We Are from Before, Yes, but We Are New: Autonomy, Territory, and the Production of New Subjects of Self-government in Zapatismo

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Cultural Anthropology in the Graduate School of Duke University

2010
ABSTRACT

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The 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, created a rupture with a series of neoliberal policies implemented in Mexico and on a global scale over the last few decades of the 20th century. In a moment when alternatives to neoliberal global capitalism appeared to have disappeared from the world stage, the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) initiated a movement and process that would have significance not only in Chiapas and for Mexico, but for many struggles and movements around the world that would come to identify with a kind of “alter-globalization” project. This dissertation examines the historical moment of neoliberal globalization, what the EZLN calls the “Fourth World War,” the Zapatista initiative to construct an alternative political project, and the importance of this process of rupture and construction for our understanding of social organization, political participation, struggle and subjectivity.

Taking up theories of new forms of domination as dispersed forms of power operating through non-state institutions and a kind of participative subject in the public realm (following Raúl Zibechi and Stefano Harney), I argue that lines of antagonism can no longer be drawn between public and private, or state and non-state realms, but must be viewed as different strategies of subjectification, one as the subject-making of a form of governance, still but more subtly a form of domination, and one as a form of struggle for collective self-making. While both forms employ mechanisms and imaginaries of cooperation, the former cultivates subjective compatibility with an existing system while the latter I associate with the Zapatista concept and practice of autonomy.

Drawing on several years of fieldwork in Chiapas as well as the extensive theoretical work of the Zapatistas themselves, I trace the development of Zapatista autonomy as a concept and exercise of power and in its implementation as a system of self-government and provision of
services through the construction of autonomous territory. This use and understanding of power has been both encouraged by and enabling of the autonomous judicial, health, education, communication and production systems in Zapatista territory. My argument here is that, beyond control over land, services, and the mode of production, territorial and political autonomy has permitted the Zapatistas to create an entire system of “new” social relations, an ecology of practices that create a mutually constructive relationship between (autonomous) system and (self-determined) subject in a cycle that continually widens and deepens the scope of what is possible for both. I then turn to an investigation of the Zapatista initiative to create a larger political project, and a more extensive and diverse collective subject of struggle, through the launching of the “Other Campaign” as a non-electoral anti-capitalist movement. If governance as a new form of domination performs the function of interpelling individuals into, using Stefano Harney’s terms, a “class with interest” identifiable by its stakes in the system, I understand the Other Campaign to be a project to gather those “without interest,” often considered expendable or dangerous to the system or “society” in general, into a “class beyond interest,” a self-determined community engaged in a struggle not for a moment of liberation to be won but as the construction of emancipation as a way of life.
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1. Introduction: History Begins Again

It is not just our duty and our hope in this country, but in the continent and the rest of the world. If in some way Zapatismo has achieved a synchrony of global sympathy, it is not because we have made certain use of the word, or because of the unquestionable heroism of the indigenous communities, but because from this moment it was proposing an alternative, the seed of something else. And this is what the Other Campaign means to do: name the enemy, capital, and the ally of this enemy, the political class . . . we intend the defeat of this government and the destruction of capital. And then, like someone said once, we will have only just won the right to start over, but we will have to start where one always has to start, from below.

Zapatista Army for National Liberation

1.1 TINA and the End of History

On January 1, 1994, the day the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was to go into effect, a group of Mayan indigenous people in Chiapas, southeast Mexico, rose up in arms against what they marked as 500 years of oppression, marginalization, and humiliation, the trajectory of indigenous existence since the Spanish conquest. The Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) took over seven municipalities and large tracts of land in Chiapas on the dawn of the new year and, in the First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle released the same day, expressed their demands—work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice, and peace—citing Article 39 of the Mexican Constitution, “the people, at any time, have the right to change or modify the form of their government,” and invoking the slogan of the original Zapatistas of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, “better to die on one’s feet than live

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1 Participation of Subcomandante Marcos in a meeting of adherents of the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle in Morelia, Michoacán, April 5, 2006.

2 San Cristóbal de las Casas, Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Chanal, Oxchuc and Huixtán. See N. Harvey 1998, 6.

3 First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle (EZLN 1993).
on one’s knees.”4 As the Mexican military moved to repress the uprising, millions of people, in Mexico and all over the world, demonstrated in the streets their support for the movement, demanding that the military halt its counterattack on the Chiapas communities. In response, the EZLN and the Mexican government agreed to a tense ceasefire. The EZLN withdrew from the municipal headquarters, but the land that was taken in the uprising became Zapatista “territory in rebellion.”

The impact of the uprising surprised both the Mexican government, which was eager to enter the “first world” with the passage of NAFTA, and the US government, anxious to assure its own congress and US investors that Mexico was a stable, reliable trade partner and place of investment. But it also surprised many forces of opposition and resistance to the current system of power which not only had little expectation for any kind of rupture within the post-Reagan, post-Thatcher world of the “Washington Consensus,” but were unable to immediately understand an insurgent force that could not be recognized as (identifiably) ideological, (consistently) nationalist, strictly ethnically- or racially- oriented, guerrilla-based, sectarian, messianic, fundamentalist, or any other categorical element of “revolutionary” forces of the 20th century (Esteva 2005). The masked rebels both fascinated and confounded people around the world, and the response from the existing powers—manifested materially by the immediate Mexican air force bombing campaign over the Zapatista communities and later symbolically by a leaked Chase-Manhattan Bank memo indicating that “the [Mexican] government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and security policy”5

4 Trademark slogan from Emiliano Zapata, leader of the Liberation Army of the South during the Mexican Revolution, the original Zapatistas.

—triggered repeated protests worldwide. Globally, the rupture of the “Washington Consensus” would be irreparable, and in Mexico the political shift in the first two weeks after the uprising, commentators noted, marked more significant gains for the opposition than had been achieved in the previous 50 years (Esteva 2005).

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In 1984, when the small, half-indigenous, half-mestizo group of guerilla fighters that would become the EZLN went to the remote southeast of Chiapas to begin what they then thought would be a Latin American-style political military organization, the rest of the world was undergoing the so-called “end of history.” The supposed “consensus” around the Thatcherite and Reagonomics perspectives insisting that “there is no alternative” (TINA) to neoliberal capitalism, the crumbling of the USSR, and the fall of the Berlin wall were assumed to mark not only the end of a particular battle but of resistance more generally.

Neoliberal policies implemented in the United States (and more slowly in Europe) and imposed on Latin American countries (as well as throughout the “global south”) of slashing national subsidies, cutting or drastically defunding social programs, privatizing national industry, and eliminating subsistence economies were combined with aggressive market strategies designed to permeate both national economies and consumer psyche and a kind of socio-cultural morality aimed at making “free” and “open,” as discourses applied to both trade and (foreign)

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6 Francis Fukuyama’s term from his 1992 The End of History and the Last Man, which made the claim that the end of the cold war and the crumbling of the USSR, interpreted as capitalism’s triumph over communism, mean that the historical struggle between political systems was over and the liberal democracy associated with advanced capitalism would be a permanent system. For an analysis of the term, see David Harvey’s A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 2007.

7 This phrase was originally Margaret Thatcher’s, used frequently in her speeches as British Prime Minister to emphasize that the neoliberal economic system being pushed by the US and the UK was both necessary and desirable for all countries as part of the global conjuncture. See again David Harvey’s interpretation of TINA in A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 2007.
society, issues of universal right to be upheld with religious fervor. The result was to create in the political field a vast amorphous network where formal political representation was displaced by the sophisticated (in some places more than others) simulation of political choice through animated electoral and legislative debates on issues that, while often morally-charged, never questioned the neoliberal schema.

While this alternately convincing and/or coercive “consensus” was certainly not total, even superficially, the major facets of globalization—growth and consolidation of the world market, the revolutionary advances in telecommunications and information technology, innovations in international finance, the endless reach of the entertainment media, as well as the subjective perspectives and possibilities for thought and practice that accompanied these phenomena—certainly made the whole world susceptible to both its effects and affects; even the best of Mexico’s progressive political analysts pronounced, in December of 1993, the “end of revolutionary armed struggle in Latin America.”

It was out of, or into, this context that Zapatismo emerged, literally changing not only the landscape in Chiapas and Mexico but shifting an entire field of power and inaugurating a new political imagination on a global level; in Esteva’s words, “there were no alternatives and the Zapatistas created one” (2005).

1.2 Zapatismo and the Movement of Movements

It was the Zapatista uprising, most accounts agree, that made possible in Mexico a significant and legitimate challenge to the 70-year regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the neoliberal policies initiated by President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) and

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implemented most forcefully and successfully by president Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) (Esteva 1995; Gilly 1997; Duterme 2004). When the fourteenth PRI president of the century, Ernesto Zedillo, was elected in July of 1994, six months after the uprising, the party and the associated political class had already suffered a serious blow, laying the groundwork for what would be a rupture with seven decades of rule by the PRI in the presidential elections of 2000. The party considered to be representative of the left in Mexico, the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) was able to grow significantly in these years due to the social activity inspired or directly invited by the EZLN, and the activation of “civil society” as a capable and self-recognized body was given form and momentum through organized response both for Zapatista initiatives and against government and military repression of the movement. Supporters in the streets during the initial protests in 1994 numbered seventy thousand in Mexico City with thousands more around the country; six thousand attended the First National Democratic Convention in Chiapas in mid-1994; one hundred thousand again took to the streets after the government attempt to decapitate the movement in February of 1995; over one million participated in the first Zapatista-sponsored referendum on indigenous rights in 1997; three million Mexicans participated in the 1999 referendum with thousands more voting from other parts of the world; and, at what was probably the peak public gathering of Zapatista history so far, between 300,000 and 500,00010 amassed in the center of Mexico City to receive an EZLN delegation advocating for indigenous autonomy in 2001. International supporters also streamed in and out of Zapatista territory throughout those years, converging in particular for the First

9 Really, “civilian society,” to refer to the rest of society, rather than the Gramscian connotations of “civil society.”

10 Estimates for the crowds in Mexico City on this particular event range widely; 300,000 is common, though some sources estimate up to one million; see for example journalist Gloria Muñoz Ramirez in an interview with Gabriel Caparó, Casa de las Americas, Cuba, 2010.

Zapatismo has in fact been credited with various aspects of initiating and fomenting what became known as the anti- or alter-globalization movement, also known as the movement of movements (Wallerstein 2005b; Rovira 2000; Esteva 2005; Cleaver 2006a). This claim has one of its roots in the EZLN’s much-heralded cyberspace presence; some maintain that the first major global action widely diffused by internet was the EZLN’s condemnation of NAFTA (Rovira 2000). The EZLN’s combination of an innovative use of the internet as a tactic of struggle with their frequent physical global “encounters” is credited with catalyzing a series of multi-actor, non-sector-specific protests against the G-8, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and other powerful political and economic summits. This trend found its first major first-world manifestations in the “Global Action Day” in Geneva in 1998 and most significantly perhaps in the historic “Battle of Seattle” in 1999, where tens of thousands of diverse actors managed to shut down the World Trade Organization’s Third Ministerial Conference, a precedent-setting triumph and style of protest that echoed through Prague 2000, Quebec 2001, Cancun 2001, Genoa 2001, and Washington 2002 (Oleson 2005; Buchanan 2005; Weinberg 2004). The Zapatista form of global encounter is also credited as the inspiration for the formation of People’s Global Action inaugurated in Geneva in 1998,11 and the World Social

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11 People’s Global Action (PGA) was initially inspired in the Second Zapatista Intercontinental Encounter in Madrid in 1997 (a follow-up to the Zapatista Intergalactic Encounter in 1996), and inaugurated in February of 1998 in Geneva. The PGA held international conferences in Bangalore 1999, Cochabamba
Forum initiated in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001\(^{12}\) (Rovira 2009; Smith 2001; Wallerstein 2005a). Writers and intellectuals in Mexico and other parts of the world proclaimed the new Zapatismo the “pioneer of a new dialect for this century” (Montalban 2001), holding “the greatest hopes with which a human can feed the spirit” (Saramago 2001). “The whole world, the world left, is looking for a new language,” Alain Touraine pronounced, “and no other social movement in the world has contributed as much to creating it” (Touraine 2001).

Zapatismo’s capacity to generate wide-ranging resonance without a clear ideological agenda elicited attributions of providing “the first postmodern revolution” (Burbach 1994). Their repeated convocations for citizen encounters and political action and participation outside the traditional political sphere earned them characterizations of being “the armed matchmakers of a new international” (Midnight Notes 2001), and of providing “a prototype for social netwar in the twenty-first century” (Cleaver 1999). The technological innovations of those who heard their early words were balanced by the inter- and intra-community structures of communication in the Chiapas communities, which evaded the “digital divide” of a starkly uneven access to resources. The mirror of their masks with the hundreds of supporters around the world who anonymously posted, circulated, and translated their words provided a kind of “abolition of the author” (Wu Ming 2003), eliminating the domination of parties, politicians, and media conglomerates over politics and turning an “electronic fabric of opposition” (Cleaver 1998) into a kind of “open-source” struggle.

\(^{12}\) The first three World Social Forums were held in Porto Alegre in 2001, 2002, and 2003, before being moved to Mumbai, India in 2004; back to Porto Alegre in 2005; then as a “polycentric” meeting in 2006 in the cities of Caracas, Venezuela, Bamako, Mali, and Karachi, Pakistan; in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2007; as a dispersed “Global Day of Action” in 2008; and in Belem, in the Brazilian Amazon, in 2009.
Yet sixteen years ago, it is important to remember, the broad networking strategies now in place, both from above, as military, governmental, and commercial technologies, and from below, by social-political movements, had not been fully developed. Extensive and effective grassroots communication networks and independent media outlets did not exist at the level of capability, visibility, and accessibility that they do today; the world wide web was only just making its way into the popular imaginary and most people were just beginning to use electronic mail. The Zapatista movement’s early, widespread, and diffuse electronic presence as an organizing technique, a tactic for disruption and disobedience, and a strategy for generating independent or “free” media was in fact in most cases developed by the solidarity network that arose around the struggle and flourished in the “movement of movements” that many give the Zapatistas credit for conceiving. This included everything from listserves and webpages dedicated to information translation and circulation, to new practices of “hactivism,” notably the hacking of a CIA webpage and the Mexican government’s webpage in 1996 (Cleaver 1999), and the emergence of the “virtual sit-in” or “Electronic Disturbance Theater” initiated by Chicano activist Ricardo Dominguez which innovated the tactic of overloading governmental webpages to the point of collapse with thousands of simultaneous and continuous hits from activists’ servers (Cleaver 1999). These strategies broke the information blockade with which the Mexican government had long controlled access to and understanding of movements in the country (Keck and Sikkink 1998) and discredited its public relations strategy, which attempted to present the conflict in Chiapas as a local, indigenous affair. This early use of the internet was not, it should

13 As reported by Cleaver, the CIA hack occurred on September 18, 1996; it was “saved” and can be seen at http://www.2600.com/cia/. The hack of the Mexican government occurred February 4, 1998, by “a group independent of but sympathetic to the EZLN.” See Cleaver 1999, footnotes 44 and 45.

14 For a fuller description, see the webpage of the Electronic Disturbance Theater, www.thing.net/~rdom/ecd/ecd.html.
be noted, sparked by EZLN Subcommander Marcos electronically mass-mailing communiqués from the jungle, but rather by the ideas and innovations of thousands of supporters around the world (Cleaver 1999, 12; Rovira 2009, 79), and it went far beyond mere information communication to a direct subversion not only of state domination but of the socialized affects and reproductive effects of the market.

The scope and depth of the impact of the Zapatista struggle and the extent and stamina of the movements it either generated or inspired urge the question of what made Zapatismo so widely resonant; there have certainly been other struggles as worthy and courageous without similar impact. We can perhaps best understand the popularity of Zapatismo as a combination of the EZLN’s communication strategy and capacity to put forward their story and convoke others, with a moment in which the invocation of a common reality and the denunciation of a set of common concerns resonated globally. The Zapatistas were able to recognize both the homogeneity of contemporary neoliberal capitalism’s onslaught and the heterogeneity of struggle, and to address both (Cleaver 2006a).

The moment marked a reconfiguration at a global level of the antagonism between labor and capital. Colonialist structures and postcolonial developmentalist relations had established a wage hierarchy and system of extraction that shifted some pressure off “first world” workers and onto the colonized or recently decolonized, with a racialized and hierarchized difference in policy implementation between “first” and “third” worlds (Cleaver 2006a). A combination of capital’s access to “third world” labor pools and migrant flows had allowed for the maintenance of reasonable wages and welfare policies in the industrialized countries. Struggles of the unwaged in the “first world” (as we will see in Chapter Two) and both unwaged peasants and waged workers in the “third” challenged capital’s ability to shift pressure and exploitation and pit workers in different parts of the world, or between urban and rural spheres, against each other. With the
reduced capacity or will to offer Keynesian concessions to workers in the global north, capital’s response was the destructuring of the regulations put in place by the Bretton-Woods agreements, an attack on the labor gains and remaining welfare policies established over the last century, the removal of protections and tariffs and the implementation of “free trade” measures, and the privatization of public resources and services, all accompanied by a conservative social push that attempted to reinstate patriarchal forms of authority as righteous, acceptable, and inextricably attached to laissez-faire market worship (Cleaver 2006b). The generalization of these policies across what were considered the first, second and third worlds created a ground ripe for a message and a rebellion that named a common enemy (neoliberal capitalism) and addressed that enemy not as the repression of specific rights or a particular identity but as a global onslaught—the Fourth World War—waged everywhere on everyone (EZLN 1999). The massive response this formulation elicited—known variably as the “movement of movements,” the “Zapatista diaspora,” “Generation 1994,” or the alterglobalization network—affirmed its echo and appropriateness to the moment.

The state response to the “network” and “netwar” aspects of the struggle in Chiapas and its connections to movements around the world has been widely denounced as a long-running low-intensity war, including the militarization of the region (70,000 troops in Chiapas, one-third of Mexican army forces), the insertion of a counter-insurgency apparatus into domestic police functions (Cleaver 1999, 3), the proliferation of security forces on the ground in Chiapas (including but not limited to State Public Security, State Transit Police, Municipal Police, Border Police, Federal Preventive Police, State Preventive Police, State Investigative Police, Mexican military forces, Federal Investigative Agency agents, Federal Attorney General agents, National Immigration Institute agents, and, created especially for operations in Chiapas, the BOM—Bases of Mixed Operations), some closely linked with paramilitary groups (Cedano 1996; Aubry and
Inda 1997; Marín 1998; Bellinghausen 2002), the discrediting and criminalization of non-governmental and human rights organizations,\textsuperscript{15} and a xenophobic campaign against foreigners sympathetic to the movement including threats, harassment, and mass deportations.\textsuperscript{16} The global attention and support elicited by the Zapatista struggle made military annihilation (what the EZLN itself had expected) of the movement impossible (Le Bot 1997). The state would publicly try to present the conflict in Chiapas as a local, limited conflict within and around the indigenous communities, and then vacillate between two principle strategies: the targeting of that conflict as a threat to national security,\textsuperscript{17} or a legitimate but misguided response to indigenous poverty.\textsuperscript{18} On the ground, joint military and police operations worked to undermine community life with land and air patrols that prevented community access to water sources and fields, massive population displacements due to paramilitary activity, and a series of assassinations and massacres in Zapatista or sympathizing communities by military-backed paramilitary forces, most brutally and notably Acteal 1997,\textsuperscript{19} El Bosque in 1998,\textsuperscript{20} and El Viejo Velasco 2006.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{16} By 1999, several hundred foreigners had been deported, most of them justified by the Article 33 of the Mexican Constitution which bans foreign interference in Mexican politics. See Global Exchange 1999 and Enlace Civil 1999.

\textsuperscript{17} Primarily under federal presidents Salinas de Gortari in 1994, Zedillo 1994-2000, and Calderon 2006-2012. See Diego Cevallos’ article for the Interpress Service (1/10/2008) for the situation under the latter.

\textsuperscript{18} See current Chiapas Governor Juan Sabines’s remarks on the subject, reported as an editorial in \textit{La Jornada}, October 29, 2010.

\textsuperscript{19} See Hermann Bellinghausen, 2007b.


\textsuperscript{21} See Ángeles Mariscal, \textit{La Jornada}, November 14, 2007.
Even under this intense pressure, which for many in the communities and refugee camps was a threat to basic survival, the Zapatistas were able to maintain not only their own struggle but their role as a “bridge” and a space for other struggles to meet and germinate. The call to “reconquer life” (Hernández Navarro 2004) as a form of resistance to policies that for many signified death appeared unstoppable in its capacity to move between contexts, inventing practices, ways of thinking, and forms of meaning, creating new subjectivities and new possibilities in its path. It was this role as a bridge between differences, catalyst of networks, origin of a global echo of struggle, and example of an ethic of political action and interrelation that would ferment in many places in many ways and prepare people for what would come, five declarations and eleven years later, in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle.

I will return to the Sixth Declaration below and in Chapter Five. It is important here to delineate the ways that the practices listed above also influence practices within academia, here specifically for anthropology, and our understanding of knowledge production in general.

1.3 Force Fields or Field Sites

In its original conceptual and methodological formulations, anthropology constituted its object of study as a bounded space, a "society" or "culture," that an observer, from a vantage point outside that space, could document and examine as a kind of social-scientific unit of investigation and comparison. These units of study were given (imagined) as a hierarchical chain of spaces, each containing the previous (like concentric circles in the “outsider” interpretation of the “insider” imagination), and following some version of the series: villages or communities; ethnic, tribal, or regional groupings; the geo-political space of the nation-state; and areas of the world corresponding to partial or entire continents. This imaginary and disciplinary methodology was created and reinforced by the imperial interests and perspectives in Europe and the United
States, and both furthered and funded in the latter half of the twentieth century, by Cold War understandings and strategies of a world divisible (and controllable) by an “area studies” model (Amin 1974; Watts 1997; Appadurai 1986, 1996; Miyoshi and Hartoonian 2001).

As anthropology struggled to free itself of its upbringing within a university-based areas studies as the knowledge-producing home for foreign policy interests (Appadurai 1996; Borneman 1995; Price 2008; González 2009), anthropologists also challenged assumptions about the natural correlation of people to place, or between people and place and culture (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Clifford 1988; Fabian 1983; Appadurai 1996; Trouillot 2003). Often though, as pointed out by Appadurai (2000) and Piot (2004), the self-critique of an imperialist or Eurocentric disciplinary gaze sought a pluralist perspective that represented only a plurality within the maps and regional expertise of the area studies model, or a kind of depoliticizing relativity that has been called “pluricultural Eurocentrism” (Rolnik and Guattari 2008, 25). During a decade of intense theorization about globalization in the 1990s and early twenty-first century, approaches to concepts of culture and society not co-terminous with the nation-state attempted to further disrupt these categories, including the “foot in each nation” experience of diaspora and migration (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994; Malkki 1997; Rouse 2004), the flexible citizenship of the multiple passport-holder (Ong 1999), the situating in and reach of local struggles with regard to global processes (Dirlik 1999; Escobar 2001; Nash 2001; Massey 2004; Moore 2005), and the role of non-state actors in constructing realities and addressing institutions of power (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Sassen 2004). But efforts to escape or evade the nation-state-based area studies cartography through the trope of globalization often led to new conceptual borders of “inside” and “outside,” now corresponding to local and global, as places from which to take or evaluate action, or poles from which to position the gaze. Attempting to bring their learned reflexivity into a differently conceptualized and globalized field, anthropologists have urged the theorization of the “friction”
of global flows in ethnographic method applied to the universal (Tsing 2005), the rethinking of the colonial categories and boundaries that framed scholarly interpretations of state forms and global transitions (Coronil 1996; Stoler 2002), the release of the category of (hu)man as well as that of culture as legitimate objects of research (Tsing n.d.; Haraway 2003; Michaelsen and Johnson 2008), and the assertion that local and global refer perhaps not so much to the ethnographer’s position in the field but the way the field is in and out of the ethnographer (Riles 2001).

The challenge of globalization may be partly a problem of the disciplinary divisions of the social sciences in general, largely predicated on the image of a closed system with a kind of organic inside which—while perhaps not structural or functional, whole or harmonious—had enough “internal” coherence by which an “outside” point of view could be established (McGrane 1989; Michaelson 1999; Mintz 1985; Fabian 2002). This conceptualization held even when the “inside” was located closer to home and new cultures discovered in the exotics of bridge clubs, bowling leagues, girl scouts troops, etc. (di Leonardo 1998). But removing distance and finding “cultural” phenomena “at home” or in the “first” world did not address what Andres Aubry calls the academic parallel to the mystification of the market: the separation of spheres of study (the nation-state corresponds to political science, society corresponds to sociology, the market corresponds to economics, culture corresponds to anthropology) that both imitates and disguises exactly that systemic separation of spheres of life which allows for exploitation: production separate from social organization, the functioning of the state separate from the workings of the market. In other words, the separation of semiotic spheres (social, political, economic, cultural) as different areas or manifestations of meaning production already reflects a mode of production and domination (Guattari and Rolnik 2008). Interdisciplinarity has attempted to address this issue within the academy, but the project of “putting into dialogue” what are fields often
simultaneously impoverished and hyper-specialized by categorical boundaries often makes any real dialogue a difficult task. Strict disciplinary specialization cannot really handle complex realities, Aubry claims, and the unfortunate result is often truncated questions of study (Aubry 2007), or, we could add, research projects that better reflect the problems of an artificially contained discipline than the issues of the world.

If globalization not only confuses the insides and outsides on which studies of culture, society, and difference have depended but also forces recognition of the false boundaries, unities, and entities that have constituted these categories, then I want to pose social and territorial movements today as an important challenge for finding paths of study adequate to that context. If, following Gupta and Ferguson, we accept “place” not as the natural home of a culture or a given relation of people to environment but instead as a space constructed out of historical processes and in connection and interaction with an extended field of power (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), we may be able to begin to understand certain phenomena using place as one site for inquiry (Asad 2002). But it is not a sufficient site to understand what produced that place, or was made possible there, or what that place in turn produces. While anthropologists and others have begun to examine the production of space through the historical processes of colonialism and capitalism (Lefebvre 1991; Coronil 1997; Harvey 1999; Smith 2008), and with attention to the agency of actors within those situations of oppression and marginalization (Scott 1987; Moore 2005), some movements, here Zapatismo in particular, provide another challenge to investigation. Beyond the assertion that every place is produced and represents not just a site of but struggle over spatial and social organization, in Zapatismo we find the deliberate construction of a territorial space, generated and implemented as a political project by a self-organized collective actor, and documented, analyzed, and theorized by that same actor. This kind of spatial and subjective territorialization disrupts not only assumptions of cultural coherence to people and place but the
entire model, however subtle and sophisticated it has become, of “cultural consciousness” that constitutes the geographical and conceptual outside of disciplinary imagination; anthropology was constructed on the ability to recognize the relativity of “cultural difference,” the naivety of cultural absolutism, and thus, implicitly, the space outside/above difference and universal absolutism of the anthropological gaze (McGrane 1989). What are our analytical elements or evidence for understanding the Zapatista construction of space and the modes and expressions of production (including that of the collective self) that have built that space both as possibility and reality? Or, somewhat simplistically, what is the researcher’s role when the outside has been eliminated (through the new topographies and stratifications of globalization) and the inside revealed (the subject speaking for itself)? This last question may be the revelation of what was always true but easily concealed, or at least habitually ignored, but it helps to force necessary questions.

In the exploration for ways to address this reality and make transparent the mystified, much-maligned but persistent clinging to the trope of insides and outsides, Annelise Riles states that in this globalized topography there is “no place outside the subject matter from which to describe it” (Riles 2000, 21), and that certain phenomena or subjects of globalization “seem to anticipate ethnographic inquiry themselves” (Riles 2000, 5). Riles claims that in this context, academic analysis seems less to transform data than to “replicate the work this ‘data’ already has done” (Riles 2000, 6), both because often the “objects” investigated are often the same as the tools of investigation (texts, analyses, documents) and because such an inquiry often requires resisting the pattern of turning “concrete apprehensions of facts” to “abstract analyses” (Riles 2000, 91) to the extent that “analysis does not feel like analysis anymore” (Riles 2000, 6). These aspects, combined with certain choices we are freed (or forced) to make in this new context, could provide us with a genuine opportunity to question the persistent subject/object and
inside/outside schemas of anthropological and other disciplinary inquiry in a way that may help us move toward innovative practices appropriate to the context and actors at hand.

Anthropologists have certainly moved far from early ethnographies that, at least to some extent, tended to follow the separation-of-spheres pattern—with chapter divisions for social systems, economic systems, political systems, kinship systems, etc.—through a wide range of valuable work that complicated the relations between space, place, and culture. Reconceptualizing the inside-outside of the relation of study has proven much more difficult. While authorial reflexivity has challenged the premise and pretense of an objective “eagle-eye” view and the condemnation of the “sin of subjectivity” (Aubry 2007, 115), it does not necessarily move us toward a new relation to knowledge production.

Aubry suggests one possible remedy for disciplinary strictures as the devotion of the disciplines to a “history of the creation of their object.” That is, how did “politics,” “economy,” “society,” and “culture,” come to be known as such (Aubry 2007, 115)? How would that process be investigated, through time and space, in order to understand the creations and bifurcations of social actors and strategies, spontaneous or sustained?

Building from this idea, I want to suggest the possibility to think of the “field” not as a site or object of study but as a force-field, a literal field of forces, in which one can examine a particular strategy of power (i.e. as domination or as social organization) or an antagonism between competing strategies or configurations of power and/or social organization. Working between Aubry’s idea for a genealogy of the creation of the object of study and the study of a field of forces that I want to propose here, and avoiding the limitations of either a strictly “historical study” or “community study,” we could then ask the question of how an investigation
of a particular space-time as a force-field could better help us understand the reality, and possibility, of social phenomena.\textsuperscript{22}

Zapatismo creates an interesting challenge to these questions, not in the least because the EZLN speaks so clearly and abundantly itself and about itself, both through theoretical reflection and through the availability, visibility, and circulation of its own practices.\textsuperscript{23} As we saw above, Zapatismo has been widely recognized for a broad range of “networking” practices, including cyber-spatial aspects and innovations in information circulation and the “netwar” techniques of strength-through-diffusion and a kind of well-structured acephalous anonymity, as well as a general networking of their own internal practices as more of a social ecology than a political program, which I will examine in Chapter Four. Such collective and simultaneous efforts of destructuring (of dominant institutions) and the construction of new practices (in both cyber and geographic space) make for a networked field of both virtual and visible realities out of which we must choose sites of study that do not organically or necessarily correspond to units of place, time or “culture.”

