistas' political praxis thus included the Internet as a tool for launching "virtual" attacks against government forces.

The impact of every facet of the Zapatistas' Internet-based strategies was far-reaching. Two interesting reactions came from Wall Street and the RAND Corporation. Counterpunch.org reported that it had uncovered a memo from Chase Manhattan Bank, written on official letterhead, advising the Mexican government that it "will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and of security policy" (memo quoted in Schulz, 1998: 600). The Chase Manhattan Bank was concerned with the Mexican government's ability to maintain an image of stability and control to entice international investment and speculation. After this story was widely circulated over the Internet, the bank had to quickly backpedal for damage control. In this case, the Internet played a double role and demonstrated how integral it was in the Zapatistas' uprising. As part of the Zapatistas' communication strategy and praxis, the Internet helped unsettle the Mexican government and its international supporters, while at the same time providing the means to report on anti-Zapatista strategies and curtailing

possible violence.

In the second example, Arquilla and Ronfeldt at the RAND Corp. were concerned with the proliferation of “advocacy networks” and “cross-border networks and coalitions” (Ronfeldt, 1998), due to their potential impact on any state’s (in this case, primarily the American state’s<sup>110</sup>) “traditional hierarchical institutions of governance” (Cleaver, 1995). Ronfeldt, et al., warn of a coming “cyber war” and of “cyber-terrorism.” To successfully deal with the EZLN, they call for “low-intensity war” to slowly “discourage” insurgent forces.<sup>111</sup> They suggested a continuous military presence “in and around the conflict zone” in order to maintain pressure on the Zapatistas, hoping that “[p]sychological disruption may become more important than physical destruction” (Ronfeldt, Arquilla, et al., 1998: 106, 8). This “low-intensity war” continues to be waged, and remains a major hurdle to peace in the region.

The Zapatistas’ use of information technology is not only a means of distributing their messages and demands, it is also a symbolic move of resistance against an increasingly monopolized global media. Marcos identifies this enemy as “[t]he giant communication media: the great monsters of the television industry, the communication satellites, magazines, and newspapers seem determined to present a virtual world, created in the image of what the globalization process requires” (Marcos, message to the “Freeing the Media Teach-In,” New York, 1997, in Zapatistas, 1998). The Zapatistas’ use of media was a revolt against the one-sidedness of commercial media’s presentations and framing. Their struggle to be heard highlighted the importance of independent media: “the work of independent media is to tell the history of social struggle in the world, ... independent media has, on occasion, been able to open spaces even within the mass media

---

<sup>110</sup> They encourage the U.S. government to develop military counter-netwar capabilities for dealing with and engaging in “network warfare.”

<sup>111</sup> It is interesting to note that this information was quickly put on the Internet by Zapatista supporters.

monopolies: to force them to acknowledge news of other social movements" (Marcos to "Freeing the Media Teach-In," New York, 1997, in Zapatistas, 1998).

The Zapatistas called for the creation of a network of independent media "to resist the power of the lie that sells us this war that we call the Fourth World War. We need this network not only as a tool for our social movements, but for our lives: this is a project of life, of humanity, humanity which has a right to critical and truthful information" (Marcos to "Freeing the Media Teach-In," New York, 1997, in Zapatistas, 1998). The control of information and dissemination of information are key to the struggle for autonomy and self-determination.<sup>112</sup> Calling for media that use indigenous languages and demanding guarantees to the right of expression, the Zapatistas challenge the government's hegemony at its informational foundation.

Though the Zapatistas' communication strategy and praxis relied on many information technologies, it was the Internet that was largely responsible for building a global support network. Supporters of the uprising in Mexico and the U.S. undertook email campaigns and organized news groups to attract an international audience. From this international audience, a crossnational solidarity network was born that became crucial for the Zapatistas in its strengthening of their negotiation position vis-à-vis the Mexican government (Schulz, 1998: 604).

### **Establishing Networks:**

The Internet does not inherently solve crises, nor does it naturally bind in

---

<sup>112</sup> Agreement #8 in the San Andrés Accords concerns the means of communication: "With the purpose of creating an inter cultural dialogue from the community level up to the national level, that may allow a new and positive relationship between the various indigenous groups and between these groups and the rest of society, it is essential to endow these towns with their own means of communication, which are also key mechanisms for the development of their cultures. Therefore, it will be proposed to the respective national authorities, to elaborate a new communication law that may allow the indigenous towns to acquire, operate and administrate their own means of communication" (Translation of San Andrés Accords on <http://flag.blackened.net>).

solidarity those who use it for voicing struggles. Rather it is a “means” or a tool for searching for solutions (Cleaver, 1995). In addition to disseminating information, the Zapatistas used it as a tool for establishing support networks and forging crucial alliances.

The Zapatistas’ Internet networks did not spontaneously appear. Two established “networks” that predated the Zapatista uprising were instrumental in developing the Zapatista cyber-network: The anti-NAFTA network, and *La Neta*, an “alternative computer communication network in Mexico and Chiapas” (Castells, 1997: 80).

The anti-NAFTA network was a North American network of connections already in place from Internet-based anti-NAFTA organizing before the Zapatista uprising. This cyber-network established itself as a medium for expressing concerns over diverse issues, while recognizing the interrelationship of those affected (Cleaver, 1995). This anti-NAFTA action network and its related listservs readily supported the Zapatistas’ uprising and helped disseminate Zapatista-related information.