Here I want to use the idea of the network in several respects to gain possible insights into these questions. One is the network that globalization presents to us “from above,” that web of power and production that scholars have been trying to track and theorize for the last few decades and which has helped us to think power and production in other-than-hierarchical

\textsuperscript{22} We can relate this idea to Foucault’s proposal to refuse to seat analysis in the “symbolic field” and to develop a genealogy of relations of force, strategic development, and tactics (\textit{Power/Knowledge} 1980, 114).

\textsuperscript{23} Mexican anthropologist Gilberto López y Rivas claims that it was Zapatismo that in some sense changed the trajectory of Mexican anthropology. The discipline had long served an advisory role to a clientelist and corporatist Mexican state with regard to the indigenous population. This came to a definitive end with the Zapatista uprising, López y Rivas claims, when suddenly, at least in some cases, many anthropologists were put at the service of an indigenous movement as advisors to the EZLN in the peace talks with the government (López y Rivas 2010a).
(though not necessarily more democratic) forms. We can think for example of the networked forces of sovereignty of empire (Guehenno 1995; Hardt and Negri 2000), diffuse organized crime or terrorist networks (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001), or the networked relations of multiple informal social bodies such as activist organizations or street gangs (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001). The network form applied to production and knowledge disrupts the political and cultural geographies that gave anthropology much of its structure—where the anthropologist examines something to which she does not belong (culturally, geographically or otherwise), and does so (regardless of involvement, commitment, or participation) from a certain outside. But we have also learned that the network form was not necessarily redistributive in any desirable way, and that it can function as a structure for private accumulation as efficiently (or more so) than any hierarchical form. With that understanding, we can distinguish between the networks from “above” that we commonly associate with globalization, and another kind of network, from “below,” also disruptive of categorically understood borders and boundaries but composed of different productive practices and goals (i.e. not oriented toward accumulation or the upward distribution of wealth).

The practice of Zapatismo, I believe, as words or actions, provide an example of this second kind of network, not only as the global “solidarity network” it generated but as an internal organization of practices, manifested in multiple singular forms—texts, events, collective bodies, new institutions—which we will explore in the following chapters. Recognizing these two types of networks, from above and from below, allows us to see that networks are both diverse and selective, promoting different forms but allowing for selective inclusion. They are neither all-inclusive nor inherently democratic. For our purposes here, working with a network model (rather than a “cultural” sphere or base-superstructure hierarchical model) provides a different relation of insides and outsides: a diverse array of forms (again, events, texts, institutions, collectivities)
presents us with multiple possible ethnographic “sites” which are not necessarily site-based; the power of selection presents us with important, non-objective choices. This may require, in a topographical understanding of the concept, that we learn to speak as one node in a network rather than observing from an analytically or geographically distinct location. This forces us to release our own analysis as an “outside” (a point thrown into particular light by the use of discourse as an ethnographic site, as we will see in Chapter Two), and to make not only analytical and methodological choices with regard to lines of inquiry but political ones. Those are choices that involve not just political positioning on particular policies and places, or even just the “collapse [of] the distinction between argument and ethnography” (Riles 2001, 20) as a form; they are actions, I want to insist, not just of recognizing, presenting, and critiquing political dynamics but of distinguishing and choosing among them.

There is a way in which the Zapatistas, perhaps many movements in general, refuse to be objects of study: they provide and perform their own story-telling, information circulation, analysis, accountability, critique, evaluation, etc.; they are their own intellectuals, practitioners, evaluators, and theoreticians. The EZLN has clarified that its theoretical reflections do not tend to be about itself as a movement but about “the reality in which they move” (EZLN 2003l). Those reflections, they further clarify, focus on what they see as tendencies in that reality, not yet consummated nor inevitable acts (EZLN 2003l). Their theory about that reality, they note, has always an approximate character, delimited by time and space, with particular applicable concepts, and no pretensions to eternity or universality. Answers to questions about Zapatismo itself, they continue, are found not in their analysis but in their practice. “For us, theoretical reflection on theory is called meta-theory. Our meta-theory is our practice” (EZLN 2003l). If the EZLN’s theoretical work has focused on the process of globalization and the accompanying shifts in the place and manner from which power, sovereignty, and the state operate, their meta-theory
is constituted by their practices of autonomy. In this sense, it is both their theory and their practice, inseparable (from each other) and un-objectifiable (from an “outside”), which can inform our understanding of both movement practice and knowledge production. The social-spatial order of globalization, as theorized by the EZLN, I take here as a helpful and necessary framework for trying to theorize a place and purpose of the anthropologist or researcher in that reality. This includes how the Zapatista movement, and movements in general, can revise and refine the role of the research on the plane of a network of practices that could give us some signals as to intellectual paths of inquiry adequate to the new subjectivities in formation.

1.4 Mexico from Below

Unlike Canada and the United States, where rural communities and small farms have suffered a long and nearly total process of depopulation and reorganization into agro-industrial farming, Mexico has maintained a large rural and traditionally self-sustaining population, especially in indigenous areas. Even today, after three decades of policies undermining the small-scale production of subsistence crops, a quarter of the Mexican population is considered rural, with an average land parcel of 1.2 hectares (2.97 acres), compared to an average 30.6 (75.61 acres) in the United States and 72.9 (180.13 acres) in Canada.24

In 1992, in preparation for entry into the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), then president Carlos Salinas de Gortari eliminated the protections provided by Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution which stipulated that ejido lands, a classification of the post-revolution 1917 Constitution which recognized and protected collectively held lands, could not be bought from or sold by their communal owners nor titled by an individual owner, preventing their

24 World Bank data published October 19, 2007, as reported in La Jornada, “La apertura en el campo expulso a un cuarto de su poblacion: BM” (Amador and Brooks, October 20, 2007).
expropriation as collateral or debt payment.\textsuperscript{25} Over the next fourteen years some 92 percent of \textit{ejido} or communal lands were individually titled, almost eliminating what had made nearly half of Mexico “social property.”\textsuperscript{26}

Since NAFTA went into effect in 1994, the Mexican countryside has lost over a quarter of its population, with the rural sector losing 30 percent of its buying power over the last 20 years,\textsuperscript{27} and immigration to the United States increasing 500 percent between 1982 and 2002.\textsuperscript{28} These factors have played a major role in leading Mexico to become, over the past decade, the biggest exporter of labor in the world, with, by official estimates, 15 percent of Mexico's laboring population working in the United States and a total of over 28.5 million people of Mexican origin living in the US.\textsuperscript{29}

Partly as a result of the depopulation of the countryside as well as a period of low growth and increasing unemployment between 2003 and 2009,\textsuperscript{30} and discounting the 15 percent of workers who live and labor in the US, some 60 percent of the Mexican working population now labor within the "informal economy,"\textsuperscript{31} that sector of unofficial or underground business which

\textsuperscript{25} A more complete explanation of this process is given in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{26} Secretaria de Reforma Agraria, \textit{Diario Oficial}. November 17, 2006.

\textsuperscript{27} World Bank data from a report published October 19, 2007, as reported in \textit{La Jornada}, "La apertura en el campo expulso a un cuarto de su poblacion: BM" (Amador and Brooks, October 20, 2007).

\textsuperscript{28} Data from the “Campaña Nacional en Defensa de la Soberanía Alimentaria and the Reactivación del Campo Mexicano, Sin Maíz No Hay País,” as reported in \textit{La Jornada}, December 26, 2007.

\textsuperscript{29} Data from the U.S. Census Bureau. According to the 2006 census, there are an estimated 44.3 million Hispanics in the United States, 64 percent of which are of Mexican origin.

\textsuperscript{30} Data from the INEGI (National Institute of Statistics and Geography), 2010 report.

\textsuperscript{31} Report by the International Monetary Fund (in González Amador “Seis de cada 10 mexicanos trabajan en la informalidad, lo cual cuesta a la economía 9% del PIB,” in \textit{La Jornada}, March 17, 2010). The Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography cited the number at 28.8% in its 2010 report.
may include street vendors, unregistered home businesses, the reproduction and sale of pirated items, and services rendered, all without tax registration or any kind of employment security, social security, pension, or other benefits. Mexico’s informal economy generates approximately USD$285 billion dollars a year, representing, by conservative estimates, 30-40 percent of the Gross Domestic Product\(^{32}\) and making it the third largest informal economy (as percentage of GDP) in the world. \(^{33}\) In 2009, official poverty rates covered over 50 percent of the Mexican population, an increase of 40 percent since 1984, with an expected GDP contraction for 2010 of nearly eight percent, from 1.3 percent growth to –6.5 percent growth, and a trade deficit of $4.68 billion.\(^{34}\)

Just as NAFTA reduced or erased the livelihoods of millions of peasants in the countryside, metropolitan areas have undergone similar processes of “modernization,” including a 2007 campaign under PRD leadership to "clean up" Mexico City by ridding its historic district of the enormous number (and thriving culture) of street vendors that have long populated it. In October of 2007, in Mexico City's historic center, thirty thousand street vendors were evicted or "relocated" to non-street and non-central areas.\(^{35}\) As many of those displaced from urban and rural livelihoods migrated north to the US where migrants make on average less than half the


\(^{33}\) Behind Turkey (34%) and Brazil (40%). Data from INEGI (National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information), (González Amador, "Mexico: The Informal Economy a Third of GDP," October 14, 2006).

\(^{34}\) According to the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook.

\(^{35}\) The historic center, as announced by the Mexican government's tourist office, is now under vigilance by the "guardian angels" of ex-New York City mayor and current Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani, a kind of security squad charged with carrying out something similar to the "zero tolerance" crime reduction policies in New York after September 11, 2001. In Mexico the “guardian angels” are officially designated to "orient tourists," "train" community members to "monitor" their own communities, and "identify strangers in the community." They are to be paid by private funds for their work in Mexico City.
wage of US citizens for equal work, Mexico in 2007 moved into first place worldwide as receiver of remittances, globally surpassing India in the quantity of remittances received from citizens outside of the country and domestically surpassing petroleum and tourism as a source of national income. Remittances during the six years of the Fox administration (2000-2006) totaled USD$82 billion. In 2006 alone they totaled USD$21 billion, in 2007 a record USD$27 billion.\textsuperscript{36}

January 1, 2008 marked the last stage of implementation of NAFTA’s terms and the total market liberalization of Mexico’s two most important crops, corn and beans. This followed shortly on the heels of the burst of the US housing bubble. Ten thousand people per day in the United States lost their homes to foreclosure in 2008—between August 2007 and October 2008, this amounted to one million homes—and by October 2009, 14.4 percent of US homes had become delinquent or were foreclosed.\textsuperscript{37} As unemployment in the US climbed to an official 9 percent (real unemployment reached 16 percent), anti-immigrant sentiment was reaching new heights, fueled by discourses of patriotism and protectionism belying just those policy factors that gave rise to the surge in immigration. Anti-migrant media propaganda was matched only by the business scramble to hire them, accompanied by an increase in ICE raids (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), discriminatory housing policies,\textsuperscript{38} the criminalization of migrants through

\textsuperscript{36} World Bank data published October 19, 2007, as reported in \textit{La Jornada}, “La apertura en el campo expulso a un cuarto de su poblacion: BM.” (Amador and Brooks, October 20, 2007).

\textsuperscript{37} From a November 2009 Mortgage Bankers Association, as reported by Catherine Clifford for CNN, 2009.

\textsuperscript{38} For example, ordinances passed in many US cities make it illegal for landlords to rent to undocumented immigrants (Farmers Branch, Texas; Hazleton, Pennsylvania, etc.), and federal revitalization projects such as Hope VI that replace low-income public housing with ‘mixed-income’ housing, resulting in a net loss of desperately needed rental units. See http://www.diggerrealm.com/mt/archives/002017.html.
the state legislated 287(g) and its national expansion, the upsurge of armed militias “protecting” the border, and the construction of the security wall on the US-Mexico border (built, it should be noted, with Mexican cement, by Mexican labor). Deportations under the Obama administration have increased 50 percent, and if work was increasingly difficult to find and keep in the US, workers deported to Mexico found official unemployment rates of around 20 percent (well over 50 percent among young people), matched by national inflation raising the basic cost of living nearly 20 percent.

Remittance numbers however only finally began to drop in 2009 as a result of the “slow recovery” in the United States, falling an overall 20 percent and in some zones 50 percent. The impact of this shift is not small; 96.2 percent of municipalities in Mexico report some kind of economic contact with the United States, and 55 percent of homes receiving remittances are located in towns or cities of less than twenty thousand inhabitants, another blow to the small-town and rural population. With the evacuation of the Mexican countryside, Mexico is now importing some one hundred billion pesos (roughly USD$10 billion) worth of grain from the US per year.

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39 287(g) is the law that essentially gives police forces the powers of immigration agents. Under 287(g) the immigrant status of an individual arrested on any charge can be determined by a fingerprint check, and ICE agents immediately receive full discretion over processing of the detained. The law was put into place under President Bill Clinton as a revision of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and expanded under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

40 The wall, as reported in a New York Times editorial September 21, 2009, was several billion dollars over budget and several years behind budget.

41 Carlos Marentes, President of the Union of Agricultural Workers of the Border, as reported at the Festival of Dignified Rage in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, December 2008.


43 Data from the “Campaña Nacional en Defensa de la Soberanía Alimentaria and the Reactivación del Campo Mexicano, Sin Maíz No hay País,” as reported in La Jornada, December 26, 2007.
It is estimated that the twenty-eight million Mexicans living in the US contribute about USD$485 billion to the US GDP, 3.7 percent of the U.S. total, spending USD$268 billion as consumption and paying USD$22 billion in direct job-related taxes.\(^{44}\) We can only deduce from these facts that North America is now in a sense a largely integrated economy; if this was not achieved officially by NAFTA, then the migrant labor pool supporting the two economies has achieved it in practice.

The rise in unemployment north of the border and the drop in remittances sent south, simultaneous with the final stages of NAFTA and increasing tensions generated around the border where the migrant flow is often both discursively and materially confused with narco-trafficking, has created a pressure cooker situation in Mexico. With the escape valve to the north (migration and the relief sent in the form of remittances) threatened, with Mexico as the Latin American country hardest hit by the financial crisis,\(^ {45}\) and with a narco-war that has killed almost 30,000 in the last four years, social unrest and political clashes are reaching new heights.

For many on both sides of the Mexico-US border, the beginning of the twenty-first century was an uncomfortable and sometimes desperate squeeze between neoliberal reforms such as NAFTA and neoconservative policy including immigration crackdowns. The housing bubble and the foreclosure crisis in the US and the effects of free trade treaties and a string of unpopular privatizations of industry and services in Mexico increased the already gaping division of wealth in both countries. There are a record ten Mexican billionaires on the Forbes’ richest list this year, with their combined income doubling Mexico’s entire foreign national debt.\(^ {46}\) The world’s richest men, Bill Gates and Carlos Slim take turns with first place, while their respective countries, the


\(^{45}\) González Amador, La Jornada April 2, 2010.

\(^{46}\) Lascano Rodríguez 2009.
US and Mexico share the rank, accompanied worldwide only by Russia, of having the fewest and least effective anti-poverty programs. Neoliberalism, the Zapatistas say, does not turn many countries into one country; it turns each country into many countries (EZLN 2003).

1.5 Chapter Structure

Chapter Two will start there precisely, with the context of neoliberal globalization, what the Zapatistas call the Fourth World War. For Chiapas in particular, the rash of free trade treaties (into which Mexico has entered more and with more countries than any other nation in the hemisphere between 1993 and 2000), accelerated deregulation (the Mexican government dropped national protections and subsidies at a much faster rate than required by NAFTA), and regressive land reform (through constitutional amendment as well as illegally but officially enforced displacement) added to what was already a residually colonial and explicitly clientelist state system and made Chiapas both an oasis and an abyss for the global market aperture. Chiapas also, however, has a long history of peasant organizing, including the struggles of indigenous inhabitants and migrants to find or stay on land of their own and substantial experience with a whole spectrum of deception and discrimination from self-serving organizational leaders, corrupt government officials, and exploitive and violent caciques (land owners). This history and experience, I will demonstrate in the first part of Chapter Two, served to prepare a generation not just for the risks of armed rebellion but for the long and patient process of constructing autonomy.

I will then turn to an analysis of the Fourth World War, through an analysis of Zapatistas’ own discourse in terms of its implications for the form of rule, the mode of production, the

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strategies of war, and the construction of identity and subjectivity that characterize its dominance in the world today. Chapter Two will conclude with a query into why the Zapatista movement poses a threat, or an alternative, to the neoliberal system. This examination will help us understand the world in which the Zapatistas organized themselves in clandestinity, the one into which they erupted publicly, the one in which they are situated now, but also the one they are slowly bringing into being.

Chapter Three will examine the paradigms of what I put in terms of autonomy versus governance, or, alternatively, self-government versus self-management. This analysis is based on the assertion that in addition to the physical and economic onslaught of the Fourth World War, movements are faced with a new form of domination, one formed close to or even inside the movements, a new art of governance. In Raúl Zibechi’s analysis, in South America this consists of “progressive” governments, which Zibechi and others maintain have done incalculable damage to the movements, that do not explicitly represent the neoliberal states nor the welfare states that preceded them but rather embody this new form of governance, built from the decrepitude of the state ravaged by neoliberalism and armed with new tools and a mandate to recover state control through pseudo-state or other-than-state forces (Zibechi 2008a, 18). These tools include forms of governance often carried out through state-sponsored or non-governmental organizations that work not so much to discipline citizens or subjects but to include and “empower” them. That is, they effectively create subjectivities compatible with the need not only for workers but for protagonists of a refined capitalist order under progressive management. These subjects demonstrate a willingness and enthusiasm for public participation and progressive reform that may encourage and even result in moderate policy shifts but tend to do so at the expense of
autonomous movements’ capacity to self-create and self-direct.\textsuperscript{49} This chapter argues that these emerging practices of governance are not a conspiracy or complot embedded in the state to use leftist discourse and movement momentum as levers by which to gain power later to use against those same movements, but rather that it is progressive administrations that are best situated to promote the development programs and anti-poverty projects often sponsored by international financial organizations that then tend to disarticulate and undermine struggles for autonomy and self-determination (Zibechi 2008a, 164).

Mexico provides a somewhat different but not dissimilar case of emerging governance. The progressive state body in this case is the PRD government of Mexico City, with the stakes, at least on the surface, constituted by its intensely charged battle for the presidency in 2006 and the PAN-PRI-sponsored fraud that kept the PRD out of the presidency. I read the stakes here differently, as the lines of antagonism composed by the struggle of the electoral-based political class as a whole on one hand and the highly publicized and controversial dissent of the Zapatista movement with regard to the PRD and the entire electoral process on the other. I will examine this scenario as a kind of battlefield of competing strategies: one of governance, which follows a long trajectory of developmentalist projects with new sophisticated forms of subject-making (as subjection); and one of autonomy, as a form of struggle for collective self-making. Using what I have set up in terms of autonomy as self-government and governance as a kind of imposed and internalized self-management, this chapter will argue that what is at issue in these categories are

\textsuperscript{49} Some movements have condemned the policies of the progressive administrations that they themselves participated in bringing to power, often with regard to particular economic or development policies (such as extractivism) or lack of democratic process, but also for direct repression of the movements. See for example the statement of the CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) with regard to the government of Rafael Correa, http://www.conaie.org/component/content/article/21-noticias-portal/249-llamamos-a-la-unidad-de-las-organizaciones-sociales-por-una-democracia-plurinacional-de-los-pueblos; or the condemnation by the FEJUVE (Federation of Neighborhood Councils of El Alto) in Bolivia of the government of Evo Morales, http://www.fmbolivia.com.bo/noticia31049-fejuve-altena-criticas-al-gobierno-de-evo-morales.html, and http://www.bolpress.com/art/php?Cod=2010111001.
forms of subjectification. While both strategies apply both discursive and actual forms of cooperation, one form (governance) is oriented toward subjection by and through domination, both externally exercised and internalized, while the other (autonomy) encourages processes of subjectivation through self-determination.

The possibility and strategy of collective self-making through autonomy as one strategy on that field of forces will lead us into Chapter Four through an examination of how the Zapatista movement has utilized that strategy to create an entire system of autonomous self-government and services of collective provision through autonomous territorialization. The establishment of control over a territory serves the movement here not only as an independent source of production but as the site for the construction of a different system of social relations. This different set of social relations, both encouraged by and enabling of the autonomous judicial, health, education, communication and production systems in Zapatista territory, in a sense closes the gap between institution and insurrection (Revel 2008), making a movement, or movement itself, not a means or an exception but a manner of being.

If the first three chapters form a kind of focusing-in from the global scope of the Fourth World War, to the battle field of governance and self-government in movements in general and Chiapas in particular, to the specific strategy and territorialization of autonomy in the Zapatista struggle, Chapter Five begins to widen the lens back out with the moment and initiative inaugurated by the release of the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle and its proposal for a national and international level effort for “another politics” and the anti-capitalist front represented by the “Other Campaign.” The Other Campaign was timed to coincide with and contest the “calendar” of the 2006 Mexican presidential elections. In the lead up to the elections, it appeared that PRD candidate Andre Manuel López Obrador was set to become the new president. His profile held important similarities with progressive South American
administrations: some progressive anti-poverty policies, small reforms on politically charged social issues, promises of relief to the poor and an assurance to national business and international capital that “macroeconomic” policies would not change. His victory seemed so close to guaranteed that the EZLN, in 2005, began publicly planning for that new national framework: neoliberal policies under progressive administration. López Obrador however was kept out of the presidency by what is widely recognized and well-documented as a fraud of impressive proportions, carried out principally by the PAN with the crucial support of the PRI. Felipe Calderon, the PAN’s militaristic and hard-handed candidate took office amid massive protests, and the scene in which the EZLN expect to act—a self-professed progressive administration with solid neoliberal foundations—changed dramatically. In many cases, both sectors and citizens were split between support for the defrauded PRD candidate and interest in the growing presence of the non-party-based, non-electoral movement found in the Other Campaign. That unexpected scenario would provide not only a complicated context for the Other Campaign but new lines of antagonism around autonomy and governance and an aperture in which the “geographies” and “calendar” of power and resistance were thrown into relief by the split between progressive party and autonomous movement. This divergence reveals a glimpse at a specter which has followed the Zapatista struggle and here haunts the first three chapters: the possibility and necessity of a larger—in both breadth and depth—autonomous collective subject. This is what I will call, using Stefano Harney’s terms, the transition from a “class without interest” as the excluded and expendable, to a “class beyond interest” as a self-determined collective subject, a community in all of its social and political aspects and abilities, not just as a movement but in movement as the self-construction of a collective future and everyday life.

I will conclude by suggesting that project of a larger class beyond interest is a glimpse of the common. The final chapter will provide a few suggestive strokes for the context in which and
actions with which that class might operate in the near future and what our practices of research and knowledge production might be or become capable of doing in response or in step.

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Today, entrance into Zapatista autonomous territory is marked by a sign: “You are in Zapatista Territory in Resistance. Here the people rule and the government obeys.” Upon entering that territory, one must first enter the “vigilance office,” where a commission of Zapatista community members provides a welcome to autonomous territory and registers the visitor’s name, country, organization, and business at hand. The vigilance commission then takes that information to the Good Government Council, the central unit of Zapatista self-government and the body in charge of all community, municipal, and regional affairs as well as relations with national and international civilian society. The Good Government Councils now govern not only Zapatista affairs but are patronized by non-Zapatista indigenous, mestizo, and urban dwellers from the whole region for the resolving of disputes, having in many cases become more trusted and respected than the official municipal governments and the state and local courts. Having stated one’s business to the Council and with permission to officially enter Zapatista territory, it is clear that this is not a bureaucratic, top-heavy process, but rather one that is nascent, slow, and entirely self-run. It is not EZLN commanders or even civilian leaders that primarily make up the vigilance and governing councils, but community members who take turns “serving” a period of time on the self-government councils. Each Zapatista self-government headquarters is populated with a series of buildings which may include, with some variance, a Health Clinic and Women’s Health Clinic, Medicinal and Herbal Pharmacy, Shoe-making Shop, Autonomous Primary School, Cooperative Convenience Store, Communications House with satellite internet connection, international peace camp, Good Government Council offices, events stage, basketball court, and auditorium and dormitories for the current shift of Zapatistas serving their turn on the
council. People from all of the communities that make up a zone rotate in and out of the headquarters to work on collective projects, international visitors populate the peace camp for a few days or months at a time, indigenous and mestizo farmers and workers come in from nearby towns and cities to bring cases to the Good Government Council, and an autonomous transport system—open-back trucks labeled “Zapatista Transport Cooperative” with the name of the corresponding Autonomous Municipality—keep a steady traffic between Zapatista headquarters, surrounding communities, and nearby cities. The social environment and practical services generated by this series of autonomous institutions and activities is unique not only in its functioning and effectiveness but in the generalized sense of confidence and collective investment that it generates. The existence of an adequate and egalitarian infrastructure is uncommon in Chiapas or in Mexico in general; the fact that these structures are decided upon, designed, and operated collectively, and in material conditions of poverty, is almost unprecedented.

The following chapters examine the question of what constitutes the social field and subject formation that generate this reality and what, in turn, this reality makes possible as a new social and subjective field in construction. In a fragmented world, with dispersed and fragmented rebellions, the Zapatista uprising and the evolution of Zapatismo has in a sense been able to forge a coherent path through that fragmentation without rehearsing or reinstating tired and polarized debates over reform versus revolution. Zapatismo was able rather to demonstrate a rebellion that could advance in a constructive, constituent manner without becoming a new form of submission or domination, what could only be described as an “epic gesture toward the open transformation of many cultures” (Esteva 2005). It is my contention that it was the Zapatistas’ ability to make that gesture as an experiment for themselves and an invitation to others, rather than as a doctrine to be applied or adhered to, that made for the unprecedented echo and successful communicability of the movement. It is through this understanding, both cause and consequence
of a set of practices they call “autonomy,” that they would create a struggle expressing emancipation not as an objective, but rather a way of life (Zibechi 2008a, 62).
2. The Fourth World War

Resistance has to take a step back for perspective and a step forward for innovation. And so, when the rebel faces the option of choosing between various paths, he looks further ahead and he looks twice: he sees that those routes lead to the same place, and he sees that there is no path to the place where he wishes to go. Then the rebel, instead of agonizing over polls which say that one path is better than the other because such and such a percent cannot be wrong, begins building a new path.

2.1 Introduction

The history of the Zapatista movement, indeed of movements in general, is often told as a timeline of events, driven by a definitive and preexisting motivation, means, and goal. Interpretations of Zapatismo are widely varied and abundant, ranging from emphases on the nature of the struggle as one moment of a larger pan-Mayan Mesoamerican indigenous resurgence (Gossen 1996) to a “third wave” of Latin American revolutionary movements (Petras 1997), from a primarily indigenous cosmological vision (Nash 2001) to a global cosmopolitan one (Burbach 1996). Others have viewed the Zapatista uprising through lenses focused on local land rights and ethnic identity (Rus 1994, 1995; Mattiace 1998, 2003), universal human rights and cultural identity (Speed 2007, 2008; Leyva Solano 1999, 2008), the relation of indigenous peoples to the state (Stephen 1997, 2002) and of indigenous struggle to “alternative development” (Earle and Simonelli 2003, 2005). But what is certain is that the EZLN, upon emerging from the jungle in 1994 in their first public appearance, did not find the world that they had organized against. Precisely those shifts in sovereignty and production mentioned in Chapter One (and revisited in greater detail in this and following chapters) had disrupted the schemas of what they had imagined to be their enemy, strategy, weapon, and battlefield. It is my argument here that

1 EZLN 2003j
what has made the Zapatistas unique as actors of their era—one of few struggles that survived the “end of history”—has been their capacity to analyze the changes occurring around them and create a diagram of a shifting world almost simultaneously with those changes. Their additional capacity—and urgency—in creating and circulating a discourse appropriate to that diagram transformed not only their movement but an entire generation of movements.

How was Zapatismo able to do this? This chapter addresses that question through two lines of inquiry: first, an historical analysis of the context and background of rural organizing in Chiapas and militant organization in Mexico that gave rise to the EZLN; and second, a discursive analysis of the EZLN texts which present the Zapatistas’ own perspective and analysis on the current world order. Far from the unconditional support lent by believers in the inherent nobility of indigenous struggle or the righteous inevitability of the proletarian line, I claim here that what brought the EZLN through “the end of history” and out the other side was in fact the capacity to generate, the will to communicate, and the innovations necessary to circulate an analysis that would lay a groundwork for organizing a struggle within the Fourth World War, a network of solidarity to sustain it, and a broader movement that would surround and extend it. Using that discourse as one investigative site is an exercise in distinguishing force-fields from field sites. It is not an effort to dig out the “unsaid” or “implicit” meaning in discourse, but to examine both the power analyzed and the power exercised and circulated in that discourse. In that sense, the examination of the EZLN’s discourse on the Fourth World War here is not to be understood simply as a basis or background for their struggle, but as a direct site of production that itself created new realities of struggle far beyond their own.
2.2 Chiapas: History of Rebellion

Since its annexation to Mexico in 1824 (having been formerly under the control of Guatemala), Chiapas has been a battleground for regional elites fighting over control of the land and labor of the indigenous population and indigenous revolts against the contesting claims over their submission were frequent and violent (N. Harvey 1998, 36; Gilly 1997, 24). These include the Tzeltal rebellion of 1712 against the church and the colonial government (Gosner 1992; Wolf 1957), the 1869 indigenous revolt against conservative and liberal elites in the state, and the long nineteenth and twentieth centuries of unrest and rebellion against the efforts of both liberal and conservative state governments to remove restrictions (originally put into place by the Spanish crown) on the private appropriation of Indian land (N. Harvey 1998; Womack 1968). Rebelling alternately against a colonial state, the Catholic Church, and local and regional conservative and liberal elites, indigenous Chiapans fought a series of attempts to obligate them to work (anti-vagrancy laws), to convert them from free villagers to peons (by classifying their lands as “vacant”), to force them to into obligated taxation (to the state) and tribute (to the church), and to accept racial, ethnic, and religious subordination (through attacks on indigenous paganism’s purported intent to “exterminate ladinos”) (N. Harvey 1998). While the role of Emiliano Zapata as hero of the landless in the Mexican Revolution of 1910 is much venerated throughout Mexico, including and perhaps especially in the south, for many Chiapan peasants the land reform dictated in the post-revolutionary 1917 Mexican Constitution never arrived (Gilly 1997). The Revolution

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2 The reclaiming of the Zapata name by the EZLN was an important historical recovery. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), had long appropriated the image of Zapata as well as the name of the revolution for what became the party’s 70-year rule in Mexico, what Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas called “the perfect dictatorship.”

3 The 1930s brought more significant agrarian reform under the Cárdenas presidency, for which the period between 1936 and the early 1940s is often called “the revolution of the Indians” (Gilly 1997, 52).
was played out in many parts of the south as merely a rivalry between local and national elites (Rus cited in Gilly 1997, 52), or as only partially including the Mayan indigenous, but only as peasants rather than as indigenous peoples (Gilly 1997, 52). This partial inclusion came in the form of “tutelage for protection,” creating the paternal corporatist relationship that would characterize the interaction of the state with rural populations for the rest of the century. This system made the state, rather than local landowners and *caciques* (rural “bosses” that function like plantation owners), the direct counterpart for peasant organization, complaints, demands, and loyalties (Gilly 1997, 52-53). Indigenous communities could maintain certain internal relations and traditions in this system, but in a subordinated manner that functioned to preserve rather than thwart the relations of domination (Gilly 1997, 53), “congealing” those practices and relations as traditional patterns rather than dynamic social systems (Gilly 1997, 55). This context will become important later as we see the neo-Zapatistas shift the target of their struggle away from a focus on and relation with the state and transform the use of traditional customs into democratic practice.

The 1970s and 80s saw the exodus and migration of thousands of indigenous peoples from other parts of the state and surrounding regions into the Chiapan Highlands and the Lacandón Jungle as a result of land struggles and social unrest. The population increase in some of these regions, which had doubled between 1950 and 1970, doubled again in the 70s and more than doubled yet again in the 80s (Gilly 1997, 52). This migration and the mixture that it brought of various indigenous traditions, religious influence, and certain Maoist currents prominent in the area created a new generation of indigenous leaders. At the same time, what had served as the mediatory body between the State and peasant organizations, the National Peasant Confederation (Confederación Nacional Campesino, or CNC), a state institution itself, was quickly losing power in the area. As independent peasant and community organizations began to form and develop a more direct relationship to both state sources of credit and commerce as well as to market forces,
the old system of corporatist economic management began to break down. This shift in production and market access however was not matched by a political “modernization” of the corporativist system. Still within the political corporatist model, local oligarchy began to form alliances with national financial capital with an eye to the wealth of precious woods, the coffee export industry, increasing livestock production, and the recently discovered massive petroleum reserves in the Lacandón Jungle (Gilly 1997, 57). These changes were furthered by the neoliberal policies implemented in the 1980s by then President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) promoting international investment, and the constitutional changes made by his successor, Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), as preparation to enter NAFTA. The combination of an old-power oligarchy with an emerging neoliberal market provided a kind of economic liberalization without political democratization, making for an explosive situation as tensions mounted between old political elites and new economic players (Gilly 1997, 58).

Resistance also began to take a new shape, with two specific and significant influences, liberation theology and Maoism. In 1974 the First Indigenous Congress of Chiapas was held in San Cristobal de las Casas, a historically unprecedented event including Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolobal, and Chol representatives that contributed greatly to both the organization within each group and the connections between them (N. Harvey 1998, 77; Gilly 1997, 59). This was a

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4 Samuel Ruiz would come to be a much loved and heralded figure both in the indigenous communities in Chiapas and on the international scene. While the Catholic Church and the EZLN had a sometimes tense relationship, Bishop Ruiz played a continuously important mediation role in the dialogues between the government and the EZLN, and the organizations he founded as head of the diocese, perhaps most importantly the Fray Bartolomé Human Rights Center in San Cristobal de las Casas, became important actors in monitoring and denouncing human rights abuses in the region, principally by military and paramilitary forces against the Zapatista support bases. Ruiz served as president of the EZLN-government mediating body, the National Mediation Commission, (CONAI, Comisión Nacional de Intermediación), and was three times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. In January of 2010, the work of “Tatic” Samuel, or grandfather Samuel, as he was called in the Chiapas communities, was celebrated on the 50th anniversary of his ordination. For coverage of his work and the anniversary commemoration, see the International
landmark event that was organized by the state with the assistance of the Catholic Church under the leadership of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, but what came out of the Congress was far beyond what the state could have planned (or wanted). Bishop Ruiz, then a young priest, had participated in the Medellin Council of Latin American Bishops in 1968 where liberation theology had gained prominence and during which a “preferential option for the poor” was adopted, cushioned in an emerging radical consensus in the region around the effect of US imperialism and the structural causes of poverty (N. Harvey 1998, 62). Ruiz had himself gone through a process of transformation in his interaction with the indigenous communities in his diocese. Under his care, catequists of the diocese of San Cristobal, usually young people from the indigenous communities themselves, were trained not to deliver the “word of God” to communities in a mission of conversion, but to “find” the “word of God” already present in the cultural practices of a people (N. Harvey 1998). This led to a kind of democratizing method in the communities in which catechists, rather than “teaching” anyone, were to facilitate the voice and reflection of all community members on political and economic matters as well as religious, dismantling the system whereby only those high in a hierarchical (religious or political) system possessed the wisdom to voice their opinion on community affairs (N. Harvey 1998, 64). This collective reflection created a systematic and socialized evaluation of life conditions, both politicizing the collective and valorizing the democratic process, and the results of that evaluation were treated by the diocese not as a kind of census data or set of raw demands but as a theological document (N. Harvey 1998, 73). These “living documents”—produced through the dialogue of the community

Service for Peace (SIPAZ), http://sipaz.wordpress.com/2010/01/22/homenaje-a-don-samuel-ruiz-obispo-emerito-de-san-cristobal-de-las-casas/.
rather than from ancient and “sacred” universal texts—served as a kind of self-organization. This textual practice, in addition to the number of indigenous, bilingual, literate young people in the communities trained by the diocese, the custom of non-salaried accountability of elected authorities in the communities (N. Harvey 1998, 75), and the valorization and implementation of collective democratic practice laid a significant base for later organizing (Collier 1994, 65).

The Congress also pulled a particularly important rug out from under what had been the stranglehold of institutional politics (by the PRI, CNC, and the INI, the National Indigenous Institute) on indigenous organizing (Collier 1994, 69). Even in officially government-sponsored initiatives, such as the land unions that arose in the 1970s, delegates who had participated in the Congress began to supplant the usual PRI loyalists as community leaders. Several independent organizations arose in the years after the Congress, including the Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization (OCEZ), which worked primarily on agrarian reform issues to help peasants to stay on their land and gain title to contested lands (Collier 1994, 69), and the Independent Confederation of Agricultural Workers and Indians (CIOAC) which employed Mexico’s labor laws to protect peasants as underpaid and mistreated workers (Collier 1994, 70-71).

Simultaneously, and also initially at the invitation of the church, Maoist organizations active in other parts of the country began to work in Chiapas and came to provide the strongest independent organizing force in the state (Gilly 1997; Collier 1994; N. Harvey 1998). Bishop Ruiz had invited activists from the Maoist group, Union of the People (UP), to help prepare the 1974 Congress (N. Harvey 1998, 79), and from another Maoist current, People’s Politics (PP) in

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5 Liberation theology also talked of a “new man” constituting the “new community” on the “new earth” through the “reign of God over the earth.” Apart from the actual theology involved, the practices of liberation theology in Chiapas tended to produce a sense and habit of community that dismantled hierarchical forms of social organization, “the affirmation of a ‘we’ that destroys the old ties of dependency and combats a common adversary (the state, the landowners, the intermediaries, the rich ladinos), a form of “we” that in this combat (re)constructs its identity and its difference” (LeBot 1997).
1977 to provide organizational skills for the diocese’ attempts to support the land struggle in the indigenous communities (N. Harvey 1998, 71). Many of the Maoist organizations of the time had roots in the 1968 student movement (both the UP and PP were led by university faculty in economics and agronomy) who promoted the Maoist “mass line.”6 Brigades of students went to poor urban and rural areas to help build “popular power”7 through political consciousness-raising and organization. The UP and PP eventually combined to form the Proletarian Line (LP), which was also active in service and industrial unions, linking their activity in Chiapas to what was at the time a new sort of popular organization in the country as a whole (N. Harvey 1998, 82). These organizations did not promote armed struggle and attempted to avoid direct confrontation with the state, focusing on building capacity and organization at the broadest level of the grassroots, and promoting connections between communities and between members of each community in a kind of horizontal democracy that sometimes fell into contradiction with the leaders and structures that had emerged from the Indigenous Congress (N. Harvey 1998). The LP and the church repeatedly came into conflict over leaders and delegates, and the Maoist organization developed its own internal divisions, usually over the struggle between ideological emphases on consciousness-raising prioritized by the national organization and the reality of local day-to-day problems that were left unaddressed (N. Harvey 1998, 83). The LP eventually managed to throw off the restrictions of its national central committee and focus, as local organizers desired, on economic issues in the Lacandón region, primarily around land use and coffee trade (N. Harvey

6 The mass line generally represented the idea that “socialism was conceived as something constructed through long-term politicization of economic demands, not as the seizure of state power,” (N. Harvey 1998, 124-125).

7 The belief that “the masses had the capacity to organize at the grassroots, and that the role of theorists and analysts was to help the masses realize their capabilities” (Collier 1994, 73). This reading of Mao held that socialism would be constructed not through taking power but through long-term politicization of economic demands resulting in widespread politicization of the masses. Concrete economic victories were to build that mass power which would gradually dismantle state power. See Neil Harvey, 1994.
1992). But as other land unions arose, including perhaps most importantly the Union of Unions (UU), an umbrella organization for several independent peasant coalitions (Collier 1994, 75), rivalries between advisors of the organizations heightened. The ARIC Union of Unions split from the UU in protest of the UU’s agreement with the state government to temper the militancy of its members in exchange for legal recognition and support for its credit union. Later though the federal government’s recognition and subsidizing of ARIC communities brought the same criticism back onto them, including accusations of leadership sell-out and the leadership’s theft of government aid to the communities (Collier 194, 77). Some important gains were made during the 1970s and 80s in creating agreements and alliances around collective commercialization, credit unions, and price controls, what in general was considered a new type of rural organization oriented toward the “the retention of surplus value through autonomous control of production, credit, and marketing” (N. Harvey 1998, 87). But amid escalating conflicts and splits between and within organizations, often based in mutual accusations of “caudillismo” (authoritarian leadership) or “social democracy” (co-opting and controlling the “masses” from above), and what was perceived as being “gobiernista” (an unwillingness to forcibly confront the government, the most damning of accusations), much of the trust with the communities was lost (N. Harvey 1998, 90). From this point on, “outsiders” would have a difficult time regaining it.

This extensive organizational trajectory however had an effect, and the next two decades held an increasing number and intensity of indigenous marches, sit-ins, hunger strikes, and mobilizations, generating significant political experience and a respected local leadership within the indigenous communities. This burgeoning resistance was met with increased repression in indigenous and peasant communities by a combination of state police, the federal army, and “white guards,” or paramilitary groups paid for by wealthy ranchers and landowners (Collier 1994, 79). A succession of evictions, displacements, deaths, and the razing of entire communities
culminated in 1980 when General Absalón Castellanos, who later became governor of Chiapas, led an attack on a Tzeltal community at the edge of the jungle, killing and incinerating a dozen members of the community (Gilly 1997, 61). This police and paramilitary repression, the land evictions sponsored by alliances between *caciques* and state and local politicians, and the fall in international prices on important Chiapan products (primarily corn and coffee in this case) as a result of trade liberalization heightened the pressure on peasants (Gilly 1997). But it also prepared and politicized a population for survival and resistance. When the first EZLN members initiated contact with the indigenous communities in the early 1980s, they found a cadre of well-prepared, well-respected indigenous leaders in the communities and a population familiar with discourse on the rights and value of the poor stemming from the liberation theology line encouraged by the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas and encouraged by the organizing tactics of Maoist organizations active in the region. The combination of political experience, collective identity, and forms of organization that came from the mixing of migrant populations, the struggle for survival, and the strength of the theoretical and theological trajectories present in the area made for a population not ripe for organization but rather, at least to some extent, already organized, knowledgeable, and well-practiced in tactics and arts of resistance.

Leading up to the 1994 uprising, Chiapas was the third largest corn producer in the nation (INEGI 1994a, 627, cited in Casanova Henríquez 1996, 4), the fourth largest livestock producer (INEGI 1994a, 614, cited in Casanova Henríquez 1996, 4), held the largest oil-producing

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8 In the 1994 uprising, the Zapatistas took as hostage General Absalón Castellanos, who by then had finished his term as governor and was the political-moral leader of the wealthy landowners in the state. He was forced to turn over his lands to the rebels and subjected to a people’s court in which he was found guilty of crimes against peasants and indigenous people and sentenced to execution. The Zapatistas however released him as “a sign of good will” after the ceasefire (he reported having been treated kindly and with respect during his captivity), and considered his punishment to be living out his days in shame for being pardoned by the very people who he had so humiliated during his tenure as governor and boss. See Weinberg 2000.
potential in the country and 30 percent of the nation’s water surface area within its borders (INEGI 1994a cited in Casanova Henríquez 1996, 4), and yet ranked among the poorest states in the nation with the highest indices of poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, and death from preventable disease (Casanova Henríquez 1996, 7). In 1992 the state was producing 20 percent of the nation’s hydroelectric power, though only one third of its households had electricity (EZLN 1992). The export of precious woods from the state increased 6000 percent in the 1980s, with 2.5 million cubic meters of conifers, tropical, and hardwood trees cut down over the decade, though a Chiapan peasant caught cutting down a tree for firewood or land cultivation was obligated to pay a fine ten times the monthly minimum wage and serve a jail sentence (EZLN 1992). During that decade, 35 percent of Mexico’s coffee was produced in Chiapas, for which coffee farmers were paid barely 30 percent of its going rate on the global market; for beef production they were paid less than 10 percent (EZLN 1992). Petroleum, gas, cacao, avocado, mamey, honey, banana, and corn all ranked as important Chiapan products, of which only the very last created a significant means of subsistence for the local population, and this through production for domestic consumption rather than any return from the marketplace. Forty percent of the nation's plant varieties, 36 percent of its mammal species, 34 percent of its reptiles and amphibians, 66 percent of its bird species, 20 percent of its fresh-water fish, and 80 percent of its butterfly species are found in Chiapas (EZLN 1992), making the state the third most biodiverse ecosystem in the world (Casanova Henríquez et. al 1996), and a site of great importance for the tourism industry and of strategic importance for scientific research (Casanova Henríquez et. al 1996). In the midst of this oil, mineral, and species wealth are the 3.5 million people that make up the Chiapan population; two-thirds live in rural communities, half of which do not have potable water and two-thirds have no sewage service. One half have no access at all to medical services, 72 percent do not finish first grade, and 54 percent are malnourished statewide, with that number rising to 70
percent in remote indigenous areas (Casanova Henríquez et al. 1996). Yet the tourism industry abounds and, in 1992, there were seven hotel rooms for every 1,000 tourists while there were only 0.3 hospital beds per 1,000 Chiapan citizens (EZLN 1992), and, in further comparison, one doctor per 1,000 Chiapas citizens in the state and in primarily indigenous areas, one doctor per 25,000 inhabitants (Casanova Henríquez et al. 1996).

These desperate conditions were not signs that Chiapas had been “left behind,” the EZLN stated, even before the uprising or left “backward.” Rather, from the perspective of the EZLN, Chiapas was the vanguard of this global phenomenon of rich resources and poor populations, and that model had been exported to the world (EZLN 1992).

2.3 The Origins of the EZLN

2.3.1 After the Dirty War in Mexico

Years after the 1994 uprising, we now know that what became the Zapatista movement started with a small group of militants from the Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional (FLN, Forces of National Liberation), one of the few organizations that survived and continued to organize during and after the “dirty war” of the Mexican government against militant and social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Those decades had hosted more than 30 guerrilla organizations, widely varied in their political and military principles and tactics, the majority of which were annihilated by the state through assassinations and disappearances (Castellanos 2007, 17). The massacre of hundreds of students during a peaceful protest in the Plaza of Tlateloco in Mexico City by the Mexican army just a few weeks before Mexico hosted the Olympic Games in 1968 marked the going underground of many of those militants who survived. While most of the surviving guerrilla organizations responded to state violence with their own violent attacks, the FLN, a

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9 See Gilly 1996.
Marxist-Leninist oriented organization with its strongest bases in the center and north of the country, withdrew from direct confrontation and began to form a long-term strategy (Castellanos 2007, 242). Their story has not been well known or documented, save Laura Castellanos’ brief description of the group in her 2007 account of armed movements in Mexico between 1943 and 1981, and Carlos Tello Diaz’ more extensive, if explicitly unfavorable and at times openly counter-insurgent version in his 1995 exposé-style history of the EZLN. The original nucleus of the FLN came out of a small group of young Mexicans in the north of the country with family experience in the militant railroad workers movement in Mexico in the 1950s and heavily influenced by the Cuban opposition movement to dictator Fulgencio Batista. This early group developed strong ties to Cuba, traveling there to deepen their political education, but maintained professional occupational capacities in Mexico until the repression against the worker and student movements in the 1960s pushed them to further organize and radicalize. They expanded slightly through an early link to a nascent Ejército Insurgente Mexicano (EIM, Mexican Insurgent Army) which was recruiting primarily in the Yucatan peninsula, but the EIM project was shortly thereafter cancelled by its originator (Castellanos 2007, 243). The militants who remained formed the FLN on August 6, 1969. The FLN had almost no relation with other guerrilla groups; they began to organize an urban web of recruits in distinct parts of Mexico, including many students and faculty in northern and central universities (Castellanos 2007, 244) with the long term goal of creating what in some accounts was a Latin American style “foco,” or guerrilla unit (Yañez

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10 See Castellanos 2008, Chapter 5, “Guerra sucia, guerra a muerte,”

11 Tello Diaz’ La rebelión de las Cañadas: origen y ascenso del EZLN has been the target of extensive critique for having relied almost entirely on state military and intelligence sources (and access), which in turn rely heavily on the unfavorable account of an ex-commander and deserter of the EZLN. Subcomandante Marcos was critical of the information and perspective presented by Tello Diaz, stating, “Diaz gets his history lessons from the CISEN,” (the Mexican Central Intelligence Agency).
quoted in Castellanos 2007, 244), and in others a “people’s army” capable of defending the population when what they expected to be an all out repressive offensive by the state eventually took place (Le Bot 1997). One of the founding members of this group, Fernando Yañez, known as “the architect” or “Commander German” by the FLN, stated that for the FLN, the common guerrilla customs of the era—“expropriations” and kidnappings in order to accumulate money and arms—were prohibited. They rejected the “fetish” of arms; arms were instruments of defense, not weapons of consciousness-raising or attack. While the early FLN members were trained in Marxist-Leninist ideology, they believed that any successful project required a particular and historical analysis of the current Mexican context (Le Bot 1997), and it was according to this analysis that they concluded that the Lacandón Jungle of Chiapas provided the conditions—hidden, almost impenetrable—for the development of the original “foco” (Castellanos 2007, 244).

In the early 1970s, the FLN began to establish training bases in Chiapas. But the state’s pursuit of the radical group continued and the discovery of one of the central urban safe houses—through what is said to have been information extracted under torture of several militants—opened a multi-fronted military operation against the group in which many urban militants were killed and the first nucleus in Chiapas was annihilated completely (Castellanos 2007, 245-7). It wasn’t until the early 1980s that a second nucleus of members, three indigenous, three mestizo, including who we now know as Subcomandante Marcos, were sent to the remote mountains and jungles of Chiapas to learn to survive in this harsh environment as guerrilla fighters and to begin to organize what they thought would be a population ripe for armed resistance—the indigenous peasants of the area (Le Bot 1997).

**2.3.2 In Chiapas: First Encounter, First Defeat**

What happened in the encounter between that group, the nascent EZLN, and the indigenous communities of Chiapas is perhaps one of the most important and most misunderstood
elements of what would become neo-Zapatismo. The half-indigenous, half-mestizo group of guerrillas that had implanted themselves in Chiapas to organize and “awaken” the peasants found a population instead that was not only awake but organized, conscientious, intelligent in the knowledge and experience of struggle, and for whom the early EZLN served not as leaders or teachers but rather as an armed wing to their own struggle (Le Bot 1997, 58). To the reality the guerrillas found they had to admit their political program provided no answer. It was perhaps this recognition that provided the bridge to another organizational possibility, one the Maoist groups referenced above had failed to find or build. Instead of encountering an “Other” to organize, Subcomandante Marcos wrote, this group of “enlightened” that came from the city to “liberate” the exploited discovered that, when confronted with the reality of the indigenous communities, they were not so much “enlightened” as “burnt-out bulbs” (EZLN 2003d).

This was both the genesis of the Zapatista movement and the “first defeat” of the Zapatista army, Marcos later wrote, as their initial ideas for revolution were neutralized and transformed by their reception in the communities (Muñoz Ramirez 2004). This was not a smooth transition. The clash of the political ideas of the early organizers with the reality, thought, and way of life of the indigenous communities in Chiapas could have been a fatal blow to any organizing strategy. For the early organizers who had gone to Chiapas committed to a particular

\[\text{\footnotesize 12} \text{ Subcomandante Marcos later wrote that this encounter was mediated by one particular indigenous elder, his real mountain mentor and legendary literary character “Old Antonio,” who taught the guerrillas that their “harsh word” not only needed to be adapted to the context of the indigenous communities in Chiapas, but more importantly quieted as they learned the ways and realities of the communities. See the collection Relatos de El Viejo Antonio, by Subcomandante Marcos, 1998.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize 13} \text{ From Yvon Le Bot’s interview with Marcos, we also know that it was the indigenous guerrillas of the original EZLN nucleus that made the first contact with the communities and begin to create a level of trust and rapport. Even these politicized figures, though, Marcos notes, did not have an answer to the reality encountered, and it would be a much longer process of becoming students of the life of the communities that would eventually enable the EZLN to become a broad-based movement far beyond a guerrilla “foco” or even a people’s army. See Le Bot 1997 pgs 56-59.}\]
model of struggle, the neutralization or paralysis of that path implied a significant crisis (Le Bot 1997, 59), and to overcome it would require an extraordinary humility and a figurative death of self (Le Bot 1997, 59), not characteristics common to political militants of the era.

The encounter of the FLN with the indigenous communities is often conceptualized as the meeting of mestizo political ideology with indigenous cosmovision, a conjuncture of worldly revolutionary discourse and local socio-spiritual belief. More malicious critics, primarily state officials, accused the mestizo members of the EZLN of being Central American guerrillas or US American renegades, manipulating the (“our”) “poor indigenous masses.” What we have learned about the FLN organizers, the early EZLN, and the history of Chiapas rural organizing itself allows the dismissal of both of these positions. There were no “foreign leaders,” no superiority of political ideology on behalf of FLN members nor any relative excess of mysticism or belief on behalf of the communities. Rather, this encounter was characterized by the clash of what was a primarily an orthodox Marxist-Leninist understanding of power and revolution and a much different understanding and practice of political resistance and organization developed through many decades of active struggle in these communities in particular and in Chiapas in general. In the EZLN’s words,

What had made these people, first our compañeros and compañeras, now our bosses, resist, was an attachment to or value of life that had a lot to do with cultural weight. Indigenous tongue, manner of speaking, the form of relating to nature, created an alternative, not just an alternative life but an alternative struggle. We were becoming students of this school of resistance that someone had been building for five centuries.

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14 This position varies between a kind of north-south or west/non-west "colonial difference" that allows indigenous people access to epistemological vision not available otherwise (Mignolo 2000; Catherine Walsh 2002; Anibal Quijano and Michael Ennis 2000).

15 Chiapas governor Elmar Setzer Marseille and Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari. See Rovira 2009, 18-19.

16 Subcomandante Marcos speech to European Solidarity Caravan. La Garrucha, Chiapas, Mexico, August 2008.
Of emphasis here is that such values, attached to language and relation were created in and as struggle, not as a given identity per se.

There are certainly other elements that contributed to the formation and evolution of the Zapatista analysis and discourse, which we cannot fully enter here; most important to note is that the encounter between the small cluster of mestizo and indigenous militants and the indigenous communities was only the first of many more to come, as the Zapatista movement drew national and international attention to Chiapas. For now, it is sufficient to note that while the FLN’s Marxist-Leninist background and the Chiapan indigenous communities’ political experience were important factors in the EZLN’s politics (and while the EZLN has certainly put a great deal of effort into the political formation of its leaders and troops), it was these encounters, later with more groups and their struggles, that would mold and transform the Zapatista perspective as it evolved through its years of struggle.


18 Much has been made of the position of a few mestizo members of the EZLN, most importantly its military chief and spokesperson Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos. Marcos’s subcommander status signals that while he is head of the Zapatista army, he is subordinate to the army’s indigenous General Command, the Revolutionary Clandestine Indigenous Committee (CCRI), a group that in turn makes itself subordinate to the will of the base communities (Le Bot 1997). Marcos’s role as spokesperson for the EZLN came about somewhat accidentally, as he spoke to journalists and tourists in several languages on January 1, 1994, after the takeover of San Cristobal de las Casas. But as the public emergence of the EZLN brought about multiple interactions not only with the Mexican government and the federal army but with large and diverse sources of national and international support, his role quickly evolved as it became much more important to make the demands of the movement understandable to a general public than negotiable with the federal government. Drawing on language skills, theoretical and literary knowledge, and a political-poetic ability to express multiple worlds in simple words, Subcomandante Marcos was able to construct a bridge not only between the Zapatista communities and the rest of the world but between many parts of that world. “Marcos is not body to link struggles together,” he states, but rather a bridge across
Neither the charges of vanguardist opportunism nor mass manipulation that were initially and repeatedly waged on the neo-Zapatistas would hold. Certain commentators had made charges of political entrepreneurism, claiming that the discourse of democracy was a mere tactical maneuver (Tello 1995), with the FLN leadership having discovered the “political purchase” of the term after the collapse of the socialist camp (N. Harvey 1998 makes this critique of Tello 1995). Charges were also made of “armed reformism” (Castaneda 1996), the supposition that the eschewal of state power in favor of basic demands made the movement reformist rather than revolutionary; of armed radicalism, the insistence that the EZLN were “professionals of violence”; of sectarianism, as a critique of their class-oriented Marxist-Leninist discourse or a foreign-led ideological manipulation of the local “monolingual” indigenous population; of a reductive nationalism, in critique of their use of the Mexican flag and other patriotic symbols; and of utilitarian indigenism, a critique of their (some claimed sudden) discourse on indigenous which those struggles can walk to meet each other.” While the role played by (the figure of) Marcos is important, attempts to attribute the thought, practice, direction, or evolution of the EZLN to his military or literary intelligence are poor understandings of the movement, its genesis, or its continuing existence.

19 Words of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, January 6, 1994, in his “message to the nation” regarding the uprising in Chiapas. See Rovira 2009, 19.

20 See the EZLN’s own analysis of this, with regard to both their early years and the political shifts in 2006, in “Peatones de la Historia” (EZLN 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e).


rights and autonomy (Tello 1995). But the claims were difficult to sustain. The accusation of fashionable democratism was weakened by a wide range of authentically grassroots innovations with regard to democratic practices (examined below). The charge of armed reformism proved unsustainable as the movement consistently refused to make concessions to state attempts to buy off leaders and buy out demands, and that of violent radicalism was impossible to sustain as the EZLN consistently resisted picking up (or, note, giving up) their weapons again after the initial ceasefire was called. Accusations of sectarianism and indigenism have resurfaced repeatedly, but while the EZLN discourse is certainly ambiguous with regard to any consistent ideological line, neither the dogmas of Marxist-Leninist thought nor the essentializing discourse of an indigenist argument found any consistent echo in the practices or trajectory of the movement. The EZLN seemed to employ indigenous claims to emphasize the particular and contextual nature of their struggle, nationalist language to displace indigenist sectarianism or secessionist claims, internationalist language to displace nationalist dogmas and identities, and then return to an emphasis on indigenous thought as an attempt to reach from the particular toward the universal, a being beyond nation-state-defined subjects and citizens. Perhaps the most continuously valid critique waged was that no one could define precisely from where the Zapatistas’ ideas came or for what exactly the movement aimed.

Finally, the government’s attempt to publicly discredit the movement by purportedly revealing the “real” identity of Subcomandante Marcos was met not with disbelief or disenchantment, but with hundreds of thousands of ski-masked protesters marching in Chiapas and in Mexico City on March 11, 1995, chanting, “We are all Marcos” (N. Harvey 1998; Rovira 2009). As the prominence of the Zapatista commanders became less visible with the end of

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government negotiations and failed military attempts to decapitate the EZLN, and as independent systems of health, education, production, and self-government began to develop in the communities, it became clear that such a project could not be the idea, implementation, or execution of any leader, vanguard, or form of rule from “above.” The long history of peasant organizing in the state that we saw above, the struggles of indigenous migrants to find and stay on land of their own, and their experience with a whole spectrum of deception and discrimination from self-serving organizational leaders, corrupt government officials, and exploitive and violent caciques, had prepared a generation not just for the risks of armed rebellion but for the long and patient process of constructing autonomy.

2.3.3 On the World Stage

It is useful here to take a brief look at the wider political and regional context in which the Zapatista movement had germinated. In the clandestine organizing years of the EZLN and in the years leading up to the Zapatista uprising, Latin America was characterized by a generalized decline of what were considered to be the oppositional forces to capitalism after the collapse of the Soviet block, including the crisis of communist parties all over the continent, the defeat of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, and the forced turn to a defensive position of the Cuban Revolutionary regime (Sader 2001). The disappearance of the fundamental ally found in the “socialist camp” created what became known as a “culture of defeat” throughout the region and the conversion of Central American (Guatemalan and Salvadoran) guerrillas into actors in an institutionalized struggle, in addition to the brutal beating inflicted on radical sectors in South America by the dictatorships in the Southern Cone, made any revolutionary left an “easy prisoner” of proposals for liberal or parliamentary democracy (Sader 2001). This was complicated and accompanied by a generalized upsurge in what became the new doctrine of political economy in the hemisphere, as neoliberal policies replaced populist, nationalist, and
social democratic reforms. Many of the most visible, specifically Marxist-identified movements of the time lacked or lost power and popular support due to practices or ideologies that tended to distance them from the population that they intended to mobilize. Groups such as the FARC in Colombia and the Shining Path in Peru, where the propagation of vanguardist ideologies and the rigid formulation of class logic distant from local experience both tended toward unrestrained violence and a kind of heroism in both killing and martyrdom, alienating many of those struggling for survival or justice (Starn 1995).

Social and political organizations of the 20th century could be generally characterized by the question of how to confront the state—as it was in the state that they identified the primary force of their own oppression and repression, as well as their redemption—and their strategies were most commonly characterized by either attempting to take control of that state or to construct bases external to it. The argument for taking state power became the predominant one of the century, achieving at least some victories in nations in almost all regions of the world system (Wallerstein 2005a). Many of those movements however failed to bring about the forecasted second part of the equation: to implement change from the position of state power. The failure to erase or significantly reduce economic inequality, to overcome class divisions, to mitigate hierarchical and authoritarian structures, or to adequately provide for or redistribute services that improved education, health, and standard of living often created disenchantment between new administrators and the bases that had brought them to power. This disenchantment took many forms worldwide, which Wallerstein identifies as movements or groups of the “new left,” but which, in his analysis, were largely unable to provide legitimate or lasting alternatives to the inefficiencies of the “old” (Wallerstein 2005a).