In the early 1990s, another grassroots computer communication network had developed throughout Chiapas and Mexico. Women’s groups especially used this network to link individuals and NGOs throughout Chiapas and Mexico, and even to the U.S. In a particular example, *La Neta*<sup>113</sup> linked Mexican NGOs to the Institute for Global Communication in San Francisco. In 1993, local NGOs in Chiapas were online; these NGOs included the Center for Human Rights Bartolomé de las Casas, which among other similar organizations would prove to be a vital player in distributing information from the Zapatistas across the globe at the beginning of the uprising (Castells, 1997: 80). Thus, the Zapatistas benefitted from these already-present informational and organizational

---

<sup>113</sup> Castells clarifies the meaning of *La Neta*: “Besides being the figurative Spanish feminine of The Net, *la neta* is Mexican slang for ‘the real story’” (Castells, 1997: 80).

networks.

Besides the Anti-NAFTA network and *La Neta*, the Zapatistas accessed a vast array of other organizations and individuals from across the nation and the globe. Through their use of information technologies, particularly the Internet, the Zapatistas injected themselves into the networks of global information flows, and in so doing, moved from “tribal village to global village” (Brysk, 2000). Cleaver (1995) argues that the effect of the international attention was to encourage local Zapatista insurgents and community members to see themselves as part of a larger movement, re-enforcing their commitment and resolve. This move into global information networks was facilitated by the speed with which the Internet allowed information and analyses to be distributed across the globe (Castells, 1997: 80).

Combined with the local and national networks, the international ties thus created a global web of support networks. To some analysts, outside supporters are paramount to the Zapatistas’ survival. “The Zapatistas’ successes depend less on the internal strength of their military organization than on the support they receive from individuals and associations that are explicitly not part of the EZLN” (Schulz, 1998: 591). These outside support ties, or “weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973), bring new resources and new support networks with them. These ties were particularly important for the Zapatistas since they pressured the Mexican government to curtail its military actions against Zapatista communities.

The international and national support networks have also manifested in the form of “real” physical mobilizations. For example, after organization on the Internet, 100,000 supporters from “civil society” crowded Mexico City’s *zocalo* in a show of solidarity with the Zapatistas and to demand the Mexican government’s declaration of a cease-fire

in early January 1994. Pro-Zapatista supporters rallied again after President Zedillo's "unmasking" of Marcos and the subsequent mobilization of the federal army to arrest the EZLN "leaders." The government's plan had to be called off after 5 days on Feb. 14, 1995 due to mounting international pressure and continuous well-attended protest marches across the nation. The government was forced by "civil society" to sit down to peace talks with the Zapatistas starting April 20, 1995, at San Andrés Larráinzar.

As well, cyberspace was the organizational "space" for the "international general mobilization" on February 16, 1997, that saw simultaneous marches and protests in American, European, and Australian cities to celebrate the anniversary of the San Andrés Accords and to call for their implementation (Schulz, 1998: 603). Such events kept international attention on the Zapatistas and their struggle. Furthermore, due to computer-mediated links that the Zapatistas had established with organizations and groups, demonstrations continue to be organized on the Zapatistas' behalf (Schulz, 1998: 604).

Despite all these advantages gained through these cybernetworks, Hellman (2000) cautions against overemphasizing the Internet and cyberspace as an organizational arena. She argues that the reliance on, and fascination with, the "virtual Chiapas" oversimplifies the complexities and differences that exist "on the ground." Furthermore, the Internet does not guarantee a democratic outcome despite its organization as a web of networks. "The Internet, like any technology, will both reflect existing social configurations of power and rearrange the forms of struggle for subverting the power structure" (Stahler-Sholk, 2001: 513). Though their structures are horizontal, rhizomatic, and fluid, and suggest a media that is not as oppressive, computer networks do not represent a "libertarian panacea" (Ribeiro, 1998: 345). Hellman asks, "what does it mean when you

can ‘participate’ in a movement without ever leaving the comfort of your room, without ever standing or marching in the rain?” (Hellman, 2000: 10-11). Because of one’s anonymity, how much commitment to a cause is needed to express solidarity over the Internet? Hellman argues that Internet activism “sometimes creates an illusion of connectedness and political effectiveness where little exists” (Hellman, 2000: 14).<sup>114</sup> She also raises the question of how to be sure information from the web is legitimate or valid, and emphasizes the need to be critical of all reports on the web (Hellman, 2000: 12). Due to these doubts and cautions, the Internet should not be the only form of action and mobilization. The Internet is no substitute for face to face organization.

Though these criticisms and cautions are well-founded and important, the Zapatistas represent an example of how “cyberpolitics can intervene in real politics,” since transnational cyber-support networks mobilized an effective protest that forced the Mexican government to halt its military attack on Zapatista communities (Ribeiro, 1998: 344). Although it is no substitute for “actually being there,” the Internet allows “activism at a distance,” or “witnessing at a distance” that can result in intervention in “real” events. The Internet provides an instantaneous, collective, and decentered means of conveying information that expands both the public and political sphere through the “virtual world” (Ribeiro, 1998: 344-345). The dissemination of images, firsthand accounts, and reports is “an effective means of controlling abuses” perpetrated by those in power (Ribeiro, 1998: 345). Similarly effective are what Keck and Sikkink call “boomerang strategies.” These are strategies in which actors appeal to the international arena to affect change at a domestic level. This tactic is usually adopted when the “direct” channel has been blocked or exhausted (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12-14), as it has been in the case of the Zapatistas.

---

<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, flows of information communicated on the Internet are not merely idle reserves or inventories of information, they are interactive communicative flows (Cleaver, 1998; Stahler-Sholk, 2001: 513).

The Zapatistas' global support network facilitates the mobilization of "boomerang strategies," which may prove vital for their continued survival.

To sum up then, the Zapatistas, with the help of a global network of support organizations and civil society groups, have opened a new political space. In their use of information technologies to disseminate and "deterritorialize" their claims, the Zapatistas are a "globalized local movement that was able to become a localized global movement" (Ribeiro, 1998: 348).