24 As in the terms of Lenin’s 1917 State and Revolution.
Yet it wasn’t only or even primarily a particular orbit of state and political forces—whether those be the dictatorships of the Southern Cone or the satellites of the socialist camp—that had definitively ended in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but also a particular regime of accumulation and its accompanying political regime and state form (Sader 2001). While the right successfully filled that gap with proposals for privatization, trade liberalization, and “structural adjustment,” the failure of the left to break with a dead regime left socialist and communist parties and organizations without a social base or political platform (Sader 2001). Social movements accustomed to fighting for (the takeover of) or against (repression by) the state would have to reformulate demands and strategies for a world in which the state now played a very different role.

It is here that we come back to TINA and what was essentially an impasse for much of the left and for any imagination outside of or beyond global neoliberalism. In Latin America, political movements and social struggles up through at least the 1970s tended to revolve around the party-based or union-based demand for or recognition of rights from the state, the making of party or party-movement coalitions to create or back electoral candidates, and strategies oriented toward modifying the relations of forces on a national level in order to either demand concessions from power or to back the rise to power of a party or representative entrusted with implementing the demands of a movement (Zibechi 2008a, 24). As we saw above, after Mexico’s dirty war, many surviving activists and militants were forced to go underground to shield themselves and what was left of the left from the repressive power of the state. That condition, in addition to the necessary isolation of the mountain and jungle location of the early EZLN organizers, provided a degree of distance from the political and social processes outside that remote location. When the EZLN emerged, they discovered a world very different from the one they had known. “We rose
up against a national power only to realize that it no longer existed,” they stated, “what exists is a
global power that produces local dominations.”

If the “first defeat” discussed above required the nascent nucleus of the EZLN to
transform itself upon encountering the reality of the indigenous communities in Chiapas, the
precedent of encounter-crisis-transformation prepared them for this and many more clashes of
reality to come. Many movements, encountering this same impasse of displaced state functions
and deformed political representation, got quite literally stuck, unable to make flexible their
strategies to adapt to the new relations of power. The EZLN, perhaps precisely because of its
capacity and will to make flexible its theory to accommodate reality (rather than the not
uncommon attempt to do the reverse), was able to react quickly to the disjuncture they found
between their position and the broader reality they encountered. They were not only able to create
a path out of this impasse with an analysis and strategy adequate to the situation, but to open up—
through the circulation of that analysis—entirely new possibilities and realities for a multitude of
struggles hovering on the same historical precipice. This section will attempt to reconstruct their
analysis from the plethora of texts that compose their theoretical evaluation, taking those texts
both as a central and invaluable site of their strategy and struggle as well as of our understanding
of it.

2.4 The Fourth World War: The EZLN Analysis of Neoliberalism

In the fable of neoliberalism, the powerful are the heroes because they are powerful, and the
villains are those who can be eliminated, the ‘expendables,’ that is to say, the blacks, the yellow,
the Chicanos, the Latinos, the indigenous, the women, the young, the prisoners, the migrants, the
jodidos, the gay men, the lesbians, the marginalized, the old, and, especially, the rebels…

EZLN

25 Interview with Subcomandante Marcos; interviewer anonymous.

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2.4.1 Total War

This is the Fourth World War, according to the Zapatistas, fought not in the “third world” or the “first world” per se, but rather at the borders of the third world found in the first, and in the first found in the third, confusing any understanding of who the “other” is, who one’s allies are, and playing itself out without discrimination “in New York and LA, the Lacandón Jungle and Mexico City, Baghdad, Gaza,” and many more places.27

The end of the Cold War, or the “Third World War” in the Zapatistas’ analysis, brought with it the immediate need for a Fourth. The new framework of international relations and the new markets opened by the collapse of the socialist model represented by the USSR initiated a scramble to conquer or dominate those new markets; conquest and the administration of newly conquered territories is a constant among the four world wars (EZLN 1997b). Yet if the end of the Cold War brought about a scenario of unfettered world capitalism with no clear contestation to its dominance, it did not eliminate the need for an enemy and a strategy, and thus a weapon and a battlefield, with and from which to go about conquest. In what was considered a newly “unipolar” world, the conquest of new territories (now markets) carried out through the process of capitalist globalization and facilitated by new technologies in information and communication had as its enemy not any national or territorial fortress against that process but rather the human (or better said, living) opposition to the logic of that market (EZLN 1997b). The Third World War’s “complete war” (with multiple fronts) had nowhere to go except to become “total war,” a

26 EZLN 1997a.

27 Subcomandante Marcos, presentation at the Festival of Dignified Rage, January 4, 2009.
war not, the EZLN insisted, with no battlefront but where everything and everywhere becomes a battlefront: “everything human which opposes the logic of the market is an enemy and must be destroyed. In this sense, we are all the enemy to be vanquished: indigenous, non-indigenous, human rights observers, teachers, intellectuals, artists. Anyone who believes themselves to be free and is not” (EZLN 1999). This war is characterized by a close relationship between the restructuring of production, the restructuring of sovereignty or rule, and the restructuring of military action.

2.4.2 The Socialization of Production and the Concentration of Wealth

The EZLN has traced the concurrent technological/informational revolutions—the “cerebralization” of the means of production (EZLN 1999), the political revolution (which they identify as “the emerging megalopolis on the ruins of the national states”), (EZLN1997b) and the processual social revolution (essentially the reorganization of the labor force), through a twenty to thirty year period in which the world’s economically active population almost doubled, world debt surpassed thirty-three trillion dollars, and the population considered poor increased from two hundred million (in the mid-1970s) to two billion (EZLN 1997b). Sectorial employment during this time dropped heavily in fishing and agriculture and slightly in manufacturing, and grew substantially in the tertiary sector of services, with unemployment nearly doubling in the developing world and nearly tripling in Europe. Simultaneously, job instability and extreme mobility, irregular salaries, and emaciated or nonexistent benefits generated precarious working conditions (EZLN 1997b). The drastically increased unemployment, debt, and poverty around the world belied the well-being purportedly indexed by increases in GDP. In the last years of the 20th century, two hundred companies came to represent a full quarter of the world’s total economic
activity, but employed a mere 18.8 million people, less than .75 percent of the world’s labor force (EZLN 1997b).  

The modernization of production, circulation, and consumption, according to the EZLN, produces a “fragile equilibrium of absurd inequalities” in which the enrichment of transnational or multinational companies not only did not imply the advancement of the “underdeveloped” nations but in fact sharply deepened poverty in “developed” capitalist nations. The EZLN delineated clearly this structure of power: “in the same way that the growth of political power of a king does not bring as a consequence the growth of political power of the subjects (to the contrary), the absolute power of financial capital does not better the distribution of wealth nor does it create increased employment for society” (EZLN 1997b).

Those who flourish in this system are not only the increasingly few, very visible rich, the EZLN added, but extended networks of organized crime. These networks had been strengthened during the Cold War to become a trillion dollar transnational industry with massive penetration into political and economic spheres, able to take advantage of deregulation and trade aperture to globalize its activities in arms trafficking, nuclear contraband, and mafia activities in prostitution, gambling, and black market speculation (EZLN 1997b). It was the devastating impact of the world debt crisis in the 1980s on the income of underdeveloped countries, complicated by World Bank and IMF dictated “recuperation” measures, that brought many legal businesses into crisis and allowed the illegal economy to flourish. The vacuum left by the fall of national markets was

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29 In 1997 when the EZLN wrote, 1% of Americans controlled 61.6% of the total national wealth between 1983 and 1989, with 80% of Americans sharing 1.2% of wealth.
filled by an organized crime-directed illegal market from above and the “informal sector” of inevitably precarious and often dangerous self-employment from below, making any kind of discourse on the national economy a farcical activity and setting millions of migrants every year, (over a million in Mexico alone in 2007\textsuperscript{30}), roaming through a “ring of terror” in search of survival and sustenance (EZLN 1997b). This “errant nightmare of global migration” provides a renewed source of “foreigners” in a world without borders, the manufacturing of “an enemy to hide the image of the boss,” and a domestic workforce that must cling to ill-paid, insecure, and unsafe jobs under the constant threat of becoming another labor refugee (EZLN 1997b).

2.4.3 The Phantom Nation-State and the Farcical Political Class

Yet globalization, the EZLN holds, however traumatic it has been for humanity, has been even more so for the political class, which has ceased to be the directors of national economies and become the directed, or rather “tele-directed,” managers of financial capital (EZLN 1997b). The loss of nation-state principality or centrality as sovereign entity was not the result of a hard fought battle between national and global capital, they claim, but rather a case of “the son eating the father,” world capitalism sacrificing that which gave it a future and a historic project—national capitalism (EZLN 1997b). Those who thought themselves governors become business managers, if they managed to stay in office at all, as powers well above them asked why employ politicians if market analysts better understand the new logic of power? Why pay politicians if market analysts better understand how to divide, classify, and address citizens as clients and consumers? (EZLN 1997b). This conglomeration of forces and actors that displaced the political class the EZLN calls the “Society of Power,” composed of public and private financial bodies,

international institutions, mass media, humanitarian agencies, industrial and commercial corporations, educational centers, and (certain) nation-states, armies, and public/private police forces (EZLN 1997b). The EZLN here dares a divergence from what has long characterized the existence and analysis of Latin American social movements and guerrilla formations, on the Latin American left in general and Mexico in particular: that imperialism as a dominant system is dead. “The nation-state which now claims the title of the divine hand of God (the United States of America) exists only on television, on the radio, in some newspapers and magazines, and in the movies,” they state (EZLN 1997b). Here in the “dream factories” of great media consortiums, on one hand “presidents are intelligent and sympathetic, justice always triumphs, and the community defeats the tyrant,” and on the other, what is purported to be a national ideological debate in the US over what for one political position is the world power of “democracy and justice” and for another is “brutality and imperialism” is in reality neither. It is a media spectacle, a mythical haven, a “hologram.” This hologram is fed by contesting forces within the political class fighting to fill the vacuum produced by globalization, but it is merely an illusion, an “impression of vigor.” “The making the world world-wide in time and space is, for Power, something which must still be directed,” they state, and that is something that has primarily fallen to nation-states, in hollowed-out form, to structure and implement. “Does the megalopolis then substitute the nations? No, or not only. They also include them and reassign their functions, limits, and possibilities” (EZLN 1997b). That project must include identifying and naming the enemy, in this case an “other” that is no longer somewhere else, but everywhere and all the time” (EZLN 2003l). If the other is [to be] a threat, how is that threat to be contained? By “raising the hologram of the nation and denouncing the ‘other’ as aggressor” (EZLN 1997b).

But it is a façade of nationhood that cannot even be loyal to itself; the heroes of this hologram are equally fleeting and utilitarian. The image of New York City fireman covered in ash
in 2001, held up by US media and government agencies as world saviors of civilization and humanity, where are they now the Zapatistas ask? (EZLN 2003l). They were replaced on TV by the brave, armed soldier in Iraq, another image which quickly faded when that brave soldier was left vulnerable due to inadequate armor (EZLN 2003l). “The flags flying in Kabul and Baghdad,” the EZLN insists, “are not the stars and stripes, but those of the great multinational corporations” (EZLN 2003l).

There is no consensual path of construction forward, the EZLN asserts, nor is there an actor capable of recovering a step back (EZLN 1997b). The “society of power” may desire a World State or a supranational government, they say, “but it is not engaged in building it” (EZLN 1997b); the interests shared within the “society of power,” do not constitute a conspiracy or a necessarily coherent and comprehensive plan among them. Likewise, they note, the traditional political class is incapable of rebuilding the foundations of the nation-state. That class, in its continued existence, merely “feeds on the spoils of a country, […] in the mud and blood of what the empire of money has built” (EZLN 1997b).

In the lead up to the 2006 Mexican presidential elections, with Andres Manuel López Obrador of the PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party) slated to win and amid much fanfare from the national and international left, the Zapatistas were one of the few voices questioning what

31 An appropriate question, as the heroic images were later replaced by new items about first responders have dying of or struggling with respiratory disease and fighting for even basic compensation and medical coverage from the US government (see for example, “World Trade Center: Surveillance for World Trade Center disaster health effects among survivors of collapsed and damaged buildings,” Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Centers for Disease Control, April 7, 2006). The brave soldier image would later have to vie for attention with the news about poorly run veteran’s hospitals (see for example “Veterans Hospital: Soldiers Face Neglect, Frustration At Army's Top Medical Facility,” Dana Priest and Anne Hull, Washington Post, February 18, 2007), inadequate diagnosis and treatment, especially for post-traumatic stress syndrome (see for example “Trauma of Iraq war haunting thousands returning home,” William M. Welch, USA Today, February 28, 2005), and a record number of soldier suicides (see for example “Soldier suicides: The sorrows of war: Over 1,000 US soldier suicides,” Tom Hayden, The Huffington Post, February 25, 2010).
would change. López Obrador spoke of the poor but to the rich: business has nothing to fear, he assured them, there will be no significant change to the macroeconomic system.\footnote{See for example López Obrador’s speech in Tlajomulco, Jalisco, June 2, 2006, on López Obrador campaign’s own webpage: http://gobiernolegítimo.org.mx/fotogaleria/index.html?anio=2006&mes=6.} In today’s world, the Zapatistas had already claimed in 1997, “the power of the financial centers is so great that they can afford not to worry about the political tendency of those who hold power in a nation if the economic program remains unaltered” (EZLN 1997b). What would be created in Mexico would not be the “left-handed neoliberal administration” of Lula da Silva, Tabaré Vásquez, and Nestor Kirchner, or a socialist government like that of Fidel Castro, or even a popular nationalism like that of Hugo Chavez, they maintained, but rather a new model of “the non-national state,” made possible by neoliberal war (EZLN 2005a). “Turning to the traditional political class as an ally in the resistance struggle is a fine exercise...in nostalgia,” the EZLN quipped flatly, “Turning to the neo-politicians is a symptom of schizophrenia. There is nothing to be done there above, except entertain oneself pretending that perhaps something can be done” (EZLN 1997b).

\subsection*{2.4.4 SuperCops and Company Soldiers: Deconstruction and Reconstruction; or, Professionals of Legitimate Violence: From Nation to Fantasy Theme Park}

The Fourth World War, the EZLN explains, is characterized by the restructuring of national armies in order to confront “a local conflict with international support under supranational cover and under the disguise of humanitarian war” (EZLN 1999). Where “the world is no longer the world” but rather a “village,” armies take on the role of either the “great policemen of the world” with the right to intervene anywhere at any time under any circumstances, or a local police force acting within and against its own population (EZLN
The “theater of operations” of the Fourth World War mirrors the globalized system of production: “information technology […] leads to moving from the systematic, the inflexible, the rigid, to the versatile, to that which can change from one moment to the next” (EZLN 1999). Where that theater is everywhere, the ability to execute a plan quickly and on demand becomes central, necessitating a “rapid deployment” force (something like the post-fordist “production-on-demand.”) The “star” of military interventions is the “political senior partner” or “supercop,”—NATO, the UN, even the OAS (Organization of American States), with local armies as “extras” (EZLN 1999). As there is no coherent “national security” strategy due to the incoherence of the nation, the doctrine of national security must be transformed to “national stability” (EZLN 1997b), something for which a nation or administration can both call on the moral backing and military aid of everyone (we could read here “narco-trafficking affects the whole continent”) and act against the autonomy or integrity of anyone (read, “terrorist tendencies at home”). National stability, in turn, represents a kind of security, for investment, and safety, from revolt. The armies that alternately fill the role of world police or local precinct officers are really “company soldiers,” incorporating military war (now in addition to economic, ideological, psychological, diplomatic) as just one more marketing strategy (EZLN 1997b).

“In the cabaret of globalization, the State shows itself as a table dancer that strips off everything until it is left with only the minimum indispensable garments: repressive force” (EZLN 1997b). The nation-state becomes “a security apparatus for megacorporations built by neoliberalism”; their budgets are reoriented toward augmenting and improving equipment, armaments, and training “to fulfill the functions politics has since some years ceased to carry out: the control of society” (EZLN 1997b). Having become “professionals of legitimate violence,” the

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33 In Mexico in fact a new official police body was formed in 1998, called the Federal Preventative Police, composed solely of military personnel. See http://ww.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/mexico/pfp.htm.
nation-state must still compete for the monopoly on violence that their constitution as a system was to have provided them. But the intricate links provided for by the global market between organized crime, governments, and financial centers created not only competition but justification: “rational” violence must be strengthened and exerted over the “irrational” (EZLN 1997b). Thus the use of violence under this system is legitimated based on the illegitimate forces created by the system itself—illegal and/or black markets, government and white collar corruption—and wielded against the actual opposition—social unrest and resistance—which is never identified (though clearly targeted) as such.

The task of the Fourth World War is dual, the EZLN explains: the destruction implied in the conquering of territories, alternatively considered “containment” of an existing threat or prevention of its development; and reconstruction, manifested as either the “extension” of war to non-war actors or the reconstruction of the conquered rebellious territory into a (re)ordered entity (EZLN 1999). In Southern Mexico this consists of “clearing the way” of indigenous communities and their territorial control in order to implement a “huge shopping mall” open to tourism and resource extraction that would stretch from Belize to the Yucatan to Chiapas, taking advantage of the multiple sites of Mayan ruins along this corridor and opening to foreign investment the wealth of petroleum, uranium, precious woods, and hydroelectric power of these lands (EZLN 1999). The indigenous population in this plan would be “reorganized” into an object of tourist attraction or as potential wage workers in the exploitation of their own lands. In the fragmentation

34 Witness rich states funding poorer states in the fight against the narco-state, itself a product of state corruption, so that both national states are justified in an arms buildup and militarization whose use is not restricted to or focused on narcotics traffic, i.e. US funds to Mexico and Colombia.

35 This project is in fact a long-term joint private-public plan, called The Mayan Corridor. See Chapter Four.
(destruction) process of neoliberalism, capital wants to put into place (reconstruction) “special nations” which are ordered by a capitalist-compatible logic—The Mayan World, in this case, as a kind of financial fantasy theme park (EZLN 1999). In this sense, in the Fourth World War, the vanquishing of an enemy-army is rarely the goal or the method: the EZLN is not the principal enemy of the State or this global war, the EZLN declares, the indigenous peoples themselves are the enemy (EZLN 1999). 36 For the neoliberal policy priorities of what are now three different Mexican executives since the Zapatista uprising, resolving conflict with the EZLN would mean recognizing the indigenous peoples and their rights to the land they inhabit and all of its historical sites and natural resources and renouncing the conquest of that potential “market”; thus resolution will not be sought (EZLN 1997b).

Those are the stakes in Chiapas, the EZLN makes clear, but the war is everywhere. The presence of the federal army in Chiapas, the EZLN states, is one of an occupation army, “it is aware of the fact that it is in a territory which is alien to it”; “the Mexican federal soldier is aware that he is foreign” (EZLN 1999). The EZLN points to evidence that this is an occupying force: the deadly land traps (sharpened stakes covered by branches as a disguise) that the federal army digs around their barracks near certain indigenous communities in the jungle are for the civilian population; there are in fact no EZLN bases or military presence in the area (EZLN 1999). They see an echo of this scenario in 2003 writing about the presence of US and UN soldiers in Iraq: the army that thought it would be “greeted with flowers” by the local population now warns that population to stay away from US bases “for their own safety” (EZLN 2003I). The occupying army knows who its enemy is: “The dominant-dominated dichotomy now defines the world’s

36 Indeed, the worst massacres of 15 years of war so far have not been on the EZLN’s insurgent forces but rather directly on the civilian indigenous communities, in Acteal 1997, El Bosque 1998, el Viejo Velasco 2006.
community,” they state (EZLN 2003l). “Public security…is the protection of those who have everything from those who have nothing;” national security programs are no longer national…but are against everything, everywhere.” The “coexistence” or conspiratorial mutual tolerance of the few “is possible only because of the common fear they have of the ‘other’… but it will not be long before the rich neighbor is also an ‘other’” (EZLN 2003l). With the threat of the dominated everywhere, and a possible battlefront anywhere, Power cannot rest. In the EZLN’s words, “In the postmodern anxiety of the Society of Power, war is the couch” (EZLN 2003l).

2.5 Conclusion: The Universalization of Fragmentation: The Broken Mirror and the Impossible Jigsaw Puzzle

Perhaps paradoxically, the EZLN states, the making of the world market, which may homogenize a type of product or hegemonize a type of lifestyle, is not an exercise in making the world one but of breaking it up, not universalization but universal fragmentation (EZLN 1999). Globalization and neoliberalism make the world an “archipelago” rather than a unified mass, offering not a reflection of a common condition shared among all but rather a “broken mirror” that offers a distorted view of their fragmentation (EZLN 1999). The isolated pieces of the global jigsaw puzzle then, produced by the hegemonization of fragmentation, provide neither difference nor unity as such but a world of “stagnant compartments” communicating with “fragile economic bridges” (EZLN 1997b). Or, in other words, neoliberal globalization is a world of “broken mirrors” reflecting the “useless world unity” of the neoliberal puzzle.

The EZLN has identified the indigenous peoples of Mexico, in addition to many others living in extreme marginalization all over the world, as “disposable” to capital: “neither consumers nor producers… they are superfluous” (EZLN 1999), “leftover” (EZLN 1997b), people who do not trade—or are not tradable—on the market (EZLN 2005a). But globalization’s scrambled jigsaw puzzle or broken mirror has created a conundrum for power: “Reclining on the
couch of war, the Society of Power looks at its complexes and ghosts: that ‘other’ who, prior to globalization, was far away in time and space, but which the disorderly construction of the hyper-polis has brought to the society of power’s backyard.” The “other” that is the “enemy” of the “society of power” or “the empire of money” as the EZLN alternatively terms it, is not the “barbarian community of yesteryear” (EZLN 1997b). Poverty and dissidence, “those ‘others’ who don’t have the manners to disappear,” are no longer in foreign lands or remote areas or even on the periphery of the city or state, they are inside and everywhere…” (EZLN 1999).

The presence of the indigenous in rebellion is abhorrent to the “society of power” partly because they inhabit lands which are also home to some of the richest supplies of wood, oil, hydroelectric power, and species of biodiversity on the planet. But, as we will see in the following chapter, and as the EZLN has begun to theorize in recent texts after the encounters of the Other Campaign, it is not (only) that their bodies are an obstruction to resource extraction, but that their social organization is a threat to the capitalist system of social relations. That is, the “leftover” are not in fact superfluous but central; their wealth is not (just) the natural resources among which they live but the social organization which is their form of life. Their ability to cultivate and maintain that organization beyond capture by capitalist accumulation, so far, is both a potential conquest and a potential threat. The priority for that “other” thus cannot be destruction and annihilation but rather disorientation and reorganization, “not doing away with the people but with the peoples’ way of being” (EZLN 1999). And therein lies the conundrum: “The Empire of Money tries to incorporate them into its logic; it needs them, but at the same time it fears them” (EZLN 1997b).

I will return to the danger and potential of the “other” in cooperation in the following chapters. This chapter has attempted to theorize a certain global moment according to the Zapatista perspective on the current configuration of power. By putting their struggle in the
Fourth World War, as they see it, in historical context as it has developed in relation to internal and external events and encounters, we have been able to see the constant re-working of struggle and self that the EZLN has undergone, opening a wide swath of new possibilities not only for themselves but for a whole generation and genre of social change. In contemporary capitalist production, we could summarize the above analysis of the Fourth World War, appropriation by private or public sources is the same thing, both based in the same rules made by the same people. Here differences are non-communicable, but they are universally exchangeable through their entry into the world market. Instead of a common denominator we are offered a general equivalent. But there is an alternative collective substance or organization to those parallel plunders of private and public: the organization of and for “below,” a common beyond mutually agreed-upon submission. Contemporary capitalism is characterized by the tension of a mode of accumulation that requires the creation of particular social conditions and associations that it ultimately cannot abide, “a social surplus beyond alienable wealth” (Martin 2007, 14). And this is where the trick happens in the neoliberal jigsaw puzzle: “when you draw, color, and cut out the pieces, you see the problem with neoliberal globalization—the pieces don’t fit” (EZLN 1997b).
3. Autonomy and Governance

The only thing we’ve heard about is the federal government’s formal offer to pardon our troops. Why do we need to be pardoned? What are they going to pardon us for? For not dying of hunger? For not accepting our misery in silence? For not accepting humbly the historic burden of disdain and abandonment?...For showing the rest of the country and the whole world that human dignity still exists even among the world’s poorest peoples? … For bringing guns to battle instead of bows and arrows? …For refusing to surrender? For refusing to sell ourselves out? Who should ask for pardon and who can grant it?

EZLN

3.1 Introduction: State-ness and Strategy

Assuming the EZLN’s interpretation of the Fourth World War, we must pose fundamental questions about the nature of rule in the modern era, something primarily identified with the location and function of the state. Taking into consideration scholars’ attempts to understand the state as not simply a fixed location but a site of symbolic and cultural production (Geertz 1980; Taussig 1996; Coronil 1997; Gupta and Ferguson 2002), as well as a product itself of symbolic and cultural practices, we must nevertheless recognize that our understanding shifts substantially without what we have long identified as the spatial organization of the nation-state, both geographically as the surface area corresponding to a territorial idea of nation and conceptually as an entity “above” a corresponding society “below.”

Globalization put this spatial organization into question, leading some to attempt to theorize forms of rule on another scalar dimension: the global as a super- or supra-state, exercising sovereignty from an even “higher” place with an even wider scope. This model has been largely discarded by two particular important theorizations on the workings of power: Michel Foucault’s understanding of power, including state power, as diffuse and dynamic, not

1 EZLN 1994b.
strictly located in or wielded from the traditionally-positioned sovereign state (Foucault 1975); and the understanding of globalization not as a scalar increase over the nation-state but as a different operation or technology of rule, a kind of “network sovereignty” which seems to function in a more “horizontal” manner, though still primarily by way of command (EZLN 1997; Guehenno 1995; Hardt and Negri 2000). With these insights, anthropologists and other scholars have dismissed the search for a new centralized and hegemonic place of rule and begun to examine globalization’s dynamics of power and rule from particular locations, through the non-locations of particular circuits and flows (Appadurai 1996; Tsing 2004; Ong and Collier 2004), through the production of space (Lefebvre 1992; Massey 2005), through forms of governmentality (Gupta and Ferguson 2002), and through the production and use of public and private spheres (Foucault 2007). These studies have helped us understand that if the state is no longer able (or imagined) to sit above (figuratively) or contain (geographically) the society it purports to rule, then we must investigate other ways that state practices are established, including the activation of the “state inside” (of us), the functions of governmentality by which the disciplinary functions of the state are internalized and executed by subjects themselves.

Foucault’s work on power as a dynamic and productive force rather than static and imposed was fundamental to understanding government—as acts of organization of rule, or “the conduct of conduct” (2007)—as a kind of production rather than a location or a particular form. If the state is not a fixed place or position but rather itself “an effect of state practices” (Mitchell 2006), then the practices of power which produce the state as an institution and location “above” can be implemented elsewhere. Likewise, government can have different strategies, of which state-like practices are only one. Moving quickly through a complex argument, we can summarize that if power is a productive practice, and if different practices are productive of different systems, subjects, and tendencies, then the existence of government is not a moral or
ideological question of bad or good, but one of evaluating which strategies and practices produce what kind of systems, subjects, and tendencies. Foucault’s analysis of governmentality—how the state permeates other institutions, social entities, and bodies to create state practices in which self-disciplining and (literal) self-control through a sort of internalized panopticon perform the work of that state—was theorized in the context of the factory, the jail, the school, the family, and other institutions of modern life. As neoliberalism and globalization have disrupted or disassembled many of those institutions, scholars have begun to ask what happens to governmentality in the post-Fordist society.² Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson have pointed to the necessity to theorize a “transnational governmentality” by which the supposed retreat of the state entails a “transfer of the operations of government to non-state entities” and simultaneously extends “the logic of the market to the operation of state functions” via techniques that seem to enact a “new modality of government” (Gupta and Ferguson 2002, 989). Gupta and Ferguson’s call for an “ethnography of neoliberal governmentality” could point us to the need to understand another kind of permeation of power, not only through (the institutions of) society but through the (much more diffuse) social and subjective in general. The structural manifestations of the post-Fordist neoliberal shift—the privatization of public entities, “free trade” commercial policies, structural adjustment, precaritization of labor, among others—must be matched by subjective ones which assume an identity adequate to that market orientation, construed in this case not as private sphere but as a public good. Governance refers to state-like practices of rule carried out through the creation of subjectivity compliant with and constructive of an accepted “public interest,” purported to be a

² Foucault had in fact stated that governmentality was already in its decline as a dominant pattern when he began theorizing it, and had begun to theorize an initial framework for understanding the “control” society as a new technique of government (See The Birth of Biopolitics 2010). See also Harney’s explanation of the difference between governmentality and governance (2008) and Deleuze’s “Societies of Control” in Negotiations, 1995.
common good but which serves a particular (private) end, a subjectivity not just self-controlled (behaving as if someone is watching) but self-motivated and self-managed in the practices and purposes of the panopticon. The subject of governance performs, keeps vigil over, and expects of others due compliance and cooperation in upholding the public interest, about which it feels self-satisfied in participating (Harney 2008).

What Gupta and Ferguson refer to as a “new modality of government,” what I’ll refer to here as governance or self-management, seemingly “works by itself” through self-enterprising individuals empowered to be responsible for their own lives and discipline (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 989), a kind of “investor” subject that replaces standardized citizen or mere consumer (Martin 2007), much more active and interactive in its relation to rule. I will examine this operation below as a form of state-like practices addressed and applied to social movements and the production of the “grassroots,” what I will identify as an important and central site of production where immaterial/cooperative labor has come to undergird and overcode an entire system of production. For now we could say that if governmentality internalized a state logic of disciplinarity, governance internalizes a market logic of “free” choice and participation, within of course only those realms where exchange value has been established and accounted for.

Gupta and Ferguson provide ethnographic tools both to understand the extension of governmentality to a post-Fordist context and to identify pitfalls in the theorization of this process. These include questioning not only the location of government in the state, including the attachment to a scalar logic of rule (the global as super/supra-state), but also the naturalization of space (as corresponding to a state or realm of rule), and the composition and organization of other

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3 Gupta and Ferguson cite Barry et al. on the transfer of operations of government to non-state entities and the extension of market logic to state function, and Barry et al. 1996, Burchell 1996, Burchell et al. 1991, and O’Malley 1998 on the enterprising individual as responsible entrepreneur.
spatial entities—society, community, “grassroots”—that carry an aura of traditional goodness accompanied by habitual fetishization. But we are left with the question of how to distinguish between strategies of government. Where “top down” and “bottom up” have been compromised by a network form of rule and new modes of governance, and public and private blurred and betrayed by a single strategy of accumulation, the task of determining what are desirable forms of government or collective organization versus undesirable ones is difficult.

Zapatismo provides a direct opportunity, I believe, an imperative, to make this distinction. Any understanding of the movement, I will argue, requires an initial recognition of the possibility of the distinction. The Zapatistas’ innovation is not simply insisting on the necessity to distinguish between strategies of government—as forms of domination or the practices of (self) organization without domination—but providing criteria for that distinction. This is in their terms a path out of the eternally repeating “opportunity” to select between forms of domination or to have voice in choosing one’s master.

In theorizing globalization, often our critique of global institutions—MNCs (multinational corporations), TNCs (transnational corporations), the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, and a whole array of NGOs—leave people running “back” to or “reclaiming” the state as a site of superior and desirable governmental sovereignty over (ambiguously defined) market forces, without identifying the ways these “non-governmental” institutions themselves carry out state functions—sometimes on behalf of certain states, sometimes against certain states—but with strategies that rather than contradicting state rule, repeat or extend the reach of state practices or reproduce practices of “state-ness” (Sassen 2008). I want to argue here for the critical import of the task of distinguishing not just between the agencies and entities that carry out state functions of government based on their relative beneficence or belligerence to a population, certainly a valid endeavor, but also between forms of government based in command and strategies of
organization based in autonomous self-government. This is an often confusing distinction as
governance, through the production of the subject (really, a domination-based system of
production internalized into the subject) makes its own claims to self-generation through
techniques for defining responsible citizenship and subjecthood, what I will call below self-
management.

Government is productive; our question must be what does it produce, and how do we
distinguish between productions or possibilities of production. Examining these questions is a
complicated task, one reason for which being that while the study of power as a strategy rather
than a place or person always has a material manifestation, it is not necessarily a site-specific one.
This brings us back to the methodological discussion of Chapter One and the proposal to study in
or with force-fields rather than field-sites. Here this becomes particularly important because we
are examining phenomena that, as strategies, are not just un-ambiguous but in fact antagonistic.
Force-fields as studies of strategies rather than sites of “culture,” structures of society, or even
flows of goods or people can, then, give us a much clearer analysis of power—its intents and
effects—in relation to a particular place.

This chapter examines the fields of contestation for that distinction, the power to
distinguish not just between forms but between strategies of rule, and the criteria the Zapatistas
offer for those discernments. I will start with the historical context that led to the Zapatista
implementation of autonomy, and their conceptualization of power that makes their distinct
practice of government possible. I will address briefly here the conceptualization of Zapatista
autonomy as centered around rule by obeying, which organizes a whole ecology of ideas,
practices, and strategies of self-organization, in order to lay a conceptual groundwork for self-
government. I will then turn to several key “fields of contestation” where we can see distinct
strategies of government as self-management at work: in the discourse and practices of
development, in that of individual universal human rights, in social movement theory in general, and finally of current forms of governance manifested as a “public interest.” This examination of fields of contestation will focus on the self-management strategies on these fields as forms of social discipline and spatial control (or spatial discipline and social control), so that we may better distinguish and understand the practice of self-government that we will look at in detail in Chapter Four.

The argument of this chapter is that without the capacity to make this distinction, we are at risk of continuing to play out an infinite global game of good-cop/bad-cop across all realms of power: good state/bad state, for example, or good global institution (i.e. Doctors Without Borders)/bad global institution (i.e. World Trade Organization), undoubtedly distinguishable entities but not necessarily antagonistic actors. That game leaves us always choosing between masters, and, within governance, becoming proud managers of our own choice.

3.2 Why Autonomy?

3.2.1 From the Fire to the Word to the Silence

The uprising that sparked such immediate and immense public attention on the first day of 1994 and became a movement now going on sixteen years consisted of only twelve days of armed combat. As the federal army began an air-bombing campaign over the indigenous communities on January 2nd, the EZLN pulled back from its planned advance in order to defend the communities. The small cluster of militants, 50 percent mestizo and 50 percent indigenous, who had encountered the Chiapas indigenous communities in the early 80s had become an armed force, 98.9 percent indigenous (EZLN 2003m), 45 percent women, with a massive social support base; according to Mexican government intelligence there were 15,000 insurgents and 200,000 civilian “bases of support” at the time of the uprising (Marín 1998). Yet unaware of the massive
protests around Mexico in support of its cause during the first two weeks of January, the EZLN was surprised by the government’s announcement of a unilateral ceasefire January 12th. As the bombing campaigns were lifted and news allowed in, the EZLN found itself confronting a new force, not the government or the federal army, but the people, what the EZLN came to call “civil society.” It wasn’t the government that was asking us to dialogue, the EZLN later explained, but the people, hundreds of thousands of people that didn’t want to rise up with us and didn’t want us to continue fighting, but “rose up themselves for our protection”: “Here was something new and we didn’t know what to do […] it was these people, these people for whom we wanted to fight, that were telling us not to fight. What do we do? We can’t fight against them. Do we fight despite them?” (Le Bot 1997, 103). The EZLN decided that the only way forward was to open a dialogue with this “civil society,” “and with that we entered the national scene” (Le Bot 1997, 103).

The Zapatista struggle thus made what the EZLN describes as its first public transition, from the “fire” to the “word” (Muñoz Ramirez 2004), one of many self-transformations the EZLN would make. As initial negotiations were begun with the government, the EZLN began a parallel process of getting acquainted with “civil society.” One way this happened was through the massive public support, manifested most directly in the thousands of citizens who formed human security chains to protect the EZLN upon its first unarmed emergence from the jungle, and the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, who followed these first public and peaceful appearances and interventions of the rebel army through the media. As the dialogues started and

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I am focusing here on the story of how the Zapatista movement was built and how it gained such wide popular support, and thus putting emphasis on the sympathies and solidarities generated. The EZLN’s massive support of course had its counterpart in those who were against the movement, including right-wing or centrist groups opposed to their demands as well as left-wing sectors who either objected to armed uprising or objected to the cease-fire. Among the indigenous communities of Chiapas, there are communities or parts of communities that are “non-Zapatista,” who either have other party affiliations or did not want to join an armed organization; most communities are in fact split between loyalties and affiliations. There are also anti-Zapatista groups, which consist primarily of party-based groups (PAN and
stopped over a period of more than two years, due primarily to inconsistencies, reticence, or open betrayal on behalf of the government negotiating team, the EZLN underwent another encounter in its contact with over one hundred advisors—intellectuals, writers, legal experts, journalists, and participants in other movements in Mexico—that the EZLN had recruited for assistance in the negotiations and the elaboration of their demands for constitutional recognition. I won’t enter a discussion on the character of these negotiations here, which is an extensive and extraordinary process in itself of the conceptualization of indigenous rights and culture, women’s rights in

PRI primarily, though with increasing hostile activity by PRD groups) and paramilitary organizations sponsored and organized by the state and trained by the military on the ground in Chiapas. I am not familiar with any anti-Zapatista groups that are not directly organized by one of the principal political parties in municipal or state power or directly sponsored and armed by the Mexican military. The primary paramilitary groups operating in Chiapas in the 1990s were Paz y Justicia, Movimiento Indigena Revolucionario Antizapatista, Mascara Roja, and Los Chinchulines. In recent years the state has opted for creating “peasant” organizations, including most prominently the Organización Para la Defensa de los Derechos Indígenas y Campesinos (OPDDIC), the Organización Regional de Caficultores de Ocosingo (ORCAO), and the Alas de Aguila of the Ejercito de Dios, which generate “land disputes” with the Zapatista communities over land occupied in the 1994 uprising and have engaged in armed attacks on Zapatista communities. The role of the state and military direction of these groups is well documented by Enlace Zapatista (www.enlacezapatista.org.mx), CAPISE (www.capise.org), CIEPAC (www.ciepac.org), SIPAZ (www.sipaz.org), and the Fray Bartalomé Human Rights Center (www.frayba.org.mx). The well-respected Mexican magazine Proceso published an article by Carlos Marin on January 3, 1998, describing the “Chiapas 94 Campaign Plan” of the Mexican Secretary of National Defense from October of 1994, including the “Military Plan for Chiapas, from 1994: to create paramilitary groups, displace the population, destroy the EZLN support bases...” See http://www.edualter.org/material/ddhh/proc1.htm. Interestingly, as a result of the Zapatistas’ Other Campaign initiative starting in 2005, many non-Zapatista communities have made alliances with the Zapatistas. The Other Campaign was an opportunity for unified struggle for those who wanted to be part of an organized resistance effort but did not want to be part of or the base for an armed group, creating an effective defense against the government “divide and conquer” strategy which, to avoid publicity scandals, has always needed “inter-indigenous” disputes as an excuse for militarization or intervention.

5 For an account of the government’s actions during the dialogues, including the ambush of EZLN commanders at a designated meeting point in February of 1995, see Hernández Navarro 1998 and Weinberg 2000.

Chiapas, wellbeing and development, democracy and justice, and reconciliation. It is important to note however that the dialogues with the federal government, the EZLN has stated, were in the end only secondarily about speaking with the government; they were principally a place of encounter, acquaintance, and alliance with other sectors of Mexican society (Muñoz Ramirez 2004).

The EZLN and the federal government finally signed an agreement on the first set of talks on indigenous rights and culture, called the San Andres Accords after the location of the talks in the Tzotzil community of San Andres Sakamchem, in August of 1996. The agreement required a substantial compromise on behalf of the EZLN, but after a referendum in the Zapatista communities showed support by a strong majority for going forward despite the Accords’ limitations, the EZLN accepted the terms of the agreement as an act of good faith for continuing dialogue. The federal government, however, after having approved and signed the accords, reneged; then president Ernesto Zedillo refused to send the Accords to the national congress for their approval and conversion into law, as mandated by the terms of dialogue, and five years would pass and a different presidential administration would take office before the agreement would be passed to the congress. During this time, the Zapatistas launched multiple initiatives pushing for the Accords’ implementation. On February 1, 1997, nine thousand Zapatistas marched through the Chiapan city of San Cristobal de las Casas demanding the government honor the agreement. Two years later, in spring of 1999, five thousand civilian Zapatistas, chosen as representatives from their communities, spread out over every municipality in the country to hold a national and international referendum on the Accords. Three million Mexicans participated, with 98 percent affirming their support for the Zapatista demands. Again two years later, in

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San Andres “of the poor” in the Tzotzil language.
February of 2001, EZLN commanders embarked on their most daring adventure so far, the “March of the Color of the Earth” to Mexico City to demand implementation of the San Andres Accords. Their reception by “civil society” was the most remarkable of their public life: greeted as beloved heroes in towns and cities along their journey, they arrived to the center of Mexico City where over 300,000 people were gathered to receive them. After a divided and reluctant congress finally agreed to hear the Zapatista demands, the EZLN surprised legislators, who expected to receive Subcomandante Marcos in their chambers, by sending only their “top rank,” the indigenous commanders, lead by Commander Esther, as their representatives. Pictures of the masked woman commander in indigenous dress circulated widely as an unprecedented historic event: seven years after having declared war on the Mexican government rebel commanders took the floor of the national congress to explain the situation of the indigenous communities, indigenous women in particular, and to demand the implementation of the Accords.

The Zapatistas returned to Chiapas to wait for the government’s response, but when the Accords were finally sent to the national congress, the legislative act produced and endorsed by all three principal parties was stripped of all significant sources of indigenous autonomy. The document produced was in fact regressive, breaking with international treaties to which the Mexican government had already signed, perhaps most importantly International Labor Organization Article 169, making indigenous peoples subjects of “public interest” rather than “public right,” effectively erasing all substantive aspects of autonomy and making indigenous traditions and customs matters of folk tradition without political weight (Hernández Navarro 1998). The EZLN, along with the fifty-two indigenous peoples represented by the National Indigenous Congress (CNI), denounced the law as a betrayal of the dialogues and an insult to

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8 Commander Esther, accompanied by Commanders Zebedeo, Tacho, and David addressed the National Congress on March 28, 2001.
indigenous peoples (EZLN 2001). The Zapatistas retreated from public light and into what to both their enemies and their allies was an unsettling silence. All dialogue and negotiations with the government were over, and the Zapatistas would not again take up discussions or relations with any political party. The demands made in the San Andres Accords were no longer a matter for legislative consideration or rights to be granted, they would later explain. The Zapatista communities delved into the long process of implementing autonomy on their own, without official recognition or legal endorsement, giving new meaning to what had long been their motto, “We do not have to ask permission to be free.” The era of the word passed into an era of silence, and a unilateral autonomy “en los hechos” (in practice) began to take form.

3.2.2 Another Politics

The failure of the Mexican government to fulfill the San Andres Accords runs parallel to the changes in production and processes of rule described in Chapter Two. Despite the fact that government negotiators had signed onto the agreement made with the EZLN negotiating team, the state could not in fact keep its word. The degree of autonomy over land and resources set out in the San Andres Accords would have posed a direct contradiction to national and transnational investment interests in the oil deposits, water power, mineral wealth, and biodiversity abundant in the region, and permitting an autonomous system of governance for the indigenous population would effectively paralyze the clientelist and corporatist mechanisms typically used to “make ready” a population for the kind of destruction and displacement implied in such projects (Hernández Navarro 1998). The fact that the defunct “political class” (the government negotiation team in this case), still writhing somewhat in the throes of its own debilitation and submission to more powerful capitalist players, had made a promise it couldn’t keep was evidence of a political class that lacked not just the will but the power to comply with such a promise. The “hologram,” in effect, was revealed.
This experience was not unique to the Zapatistas. In many movements where unions and progressive parties achieved victories, the (supposedly temporary) sacrifice of democracy, difference, and freedom of those “below” in order to arrive at the eventual institution of those ideals from “above” led to the positioning of leaders or administrations as at best mediators for capital and at worst its mercenaries. For many movements this led to a shift from the strategy to take state power, where many had concluded power was not actually held, to beginning to attempt to organize production and social relations among communities and organizations themselves.

While not alone in the experience and experimentation of these strategies of self- and social organization, the Zapatistas were able to communicate perhaps most clearly and coherently the necessity and possibility of creating a political force capable not only of organizing its own survival and that of its members, but of reclaiming the function of defining what constitutes a “good life” that the state had ceded to the market (Esteva 2005). In a context where many leftist organizations were wrestling with ideological and practical questions over the value and validity of trying to reclaim the state, and as many places struggled with the non-results of state-sponsored “development” and the devastating results of market-sponsored structural adjustment, the Zapatistas staked their position on two key points. One, attacking the state from below would have limited if not nonexistent returns where it had already largely been evacuated from above; and two, a rejection of “taking” state power from “above” in favor of social transformation from “below” did not mean a retreat into “merely” cultural, local, or dispersed guerrilla-like forms of action. Rather, their strategies reflected a conviction that in the contemporary world and in contemporary forms of struggle, as expressed by Gustavo Esteva, “all localisms will be erased from the map,” and that cultural resistance, economic demands, or political redistribution, while perhaps important elements, were totally insufficient goals for the movement (Esteva 2005, 34).
What they would aim to create instead was “another politics” altogether, the first step toward the “other world” that they deemed not only necessary but already nascent in the cracks of the old.

3.3 An Other Power

Something happened in this process to which I want to draw to your attention: a shift in the EZLN’s position with respect to the problem of power. And this shift with respect to power is what will mark most deeply the footstep on the Zapatista path. We realized… that solutions, like everything in this world, are constructed from below up. And in our previous proposal, and in every proposal from the orthodox left up until then, it was the reverse, it was that things had to be resolved from the top down…

The EZLN’s early refusal to introduce itself as a force aiming to take over the state, its subsequent questioning of the value or validity of the strategy of using the state apparatus in general, and its later rejection of all registered political parties, confused and angered many traditional political actors on the left who considered the repudiation of state power foolish and the questioning of the pursuit of a socialist state traitorous. At the same time, organizations of diverse political stripes fought for the right to claim the Zapatista struggle as ‘one of their own’—communist, anarchist, Maoist, indigenist, libertarian, social democratic, etc.—and as proof, finally, of the truth of their own ideological position, legitimated by the action of an almost all-indigenous army that seemed to fill all of the desirable slots of nobility, uncorruptibility, popularity, and surprising success. But the EZLN tended to speak to all and claim none. It is necessary here to examine the conceptualization of power that helped the EZLN formulate both a strategy and a set of principles, or ethics of struggle, that did not fit any recognized category of social or political struggle. This strategy and principle would be what allowed for the rupture of

the dichotomies around armed or pacifist, culture or class, reform versus revolution, etc., that had paralyzed and polarized many sectors of social struggle over the last decades.

3.3.1 The Exercise of Power

The EZLN’s straightforward skepticism about state power would resonate with other experiences in a way that drew immediate interest:

We think that you have to take up the problem of power, to not repeat that formula which says that in order to change the world it is necessary to take power, and once in power, then you can organize things in a way that better suits the world, that is, that better suits me who is in power (EZLN 1997b).

But the EZLN’s insistence that it did not want to “take power” has often been misunderstood as either the denial of the necessity or desirability of any system or organization of rule (something like a very crude anarchism), or of the desire to create another, parallel system of (sovereign) rule. The former is usually related to a conceptualization of power as a negative force of pure domination, imposed from “above,” and thus one’s position in relation to power is always and only to resist and oppose. The subject’s relation to power is thereby limited to victim (acted upon) or protester (acting against). The latter is most commonly represented by a use of “autonomy” as separatism or secession whereby people are defined by claims to exceptionality, an identity group deserving of a different system of sovereign rule or a subsystem

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10 For a discussion of the sovereign as a social relation based on domination rather than a consensual social contract, see Hardt and Negri 2001; see also Alvaro Reyes, dissertation May 2009.


12 References for this version could include the struggle for autonomy in the Basque Country in relation to the Spanish state.
of sovereign rule within the existing sovereign state.\textsuperscript{13} The EZLN, however, describes its use of the concept as the effort “not to take power but to exercise it.”\textsuperscript{14} This is a conceptualization of power that, similar to rights, exists in the exercise thereof, rather than as either naturally-existing or legally-mandated, contracted to (via the “social contract”) and from (via demand or petition) the sovereign (Speed and Reyes 2001, 53-54).

It was anthropologist Pierre Clastres who attempted to demonstrate ethnographically that one, power was ubiquitous, but that two, power was not a purely coercive force. In other words, there were societies without a sovereign relation, but no societies without power. “Political power is universal,” he claims, “immanent to social reality,” inherent both in human nature and thus to social life (Clastres 1989). Calling on Nietzsche’s distinction between “power-over” and “power-to” (1968), in Clastres words “coercive” power and “non-coercive” power, he insists that the political could be conceived of apart from domination and violence, that the social could be not conceived of without the political (Clastres 1989, 23), and thus that social organization could be conceived, in fact constituted, apart from (transcendent) control and domination.\textsuperscript{15} This kind of

\textsuperscript{13} The EZLN’s words on this: “The only way to incorporate, with justice and dignity, the indigenous into the nation, is recognizing their own forms of social, cultural, and political organization. Autonomies are not separation, they are the integration of the most forgotten and humiliated minorities in contemporary Mexico” (EZLN 1995, 190). Translation mine.

\textsuperscript{14} EZLN Communiqué “To the soldiers and commanders of the Popular Revolutionary Army,” August 29, 1996. The complete quote is: “What we seek, what we need and want is for all those people without a party or an organization to make agreements about what they don’t want and what they do want and organize themselves in order to achieve it (preferably through civil and peaceful means), not to take power, but to exercise it” (EZLN 1996).

\textsuperscript{15} We should also note here that the way Clastres poses the idea of society (i.e. society against the state) is somewhat problematic in the sense that society has served in many of its moments of conceptualization as both correlative and opposite of government in liberal thought. Robert Hurley characterizes Foucault’s thought on the subject in a summary of course lectures published in Security, Territory, Population (2007): “Society, in fact, represents the principle in the name of which liberal government tends to limit itself…it also forms the target of a permanent governmental intervention…in order to produce, multiply, and guarantee those liberties that the liberal system needs” (pg 385). Society represents, in Foucault’s words,
power of non-domination, the EZLN has pointed out, was already present in some form in the indigenous communities of Chiapas and was in fact one of the foundational elements of what would become the EZLN. This should not, however, lead us to conceive of indigenous society as some form of natural or absolute outside or exception to (state or other) domination. Rather, the tactic of the Zapatista movement would be to strengthen that form of power through a whole network of practices that would in turn continually select for practices of non-domination.

In refusing what they consider to be the trap of trying to occupy the state (by taking power) or creating a new state or sovereign (through a parallel command-obey system), the Zapatistas generated a discussion of what constitutes a political actor who does not seek power:

We think that if we can conceptualize a change in the premise of power, the problem of power, starting from the fact that we don’t want to take it, that could produce another kind of politics and another kind of political actor, other human beings that do politics differently than the politicians we have today across the political spectrum (EZLN 1996, 69).

It is this “other human being” that we will see emerge in the practice of Zapatista autonomy. An “other politics” allows for subjects who do not just respond to or act as subjects of power, but are capable of acting by themselves, in a positive and constructive relationship to (their own) power, or more accurately, for and from themselves. Autonomy in the Zapatista

both “the set of conditions of least liberal government” and the “surface of the transfer of governmental activity” (1982 manuscript on “Liberalism as art of government”).

Foucault outlines the consequences of seeing power only as domination in “Power and Strategies”: “The key point is that to this reduction of power to the figure of the master there is linked another reduction, that of procedures of power to the law of prohibition. This reduction of power to law has three main roles: (i) It underwrites a schema of power which is homogeneous for very level and domain—family or State, relations of education or production. (ii) It enables power never to be thought of in other than negative terms: refusal, limitation, obstruction, censorship. Power is what says no. And the challenging of power as thus conceived can appear only as transgression. (iii) It allows the fundamental operation of power to be thought of as that of a speech-act: enunciation of law, discourse of prohibition. The manifestation of power takes on the pure form of ‘Thou shalt not’ (1980, 139-140).
context, we could say, is the potentializing and construction of that kind of power at the level of social organization. It has no referent to the discourse of “empowerment” whereby individuals are helped to “maximize their potential” in an existing system, or to the creation of “pluriethnic regional autonomous” (as critiqued in Esteva 2005, 79; Speed and Reyes 2000) whereby groups with demands are ceded (or, not inconveniently to the existing system, allowed to recede into) separate or decentralized forms of the same power apparatus. Said differently, neither the offer of assimilation nor the conversion of social marginalization (as a result of negligence and discrimination) into a “privileged” marginal status (as a result of selective state recognition) would allow for the self-construction of a collective subject capable of exercising power. Thus the claim for and implementation of autonomy is not dependent on a successful plea before the powers of the state or a reliance on a system of law that in turn depends on recognition of (and thus in a sense submission to) the state that makes those laws. To “do politics differently” comes to mean a politics not only different from the “politics of the politicians” in power but also different from the leftist political organizations of the era which prescribed the implementation of a particular predetermined program. The Zapatistas’ attempt to organize a struggle around a set of basic needs and “necessary values,” these shared and self-defined, came in direct opposition to both the ideological party platform promoted by the traditional left and the personalization of political participation promoted by the neoliberal system (Hernández Navarro 2000). “We need different words” Gustavo Esteva writes, “to speak of what is not merely contrary to Power (that

17 This includes any number of organizations across the left political spectrum, including most prominently Marxist-Leninist organizations like the Popular Revolutionary Front (FPR), the Maoist organizations like the Union del Pueblo (UP) and Política del Pueblo (PP) that operated in Northern Mexico and were transplanted to Chiapas in the 1970s (Harvey 1998, 79-90), the Mexican Communist Party, member of the Communist International (not to be confused with the Communist Party of Mexico, a different organization), as well as social democratic organizations, some tied to the “progressive” liberal political parties.
which resists it) but also of something radically different. Something that is neither its reflection nor its opposite” (Esteva 2005, 77).

What autonomy, “another kind of politics,” made possible (or was made possible by) in Zapatista territory was the intersection and mutually reinforcing relation of two principal axes: the autonomous construction of the capacity for collective survival in extraordinarily precarious and dangerous conditions; and the construction of a collective subject capable of acting by and for itself (Ornelas 2006). These dual axes, the construction of system and subject, whether considered in form of an initiative, experiment, or new kind of institution “for” and “from” below, overcome what Esteva points to as the too frequent result of one without the other: the initiative from “above” directed down that loses itself in a social vacuum; and that from “below” directed up which loses itself in an institutional vacuum (Esteva 2005, 80). Our inquiry here is the mechanisms by which the exercise of “non-coercive” power are promoted through the series of practices that make up Zapatista self-governance.

3.3.2 Rule by Obeying

The Zapatista method for engaging “another politics” by implementing “autonomy in practice” took the form of what they called “mandar obedeciendo,” or rule by obeying. As a system of self-government centered around the work of *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Good Government Councils) headquartered in each zone of Zapatista territory (the details of which we will examine below), the idea of rule by obeying was built on seven principles: “To obey, not to command; To represent, not supplant; To step down, not climb up; To serve, not to help oneself; To convince, not to defeat; To construct, not destroy; To propose, not impose” (Good Government Council of La Realidad 2007). Unique to these principles is not their discursive beauty or integrity—against the imposition of rule, the formation of social hierarchy, the accumulation of power tied to wealth, and the structure of domination required for exploitation—
but the fact that they were sustained not by adherence to a party ideology or charismatic leaders but by a structure of organization which continually favors their selection. That is, it is not that individual Zapatistas are incorruptible icons of selfless service, but that the organizational patterns they collectively select, as we will see below, create an unfavorable environment for personal promotion.

The “Good Government Councils” operate as a form of rotating autonomous government which serve as a local justice system, a representative body to relate to other regions and organizations as well as people and projects from outside the zone, a source of financial and ethical management and accountability for the distribution of funds and the coordination of collective projects, and a delegated body to carry out the mandate of the community assemblies by whom Council delegates are chosen and to whom they are accountable (EZLN 2003f). The term lengths, form of rotation, number of members, and other details of the Councils are decided locally by each zone, ranging from turns of one week to three months serving as part of the governing body (El Kilombo 2008, 46). Common across all zones, community members chosen for the Councils take their turn governing their designated shift and then return to the cornfield or the kitchen and the daily work of the community. Each community in turn covers the daily work and sustenance of its currently governing members through collective labor and/or with funds from collective projects (EZLN 2003f). The distinction between this mandate and that given or

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18 The official responsibilities of the Councils include: to balance unequal development across the autonomous municipalities; to mediate conflicts between autonomous municipalities and between autonomous municipalities and official (state) municipalities; to attend to denunciations made in the autonomous municipalities of human rights violations, investigate their veracity, and direct the autonomous municipalities in the corrections of any determined errors; to oversee municipal projects and ensure they are carried out according to the timeline and format decided by the communities; to oversee the implementation of laws made in the autonomous municipalities; to attend to national and international guests who wish to visit the communities, propose projects, install peace camps, or do research; and to promote and prepare the participation of community members in other movement activities (EZLN 2003c).
assumed in what we can generally call “representative democracy” is not only the rotating function of government, but also the relation to the community assemblies where the core of decision-making power is held. This relation of governance structures all of the other relations to be mediated and tasks to be completed, “In sum, to ensure that in Zapatista rebellious territory, whoever rules, rules by obeying” (EZLN 2003f).

While the rotating structure and constant retraining necessary in this model of self-governance have occasionally raised serious obstacles to what we commonly understand as “efficiency,”19 these aspects have served important functions with regard to the goals of doing “another politics.” Issues are first addressed in community assemblies where consensus is sought through extensive discussion, then delegated to the Autonomous Councils for execution or implementation. The Councils are in turn watched over by the autonomous authorities of the communities for compliance with community mandate (Ornelas 2004); failure to follow that mandate or acts of individual interest not congruent with collective decision can result in the immediate revocation of a Council member by the assembly. This circular practice keeps power firmly at the base throughout the political process and makes political representatives, during their “turn,” responsive and responsible to that base. Second, the fact that every member of the council is a community member with the same daily responsibilities as everyone else prevents the professionalization of politics or specialization of the role of governing. In this system, politics itself is not a sphere separate from all other realms of life: one does not become a politician; there are no politicians. Governing is rather a necessary social task in which all must participate to

19 The EZLN refers to the frustrations of national and international visitors who come to the Councils with project proposals or requests and may be “approved” by one council but when they come back to implement a project, confront another council and have to start the process over again. They clarify however that this system has served them well, in that “the problem isn’t going to be who rules. The problem is the relationship that you build…And that has been what has really launched the autonomous municipalities (El Kilombo 2008, 46).
maintain organization and cooperation. That collective organization is always a “living” or imminent gesture which can be changed or reorganized by the decision of the base at any time. In this system, making government a common responsibility rather than a professionalized category delinks it from privilege or prestige and thus eliminates the temptations or vices of wielding power over others. Third, the Good Government Councils do not centralize rule, subtracting power from the autonomous municipalities, but rather provide a point of coordination between communities and municipalities that allows for greater organization (the settling of disputes between communities or municipalities and the development of larger zone-level projects or programs), thus increasing the power of that organization (Ornelas 2004). Fourth, the rotating and non-remunerative character of positions on the Councils prevents, or makes difficult, the corruption of any political delegate. “You can buy one person off,” the EZLN comments, “but they would soon be replaced on the Council and you would have to start all over again” (El Kilombo 2008). Thus anti-corruption mechanisms don’t depend just on the honesty and resolve of the person in political position, but are rather ensured by a structure that makes corruption, in fact, very expensive. These factors, the circular pattern of assembly discussion, delegation, and vigilance, the non-specialization of governing, coordination without centralization, and the non-lucrative nature of corruption, have a kind of tendential equalizing role that prevents certain class hierarchies from forming. Whereas specialization tends to form or reinforce sectors, i.e. workers, bureaucrats, business people, intellectuals (Ornelas 2004), the rotating and responsive aspects of the councils prevent the formation of a “political sector.” They provide rather a kind of democratizing effect not only through the “taking turns” of governance but also through a kind of mutual collective subsidy: when one is not governing, she or he is part of the collective effort to sustain the livelihood of those who are (El Kilombo 2008, 46). By putting the authorship of
politics into question, the Good Government Councils suggest the possibility of the elimination of a “political class” altogether.

We must note here that this system relies already to some degree on a collective subject—that is, people capable of working in and through an assembly, of participating productively in a collective dialogue. There are certainly historically particular precedents for this capacity in the traditional organization of indigenous community life in Chiapas and the necessary interdependence of an existence wrought out with minimal institutional aid and almost no state services. But neither marginalization nor indigenous custom or identity are sufficient for an organized collective subject. The system of rule-by-obeying—the rotation of responsibilities, accountability to the assembly, the collective right to revocation of delegation, the non-specialization or non-professionalization of the political realm, and the collective coordination of the daily sustenance and logistical structure of the governing cycle essentially becomes, admittedly circularly, a system for producing the subject necessary for and capable of producing such a system.