**What is different in this uprising is Internet use:**

The extensive media presence and the organizational use of the Internet allowed the Zapatistas to broadcast their messages from a local context to resonate at a national and global level rapidly and frequently. This set them apart from their predecessors. "What distinguishes the Zapatista rebellion from prior indigenous revolts in Mexican history is that so many knew about it instantly and continued to follow its changes. The presence of the media (television, radio, and newspapers) in Chiapas on the first and subsequent days of the rebellion, as well as the consistent transfer of EZLN communiqués from printed to internet versions, made a critical difference in the impact of neo-Zapatismo outside Chiapas" (Stephen, 2002: 148, 43-44). A "third army" of reporters and international observers, "made the difference between an uprising that exposed the impoverishment of the majority of Mexicans to a world audience and a skirmish that could be buried by a government dedicated to a course of neoliberal 'modernization' and entry into international investment markets" (Nash, 1997: 48).

Continued successful projection of the Zapatista struggle beyond the Lacandon jungle has enabled local views and resistances to filter into a national debate on democracy

and indigenous rights. At the same time, this opening of the local context to global information flows insists that anti-hegemonic resistances not be relegated to only local and regional contexts. As Mexico is integrated into the global economic order, it is also integrated into the global flows of information, meaning that the local ramifications of this economic integration can be broadcast for the world to see the devastating consequences.

As localized versions of experience and meanings become accessible to everyone, frames must shift to accommodate this global scope. Thus, symbols and frames such as Votán-Zapata (discussed above) were “transvaluated” from a local context, to a national and international context in order to foster unifying positions (Stephen, 2002: 169).<sup>115</sup> The Zapatistas employed the strategy of transvaluation to connect to a larger world and actuate support. Thus, the Zapatistas have “become visual and literal icons, linking with and galvanizing indigenous movements, student movements, labor movements, and others in struggle, both in Mexico and in other countries” (Stephen, 2002: 170).

Through the successful mobilization of “civil society,” the building of transnational solidarity and the linking of “personal, organizational, and informational networks,” the Zapatistas, as “innovative global actors,” were able to “demonstrate how a movement can communicate across national and cultural barriers” (Schulz, 1998: 605). Indeed, the Zapatistas were a catalyst for the anti-globalization movement through their resonant framing of local issues in global contexts. Their global media presence has translated the Zapatistas’ discourse into a global discourse generally formulated and understood as anti-neoliberalism by its global supporters, a formulation reinforced and encouraged by the Zapatistas themselves (Stephen, 2002: 174-185). This has even led to a cultural borrowing of Zapatista slogans, images, and strategies (Couch, 2001). By

---

<sup>115</sup> Of course, Stephen cautions, fostering such unified images transcends local differences and conflicts.

extending their political reach through computer networks and maintaining global political ties, the Zapatistas and their supporters have “woven a new electronic fabric of struggle” (Cleaver, 1998: 81).

### **Conclusion:**

Since computer-mediated communication and independent media were capable of reaching a large audience with their message, and thereby, generating support at the national and international level, the use of the Internet and information technologies is a crucial practice that enabled the Zapatistas’ collective action and mobilization.

By using the flexible, decentralized network of information flows of the Internet to access and mobilize “civil society,” the Zapatistas were able to shift from a military guerrilla strategy to a non-violent, political strategy in which they used “words as weapons” in a war of “ink and Internet.” Their dissemination of information, or “communicative praxis” (Schulz, 1998) in this informationalized struggle involved circulating compelling content<sup>116</sup> through the Internet and independent media, and activating pre-established informational and organizational networks. This practice enabled them to break the government’s physical and informational isolationist cordon, and to link local, national, and international organizations and groups into a global web of support networks. Since the Internet’s structure mirrored the Zapatistas’ organizational structure, it was used as an organizational “space” to mobilize supporters across both “virtual” terrain and “real” space in protest marches, human shield campaigns, and as international observers. With national and international players supporting their local struggles, the resolve of local actors was strengthened.

<sup>116</sup> What made their messages compelling was not only that they were effectively disseminated, but also that they were easily understandable. Unlike the government’s discourse of rhetoric, issue dodging, and empty promises, the Zapatistas’ political discourse was clearly articulated in comprehensible, simple language, and was morally persuasive (Russell, 1995: 38-39).

The Zapatistas differed from previous Mexican uprisings in their use of information technologies, as well as in joining them with grassroots mobilization. By drawing global attention to a grounded local struggle, the Zapatistas positioned that local struggle in a global context. In this case, the excluded have used the very mechanisms of ejection and domination to highlight their history of exclusion and to demand inclusion not just for themselves, but for all those condemned to oblivion.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The above discussion of three crucial practices employs a framework which incorporates aspects of social movement theory and seeks to demonstrate how practices under specific contextual conditions generate processes of mobilization and collective action. Such a framework has generally been overlooked in analyzing the Zapatistas. This analysis contributes to the burgeoning work on the Zapatistas by using this framework to focus on *how* the Zapatistas generated processes of collective action and mobilization.

In their recent work on social movements, Escobar and Alvarez (1992), Foweraker (1995), Canel (1997), and Otero and Jurgenitz (2003) have all stressed the importance of combining approaches often kept separate. That is, they call for a synthesis of new social movement theory and resource mobilization theory in order to overcome the blind spots of each approach. This synthesis would generate analyses of movements in their complexity and multifacetedness. The Zapatistas' collective action and mobilization is an example of a topic where such a synthesizing approach is not only suitable, but beneficial to its understanding. In using aspects from McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), and their focus on mechanisms, this thesis has taken a step towards such a synthesis.

McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly advance a conceptualization that acknowledges the importance of collective identities, strategic dimensions, structural contexts, framing, political opportunity, and social mechanisms. Their analysis shifts from a focus on the structural origins of movements, to mechanisms that “transform” given social settings into sites from which collective action emerges (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; McAdam, 2003: 132-133). In order to focus on the “dynamics” that generate “organized, sustained challenge[s] to constituted institutional authority” (McAdam, 2003: 127-129), McAdam,

Tarrow and Tilly use mechanisms as an analytical category, thereby avoiding “static variables” and “general covering laws.” Following their work, this thesis employed a framework that sees outcome processes generated by interacting mechanisms that concatenate and are embedded in a context. In this framework, practices motivate contention.

A focus on mechanisms entails addressing the *how* in observed events (see Hedstrom and Swedberg, 1998: 1-2). Such an approach is useful since it overcomes static structuralist conceptions of collective action and includes cognitive categories of human practice by addressing “how social movement agents construct their objectives” (Tarrow, 2003: 135). This mechanism-focused perspective sees human practice as crucial to analyses of social movements which address pre-existing organizations, use of resources and relational networks. Analyses employing generative mechanisms as explanatory tools also take into account institutional contexts and “institutionalized power relations” (McAdam, 2003: 127-128). Such approaches could avoid “narrow and insular frameworks” by acknowledging the “interactive dynamics” (McAdam, 2003: 128) across the micro, meso and macro levels of social, cultural and political life.

The practices of accessing grassroots organization networks, framing, and using information technologies enabled the Zapatistas to mobilize effectively and engage in collective action. Grassroots organizing generated support by disseminating innovative and compelling frames that resonated at the local level and across the globe via information technologies. A large support base in local communities was accessed and mobilized by combining traditional organizational practices and cultural codes, and espousing a horizontal structure maintained by radically democratic decision-making. The Zapatistas used innovative frames and dissemination practices to link local and global

struggles that existed before the uprising.

### **Context:**

The context within which the Zapatistas acted included neoliberal economic policies that exacerbated the living conditions of poverty, ended the possibility of settled land claims, and opened local small producers to the global market and to competition with international large agri-business. In addition, structures of dominance were imposed by a one party system through state-run organizations (CNC and INI) and an assimilationist ideology. These structures of domination were enforced by local elites, *caciques*, middle-men who oversaw product distribution, and “security forces” or paramilitaries. Rich in resources, Chiapas remains the poorest state in Mexico, with local communities in the Lacandón jungle receiving little benefit from the development of the land. In these contextual conditions unrest seethed for years.

Once the Zapatista rebellion erupted, President Salinas could not crush it since it attracted so much international attention, and with elections only eight months away, violence might have jeopardized the PRI’s chances of electoral victory. The government needed to maintain the image of control over a stable national scene to sustain investors’ interest. This presented a favourable political opportunity for the uprising.

### **Practices as Mechanisms:**

At the local level, the support of communities in the Lacandón jungle, as the Zapatistas recognized, was crucial for a successful insurgency. The local communities that form the Zapatistas’ base support, feed, clothe, and keep them hidden. That is, while the Zapatistas “protect” local communities, the local communities also “protect” them. The

key to support from local communities was accessing and mobilizing the pre-existing network of local grassroots organizations. This entailed a slow process of building local trust and support. Increasing disenchantment with political options, and little or no change despite years of organization and activism provided the opportunity for the Zapatistas to insert themselves as a viable alternative to the stalled, corrupt, discordant, and unsuccessful peasant organizations in the Chiapan rural landscape. The Zapatistas re-invigorated political organization in Chiapas, as well as in Mexico, by giving an alternative that involved action. Against top-down clientelistic control, the Zapatistas presented a bottom-up organizational network forming a horizontal web.

By framing themselves in a national historical context and justifying themselves by activating the memory of cultural codes and collective experiences, the Zapatistas amassed widespread national support. In emphasizing a cross-pollination between marxist revolutionaries and indigenous cultural practices, the Zapatistas produced hybrid frames that resonated at local and at global levels and acted as bridges between the two. These frames were disseminated to local, national and international audiences through information technologies and independent media.

The Zapatistas employed these frames when they accessed and mobilized support networks at both the local and transnational level by expressing the concerns of a collective political unity through a collective indigenous identity that affirmed a sense of community and cohesion, organized through horizontal traditional decision-making structures based on consensus and consultations, with a leadership that led by obeying. By framing their concerns, identity, and organizational structure in this way, the Zapatistas were able to link their concerns to global issues to form a global support network of autonomous groups and organizations that share common goals yet retain

their differences.

The Internet proved to be a useful tool for disseminating these frames and information, and for organizing. Since the Internet's structure mirrored the Zapatistas' organizational structure, it was used as an organizational "space" to mobilize supporters across both "cyberspace" and "real" terrain in protest marches, human shield campaigns, and as international observers. By using the flexible, decentralized network of information flows of the Internet to access and mobilize "civil society," the Zapatistas were able to shift from a military guerrilla strategy to a non-violent, political strategy in which they used "words as weapons." Their communicative action, in this informationalized struggle involved circulating compelling content that referenced global human rights norms and a multitude of other frames that included their cry of *Ya Basta!*, the evocation of dignity, myth and truth, their unmasking of an indigenous Mexican "reality," accountable leaders, consensual decision-making, the linking of local struggles under a global banner of resistances against neoliberalism and for humanity, and the dream of a world where many worlds fit. Through this clear and understandable poetics of resistance, disseminated through the Internet and independent media, the Zapatistas activated pre-established informational and organizational networks. This meant they were able to break the government's physical and informational isolationist cordon, and to link local, national, and international organizations and groups into a global web of support networks with which the Zapatistas' frames struck a resonant chord. This enabled the Zapatistas to establish what Laclau and Mouffe call "chains of equivalence," between their own local struggle and all those struggling against oppression across the globe, thereby linking disparate pre-existing struggles.

In their use of information technologies, especially the Internet, their innovative

framing, as well as in bringing together information technologies and grassroots mobilization, the Zapatistas represent a shift from previous Mexican uprisings. By drawing global attention to a grounded local struggle, this local struggle became global in context. In this case, the excluded have used the very mechanisms of exclusion to highlight their history of exclusion and to demand inclusion not just for themselves, but for all the those condemned to oblivion.