While the form of autonomy implemented through the Good Government Councils may be unique, the possibility of non-hierarchical social relations and a political sphere that does not function on the principle of command-obedience is not new. Many of the characteristics of “rule by obeying” have referents elsewhere: the practices of revocation in many Mesoamerican societies (Casanova 2006); in the organization of assemblies in ancient Greece (James 1956); in forms of eliminating any attachment of privilege to leadership in certain American Indian tribes (Clastres 1989); in the direct democracy of the Paris Commune of Civil War France in the nineteenth century (Marx and Lenin 1985); and in some of the traditional forms of organization of some of the Mayan indigenous communities themselves (EZLN 2003c), to name just a few of
the well-documented examples. Clastres provides a specific ethnographic study of power among the Tupi-Guarani where “All, or almost all, are headed by leaders, chiefs,” he states, “and—this decisive feature merits attention—none of these caciques possesses any ‘power’” (1987). Clastres continues:

one is confronted, then, by a vast constellation of societies in which the holders of what elsewhere would be called power are actually without power; where the political is determined as a domain beyond coercion and violence, beyond hierarchical subordination (Clastres 1989, 11-12).

In Clastres’ examples, the position of chief in many American Indian societies may include aspects of prestige, but prestige is not attached to power. The chief has no authority at his disposal, no power of coercion, “no means of giving an order” which would require a monopoly over the use of violence. Rather, “armed only with his eloquence,” the chief’s power is limited to speech, the power of his word, but a word that carries no force of law. Here we are called back to the Zapatista principle “to convince, not to defeat”: the word, the power of authenticity and persuasion, is of value only in relation to others, not as power over them. Even a talented orator, Clastres states, or an expert hunter, things that may attribute prestige to a chief, 21

20 There are also recent or contemporary examples, including the indigenous communities of El Alto, Bolivia (see Raúl Prada 2004); the piqueteros and unemployed workers movement in Argentina (see Marina Sitrin 2006 and Colectivo Situaciones and MTD Solano 2002); and certain parts of the MST in Brazil (see Stedile and Fernandes 1999). The diversity of examples is important so as to eliminate any tendency to classify this as a strictly indigenous tradition, or something possible only in the global south.

21 Other work within anthropology on different models of political power and chiefdom include Marshall Sahlins and Elman Service, Evolution and Culture, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960, and Marshall Sahlins, “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia.” Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol. 5 no. 3, 1963, pgs 285-303. However, all of these works tend to present these systems of leadership, power, and prestige and their relation in evolutionist terms, whereby such a system is possible due either to its existence in a place or time before or exterior to the present. In that reading the rejection of a command-obey system with regard to authority depends on a developmentalist model, whereby eventually command-obey will emerge, or a kind of essentialist model, whereby an alternative exists due to some kind of imagined or imposed intrinsic exteriority (being indigenous, for example) to “modernity.” It should be clear here that the Zapatista practice of rule-by-obeying, while it may have historical or traditional roots, is a decision that is repeated and empowered in the construction of a particular political project.
are not transferable into political power.\textsuperscript{22} “The tribe…never allows technical superiority to change into a political authority” (Clastres 1989, 207). Any attempt to impose authority, where relations of command-obedience do not exist, would consist of the people turning their backs on a leader (Clastres 1989, 208). The separation of prestige from power in a society, “between the fame of a victorious warrior and the command that he is forbidden to exercise,” is what prevents the reversal of societal power over the designated chief into something that would serve purely private ends: the tribe in the service of the chief (Clastres 1989). The internal social relations of the tribe, which do not function by command-obedience, are what keep prestige, or any particular power or ability, from being converted into power-over, a source of domination. But while what Clastres calls “primitive law”: “you are worth no more than the others” (Clastres 1989), provides us with a model or example to demonstrate that the “non-state,” or non-dominant power relations, are possible, perhaps even inherent, in any society, we do not from his account see the possibility of the deliberate construction of “another power” as a political project with strategies oriented to (and from a historical and contextual analysis). What the Zapatistas attempt is to produce, conscientiously and systematically as a form of struggle, is this kind of power and subject. They attempt to stretch the tendency into the construction of a society, not just “you are worth no more than the others” but, in the Zapatista terms, “everything for everyone, nothing for us.”

\subsection*{3.3.3 Domination through Exploitation or Labor as Self-activity}

The possibility of leadership without command and organization without domination brings into question the organization of production, not only that necessary for survival but how

\textsuperscript{22} Even beyond the lack of prestige, chieftanship entails a kind of obligated generosity that appears even “more than a duty: it is a bondage” (Clastres 1987, 30). There is a similar example in the Zapatista Good Government Councils in which punishment for certain violations of Zapatista law consists of serving in a position of authority for a certain amount of time (EZLN 2003f).
surplus is made and managed. Here we must start from the command structure of capitalism as the intersection of domination and exploitation. Returning again to Clastres’ analysis of social organization, now with regard to production, he holds that a society organized around labor as a commodity already reflects the division of that society into ruler and ruled, exploiter and exploited. The ability to impose alienation, always political before it is economic, Clastres claims following Max Weber, rests on the monopoly of legitimate physical violence that constitutes the very substance of that entity which represents the division of ruler and ruled: the state (Clastres 1987, 203). It is not the necessities and advances of a mode or means of production that develop into a hierarchized society that requires class divisions to organize labor and property; it is the division into ruler and ruled that allows for the formation of classes by which exploitation is carried out. If we are to use Marxist concepts of base and superstructure, in Clastres’ opinion, we would have to reverse them, starting with the political (Clastres 1989, 202). But we could perhaps more productively return to the terms of our discussion in Chapter Two: capitalism itself is a system of social relations, not an economic system or a (strictly) political one. How social relations are produced can be manifested in a society with power, where power is exercised through self-organization, or a society beneath (those who have) power, the subjugation of people to a hierarchical authority. Whether those people (purportedly) choose that authority or not is secondary here. Exploitation doesn’t create social inequality; rather, exploitation is only made possible by an existing class division, this represented and manifested, according to Clastres, in the existence of the state. The social structure of society, he maintains, always precedes the State machine (Clastres 1989, 204).

This conceptualization helps us understand a long history of struggles in various traditions that give us a context for what has come to be called “autonomy” or “self-activity.” Long before anthropologists and other theorists and social scientists began to define and defend
the agency of actors faced with the overwhelming force, both physical and ideological, of domination, many struggles were able to explicitly conceptualize their own actions as “autonomous,” or affirmative rather than reactive. Some workers’ struggles in the twentieth century began to insist that the conceptualization of resistance as a response of victims to exploitation was insufficient and inaccurate. Rooted in Marx’s concept of living labor, theories of workers’ autonomy insisted on the power of workers to self-organize autonomously from capital, that is, to create a rupture in the system and act outside (the logic of) the capitalist relation. These ideas were prominent in various movements attempting to understand Marx’s claim that capitalism’s survival was not its own capacity to produce and to subject labor to its production, but rather its ability to harness working class activity and imagination and impose its order on those processes (Cleaver 1988). Workers’ struggles in this tradition were built on a belief in the primacy of labor, that it is working class activity which motors production and working class struggle which forces capitalist innovation; capital must appropriate this activity and creativity in order to maintain itself. At a more profound level, autonomy can be understood as the capacity of the unwaged or non-proletarianized to refuse their own subsumption into the capitalist system. Exodus from lands or situations colonized by capital as well as occupation, the seizing of lands or

\footnote{This theoretical trajectory is perhaps most commonly identified with the political tradition descended from Operaismo in Italy and related to what in the United States has become known as “Autonomous Marxism.” Operaismo emerged as a political movement in post-war Italy that became a major social force in the 1960s and 70s with the ability to mobilize hundreds of thousands of members. Emerging from a crisis in the labor movement and a general discontent among large sectors of the working class with the Italian Communist Party, Operaismo advocated for the refusal of work, for an “exodus” from capital, that is, from the social relationship that allows not only the exploitation but also the imposition of work. This refusal comes from Operaismo’s belief in the ability of the working class to act both for itself, to organize and politicize itself without a vanguard or a party, and by itself, or autonomous from the dialectic of capital, in order to break the social relationship that maintains capitalist power over the labor of others and thus extinguish itself as a class. Operaismo emphasized the importance of understanding working-class composition and the need to analyze and strategize within continually changing conditions of power and production in order to analyze the possibilities for exercising worker autonomy in making and changing the world (Wright 2002).}
resources for production not controlled by capital, were strategies that characterized a myriad of historical struggles, from European peasants during the crisis of feudalism and the rise of agrarian capitalism\textsuperscript{24} to slaves in the Americas during colonization\textsuperscript{25} to indigenous and other peoples establishing autonomous territories today.\textsuperscript{26} Varieties of independent and self-governing communities, composed of diverse populations of ex- or escaped slaves, native peoples, migrants, and others resisting systems of domination—called Maroon societies in North America, Palenques in Mesoamerica, Quilombos in Brazil, to name just a few examples—are one historic example of such autonomies in the Americas.\textsuperscript{27}

We could consider the hinge between the peasant, slave, and indigenous autonomies of early capitalism and colonization and those of twentieth century industrial worker’s struggles to have been the organization and struggle of the unwaged, precariously waged, or groups not considered principally “workers.” In the United States, it was the struggles of the Black community, from the civil rights movement to that of Black Power, that provided a powerful force beyond what was strictly considered “class struggle” or “workers movement” and for an affirmation of the autonomous organization of social life and production in general.\textsuperscript{28} The self-

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\textsuperscript{24} See Rodney Hilton 2003 and Christopher Hill 1984.
\textsuperscript{25} See Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker 2001.
\textsuperscript{26} See Boccaro 2002 on the Mapuche in Chile; García, Gutiérrez, and Prada 2000 and Mamani 2005 on indigenous organization in Bolivia; Stedile and Fernandes 1999 on the MST in Brazil, Pithouse and Badiou 2005 on the Shackdwellers Movement in South Africa, and López Barcenas 2002 for the many phases and locations of indigenous autonomous movement in Mexico.
\textsuperscript{27} See George Rawick 1973 on slave narratives of self-activity in the United States; on Quilombos and Palenques see Carneiro 1988; also on Quilombos see Franco 1973, Escalante 1979 and Navarette 2003; also on Palenques. see Eugene Genovese 1992.
\textsuperscript{28} See Cleaver 2006 and Reyes 2009.
\end{flushright}
for other minority groups as well as for student groups and feminist struggles, catalyzing a series of movements and movement strategies by those sectors or groups. In Europe and the United States, feminist struggles throughout the twentieth century insisted on the autonomy of women’s demands and the refusal to subsume them within what was considered to be a broader “class interest” under principally male leadership. They called attention to the unwaged reproductive work that has long been exploited by capital but masked by the wage relation, most visibly housework in this case, but also to affective and reproductive work more generally. It is in part to the credit of these feminist analyses, and to a less recognized but even more important extent Black and other people of color struggles in the US, that unwaged manual and mental labor were recognized as a part of capitalist production, thus politicizing the social sphere as a field of production. The extension of the understanding of the struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation from the terms of production of commodities to the fact of (and resistance to) labor as a commodity, including its reproductive and social manifestations, was of great import to both pushing and understanding the transformations in the form and organization of labor. As we have seen from the early capitalist and colonial examples, autonomous movements in the twentieth century were not a new form of struggle in relation to capital, but the global moment and transition that these movements experienced allowed them to assert with unprecedented strength the necessity to attack relations of production only by at the same time attacking the affective knots which sustain them (Zibechi 2002). It was these struggles that made clear that the socialization of production across all spheres of life and living should not subjugate all of life to

capital, a common protest to theories of the “social factory,” but rather make all of life a potential subject and location of revolution.

The examples above provide historical and analytical referents for the term autonomy, though not any genealogical trajectory for Zapatismo. Zapatista autonomy is a singular phenomenon, based in part on indigenous traditions but also departing from them, fed by the migrant history and mixed populations of the Mayan communities that would eventually compose the Zapatista movement, cultivated in the clash of cultures created between the FLN militants and the indigenous communities and in the broad range of differences among those communities themselves, developed in a very particular context and experience and radically and repeatedly transformed in the process of struggle. What we can say about the array of autonomous moments and movements cited here and in the next chapters is that while there may be no direct or even related lineage or contact in many cases—an imitable or repeatable model would be somewhat antithetical to the concept of autonomy—the practices of autonomy have tended to emerge most prominently in that sphere where citizenship, nationality, identity, profession, and the many other categorizations of social order and sovereign rule have been destabilized, denied, or discarded.

Yet even within these movements or communities, the tendency toward authority or away from it is something constantly in motion, something played out everyday; it is, in fact, politics. The possibility for the desire for prestige to be converted into the will to power is always a risk (Clastres 1989, 210). For Clastres, the ability of a variety of American Indian Tribes to prevent the attachment of power to prestige or of authority to chieftanship required the constant exercise of politics by society as a whole, a refusal by that society to allow for a separate political power to

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30 Some scholars have resisted theorizations of the social factory, real subsumption, or the biopolitical on the grounds that it leaves no room for resistance, composing a classic “rape script” that makes “monolithic” and totalizing the forces of domination. See for example, Gibson-Graham 1996, 195.
form, and the will to turn its back on any attempt by leadership to become authority, that is, to attach the force of command to the earning or granting of respect. None of these aspects would ever or could ever be guaranteed; the field of power where propensities toward the dispersion of power and democratic organization or toward the congealing of power into command is always a field of contestation. That is the politics of struggle, or rather, the struggle at the heart of all politics.

Zapatista self-governance, I would argue, is a form that precludes and, tendentially and repeatedly, prevents the placing of leadership into a command structure. That is, Zapatista communities have organized social relations to continually tend away from the division into classes, principally ruler and ruled, that provide the foundation for domination, in effect, the state. By making “an-other politics” a phenomenon firmly rooted in and practiced by the social base, they are able, repeatedly but each time anew, to choose non-domination.

3.4 Fields of Contestation

The following investigation of development, rights, social movement theory, and governance is undertaken not as an ethnographic examination with these fields as sites, but as an examination of fields of contestation where strategies of self-management (in contrast to self-government) are played out. My argument is that these “fields” are historical and contemporary axes for self-management: the right to and subject of development, the implementation of a discourse and identification with individual universal human rights, social movements as calculable collectivities of interest and identity, and governance as a kind of carefully managed reorganization of the supposedly benign space of the public, the “grassroots,” and the participative subject. The idea of force-fields here becomes important as a way to understand territorializations of strategy, where we are often tempted to naturalize even non-traditional field
sites (however complex and problematized) as entities of “culture” or “society” corresponding to a particular people or place. Force-fields, in other words, help us trace effects of power rather than look for evidence of truth. This investigation of fields of contestation will lay the groundwork to help us understand the strategic site, as process and practice of self-government, which we will examine in Chapter Four.

3.4.1 Development

“On January 20, 1949,” Mexican scholar Gustavo Esteva writes, “two billion people became underdeveloped” (Esteva 1992). This was the day that Harry Truman took office as president of the United States, announcing in his inauguration speech that the “old imperialism” was no longer appropriate and that the US would embark on a “bold new plan” to bring scientific and industrial advances to the “underdeveloped areas” of the world (Esteva 1992; Escobar 1995). Truman referred to a plan meant (explicitly) to eliminate the conditions for the spread of communism and (implicitly) to promote the domination of US-backed economic policies, but the term was adopted and embraced widely, from state plans for industrial development to non-governmental and humanitarian programs in “urban development,” “rural development,” “participatory development,” “sustainable development,” and a myriad of other adaptations with varying emphases on the right or responsibility of people for their own “development” (Esteva 1992; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994). The fact of “underdevelopment” went unquestioned (Esteva 1992; Ferguson 1994), and the United Nations took up the term as its motto for three consecutive “development decades” in which the two thirds of the world’s population considered underdeveloped would purportedly be led to material prosperity and economic progress. From the end of World War II through the end of the 1980s (the third “development decade”), the “third world” was produced and reproduced in the discourse of development from all points on the political spectrum. From “market-friendly” development to “socialist” development, often
couched in terms of the “empowerment” of being involved in one’s own “grassroots”
development (Esteva 1992), the discourse created “an extremely efficient apparatus for producing
knowledge about, and the exercise of power over, the Third World” (Escobar 1995, 9).

This analysis built a certain continuity between colonial (Said 1978, Mitchell 2002) and
developmentalist (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Ferguson 1994) systems of representation.31 As
colonial subjects became “underdeveloped” subjects, and through the transformation of the
“poor” into the “assisted” with an income-based classification system for “underdevelopment” for
which the remedy could only be economic progress (Escobar 1995), the “tale of the three worlds”
(Denning 2004) took shape in which the third of these worlds became, once again, a field where
the making-productive of the environment or economy was accompanied by the making of a
subject suitable to that project. If the colonial subject had to be converted (religiously) and
cultured (morally) into the system of domination established by the conquest, the subject of the
post-WWII era had to be “developed” and “empowered” in order to be an effective actor in the
establishment of economic and political modernization. The flip side of this in some regions,
particularly indigenous ones, was the empowerment of a native population “to be truly
themselves” in the “perfection of authentic otherness” (Li 2007, 15), a discursively distinct but
similarly prescribed and imposed identity. The Declaration of Coyocuc at a United Nations
Symposium held in Mexico in 197432 states that the purpose of development “should not be to
develop things but to develop man” (Esteva 1992).

31 Though the latter, Escobar in particular, were often criticized for not recognizing the continuity with the
former, as we’ll see further below.
32 UNEP (United Nations Environment Program)-UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and
Development) “Symposium on Resource Use, Environment, and Development,” Coyocuc, Mexico,
October 1974.
Critique of the development enterprise arose perhaps most prominently with the emergence of dependency theory (Gunder Frank 1967; Amin 1978), world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974), and Marxist analyses of development as neo-colonialism (Chilcote and Edelstein 1974; Lappe and Collins 1977) in the 1960s and 70s. These critiques were followed by a body of work, including that of Escobar and Esteva as cited above, emerging in the 1980s and 90s that examined the textual and discourse-based critiques of representation, much of it highly influenced by Foucault’s work on governmentality (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Ferguson 1990; Sachs 1992). This perspective was often referred to as “post-development” in reference to the poststructuralist thought by which it was heavily influenced. The “post-development” critique did not go uncritiqued itself, as other scholars claimed that its discourse-centered analysis made development into a monolithic category, disallowing the great variance of projects grouped under the rubric of development or the ways in which such projects were contested, resisted, or appropriated in context (Moore 1999). Others pointed to a “historical amnesia” about the development phenomenon, pointing out that “development” and “underdevelopment” existed long before Truman pronounced them (Cowen and Shenton 1995), and that the fact that “processes of economic development are in the final analysis also power struggles” was marked by Max Weber in 1895 (quoted in Moore 1999). Tania Li, though not contesting the claims of “post-development” thought, points out that the “programs for paupers” and poor laws throughout much of Europe in the 19th century were aimed explicitly at the prevention of revolt by those society marginalized or found difficult to assimilate (Li 2007). \(^{33}\) Others read developmentalism in a very different genealogy, the comparatively benign or even beneficial import-substitution model

\(^{33}\) Li also points out that the verb “to improve,” the term she uses for development, in medieval England meant to make agricultural land profitable, a process which usually involved the enclosure of common lands, a process which we in turn now associate with an important moment of primitive accumulation. See Li 2007, pg 19.
of national development that preceded the capitalist backlash that came through the imposition of
the neoliberal export-oriented model (Wallerstein 2005a). Perhaps most relevant for our purposes
here, the debates over the role of development as a tactic of global capitalist expansion and the
calls for a less “economistic” micro-politics of development (Moore 1999) reflected parallel and
more general theoretical discussions over the appropriate axes of analysis for forms of
domination and resistance, usually set up as the problematization of the predominance of the
economic in relation to other spheres and systems, or the centrality of global capital versus other
historical or local forms of domination.

It is perhaps helpful here to take the angle that the development decades, if judged on
their own terms, were an unmistakable and summary failure. After over thirty years of pouring
funds and projects into the “underdeveloped” world, in 1995 over one billion people lived in
abject poverty (United Nations Report 1995), with the number of very poor countries doubling in
the last thirty to forty years, and the number of people living in extreme poverty growing two-
fold. For the forty-nine least developed countries (LDCs) in the world, a 2010 United Nations
Conference on Trade and Development Report specifies, the model of development that has
prevailed to date for these countries, “to move the LDCs in the direction of trade-related growth,”
has failed and should be re-assessed (UNCTAD 2010).

Many failed projects were attributed to a mixture of local and state corruption in the
“aided” countries, the imperialist aims of the international institutions backed by rich states
carrying out the projects, and a lack of honest attention to “people-centered” development that
would purportedly have been more attentive to the needs and concerns of people on the ground
who would thus presumably have been more thoroughly “invested” in the projects’ success.
There is certainly much to be said about the political intentions and motivations of the
governments both sponsoring and receiving development projects and funds, and if we can deem
“failure” what resulted in “developed” nations’ increased access to the resources of “underdeveloped” nations, the maintenance of a massive poor reserve army of labor in the “third world,” and an elite class in those same countries that climbed into the financial “first world” on the backs of their compatriots. But our critique here in terms of understanding the context for a series of autonomous initiatives is another.

As a strategy which is rooted in the accumulation of capital, and consequently in its class relations, development theory has been easily identified with the capitalist regime of production. Aside from the significance of the creation of the “underdeveloped” subject, development projects of infrastructure improvement and investment were absolutely necessary to capitalist survival, with the necessity of this intervention matched by the consequential need to manage—to intervene in—the fall-out from capitalist advance (Li 2007, 20-21). The use of or tendency toward developmentalism is not without referent in Marx, and thus not without use and promotion in political ideologies aimed a countering capitalism. The dialectic as a form for analyzing the interaction of capital and labor, the emphasis on the industrial working class as the principal subject of struggle, and the perspective of technology and capitalism as, in some senses, progressive forces led many to use Marxism to support developmentalism or to use a critique of developmentalism against Marxism. Marx’s statements on peasants as filled with “rural idiocy” (1848) and “incapable of asserting their class interest in their own name” (1852) have been used, in equally damaging ways, both as a justification for making ideological shrines to the industrial working class or for condemning all Marxist analyses as derogatory and discriminatory vanguardism. But the discourse of development and thus the phenomenon of “economic man” was embraced in the twentieth century by both capitalism and socialism. As economist Harry Cleaver points out, socialist models have tended to object to the capitalist expropriation of surplus labor, but not to the extraction and expropriation of surplus labor itself (Cleaver 1988a). Socialist
development supported a state model where surplus would be redistributed by the socialist state for the purported good of the people. Such a model does not necessarily eliminate exploitation, Cleaver notes. Capitalist development depends on the reinvestment of surplus to produce accumulation, he points out. But in the logic of capitalist investment, as Marx demonstrated, the meeting of necessities through commodity production is not the primary purpose of investment; profit is (Cleaver 1988a). It is not (human) need that drives the (capitalist) need to hire labor, it is the (capitalist) necessity to maintain the capacity to extract surplus through labor. Value’s content, therefore, is imposed labor. “This is the real, intertemporal meaning of exploitation,” Cleaver claims, “it is not just the extraction of a surplus upon which the capitalist live and fatten themselves. It is not just greed. It is the extraction of a surplus for the purpose of extracting future surplus. It is the imposition of work for the main purpose of being able to impose more work in the future” (Cleaver 1988a). Work thus becomes the central factor to social organization, as the capitalist system is itself a social relation and that system pervades (and now dominates) social organization in general. The project of “socialist” development was to “cleanse” the process of exploitation from the imposition of work associated with capital accumulation and deliver that excess (surplus value), via the state, back to “the people,” i.e. laborers themselves (Cleaver 1988a). In the socialist “workers’ state” then, there would be a fair distribution of surplus, but a continuing measure of work by the law of value, and therefore the continuing imposition of work. The state organization of production by managed distribution, then, only provides that the law of value is generalized into what is essentially an advanced, highly rational capitalism (Negri 1974). The problem of the capitalist system, it is worth reiterating here, is not just the reduction of all things to commodities, but of all life to labor (Negri 1974), and by extension, the identification and definition of all people in terms of their work. Here we see again that it is not only the equity
of distribution, the capacity for consumption, or even the mode of production (of goods) that is at stake, but the actual creation and reproduction of a (particular) subject.\textsuperscript{34}

Yet we can also find elements of an autonomous thesis within Marx’s work. Living labor, the self-activity of the working class, as opposed to dead labor, that abstracted measure of labor subjected to capitalist command, provides a basis for understanding the autonomous power of labor (Cleaver 2006a). It is in fact in studies of the struggles of peasants in the \textit{1844 Manuscripts} and Marx’s letters on the Russian Mir that what was initially a superficial and dismissive treatment of the non-waged labor of peasants becomes a foundation for theorizing self-organization outside of or beyond what is afforded by capital’s organization of labor (Cleaver 2006b). Counter to the developmentalist thesis, Marx states in a letter to his Russian translator Vera Zasulich:

Theoretically, then, the Russian ‘rural commune’ can preserve itself by developing its basis, the common ownership of land…it can turn over a new leaf without beginning by committing suicide; it can gain possession of the fruits with which capitalist production has enriched mankind, without passing through the capitalist regime, a regime which, considered solely from the point of view of its possible duration, hardly counts in the life of society” (\textit{First Draft of Letter To Vera Zasulich}, 1881).

While the emphasis here on peasant self-activity may be outbalanced by what has been interpreted as a more prominent line of Marxism whereby the peasant must follow and be subordinate to the urban proletariat in terms of political potential and revolutionary subjectivity,\textsuperscript{35} the rejection of any linear developmentalist trajectory that by theoretical default or material imposition rules out autonomous action or self-activity stands clear.

\textsuperscript{34} It is worth mentioning that studies of certain Indian peoples and “archaic” societies have been used to show that political-economic systems where labor is not a commodity, in some cases considered “primitive,” in fact have higher living standards, if measured in terms of work time, leisure time, the capacity to produce “surplus” and generate affluence, than advanced industrial or agricultural societies. See Pierre Clastres 1987.

\textsuperscript{35} As represented by statements on the lack of “class identity” or potential thereof in peasant life in \textit{The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louise Bonaparte}, cited in Harry Cleaver 1990 and Hardt and Negri 2004.
In the context of Chiapas, it was in fact the failure of economistic projects, represented in a vast array of peasant organizations which included prominent Maoist strains,\(^{36}\) that in many ways “vaccinated” people against a certain kind of developmentalist project (N. Harvey 1998, 90) and effectively “threw” thousands of ex-members of those organizations toward the EZLN (Le Bot 1997). Disenchantment with these groups came in part from the failure of the “mass line” to achieve concrete economic demands and what were considered leadership sell-outs to the state, but also from discontent with a model which tended to make poverty more “digestible” (Le Bot 1997) rather than fundamentally addressing the power dynamics at its core.

There would be controversy over the re-creation of the “third” world as the place of confrontation over regimes of development (much as it had been the target of struggles for colonial control), as central to superpower rivalry as it had been to colonial competition (Escobar 1995, 34), and what others considered the reification of a falsely generalizable “developmentalism” (Moore 1999; Redfield 2005). For our purposes here, it holds that the universalizing and moralizing aspects that characterized the dominant part of the development era and enterprise, which foreground what would become the institutionalization of humanitarian intervention as a remedy to problems of poverty, inequality, and social conflict, and the ngoification of the sphere of action around those problems as we will see below, managed to make social life both a technical and a moral question, but not a political one (Ferguson 1994). Benevolent actors internal to the process not withstanding, it would be difficult not to connect this discursive depoliticization of society and social relations with foreign policy aims and the needs of a burgeoning world capitalist economy. Socialist development offered no escape or alternative

\(^{36}\) For example, The Union of the People (UP) and People’s Politics (PP) which became active in Chiapas in the 1970s, mostly led by activists from the north or students from Mexico City who were initially recruited by the church to work directly with the communities in Chiapas against land evictions. For more on these groups, see Neil Harvey 1998, 79-90.
to “economic man” or the work-centered society. For many then, development took its place behind colonialism, orientalism, populism, and clientelism (and before, as we will see below, neoliberalism), as a perhaps more sophisticated but no less effective form of social control.

3.4.2 Rights

One effect of TINA (the Thatcherite “There is No Alternative) after the fall of the socialist block, as we saw in Chapter Two, was the elimination of political discourse or ideology that suggested forms of social organization different from neoliberalism, and the promotion of those that supported that form, most notably “rights” discourses (Speed and Reyes 2001). From this perspective, while the capacity of states to provide and distribute resources was diminished, the discourse of the “rights” of citizens to material and immaterial provisions grew in what may seem paradoxical but was actually complementary: as the possibility of social change or reform through demands on the state were eroded by neoliberal restructuring, many groups began to redirect their complaints and demands toward rights-based claims from identity-based standpoints aimed precisely at that diminished state (Speed and Reyes 2001). In this context, groups often formed based on a lack of rights, from which a set of demands, based on recognition (of identity) and inclusion (through the granting of rights), were central. While these efforts were widely varied in character and consequence, at issue here was that as states’ power to command social and economic systems fell, demands on the state for social and economic recognition surged, and the very groups marginalized by or disenfranchised from the legal system often tied themselves to that system by framing their struggles in terms of rights (Speed and Reyes 2001).