Although they have been presented separately in this analysis, the practices that are embedded in this context cross-germinated and constantly affected each other. They were intertwined and concatenated with a multitude of other mechanisms that generated the processes of the Zapatistas' contention.

### **Outcome:**

The EZLN is an embodiment of a “new” political praxis in its organization, mandate, decision-making, and leadership. This “newness” comes through a “cross-pollination” of many currents, including traditional and cultural, into complex, multifaceted organization.

Thus, this “newness” is based on the combination of pre-existing elements. From their demands which bear a striking resemblance to those of the FLN and to those articulated at the ‘74 Congress, to their reactivation of existing historical cultural frames, from their mobilization of pre-existing organizational networks to their tapping of internet networks that had been established before their uprising, and from their articulation of 500 years of oppression, to the choice of their name, the Zapatistas represent the ever-presence and reactivation of unfinished struggles. Indeed, as the Mexican Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz writes in his seminal work, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, in Mexico, “past

epochs never vanish completely, and blood still drips from all their wounds, even the most ancient" (1961: 11). The Zapatistas are an amalgamation of pre-existing struggles and resistances, symbols and images, demands and concerns, and approaches and strategies, which all combined into a renewed and reanimated process of contention.

The Zapatistas are a reminder and a catalyst. Their uprising of the forgotten and ignored from *Deep Mexico* demonstrated enough innovation to resonate across the globe and reinvigorate revolution, while drawing attention to unfinished struggles. The Zapatistas were one of many sparks that encouraged and invigorated both old and new elements. The impact of their practices, actions, and strategies has not only generated a vast support network, but has had considerable influence globally. Their uprising proved to be one catalyst in the rise of a global resistance movement, and they became important players in the "anti-globalization" movement. As an example of innovative contentious political action and successful political practice, they maintain an important and influential position in the politics of revolt, resistance, and collective action.

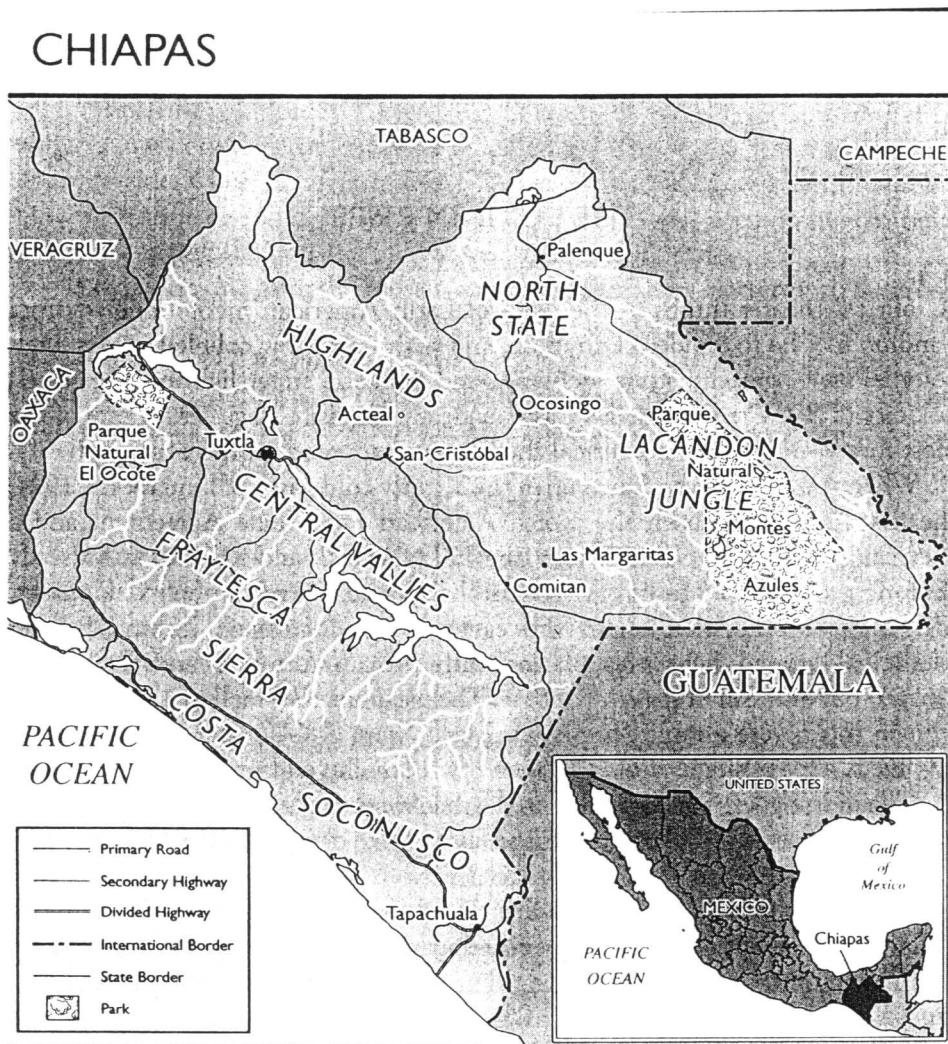
This thesis was a tentative attempt at explaining *how* the Zapatistas generated processes of collective action and mobilization. The analysis was limited by a lack of critical resources in that it relied on Marcos' writings as the "voice" of the Zapatistas. Of course, this is difficult to avoid since he *is* their spokesperson. However, as other Zapatistas step into the spotlight, and as autonomous communities begin to speak for themselves, more varied accounts should become available. Subsequent research should adopt resources that contain more critical reflection and do not rely so heavily on Marcos' representation of the Zapatistas in order to avoid a mere "cheerleader" position.

The Zapatistas continue to present a fertile area of study. Future analyses should also address the *how*, but not at the expense of the *why*, which has been the focus of most

analyses of the Zapatistas. Forthcoming investigations could analyze the other practices/mechanisms mentioned in the second chapter that, due to spatio-temporal constraints, this thesis did not analyze. Furthermore, comparative analyses could be undertaken between the Zapatistas and other movements, between the Zapatistas in 1994 and the Zapatistas at a later time, say 2001, and between the Zapatista uprising's mechanisms and the mechanisms of other movements or uprisings. Future analyses should continue to situate their study within frameworks developed in social movement theory.

## Appendix

**Map of Chiapas, México**



Map from Ross (2000), pg. 17.

### Works Cited

- Alfred, Taiaiake. 1999. *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Bardacke, Frank. 1995. "Afterword." In *Shadows of Tender Fury*. Subcomandante Marcos and the EZLN. Translated by Frank Bardacke, Leslie López, and the Watsonville, California, Human Rights Committee. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Barry, Tom. 1995. *Zapata's Revenge. Free Trade and the Farm Crisis in Mexico*. Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press.
- Bartolomé, Efraín. 1995. "War Diary." In *First World, Ha Ha Ha! The Zapatista Challenge*, ed. Elaine Katzenberger, 5-28. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Benjamin, Thomas. 1996 (2nd Ed.). *A Rich Land A Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Bob, Clifford. 2001. "Marketing rebellion: Insurgent Groups, International Media, and NGO Support," *International Politics*, 38: 311-334.
- Bonfil Batalla, G. 1996. *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*. Translated by Philip A. Dennis. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*. New York: The New Press.
- Brecher, Jeremy. 2003. "Globalization Today," in *Implicating Empire: Globalization and Resistance in the 21st Century World Order*. Eds., Stanley Aronowitz and Heather Gautney, 199-210. New York: Basic Books.

- Brecher, Jeremy and Tim Costello. 2000. *Globalization from Below: the Power of Solidarity*. London: South End Press.
- Bruhn, Kathleen. 1999. "Antonio Gramsci and the Palabra Verdadera: The Political Discourse of Mexico's Guerrilla Forces." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 41, #2, Summer: 29-55.
- Brysk, Alison. 2000. *From Tribal Village to Global Village: Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Burbach, Roger. 1994. "Roots of Postmodern Rebellion in Chiapas." *New Left Review*, 205: 113-124.
- Canel, Eduardo. 1997. "New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilization Theory: The Need for Integration", pgs. 189-221 in Michael Kaufman and Haroldo Dilla Alfonso, eds. 1997. *Community Power and Grassroots Democracy: The Transformation of Social Life*. London & New Jersey: Zed Books.
- Carroll, William. 1997 (2nd Ed.). "Social Movements and Counterhegemony: Canadian Contexts and Social Theories," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*. William Carroll, Ed. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 1997. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Volume II: The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castells, Manuel. 2000 (2nd Ed.). *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Volume I: The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castells, Manuel. 2001. *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Cleaver, Harry. 1994. "Introduction," *Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution*, New York: Autonomedia.
- Cleaver, Harry. 1998. "The Zapatistas and the Electronic Fabric of Struggle", <http://www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/Cleaver/zaps.html>, also in *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*. John Holloway and Eloina Pelaez (eds.), London: Pluto Press.
- Cleaver, Harry. 2000. "The Virtual and Real Chiapas Support Network: A review and critique of Judith Adler Hellman's 'Real and Virtual Chiapas: Magic Realism and the Left', *Socialist Register*, 2000." <http://www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/Cleaver/anti-hellman.html> (Last accessed July 7, 2003)
- Cohen, Jean. 1985. "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements." *Social Research*, 52 (4): 663-716.
- Collier, George A. with Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello. 1999 (2nd Ed.). *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*. Revised Edition. Oakland, California: Food First Books.
- Couch, Jen. 2001. "Imagining Zapatismo: the Anti-globalization Movement and the Zapatistas." *Common/Plural. Journal of Transnational & Crosscultural Studies*. Vol. 9, #2, Pp. 243-260.
- Cowen, Tyler. 1998. "Do Economists Use Social Mechanisms to Explain?" in *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, Peter Hedstrom and Richard Swedberg, eds. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Escobar, Artura and Sonia E. Alvarez. 1992. "Introduction: Theory and Protest in Latin America Today." In *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, Escobar and Alvarez, eds., Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Esteva, Gustavo. 1999. "The Zapatistas and people's power." *Capital & Class*, Vol. 68, Summer, 153-183.

Evans, Fred. 1999. "Voices of Chiapas. The Zapatistas, Bakhtin, and Human Rights." *Philosophy Today*, 43 (supplement): 196-210.

Foweraker, Joe. 1995. *Theorizing Social Movements*. London & Boulder, Colorado: Pluto Press.

Fox, Jonathan. 1994. "The Roots of Chiapas." *Boston Review*, April/May, <http://bostonreview.mit.edu/BR19.2/fox.html>.

Fuentes, Carlos. 1997. *A New Time for Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gambetta, Diego. 1998. "Concatenations of Mechanisms." In *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, eds. Peter Hedstrom & Richard Swedberg, 102-124. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

García Aguilar, Eduardo. 2001. *Mexico Madness: Manifesto for a Disenchanted Generation*. Translated by Jay Miskowiec. Minneapolis: Aliform Publishing.

Gilly, Adolfo. 1998. "Chiapas and the Rebellion of the Enchanted World", Pp. 261-333 in *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics*. Edited by Daniel Nugent. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Gonzalez, Mike. 2002. "The Zapatistas: The Challenges of Revolution in a New Millennium." In *The Zapatista Reader*, ed. Tom Hayden, 430-451. New York: Thunder's Mouth/Nation Books.