While in one sense the retreat of the clientelist or corporatist state allowed for a certain opening for the activity and organization of “civil society,” it created at the same time the possibility or necessity for a different, usually non-state realm of mediating bodies, most prominently non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private philanthropic international
foundations, with a close relationship between the two. There have been many efforts to
problematicize the role of these institutions with questions about their role in global formations of
power and rule and their impact in local contexts with regard to their operational structure. Tying
rights discourse to the development industry we examined above, critiques have been made of a
dual deferral instigated by what we could call the “aid and improve” industry: that of a continual
deferral of responsibility by humanitarian or human rights organizations to absent political
authority; and that of the seemingly necessary deferral of the possibility of dignified conditions in
favor of the need and promise to preserve existence (Redfield 2005). The former relies primarily
on questions of governance and the latter on the operation of biopower (Foucault 1990), both in
relation to issues of sovereignty (Agamben 1998). Anthropologists have built on these ideas,
examining sovereignty without territory (Appadurai 1996; Tsing 2005; Ong and Collier 2005),
the tendential transnational governmentality of NGOs (Gupta and Ferguson 2002), and the
making intelligible of a field in order to make the necessary interventions (Ferguson 1994).
Pointing out the disjuncture between the skepticism that anthropologists and other academics feel
toward notions of universality and humanitarian neutrality on one hand and the practical need for
and diverse efforts of intervention and advocacy on the other, others point that analysis and
critique of the NGO sphere must inevitably be partial, incomplete, and reflexive (Redfield 2005;

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37 It should be noted that the end of corporatist rule doesn't mean end of the state, but rather that the state
escapes its mediating function through formal public institutions and now permeates society as a whole
(Deleuze 1994, cited in Speed and Reyes 2004, pg 49). James Ferguson states, similarly, that while the
developmental/non-governmental apparatus tends to depoliticize everything it touches, it performs a
simultaneous, quiet but proliferate expansion of bureaucratic state power (1994, xv).
Riles 2000). That should not keep us, however, from attempting to identify tendencies and make discernments as to their potential. ³⁸

Perhaps the most central issue for our purposes here is the tendency for these non-governmental and philanthropic organizations to target issues to address while avoiding the question of the fundamental limits of the neoliberal state with regard to any real alternative political project, thus reducing their treatment of those issues to a series of problem-management techniques (Speed and Reyes 2001) and potentially prolonging their necessity and centrality (Terry 2002). The diagnosis of deficiencies and consequent necessity for calling in expert direction (Li 2007) to operate a self-referencing technical matrix (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983) has a fundamentally depoliticizing effect, both of the issues at stake and of the social body in general. The “antipolitics” (Ferguson 1994) created is a combination of “the design of programs as a deliberate measure to contain a challenge to the status quo” (Li 2007), the effective quenching of political challenges to the system (Ferguson 1994) and the perhaps unintended depoliticizing, paternalistic effects of attempts at improving a population’s welfare (Li 2007; Ferguson 1994). Even in situations of humanitarian aid and human horror (rarely found without political stripes), Fiona Terry maintains, the “first response” should always be “militancy against” rather than “rescue from” (Terry 2002).

The undeniably statistically and symbolically significant presence of these organizations with regard to social organizations in so many places around the world begs an analysis of the structure of relations (and rule) they promote. The structure and staffing of NGOs, while usually at least superficially and sometimes sincerely benevolent, does not offer any democratic

³⁸ These are not principally issues or accusations of bad intentions or ulterior motives, we should note, but of ethical and political questions that must accompany the phenomena of power and rule that have developed as part of or in response to neoliberal configurations.
alternative to the clientelist state. NGOs do not typically have any representative power or accountability to a base in any structural sense, and NGO workers are commonly hired, paid, and directed by a board usually very distant from any process of community decision, election, or selection; their power usually comes more from a moral high ground (and a Western philanthropic financial base) than from representative legitimacy. On one level, there is a layer of activity of the largest global humanitarian NGOs that operate principally in relief and human rights work and provide a kind of moral force that provide (and sometimes prefigure military) intervention on the basis of defending the universality of humanity and “life itself” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 313-314). These entities, in their purported representation of and remedy for people’s interest in general, have been characterized as vital instruments to the networks of biopower that serve capital, making justice, survival, and life in general issues “beyond politics” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 314), and thus beyond people’s self-determined political activity. The quantity of resources that these global NGOs manage and their sheer numbers and presence worldwide has serious impact on structures of sovereignty, national and global. But there are multiple other layers of NGOs, which will be more relevant to us here, with less global profile who profess to work at the “grassroots” level in projects of community “empowerment,” self-determination, and capacity for self-directed growth. Yet their more modest profile and good intentions, I will argue later, do not substitute for a lack of representation. The removal from the roots and stakes involved in accountability (or belonging) to a base is most benignly an obstacle and far too often the subversion of the very kinds of processes they purport to promote (Zibechi 2008a). The danger of this structure, both internal to NGOs and in their relation to a system of power in general is the tendency, willed or not, for the NGO to play “an active role in the diffusion of the logic of neoliberal sovereign rule throughout society” by involving the social body as a whole, especially and most subversively those from the bottom, in that project which marks as agent of
change that which maintains the current state of things (Speed and Reyes 2001, 50). NGOs thus become in one sense a place for civil society organization, purportedly in opposition to neoliberalism but fulfilling exactly its mandate for social services outside the public realm, while keeping those initiatives contained to organizations that as a rule operate at a distance from any representational relationship to the base with whom they work (Zibechi 2008a). It is a controversial but necessary task to question to what extent they thus undermine and in some cases openly subvert movements or practices of autonomy. I will return to this below.

The depoliticizing effect of the mediating role played by many of the NGOs that filled the gap left by the hollowing out of certain state functions—both those that serve the purpose of guaranteeing the general social welfare (the welfare state) and those that enforce the hierarchies of inequalities of society (the corporatist state)—combined with the rights discourse (often promoted by the same NGOs), that enforce the need for state validation of group demands, can leave movements tethered to a set of demands for which there is no corresponding body able or willing to grant or legitimate them. It can also leave them tethered to the very forces that undermine those demands—a vacuous state serving as a kind of placeholder and instrumental actor in a thriving and diffuse neoliberal order.

How has the Zapatista movement avoided these pitfalls? First, and briefly, while accepting and incorporating the work of NGOs, and in some cases relying on it heavily, the Zapatistas have never confused this involvement with a political project in itself. In repeatedly refusing projects they feel are based in pity or charity, they denounce what they call “a more sophisticated hand-out” as practiced by “some national and international NGOs,” and “funding organizations” whereby “they decide what the communities need and… impose not only those determined projects, but also the times and forms for their implementation.” Naming both a “Cinderella Syndrome,” the assumption that they are so needy as to accept anything (EZLN
and a paternalism that assumes that they don’t in fact even know what they need “like children who have to be told what they should eat, when and how, what they should learn, say, and think…” they at one point found it necessary to declare that they would no longer receive such hand-outs nor accept the imposition of such projects (EZLN 2003d). We will see more evidence of this in the specific areas of autonomous production below, and in their dedication to maintaining an internal structure of self-determination, however stumbling or slow, over any possible, however “beneficial” or lucrative, interruption or exception.

Second, the EZLN has employed the question and discourse of rights as a tactical maneuver in attempting to bring attention to and create space for self-determined activity, rather than evoking the universal values of an unquestioned (state) power carrying out its inherent duty. As Speed and Reyes describe it,

The power of the ‘law’ is, in thought and in action, the power to produce and reproduce daily practices and subjectivities within society that continually reinforce the founding myth of sovereign power, that is, the power to create subjects that act as if all power emanates from the sovereign (Speed and Reyes 2001, 45).

It is precisely in this last element, the creation of subjects who relate to power only in terms of that held by the state or sovereign, that we find several of the most innovative and important Zapatista practices. In strategically deploying rights discourse only in the context of the exercise of their own rights beyond and regardless of their recognition (Speed and Reyes 2001), they provide the conditions of possibility for a subject that is not just the sovereign subject (as individual endowed with unalienable rights) or the subject of the sovereign (citizen subordinate to the state), two sides of the same coin of subjection (Reyes 2009). That subject of rights and citizenry is, according to Yvon Le Bot, “abstract” and “interchangeable,” while the subject constructed in the meeting (clash) of difference and dialogue—two aspects the Zapatistas have repeatedly insisted on as part of the construction of their struggle—is “singular, particular, and
universal” (Le Bot 1997, 6). In going about the establishment and exercise of this subject primarily as a collective subject, they are able to evade being relegated to what has become a highly personalized politics of a supposed pluralism tolerated and even promoted by neoliberalism that can safely recognize, represent, and assimilate claims to difference through a discourse of equality. It is the construction of a collective subject—not in terms of an identity deserving of equality or exception—but a self-organized body capable of acting for itself, in constructing and promoting its desires, and on itself, in the capacity to re-define that body and its desires as a constant exercise, that has allowed the Zapatista communities to act as “peoples rather than settlements” (Hernández Navarro 2000, 11). This is a distinction that, in terms of autonomy, makes all the difference.

Therefore, as evidenced in the discussion of the San Andres Accords above, while the Zapatistas have engaged the state in seeking recognition of rights—one result of which was a previously unprecedented attention to the condition of indigenous communities on a national scale—they have anchored that demand in the belief and practice that such rights and their protection will only arise as a result of struggle, the ability to become a social force and engage a field of power, not because of the will or decision of the state. In this sense they are able to create a kind of “legality from below,” to use the terms of the debate, or in another language, to give disobedience a “constitutive character” (Lara 2007). This is what enables them, in multiple instances, to create and constantly innovate even while in defensive postures (Lara 2007), as we will see further below.

3.4.3 Social Movements Theory

The global implementation of neoliberal policies that we examined in Chapter Two brought about a new wave of movement strategies and ways of understanding them. Work on social movements from within academia has tended to characterize the last century of struggle as
divided between “old” social movements, primarily syndicalist and party-oriented, and “new” social movements, oriented toward the reclaiming and recognition of identities and cultural groups marginalized not only by dominant state systems but also by general societal norms and traditional leftist politics. “Old” social movements were associated with a hierarchal internal structure and an emphasis on a particular revolutionary subject to which all other differences would have to be subordinate (purportedly for the time being), in order to achieve unity in organizing for the cause, a strategy “new” social movements later rejected as the perpetuation of patterns of domination and subordination. The proliferation of movements in the 1960s and 70s—the anti-apartheid, gay/lesbian, transsexual, environment/ecology, race, ethnic, anti-nuke, AIDS, and other struggles, to name just a few—seemed to point to the need to think both repression and resistance differently. Some attempted to grasp the shift in social movements theory in the 1980s in terms of both the divide and the continuities between “old” social movement analyses based in modernization and dependency theory and actors located in the working class and revolutionary vanguards, and new social movements arising from a fragmented social and political space where the arena of two demarcated camps—bourgeoisie and proletariat—has been overcome by the plurality of struggles and identities that make up society (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). This analysis rested heavily on work in the 1980s (most prominently Laclau and Mouffe 1985) insisting that the multiple identities mobilized as subjects of struggle made clear that class was an insufficient category for social antagonism and that no subject or space of struggle could be determined a priori, an aspect attributed to class analysis. While many urged a cross-pollination of these theories and even an abandonment of their strict delineation, a certain division between the determined economic actor and the more choosy cultural actor tended to emerge (Alvarez, Escobar, and Dagnino 1998). Important work arose from these distinctions—such as the plurality of identities of struggle, the centrality and importance of the body (as in some feminist,
gay/lesbian, human rights, pro-choice campaigns), and an emphasis on the lack of a single view or utopic vision of desirable social change, but the class versus culture paradigm had descended into a poor understanding of both. Some scholars responded with the insistence that the issue was not culture versus economics, or even culture plus economics, but that culture is not outside the mode of production; discarding class in favor of other “identities” did not serve the desired purpose of displacing economic determinism but rather repeated the model that separated the economic from the social or cultural in the first place (Denning 1998). Others maintained that the turn to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and multiple other identifications and issues reflected in part a recomposition of the working class, viewed not as a given sociological category or income bracket but as a contextually specific examination of the mode of production, and that class could not be defined outside the historical configurations of power that produce racial, ethnic, gendered, and other social formations (Mandel 1975; Touraine 1988). Still others signaled the limitations of the “old” versus “new” paradigm by pointing out that struggles around autonomy and identity, environmentalism, feminism, indigenous activism, and antiracism were neither novel nor unprecedented, that social movements had never been solely economic-based “class” struggles, and that the shift in social movement theory reflected rather a scholarly attention to multiple vectors of political and social activity (Fox and Starn 1997).

The 1990s wave of protests against foreign investment-driven or IMF-sponsored mega-development projects and privatization efforts in the “developing” world and the anti-globalization protests at G-7 summits, world economic forums, and other meetings of the global

39 In a time when “old” and “new” were dominant terms in social movement theory, as well as debates between the daily, banal acts and arts of daily resistance (see Scott 1990) and the large, intentional or “conscious” moments or attempts at change, Fox and Starn’s work on the “midways of mobilization” marked an important moment signaling that many of the “limitations” associated with movements were limitations in attempts to theorize or categorize them.
elite mostly in the “developed” world shed light on a common enemy, though not always a unified resistance. Lamentably, in scholarly production this moment too often took on once again polarized characteristics of local versus global, subaltern versus hegemonic, particularity versus universality. Attempts to mediate that paradigm included work on the specific transactions of people and things in border-crossing (Edelman 2003; Cunningham 2001), the transnational as place of production and identification (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994; Ong 1999; Tsing 2004), and work on the new institutions of the transnational—advocacy networks, international truth commissions, environmental groups, human rights organizations, etc.—as important new non-state actors (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Riles 2000; Ferguson 2001).

We might try to read this genealogy differently, focusing not on a shift from party politics to identity politics or between economic and sociological interpretations of class, but rather from state-centered demands (for power or concessions from power) or market-oriented positions (for priority in or protection from) to territorialization as a new kind of inhabittance—a way of living in a space—and new forms of collective habituation—a set of practices employed in that space. This kind of social map shifts focus from creating and unifying the party (and its masses) as a platform of struggle or defining an identity (and who it includes) as a bastion of struggle, to establishing territories as spaces for the reorganization of daily life. Here we see the underside of the process we examined from “above” in Chapter Two. With the shift from the welfare state and the Fordist mode of production to the neoliberal state and post-Fordist models, the primary tools of union-organized workers movements, the strike and the protest, used to push a certain set of demands and support governments friendly to their interests, lost force in a situation where the state no longer played or even pretended a mediating role, where workers were displaced from the primary place of their collective organization, the factory, and where no party promised any return or advance to a situation akin to their demands. While the narrative of the unionized-
worker-as-protagonist so prominent in the U.S. and Europe is a perhaps a questionable history of struggle Latin America in that it did not find its direct roots in the history of the continent (Zibechi 2008a, 76), it is certainly true that the syndicalist strategy and discourse gave birth to what became known for much of the twentieth century as the “Latin American Left” (Sader 2001), even after independent union activity and a clear consensus on class content had been lost (Hernández Navarro 2000). While the effects of displacement and deterritorialization (capital flight, deindustrialization, work precarity) were true for those who never worked in factories and were not considered proletarian actors (peasants, farmers, fishermen, hunters, forest-dwellers, and many more who lived from the land and water), those outside the formalized wage relationship were rarely understood as elements of significant systemic change. In other words, if the regime of accumulation had changed, the composition of the (recognized, institutional) left hadn’t (Sader 2001, 123-124). With the territories where previous labor victories had been grounded—the factory and the farm—lost or reorganized, many movements lost their base and their force.

Of those that survived or surged in response—notably, the Movimento Sem Terra (Landless Movement) in Brazil, the neo-Zapatistas in Mexico, the Piqueteros and Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados (Unemployed Workers Movement) in Argentina, the Shackdwellers in South Africa, the Indigenous mingas in Ecuador and Colombia, and the Bolivian indigenous communities and coca-growers in the region of El Alto fighting for production and water rights, to name just a few—perhaps the most important common theme is that of a new kind of territorialization (Zibechi 2008a, 2008b). Many of those displaced or disregarded actors, seeing

40 “Sindicatos charros,” replaced most independent union activity in Mexico the last decades of the 20th century. Charros are unions with leadership closely tied to the powers that they were purportedly negotiating against. The role of that leadership became more to control workers more than represent them, while simultaneously maintaining well-paid positions as union leaders, effectively negating any significant worker force from below and keeping worker demands relatively unthreatening.
the fruitlessness or open cooptation of their struggles by the neoliberal state as well as the limitations of those struggles themselves to provide a desirable life as a whole, began to construct something else, self-run territories. The first of these were most commonly rural endeavors, usually involving land takeovers or occupations, but they quickly appeared in urban centers where the control of buildings, blocks, neighborhoods, and factories became a source of survival and self-determination for many groups and communities. This “flight” within, from state and capital domination and from relations of exploitation (D. Harvey 2004) to the “self-construction of habitat” (Zibechi 2008a) became a way both to escape the vigilance of and subordination to state/capital powers and to provide a place for some kind of collective self-determination. In difference to sectorial organization, these forms of resistance were not based only or strictly in the mode of production, but rather in systems of social relations or forms of social organization that could create particular ways of living where, as Eric Wolf had said in 1969, “the battlefield becomes society itself” (Wolf 1969). We will return to the Zapatista strategy of territorialization in Chapter Four. It is first necessary to see what the terms of struggle would be on that new battleground.

3.5 Cooperation, Immaterial Labor, and the Science of Governance

3.5.1 Shifts in Production

The erosion of the Fordist/Keynesian pact and the transformation to a post-Fordist model in the 1970s marked a significant shift in the regime of accumulation and accompanying mode of government (D. Harvey 1990; Castells 1996; Jameson 1989). As mass industrial production combined with Taylorist scientific management (and a state-mediated labor-capital contract) were replaced by flexible labor processes, geographical decentralization, and new sectors of production such as financial capital (D. Harvey 1990), labor saw the rise of part-time, temporary, and home-
based work, and the feminization of the labor process (Fuentes and Ehrenreich 1983; Sassen 1998). The replacement of the full-time, life-long, family-waged job with pension and benefits by employment framed through subcontracting, outsourcing, and the flourishing of informal and illegal economies marked shifts not only in labor practices but in social-economic structures on all levels. The tighter production-distribution-consumption loop of post-Fordist production and the instant data analysis and information access necessary to enter and track trends, exchange rates, technological innovations, and competitor maneuvers made information and knowledge an increasingly privileged and profitable commodity in itself (Castells 1996; Harvey 1990). The crisis that forced capitalism out of its nationally and geographically centralized model made necessary a high level of global communication, and (whether complicit or coerced) cooperation. 41 These factors contributed to the rise and size of the knowledge- and image-producing industries, including business consultancies, the advertising industry, the media industry, and even the university system. But the combined effect of the value of information and communication and the increased capacity for its transfer also, and perhaps more importantly, connected and transformed “traditional” industries and labor forms through market expectations, technological developments, speculative practices, and the pressures of competition, “modernization,” and monopolization. These shifts are important not simply in order to identify new profit-making arenas, styles of work, and sources of exploitation, but because the historicization of the growing role and profitability of information is important for providing a

41 It should be noted here that communicative or immaterial labor does not replace industrial labor as a quantitatively dominant form; industrial labor in fact is not and has never been quantitatively dominant over agricultural labor. But agricultural labor as well as industrial labor came to be overcoded with the ability to buy, sell, and patent the knowledges and practices that change or maintain seed makeup, farming techniques, traditional medicinal uses of plants, machine design, industrial processes, and so on. It is not that workers now act without material or manual input, but that all work is hooked into the same globally connected labor process. See Hardt and Negri 2004.
material base for changes in the conceptualization of what would become known as immaterial labor and post-Fordist production. Globalization burst a certain criteria of measure—which depended on a set of temporal and spatial organizations of production, of the nation-state, and of remuneration—that would have to be reconfigured within new processes of globalization.

3.5.2 Immaterial Labor

The pressure exerted by workers’ struggles and the reorganization of power relations brought by anti-colonial liberation struggles would change the spatial organization of production, both on a global scale and within factory walls, and force the further socialization of production. The Fordist worker (factory-based and assembly line-formatted for a particular task and formally linked to other individual tasks), lost viability as an individual body/unit of production as capital was forced to put more responsibility for the generation and evolution of the means of production in the (collective) hands (i.e. brains, bodies, language, imagination, affects) of workers, necessarily sacrificing a degree of control over the production process in order to sustain its own

42 Mauricio Lazzarato defines information, communicative, and affective labor as categories of immaterial labor, that which produces both the informational/technical and social/cultural content of the commodity (Lazzarato 1996). From feminist analyses (Hothschild 1983), we have gained the insight that immaterial labor—whether that be unpaid labor in the home or the family, paid service work, production in the “creative” industries, or the relational/cooperative labor of any chain of production, is by no means non-corporeal; it requires the action, reaction, and interaction of bodies in both the “producer” and “consumer” and likewise has the corporeal effects of stress, excitement, exhaustion, health, and illness of all work. Feminist analysis also offered the fundamental insight that the unrecognized immaterial labor of reproductive work (in all its very material conditions and manifestations) held a mystified central place in the capitalist relation, not just as exploited labor itself but as a factor, perhaps the factor, that allowed for a worker materially and subjectively reproduced for the wage relationship.

43 It is important in looking at global processes not to pose globalization as having neither a single subject nor being without a subject (Brown and Szeman 2002). In fact one of the most important subjects of the process are the very labor forces often assumed to be the “victims” forced to react to the globalization process. Marx theorized the constant downward pressure that the proletariat puts on the rate of profit that forces capitalist change, but we must also point to the anti-colonial wars of the 20th century, the anti-imperialist upsurge during the Vietnam war, and both industrial and non-industrial workers’ struggles in the first and third world—the successes and the strength that these varied forces of resistance provide—as the instigators of transformations in the system (C.L.R. James 1973, Hardt and Negri, 2000).
existence and profitability (Ross 1996).\textsuperscript{44} It is through cooperation that not only are products assembled and information transferred, but ideas invented, knowledge created, and creativity generated. All production now enters an economy coded and shaped by information and communication, both as the language and affect always present in cooperation and now more fully incorporated into production, and as the transfer of information and the technical requirements of a highly sophisticated (and drastically disparate) division of labor. Ideas, knowledge, creativity, and sociality, have of course always been produced collectively, all things, we should remember, intricate to and inextricable from what we consider the “manual” tasks of seeding and sowing, fashioning and manufacturing, etc.; immaterial labor is inseparable from its cooperative, collective, and corporeal form. What is significant here is capital’s interest in, promotion of, and access to this productivity.

While the informationalization of production and the development of finance capital point to sophisticated technological developments in extracting profit, this does not imply the association of productive social cooperation primarily with a new, high-tech though precariously waged European or American worker, an easy but grave confusion for understanding the stakes of cooperative labor. The “creative class” or “cognitariat” of art and design consultants, intellectuals and academics, software engineers, and marketing and advertising agents, have often become the accepted symbol and subject of theories of immaterial labor and social cooperation. This is inadequate not on ideological terms (as if such workers didn’t deserve a place central to production), but rather on historical ones. Raúl Zibechi, using the work of C.L.R. James, points out that the true “vanguard” of cooperative and communicative labor was the slaves of the West Indies who participated in a global market, able to manage all necessary European and African

\textsuperscript{44} Here we should recognize that while immaterial labor may create a workforce that is in some sense more autonomous (Negri 2006, 116), this may not have any direct relation to a workforce that is more “free.”
languages, holding knowledge of the purpose and functioning of all of the machinery, supply chains, and translations of value that went into complex trade relationships, and maintaining the necessary continuity, community, and affect to headquarter on a series of islands a worldwide market of goods, languages, values, and sentiments. Their global “cosmopolitanism,” Zibechi claims, put them far ahead of their contemporaries in the European peasantry and proletariat (Zibechi 2008a). This is immaterial labor Zibechi exclaims, in a population in its vast majority unable to read, unwaged, unrecognized, and wholly involved in the manual and material aspects of their labor. The common knowledge and capacity for cooperation produced by this population about itself and its place in a world economy was primarily organizational (Harney 2008), and that is what is most wanted and feared by capital. The surplus or excess produced by slaves in the West Indies, manifested as organizational capacity and innovation, was obviously in that context highly vulnerable to extraction and exploitation under brutal conditions of force, though it was nevertheless capable of producing the Haitian revolution and the abolition of slavery (Harney 2008; Zibechi 2008a). The excess of cooperation sold to the current regime of accumulation by those employed as technical or creative workers in the wage relationship, to further distinguish, is something else, “a bargain one has no right to make” (Harney 2008). The wage relationship, we know, always takes more than it gives, the definition of surplus value. The particularly perverse exhibition and exploitation of selling immaterial surplus labor for a wage amounts to selling something it is not one’s right to offer: the fruits of cooperation produced among many, gathered by a few, individually rewarded (the wage), and channeled into a regime of accumulation. The profitability of the socialization of production and its cooperative mechanisms has always depended on capital’s ability to capture (to impose its own measure of value upon) that sociality. The importance of immaterial labor today is that it requires the creation and circulation of value and exchange at the social level. How does this work?
Immaterial and social processes are harder to harness and control for expropriation than the production of tangible commodities. The exercise of knowledge, the invention of a design, the concretization of an image, the making of a tune, the affective, creative, emotional, and material skills of domestic work and home and community life, and the contribution each of these make to the construction of a social fabric is never an individual endeavor. Experience, the deed of being in the world, and ideas and practices, gathered from that experience, as the primary components of immaterial labor, are collective phenomenon that grow from and tend toward an autonomous collectivity and cannot easily be identified or abstracted in a way that allows their incorporation into a labor theory of value. In this instance, capitalism is forced to adapt to new forms, to try to regiment, measure, abstract, and extract the activity of cooperation, essentially of social relations: it needs and wants the incredible wealth produced through that cooperative labor, but it is highly endangered by the same.

Immaterial labor, in producing primarily a social relationship, reveals what is more easily masked in "material" production: that the primary purpose of capitalist production is not consumption (using up) but transformation (of the consumer), who then produces new needs and desires (to be met by more commodities) (Marx 1993). It is here that we can better understand capitalism not as a mode of production imposed in a determinate form, but as the imposition of a law of value. Or, said differently, capital does not operate principally through exchange value, but through control of subjectivation (Rolnik and Guattari 2008). It was Marx we can recall who recognized that capitalism was not the production of objects for subjects but the production of subjects for objects (Marx 1993), not to produce commodities, but to reproduce the capitalist relation, now actively global.

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45 Whether the Labor Theory of Value should be discarded or adjusted is the subject of debate; see the discussion on this point between Antonio Negri and Harry Cleaver (Negri 1996; Cleaver 1994).
Marx also maintained that to find the real site of production, we must shift our gaze from the marketplace to the “basement” where the exploitation of labor and the extraction of surplus value take place in order to produce profit. In a socialized and globalized productive process, the “basement” where communication and cooperation take place is found, literally, “below”: both the “below” of everyday life and social relations, and the “below” of current global society: an “underclass” mined for its labor, both as individual bodies and as the wealth of its cooperative practices. In the reorganization of production, not just from “above” but also in the forms proper to the labor force, we can no longer account for a society that associates with the wage relation a primary model of capitalist production and social organization (Negri 1996). Society is productive beyond measure. It is at this point in capitalism, where production is transformed by the incorporation of communicative and cooperative labor into exploitable activities through the process of globalization (here understood as real subsumption), that the purpose of exploitation becomes less the process of the extraction of surplus value and more one of social control (Hardt and Negri 2009).

3.5.3 Governance

How does social control work today? What is the material of immaterial labor today, the forms and ideas produced in cooperation and entered into the regime of accumulation? Stefano Harney says it is precisely those things invented by slave community (Harney 2008): democracy (now associated almost exclusively with the state and state-building enterprises and interventions), multiculturalism and diversity (appropriated as business positives), human rights and equality (the foundation for a depoliticized state or NGO-based intervention), criticality and strategy (appropriated and institutionalized by academic discourse), creativity and fraternity (appropriated by a “progressive” “creative class” and a “teamwork-oriented” corporate discourse and practice), and solidarity (now known as philanthropy and charitable assistance). These
cooperative resources can also lead to a level of organizational intensity that can become manifest in moments or eras, as Harney points to the emergence in the 1970s “promised from Mao to Malcolm” of a new critique of the enlightenment class and the surfacing of a new collective actor (Harney 2008). The field, even of such noble concepts, is always crossed by differing strategies. The stirrings of a collective actor generating forms of cooperation surface as mobilization, movement, and possibly rupture, making visible a wealth of collective power, creativity, intellectuality, and productivity. And thus there we find a struggle: the potential for the further autonomous organization of such forces, or their harnessing for service to a regime of accumulation. Our investigation in this section is the field of contestation for cooperative labor and the strategies at work there, what will be referred to here as the science of governance. For this task I think it is helpful to put into dialogue Stefano Harney’s work on governance, Randy Martin’s work on finance, and Raúl Zibechi’s work on social movements to fashion a theory of forms of social control—techniques of domination—adequate to a world “below” of materially impoverished but highly coveted cooperative wealth.

The subject of the transnational development apparatus, as we saw above, already included an “entrepreneurial” aspect, a “responsible, participatory, and corruption-averse” actor within a “target group” that would behave with self-motivated diligence in their own interest (Li 2007, 16). But development’s objective failures and susceptibility to critique (of the principle of aid, foreign dependency, and the hierarchy of its administration), and neoliberalism’s market logic (state-like practices of government operable through the market) would require a further refined subject and strategy. Some have pointed to a seeming disjuncture between two principle aspects of neoliberalism: policies of structural adjustment in the global south, and a “responsibilized” investor citizen in the global north (Ferguson 2010). It is more helpful I think to see these as parallel and fully integrated aspects. If the trajectory of citizen-consumer-investor
characterizes a particular subject associated with the global North, that subject only performs those identities in parallel to another: the “native” (of colonialism, at home or abroad), “assisted” (of clientelism or poverty programs), and “empowered” (of development or NGO work). The “rugged individual risk-taker” (Harney 2008) that would provide the image of an adequate subject in the centers of finance capital, capable of managing her portfolio and evaluating appropriate risks and investments (Martin 2007), only makes sense in relation to the active entrepreneurial participant (recipient of micro-loans and holder of small debt) of what used to be called the periphery. This is not just a logic of the individual sovereign subject transferred from “first” to “third” world, but the bringing (back) of development logic from the “third” to the “first” (Chomsky 2008): the morally righteous and financially responsible path of the (child-like) subject brought to maturity through development mapped on to the foreclosed homeowner in need of correction, self-discipline, and proper self-management (Martin 2007). This self-managed subject, able to evaluate her own “interest” as a member of a financial economy that if managed appropriately would purportedly provide adequately, should be prepared to calculate risk, assume debt, and participate fully in this supposed “common space” of private enterprise for the public good. Self-managed subjects are “independent” thinkers and actors, able to self-identify their interests and recognize the obligation of all to legitimize representation through participation and inclusion, and they praise and employ democracy as the force for this enactment (Harney 2008). They understand that it is up to them to generate new interests in the form of quality, design, discipline, and communication to be innovated and introduced into the workplace. They are thus dedicated to, proud of, and wholly identified not only with their own work and “public life,” but with the necessity and desirability of working in order to work—as well as to talk about, sense, and desire others to be at work (Harney 2008). The subject of education (the literate subject, stepping out of the culture of poverty), of development (the productive subject, overcoming
dependency), of modernization (the citizen-subject, moving beyond of primitive production), is now the self-managed subject of global capitalism—a citizen-investor, citizen-consumer, citizen-debtor, capable of making decisions and taking risks in her “own” interest for the “public” interest. Her interest is entirely self-absorbing (under the guise of public necessity) and permeates all aspects of life: one must always be pondering and evaluating one’s financial profile, debt accrual, retirement potential, the children’s tuition (Martin 2007). The science of producing this subject, Harney builds on Foucault, is governance, not a replacement of the forms of governmentality found in the disciplinary society but their extension or their conversion: communication over confinement, information over isolation. New forms of domination require not just that people “work” but that they interact, communicate, cooperate, create, not only obediently, and not just voluntarily, but with a commitment to the use of their production for what they identify to themselves and others as “public interest” (Harney 2008), an assumption and imagination of a general good and common cause which they serve on their own accord.