Granovetter, Mark. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology*, 78: 1360-1380.

Guevara, Ernesto Che. 1961(1998). *Guerrilla Warfare*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

- Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Harvey, Neil. 1996. "Impact of reforms to Article 27 on Chiapas: Peasant Resistance in the Neoliberal Public Sphere." In *Reforming Mexico's Agrarian Reform*, Ed. Laura Randall, 151-171. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Harvey, Neil. 1999. *The Chiapas Rebellion. The Struggle for Land and Democracy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Harvey, Neil. 2001. "The Political Nature of Identities, Borders, and Orders: Discourse and Strategy in the Zapatista Rebellion", in *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations*. Mathias Albert, David Jacobson, and Yosef Lapid, Eds. Borderlines, Vol.18. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hayden, Tom. 2002. *The Zapatista Reader*. Ed. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.
- Hedstrom, Peter and Richard Swedberg. 1998. *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hellman, Judith Adler. 1997. "Anniversary Essay on Social Movements: Revolution, Reform and Reaction." *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 30, #6, May/June.
- Hellman, Judith Adler. 2000. "Real and Virtual Chiapas: Magic Realism and the Left." *Socialist Register* 2000.
- Henck, Nicholas. 2002. *Broadening the Struggle & Winning the Media War. "Marcos Mystique", "Guerrilla Chic" and Zapatista P.R.* Montréal: Kersplebedeb Distribution.
- Higgins, Nicholas. 2000. "The Zapatista Uprising and the Poetics of Cultural Resistance", *Alternatives*, 25: 359-374.

Holloway, John and Eloina Peláez, eds. 1998. "Introduction: Reinventing Revolution," *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*. London: Pluto Press.

Holloway, John. 1998. "Dignity's Revolt," in *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*. John Holloway and Eloina Pelaez, eds. London: Pluto Press.

Holton, Robert. 1998. "Classical Social Theory," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Ed. Bryan Turner, 25-52. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Jeffries, Fiona. 2001. "Zapatismo and the Intergalactic Age." In *Globalization and Postmodern Politics: From Zapatistas to High-Tech Robber Barons*, Roger Burbach. London & Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press.

Johnston, Josée. 2000. "Pedagogical guerrillas, armed democrats, and revolutionary counterpublics: Examining paradox in the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas Mexico", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 29: 463-505.

Katzenberger, Elaine. 1995. *First World, Ha Ha Ha! The Zapatista Challenge*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.

Kampwirth, Karen. 2002. *Women and Guerrilla Movements*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders. Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

King, Patricia, and Francisco Javier Villanueva. 1998. "Breaking the Blockade: The Move from Jungle to City." 104-125, in Holloway, John and Eloina Pelaez, eds. *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*. London: Pluto Press.

La Botz, Dan. 1995. *Democracy in Mexico. Peasant Rebellion and Political Reform*. Boston: South End Press.

Laclau, Ernesto & Chantal Mouffe. 2001 (2nd Ed.). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London & New York: Verso.

Lash, Scott and John Urry. 1996. *Economies of Signs & Space*. London: Sage Publications.

Long, Ryan. 1999. "Challenges to State Hegemony, Competing Nationalisms and the Staging of the Conflict in Chiapas." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, # 1: 101-113.

Marcos, Subcomandante and the Zapatistas. 1995. *Shadows of Tender Fury*. Translated by Frank Bardacke, Leslie López, and the Watsonville, California, Human Rights Committee. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Marcos, Subcomandante. 1994. "A Tourist guide to Chiapas." *Monthly Review*, 46: 8-18.

Marcos, Subcomandante. 2001. *Our Word is Our Weapon*. Edited by Juana Ponce de León. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Marcos, Subcomandante. 2001. *Questions & Swords: Folktales of the Zapatista Revolution*. El Paso, Texas: Cinco Puntos Press.

Martinez-Torrez, Maria-Elena. 2001. "Civil Society, the Internet, and the Zapatistas." *Peace-Review*, 13, 3 (Sept.): 347-355.

Mattiace, Shannan L. 2003. *To See With Two Eyes: Peasant Activism & Indian Autonomy in Chiapas, Mexico*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press.

McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (eds.). 1999. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McAdam, Doug. 2003. “Eehh, What’s Up (with) DOC?” Clarifying the Program.” *Mobilization*. Vol. 8, No. 1, February, 126-134.

McNally, David. 2002. *Another World is Possible. Globalization and Anti-Capitalism*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

Millán, Márgara. 1998. “Zapatista Indigenous Women.” In *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*, eds., John Holloway and Eloína Peláez. London & Sterling, VA: Pluto Press.

Nash, June. 1995. “The Reassertion of Indigenous Identity: Mayan Responses to State Intervention in Chiapas.” *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 30, #3, 7-41.

Nash, June. 2001. *Mayan Visions. The Quest for Autonomy in an Age of Globalization*. NY & London: Routledge.

Navarro, Fernanda. 1999. “A New Way of Thinking in Action: The Zapatistas in Mexico--A Guerrilla Movement?” *Rethinking Marxism*, 10 (4), winter, Pgs.: 155-165.

Nugent, Daniel. 2002. “Northern Intellectuals and the EZLN.” In *The Zapatista Reader*, ed. Tom Hayden, New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press/ Nation Books.

Otero, Gerardo and Heidi A. Jugenitz. 2003. “Challenging National Borders from Within: The Political-Class Formation of Indigenous Peasants in Latin America.” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 40, 5, 503-524.

Paulson, Joshua. 2001. “The San Andrés Accords: Five Years Later.” *Mexico Solidarity Network*. <http://www.chiapaslink.ukgateway.net/news/010403.html> (Last accessed July

7, 2003).

Pawson, Ray. 2000. "Middle-Range Realism." *Archives Européennes de Sociologie XLI* (2), 283-324.

Paz, Octavio. 2002. "The Media Spectacle comes to mexico." In *The Zapatista Reader*, ed. Tom Hayden, New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/ Nation Books.

Paz, Octavio. 1961. *The Labyrinth of Solitude. Life and Thought in Mexico*. Translated by Lysander Kemp, New York: Grove Press.

Petras, James. 1997. "Latin America: The Resurgence of the Left." *New Left Review*, May/ June: 17-47.

Rabasa, José. 1997. "Of Zapatismo: Reflections on the Folkloric and the Impossible in a Subaltern Insurrection," Pp. 399-431 in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, edited by Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Rajchenberg, Enrique, and Catherine Héau-Lambert. 1998. "History and Symbolism in the Zapatista Movement." 19-38, in Holloway, John and Eloina Pelaez, eds. *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*. London: Pluto Press.

Ramos, Alcida Rita. 1998. *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. 1998. "Cybercultural Politics: Political Activism at a Distance in a Transnational World." 325-352, in Sonia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar, eds., *Cultures of Politics Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Ronfeldt, David, Arquilla, John, Fuller, Graham E., Fuller, Melissa. 1998. *The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico*. Washington, D.C.: Rand.

Ross, John. 1995. *Rebellion from the Roots: Indian Uprising in Chiapas*. Monroe, Maine & Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Common Courage Press.

Ross, John. 2000. *The War Against Oblivion. The Zapatista Chronicles, 1994-2000*. Monroe, Maine & Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Common Courage Press.

Rovira, Guiomar. 2000. *Women of Maize: Indigenous Women and the Zapatista Rebellion*. Translated by Anna Keene. London: Latin America Bureau.

Russell, Adrienne. 2001. "The Zapatistas and Computer-Mediated Peace." *Peace-Review*, 13, 3 (Sept.): 357-363.

San Andrés Accords. 1996. Trans. Rosalva Bermudez-Ballin.  
[http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/san\\_andres.html](http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/san_andres.html) (Last accessed, July 7, 2003).

Schulz, Markus S. 1998. "Collective Action Across Borders: Opportunity Structures, Network Capacities, and Communicative Praxis in the Age of Advanced Globalization." *Sociological Perspectives*, 41, #3, pp. 587-616.

Scott, James. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Snow, David A. & Robert D. Benford. 1988. "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization." In *International Social Movement Research*, Vol. 1, 197-217.

Snow, David A. & Robert D. Benford. 1992. "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest." In Eds. Aldon Morris and Carol M. Mueller, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, 133-155. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Stahler-Sholk, Richard. 2001. "Globalization and Social Movement Resistance: The Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico." *New Political Science*, vol. 23, #4: 493-516.

Stephen, Lynn. 1995. "The Zapatista Army of National Liberation and the National Democratic Convention." *Latin American Perspectives*, issue 87, vol.22, #4 (Fall): 88-99.

Stephen, Lynn. 1997. *Women and Social Movements in Latin America: Power from Below*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Stephen, Lynn. 2002. *Zapata Lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Tarrow, Sidney. 1992. "Mentalities, Political Cultures and Collective Action Frames: Constructing Meaning Through Action." In Eds. Aldon Morris and Carol M. Mueller, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney. 1998. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney. 2003. "Confessions of a Recovering Structuralist." *Mobilization*, Vol. 8, No. 1, February, 134-141.

Tilly, Charles. 2002. *Stories, Identities and Political Change*. UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Tilly, Charles. 1984. "Social Movements and National Politics," in *Statemaking and Social Movements*. Charles Bright and Susan Harding, eds. 297-317. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Rebellion*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Touraine, Alain. 1981. *The Voice and the Eye. An Analysis of Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Touraine, Alain. 1988. *Return of the Actor. Social Theory in Postindustrial Society*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tutino, John. 1986. *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Veltmeyer, Henry. 2000. "The Dynamics of Social Change and Mexico's EZLN." *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 114, vol. 27 #5 (September): 88-110.
- Von Werlhof, Claudia. 1997. "Upheaval from the Depth. The 'Zapatistas,' the Indigenous Civilization, the Question of Matriarchy, and the West," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 38, 1-2: 106-130.
- Warnock, John. 1995. *The Other Mexico: The North American Triangle Completed*. New York: Black Rose Books.
- Watson, Iain. 2002. "Reengaging Radical Democracy: An Examination of the Emiliano Zapata Army of Liberation (EZLN) and New Political Participation." *Democracy & Nature*, vol. 8, #1: 63-86.
- Weinburg, Bill. 2000. *Homage to Chiapas: The New Indigenous Struggles in Mexico*. New York; Verso.
- Weller, Worth and Ben Weller. 2000. *Conflict in Chiapas: Understanding the Modern Mayan World*. North Manchester, Ind.: DeWitt Books.
- Wilson, John. 1972. *Introduction to Social Movements*. New York: Basic Books Inc.
- Womack, John Jr. 1999. *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader*. NY: The New Press.
- Zald, Mayer N. 1999. "Culture, ideology, and strategic framing." In *Comparative*

*Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings.* Eds. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zapatistas. 1998. *Zapatista Encuentro: Documents from the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism.* New York: Seven Stories Press.

Zapatistas. 1995. *Shadows of Tender Fury.* Translated by Frank Bardacke, Leslie López, and the Watsonville, California, Human Rights Committee. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Zapatistas. 1994. *Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution.* New York: Autonomedia.

Zapatistas. 1994. “Declaration of War.” In *Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution.* New York: Autonomedia.

Zermeño, Sergio. 1997. “State, Society, and Dependent Neoliberalism in Mexico: The Case of the Chiapas Uprising.” In *Politics, Social Change, and Economic Restructuring in Latin America,* Eds. William C. Smith and Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz. Miami, Florida: North-South Center Press.