Early accounts of primitive accumulation documented the enclosure of land and restriction of access to common or natural resources; the disciplinary regime put to use the enclosures of the modern institution—factory, school, jail, even home; but the immaterial labor of cooperation was not containable, nor fully realizable, inside the confines of a privatized space or the disciplined body. Neoliberalism has been importantly theorized as the continuing process of enclosure, both in its original sense of “fencing off” of geographical areas and with regard to the privatization of natural or national resources, but also as extended to common space and practice, to what is permitted in the street or on the block, what is shared online, what is created

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46 See Peter Linebaugh 2008.
47 See Foucault 1977.
in music and art and technology. But even extending our understanding of enclosure is insufficient here. Capital’s striving to use social cooperation today is better described not as enclosure, the production and protection of the private sphere, but as opening, the instrumentalization of the public (Harney 2008). Sovereignty established the public and private in order to provide an internal divide (inside/outside) within colonial states, something both made possible by the non-European outside (as a reflection of the “other” back onto European society) and made necessary by the anti-colonial struggles which led to the partial erasure of that “outside” (reinforcing the need for an internally differentiated category) (Harney 2008; Reyes and Kaufman 2011). If governmentality (as disciplinary society) made the private productive “through the production of the public,” governance, through the trope of the “public interest,” opens the public as a direct place of production, “holding all of the qualities of the general intellect up to the light” (Harney 2008). The fetish of “public interest” is capital’s attempt to arrange a labor process beyond its control, that process and the fruit of cooperation that is so desirable for capture but which tends to suffocate under heavy discipline.

How does this work? If cooperation must be made visible—available, accessible, intelligible—to capital in order to be appropriated, the “public” serves as a place of exhibition for this labor, or more precisely its potential. It is a place for “prospecting” by capital which cannot directly know and organize the sociality—thought, creativity, interaction, imagination—of the social. It is something like a form of social speculation, choosing possible exchanges and forms of exchange to package and bet on, massively profitable if one chooses well (Martin 2007). What is it people, generate, desire, are capable of? If this could at some point to some degree manufactured and sold to people, now capital needs more collective “input,” a place of exhibition for those capacities that is “open,” interactive, identifiable. It is important to reiterate that this is not a figurative opening executed from the side of capital, but rather the necessity for subjects
who identify their interests as public and volunteer their labor and their selves in that space. How is that subject created?

Here we come to the crux of our argument and a bridge between what we saw above was the tendency to see a gap between the policy aspects of neoliberalism (structural adjustment in the “third world”) and the subject of neoliberalism (responsiblized citizen-investor in the “first”). What are the mechanisms or agents by which a subject with interest is generated, affirmed, and rewarded? How do such mechanisms reach those places of extensive cooperation and multiple forms of cooperative labor that we find in movements and among the poor? If it is these movements and their autonomous production of goods, sociability, and self which most seriously threaten the system, by what mechanisms can they be made “interested” subjects—not just disciplined subjects—and thus their cooperation made compatible (available for capture) with a regime of accumulation?

While it may seem that the self-managed subjects, in order to invest, consume, assume debt, take risks, and identify with work must have access to capital, markets, and of course, a job, it is precisely to the terrain of the poor, the unwaged, and the movements against marginalization and dispossession where the state is arriving. In other historical forms of exploitation and rule, the clientelist state served the purpose of keeping the poor and the dispossessed from becoming a collective force with the clientelist exchange: handouts for votes, aid in return for acquiescence. That exchange cannot function effectively in a system that needs the cooperative labor of those subjects. How are they addressed and interpellated today? Primarily, Zibechi claims, in the form of nongovernmental organizations, functioning through new forms of governance, and with much more efficacy than the clientelist bosses of a more authoritarian state (Zibechi 2008a). If governance is the science of the interested subject of production, then the laboratory, the
“Research and Development” Department, of that science are nongovernmental organizations and associations (Harney 2008b).

The new conquest for those “below,” Zibechi maintains, is to first assume the demands of movements, or of the poor, discursively and to a degree materially, and second, to locate in place of the officials and agents actions of the clientelist state advocates for those same causes/movements. We have already looked at a critique of NGOs in their role as a depoliticizing operation for putting the interests of empire into effect. What we are talking about here is not, we should note, the paternalism attributed to some aspects of the “aid and improve” industry; governance does not refer principally to the NGO task of filling in the authority gaps of neoliberalism with alternative practices of government, provision, and distribution, but to creation of subjects who will perform for that empire. NGOs become the primary site for the production of self-management (Zibechi 2008a; Harney 2008b).

This breed of NGO functioning tends to be careful not to claim to speak for or represent anyone or any population. They have a well-developed anti-charity discourse (to improve on a previous anti-poverty discourse) about not giving anyone fish to eat but rather teaching them how to fish, or perhaps more contemporarily, providing workshops on the most innovative and environmentally safe fishing techniques. They are focused not on “giving voice” to others but on helping people to “find their own voice,” to empower themselves (as citizens), express themselves (as subjects), and become “independent” (self-managed). This logic is in fact so diffuse and deceptively acceptable that an “official” NGO is not always necessary, these tasks can be carried out by “grassroots” organizations (even better!) with a few well-placed and well-trained actors.

The technology for such a task requires much more insidious intervention then the authoritarian state or even the disciplinary institution. Zibechi points out that the staff of such
organizations are usually local, often ex-militants or activists themselves, young people, who read the same authors, have the same heroes, speak the same language as the communities or neighborhoods or movement they work with, and are able to use that knowledge as popular education, in assembly processes, and as elements of “grassroots” planning “from the bottom.” Zibechi is even more specific: “the workers of the NGOs are in large part young women with university education that move in the same spaces as the militants” (Zibechi 2008a, 19). These NGO workers serve as important nodal points that link movements to philanthropic funders, to development agencies, and often to “progressive” political parties or friendly state or electoral offices. They thus serve not only to channel cooperative labor produced below into a translatable and abstractable force, but to facilitate the conversion of autonomous actors of that production into self-managed subjects, capable of creating that channel as a constant from within. Governance in this regime becomes not only a new labor process and a term of the economy, but a form of economic production itself, and a form of government (Harney 2008).

3.6 Conclusion: At-risk and Unmanageable

What of those then who won’t perform? Who won’t exhibit their willingness to work and make sure others do also, who won’t commit to a “public interest”? The “other,” both productive of and produced by the self-managed subject, would be the unmanageable, those who refused to perform the public interest, to exhibit their capacity for work in the public realm, to assume the supposedly “common” project of the public good. This other, upon refusing to enter the realm of “risk-taking” subjects would become the “at-risk” subject, unable or unwilling to participate responsibly in what they should have recognized as “their own good.” Yet those “without interest” who do not “work in order to work” for their own inclusion are not disposable, leftover, or excluded. They are, rather, as the “other” to the public interest, a threat to the insistent and
indignant belief of the self-managed in the public interest, and the real risk to the system. They
must be criminalized because they cannot be made subjects of governance, demonized or merely
disdained, discriminated against or collectively attributed pathological negative traits,
marginalized or removed altogether from the circuits of the public through incarceration or death.
Witness the war on drugs, the war on welfare, the war on poverty, the war on terrorism; recall the
drug user/dealer, the welfare mom, the Black male, the enemy combatant (Harney 2008a).
Parallel in this regime to the ‘wars-on’ are the ‘campaigns-for’: environmental conservation,
green business, forest preservation, lake and ocean protection, etc.; and the new subject “against”
the public interest: the peasant, the indigenous, the poor, who cut down trees for firewood, hunt
and fish for food, or who do not frequent the farmer’s market, drive fuel-efficient cars, or employ
environmentally safe home and business practices. They do not assume their fair share of risk on
the market or balance properly their portfolio, they don’t “go green” or vote with their dollars.
And if they dare to be in public but not (act out) the public, they are not only a menace (to
society) but a mortal threat (to sustaining the house of cards of the public interest). We should not
be mistaken: self-management appears voluntary but it is compulsory: one’s opinion, feedback,
and point of view is not just “welcome,” it is obligatory. Anyone who does not wish to be heard
and included is without “interest” and must be kept out of these public circuits.

Being “without interest” then holds a dual and mutually exclusive threat. For empire, the
threat is that those without interest become in fact a class beyond interest, the “self-organization
of the incommensurate” (Moten and Harney 2004), disidentified (with the public interest of a
current regime of accumulation) through self organization (a collective self- and alternative-
valorization). They are those who seek a way to be together that does not require the coinciding
of “interest,” but that in fact may just be a form of being together, unddictated and “unproductive”
(Moten 2008). That doesn’t mean that they don’t or won’t have a movement, but that that
movement may be unintelligible to the interpretations (measure) of success (achievement of interest) used for evaluation.

The other danger is to the movement itself, the risk that it might “come to know” itself through its interests, that is, become operable within a regime of accumulation by identifying itself through the channels of governance that manage that regime (Harney 2008b). In that instance, its radicality—as a real force of antagonism—is neutralized and it becomes merely another participant voice adding to the polyvalent diversity of the subjective marketplace, part of the broken mirror of the neoliberal puzzle, reflecting the utter fragmentation of a unified public interest.

These are, in some languages, biopolitical forms of domination, often implemented by the “left,” whether through “progressive” state administrations or non-governmental agencies (Zibechi 2009). They are both the response to a triumph of movements to render old forms of domination ineffective and a particularly acute risk to any actually antagonistic movement in a system which is largely able to contain, and in fact incorporate, its opposition. Central to this field of contestation is the relation of spatial discipline to social control, and the contesting strategies here presented as the difference between self-management and self-government within those intersecting spheres. This chapter has intended to examine some of the tactics of self-management in order to be able to distinguish that strategy from what will be presented in the next chapter as Zapatista self-government through autonomy. The capacity to distinguish autonomy (as used by the Zapatistas) from the array of development schemes, popular education projects, agricultural improvement programs, and “empowerment” techniques prolific across the world from multiple state, non-state, and “grassroots” sources allows us to avoid confusion about or justification of a system of massive and growing wealth disparity held together by willing (if always ranked) participants in their own self-negation, and the radical possibilities of a different world.
It was as a demonstration of these radical possibilities that, two years after Commander Esther spoke on the floor of the national congress in support of the San Andres Accords, she once again took the floor, this time in the newly christened autonomous self-government headquarters in Oventic, Chiapas:

The political parties conspired to deny us our rights….Now, we will to exercise our rights ourselves. And we don’t need anyone’s permission to do so, especially that of politicians…. In practice what we are doing is forming our own autonomous municipalities, and we haven’t asked anyone’s permission…” (Commander Esther 2003).
4. Territory: The Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in Rebellion

What will have an effect? The capacity for resistance of the aggrieved, the intelligence to combine ways of resistance, and, something which might sound ‘subjective,’ the decision-making capacities of the aggrieved human beings. The territory to be conquered (call it Syria, Cuba, Iran, the mountains of the Mexican southeast) will then have to turn itself into a territory in resistance. And I am not referring to the number of trenches, weapons, traps and security systems (which are, however, also necessary), but to the willingness (the “morality/Morale’ some might say) of those human beings to resist.

EZLN

4.1 Introduction

The first time I entered the community “24 of December” at the mouth of the Lacandón Jungle it was under siege. The community sits on land occupied in the Zapatista uprising in 1994, but abandoned in the 1995 Mexican military invasion that attempted to trap the EZLN leadership at a site near here. The invasion failed but a military base was left in the region as a kind of controlled threat, and most of the villages displaced were unable to return to their homes. After twelve years as war refugees, on December 24, 2006, this community re-occupied the lands, naming the community for its recuperation date and putting up simple wood houses, turning over soil for planting, and creating a small central shelter where these 31 families would meet as an assembly. Shortly after re-settling they came under attack by the “Union de Ejidos de la Selva” (UES), a “peasant” organization of the kind constructed (and usually paid) by municipal or state government to pose local indigenous opposition to the Zapatistas, who razed the Zapatista houses and newly planted crops. I sat in one of the simple houses left, on the one lone chair it held while the older couple who had invited me in leaned against the wall or knelt by the fire. They were old to be squatters, the woman was not well and only the man spoke a little Spanish. They had

1 EZLN 1997b.
nothing, not even the skimpy array of dishes and rough wood stools and shelves customary in the communities. There was only the fire, the walls, the one chair, two tin cups, and us. The woman borrowed a cup from an equally sparsely furnished house of a neighbor so that we could all have coffee together, a half cup each.

Outside 100 Zapatistas from other communities in the region surrounded the community as “security belts.” They are coordinated by the Good Government Council of this zone to ward off attack by the paid peasant front groups. They are there 24 hours a day, coming and going in five-day shifts, keeping vigil over their comrades in this nascent community.

This land used to belong to General Absalon Castellanos, former Chiapas state governor, who as the largest landowner in this region had been taken political prisoner by the Zapatistas in the uprising. He was sentenced (by the EZLN) to execution for crimes against the people but later released on punishment of the “shame” of being pardoned by his former peons. Most of the families resettling 24th of December are composed of the grandchildren of those people who had served as peons on Castellanos’ land, the children of those who took up arms in 1994, now starting their own families on occupied lands.

The old man shows me the military base on one edge of the land where the military had taken over the spring where the community formerly had access to water, using it as a latrine and a garbage dump. He shows me a police post on the other side of the land, where security officers were involved in trafficking valuable woods, cutting down the forest in large swaths that would be later blamed on the community’s need for firewood. On a third side of the land was the UES base. We see the burnt remains of the buildings and crops they had razed several months before.

The community is just beginning to plant again. It must be very difficult to start over, having just started over, I say. Yes, he says, though not in total agreement. But when we were preparing for the uprising, he tells me, we worked 16-hour days for the latifundistas and then snuck off into the
jungle under cover of night for political or military training, coming back in the morning in time for work. No rest, barely any sleep. That was difficult, he concedes.

Inside again they give me a steaming cup of beans and what must have been a very precious half of a chayote, a green vegetable. I accept it knowing it means one of them probably wouldn’t eat today.

The UES attacks had slowed a bit, the old man tells me, when the government stopped paying them to attack. They gave them 100 pesos per attack. Now they try to fine them for not attacking, he says, and almost smiles. But not quite. He explains that that’s why the harassment by police and military forces increased. We can see through the cracks of the boards of the house the military base and the line of immobile, alert Zapatistas between the base and the community. This may be living in poverty, the old man tells me, gesturing around at the house, and under constant threat, he gestures outside, but this is the life we struggled for, it is ours. We decide when to work, how to work, when to celebrate, how to organize, whom to love, how to live. We’ll defend it with our lives, he states undramatically, because we refuse to live any other.

In this place with not a bean to spare—if there was a whole cup of coffee I know they would have served it to me—you can’t react with pity or offer sympathy; both are blocked by a tangible sense of dignity. You can only relate out of respect; they know that what they are offering is not a glimpse of poverty but a version of wealth. I offer the old couple each a cigarette, one of few acceptable gifts in this context. This time the woman almost smiles.

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It is easy to fall into romanticism writing from or about Chiapas, even more from Zapatista territory, which covers drastically different climates and terrains that host multiple indigenous languages, but also seem to speak themselves. In the cold highlands an ever present mist lifts and descends like a celestial curtain call, one moment cloaking everything with a
mysterious thick cloud that veils anything beyond two meters in any direction. In an instant it lifts, unveiling like a scene in a theater the villages and the forested base of the mountains, then ascending gradually to reveal the mountaintops and a gloriously, suddenly and strangely cloudless sky. Then the curtain drops again and one is left again with no reference but the immediate moment and its two-meter radius. In the hot Northern Zone, toward the border with Veracruz, one wakes every morning to the sound of howler monkeys, which sound like lions roaring from the top of the trees. The heat is so intense one has to move slowly as not to expend energy which seems to crackle and burn to a crisp the moment it is exerted by the body. In the Jungle zone, deep into the southeast of the state and nearing the Guatemalan border, the pulsing of the life of the layers of flora and fauna vibrate in one’s ears and feet; there can be no illusion that nature is ever still. In the rainy season the reign of the water is so imposing that one learns to fear and respect it as one learns to fear and respect the sea: it can trap you in blinding sheets of water that no shelter can keep out, or swallow you to the thighs in mud that seemed sturdy. It can come in an instant, soak in seconds, and disappear in a moment or continue for days.

With this spectacular performance played out every day in its own regional scene, it is difficult not to be swept into a mystery one can’t quite identify. It isn’t that it would take a steady hand and objective mind to resist; it would require rather total unconsciousness or complete self-absorption. There is no separating life-human from life “nature,” here. The rhythms of raindrops, hammers, howls, yells, thunder, motor, murmur, and breath meld together with dissonance but not conflict. When the rain or the monkeys quiet down a river of words surges, even soft voices carry as the reverberation of the valleys and canyons provide that magical acoustic amplification. When the people are silent the mountains seem to speak.

In all of Zapatista territory there is a constant across the cold high mountains or the thick jungle or the boiling northern zone: some of the most impressive falls, currents, and depths of
water in the country, even on the continent. Long narrow waterfalls drop precipitously from the
heights of the mountains, wide crashing systems of falls move from one crystal pool to another,
and a vast network of rivers run from one village to another. These waters are the source for all of
the water needs of the communities in the zone, the relief of every hot day in the field, and the
target of the most expansive and invasive development plans of an allied industrial and tourist
sector in the history of the state, the “Mayan Corridor.”

The Mayan Corridor is a joint state-federal tourism plan designed in eight “circuits” that
would link up important sites of Mayan ruins and natural attractions with a system of highways,
luxury hotels, conference centers, and “adventure tourism” opportunities. The plan is tailored for
a particular tourist rank, promising golf courses, “extreme sports” outlets, and a helicopter
landing pad that converts to an astrology platform at night. The Corridor is both a parallel and an
intersection of the Plan Puebla Panama (PPP), launched in 2001 as a massive industrial
development project that would stretch from central Mexico through Central America (Call
2002). The central axis of the PPP is the combination of resource wealth and biodiversity in the
south of Mexico, the strategic location of the isthmus—the narrowest part of the country and the
shortest distance between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans on the continent, and a mostly poor and
increasingly landless population, which together would provide a “holistic” commercial sphere:
raw materials, efficient transport, and cheap labor (Ceceña 2001; Pickard 2006). Under the PPP,
southern Mexico would essentially provide a new united manufacturing and transport zone that
could supercede the problematic US-Mexico border maquila zone and the strategic importance of

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2 The state government of Chiapas is being advised in this project by two consulting firms in Florida, USA, Norton Consulting, Inc. and EDSA; if approved, a total cost of 670 million pesos would be split between the government of Chiapas and the federal government.

the Panama Canal (Ceceña 2009b). A separate project by the World Bank, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, was to perform an important component of the PPP by linking the Lacandón Jungle (Chiapas) to the Darien Jungle (Panama), both of which are important nodes of diverse biomes (which generate new species or variants of existing species) and which together provide the largest and most diverse genetic pool on the planet (Ceceña 2009b). Colombia was added to the PPP in 2006 as both a mouth to the Amazon and a link to the Regional Infrastructure Integration of South America (IIRSA), a similar, parallel development plan extending through South America (Ceceña 2009b). The resistance to Plan Puebla Panama of communities in the isthmus region, in Chiapas, and in many parts of Central America and the northern Amazon was so strong that the project was forced to be officially “dropped,” replaced by the more politically correct but essentially equivalent “Mesoamerican Project” (Zunino 2010). The resistance also brought to the forefront another necessary aspect of the multi-pronged “development” effort of the region, a security program adequate for (but not directly addressed to) the ambitious development plan. Plan Mexico, designed formally as a tool of the war on drugs whereby Mexico would receive 1.5 billion dollars from the US, as well as police and military training, and equipment (Carlson 2010) was met with alarm and outrage from a wide spectrum of the Mexican population. Plan Mexico’s clear parallels to Plan Colombia, considered by many a failed tool of the drug war, an effective base of US control in Latin America, and a successful counterinsurgency program, was for most Mexicans a flagrant violation of national sovereignty, in particular the aspects which would permit the presence of US security agents and advisors on the ground (Ceceña 2006). After public outcry and congressional debate on both sides of the border, Plan Mexico was renamed the “Merida Initiative” in 2008 and went forward with transfers of US funds, equipment, and training to Mexican security forces (Zunino 2010). It has
been widely denounced for its intention and use to repress social unrest rather than fight narco-trafficking (Ceceña 2006).

As we saw in Chapter Two, the “undesirable” lands settled by the indigenous migrant communities in the mountains and jungle of Chiapas in the latter half of the twentieth century went from an almost total lack of roads, services, water, or electricity grids, where peasants struggled to coax corn out of steep rocky mountainsides, to being the centerfold of capital’s desire as petroleum, uranium, natural gas, fresh water, and precious woods were discovered in abundance. As the “cultural memory” of the indigenous roots of Mexico were re-realized as a valuable (lucrative) resource—the Mayan ruins of Palenque, Bonampak, Toniná, Chichén Itzá, and Tikal would be the connecting dots of the Mayan Corridor—the actual presence of the existing indigenous would be not only devalued but slated for elimination.

The criss-crossing and conjoining strategies of the Mayan Corridor, the PPP, the Mesoamerican Plan, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, and the Merida Initiative have met multiple points of resistance throughout the area they purport to control, including some struggles of notable strength in the region. But all of these projects condense with particular weight and threat in the Lacandón Jungle, where there is not only local resistance but a standing rebel army, a movement of international visibility, and an alternative strategy on the ground already well

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4 Organized resistance fronts in the region include most prominently, CECOP (Consejo de Ejidos y Comunidades Opositores a La Presa La Parota) in Guerrero, México; COPINH (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras) against the El Tigre dam on the border between Honduras and El Salvador; ACAP (Asociación de Comunidades Afectadas por el Anillo Periférico y Libramiento) against the freeway projects in the metropolitan zone of San Salvador, El Salvador; the Maya community in Sipacapa, in San Marcos county, Guatemala, against the Montana mine; UCIZONI (Unión de Comunidades Indígenas de la Zona Norte del Istmo), in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, against the various projects of Plan Puebla Panama and of PEMEX in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec; El Grupo Solidario de la Venta against the wind turbine project in La Venta II, in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec; La Asociación de Comunidades Rurales de Chalatenango, against the onslaught of various mining companies in El Salvador. See Zunino, 2010.
advanced in its own project. It is only in this context that we can fully understand the significance of Zapatista territory and the construction of autonomy as a project not just of resistance or local sustenance, but as a strategy that can maintain its antagonism to capital and create an alternative social and productive organization of forces. This chapter will examine how that strategy has developed in relation to this specific terrain.

But first we must go back to how this land came to be Zapatista territory. I will start here with the occupation of land in the Zapatista rebellion, and the significance of establishing a territory—not just “agricultural reform” or the collectivization of arable land—but an autonomous “territorialization” of an area in all of its physical, topological, social, and relational aspects. This territory became the base for a series of autonomous systems, including health, education, production, and communication, that would come to constitute spheres of necessary provision and innovative organization that would lead to the need for a more comprehensive self-governing system and then flourish under the same. I will look at each of these systems as singular phenomena, and then as what they provide as a network of practices for the constitution of autonomy. My interest here is to establish a way of understanding autonomy and its attempt to construct an “other” politics—a power without domination, with an ethic of democracy, carried out as a system of cooperative social relations—not as a policy that can be instituted by or as law but as a kind of social ecology. Such a system may have laws, as well as policies for certain

\[\text{5 All of these tourist, industrial, and infrastructural initiatives hit points of conflict all over Zapatista territory as communities resist eviction and displacement by highways, the privatization of waterfalls or Mayan ruins, the expropriation of land around possible tourist attractions, and the environmental criminalization of villages in the “biosphere” region. In each of these instances they are confronted most directly by party-loyal indigenous groups, paid and usually armed, to harass the communities in resistance. The most well-known of the instances is the 1997 massacre of Acteal, in which 46 people, mostly women and children, were massacred while praying in their community church by paramilitaries, high on military-supplied liquor and drugs, fueled with counter-insurgent propaganda, and armed with high-caliber weapons.}\]
issues and delegates for certain tasks, but its essence is its practice as an open process that aims precisely at keeping the space of decision open rather than attempting to ensure its existence as (a form of) rule. There can be no insurance for the construction, execution or reproduction of autonomy, I will claim here; it depends rather on the capacity to put collective weight behind certain tendencies (of democracy and cooperation in this case) and to increase the consistency and connectivity of those practices into a social ecology that carries the momentum of its own continual collective valorization.

4.2 Land and Labor

4.2.1 Land Occupation

The 1994 Zapatista uprising became best known for the emergence of an indigenous army and the taking of seven municipal headquarters in what turned out to be a spectacular surprise and show of force on January 1, 1994. What received less attention was the taking of somewhere between 500,000-700,000 hectares of land (around 1,235,000-1,730,000 acres or 1,900-2,700 square miles), “recuperated” from the latifundistas who had monopolized Chiapan land for decades.\(^6\) This was some 12 percent of the total land area of the state, constituting a monumental shift in the constitution and use of agricultural land in Chiapas.

As we saw in Chapter Two, land and agrarian reform has long been a central issue in Chiapan politics. In preparation for entry into the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), then president Carlos Salinas de Gortari modified Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution which had stipulated that ejido lands, a kind of collective or social property, could

\(^6\) This number is unofficial and much disputed. There is no accepted, accurate accounting of the land recuperated in 1994; estimates range from 200,000 to 700,000. Journalist and chronicler of the Zapatista movement Hermann Bellinghausen uses the higher number in the most recent citation “La otra campaña, opción para agrupar a las organizaciones campesinas en lucha” (Bellinghausen 2007a). According to the Centro de Analisis Politico e Investigaciones Sociales y Economicas (CAPISE), the Mexican government officially recognizes 250,000 hectares as recovered by the Zapatistas.
not be bought from or sold by their communal owners, nor titled by an individual owner (Harvey
1998; Gilly 1997). Ejidal and communal lands are a remnant of the Spanish conquest, originally a
cooperative form of organizing promoted by the church but which coincided with and was
strengthened and legitimated by indigenous traditions that supported collective land holdings.
Liberal reforms in the 19th century eroded those holdings (by privatizing titles as a way of
destroying church power), but their collective nature was taken up again as a cause by the most
radical forces of the Mexican revolution in the first decades of the 20th century. It was considered
a great victory of those forces to have achieved in the post-revolution Mexican Constitution of
1917 the inclusion of Article 27, which served as an official protection for common lands by
banning their privatization and preventing their expropriation as collateral or debt payment. The
modification of Article 27 in 1992 eliminated this protection. A government program, PROCEDE
(Certification Program for Ejidal Rights and Titling of Parcels) was put in place in 1993 to
“register” (individually title) common lands, purportedly and with much publicity as a form of
distributing “land rights” to peasants. Before the privatization effort, of a total of 196 million
hectares of surface area in Mexico, 101.8 million hectares were classified as “social property,”
representing 51.94 percent of total Mexican land. Throughout the 14 years of operation of
PROCEDE, 28,790 agrarian units were “certified” and “titled,” leaving only 2,421 agrarian units
still under communal classification, equivalent to the privatization of 92.24 percent of the total
social property.7 PROCEDE officially closed operations in November of 2006, having pulled off
what amounts to a massive and near total “certification”—or preparation for privatization—of
communal lands and almost completely erasing what had been the most important protection of
farmer, peasant, and indigenous populations in the history of the country.

How was this done? While formally it was necessary to gain the signatures of a certain number of ejido members for the sale of a plot, all over the country communities and ejido owners reported cases of fraud in the individual titling of their lands. This usually consisted of buying off some members of the ejido, acquiring the signature of elderly or illiterate members who were not accurately informed as to the content of the contract they signed, or coercing signatures of sale directly through threats and harassment. Once an individual title was assigned to the ejido, it usually proved simple to impoverish or indebt a small individual landowner who would then be forced to sell the land if it wasn’t first expropriated as debt collateral. The modifications to Article 27 also provided for the next step of in the privatization effort, changing the law so that commercial entities, prohibited from acquiring ejidal lands in the original Article, could become proprietors of such lands. By mid 2006, this project was much advanced, with small farmers and peasants in nearly every state reporting the loss of ejidal lands through coercive legal or illegal means and their subsequent private or corporate possession.

Before the modifications to Article 27 and the implementation of PROCEDE, Chiapas ranked second highest in the nation for the number of ejidal holdings, with 1,887 agrarian units under this classification (Secretaria de Reforma Agraria 2006). The land occupied in the uprising would play an important role in maintaining those common holdings as PROCEDE was unleashed in the rest of the state as part of the national campaign to privatize land and specifically as a counterinsurgency tactic in Zapatista territory.

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8 As documented by testimonies collected during the Other Campaign.

9 Section IV of Constitutional Article 27.

10 Reports in the great majority of states as traversed by the Other Campaign corroborated this narrative.

11 Because most communities are divided between Zapatista supporters and members of registered political parties, attempts to push government programs like PROCEDE into the communities served as a way to
Not all of the lands recuperated in 1994 were occupied by Zapatistas. When word of the rebel takeover circulated, many *latifundistas* (large land owners), panicked at the thought of their indigenous workers up in arms, fled their lands without an actual invasion by the rebel army. Other indigenous and peasant organizations took advantage of the *latifundista* exodus to settle some of the lands; as the EZLN reported a dozen years later, there was not a peasant organization in the region that did not benefit from the land recuperation of 1994. In this sense, the event of the land recuperation was a unifying factor for many of the peasant and indigenous organizations in the state, as land was a common demand and necessity for nearly all of these organizations.

The state government, in an attempt to alleviate the attention being shed on the uprising when they very much preferred to bask in the afterglow of NAFTA’s successful passage, indemnified the large landowners generously and the lands hence stayed largely in the power of the Zapatistas.

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Polarize political affiliations and generate conflict. The EZLN has responded with several consistent principles: the refusal to fight or attack other indigenous communities; the refusal to react to provocations and an emphasis on working out issues between families or communities without involving state authorities; and a refusal to use armed resistance or violence without consultation and consensus among Zapatista support bases, something that, after the 1994 uprising, has never, so far, been reinitiated. The Zapatista communities do however maintain that they will not give up the occupied lands and, in response to increasing military and paramilitary attacks between 2007-2010, have repeatedly stated that they will fight to defend those lands and communities if necessary. On all of these points, see denunciations from the Good Government Councils under “Comunicados de las JBG” (Communiqués from the Good Government Councils) at http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/.

12 EZLN 2007b

13 In addition to this indemnization, and as part of the campaign to quiet the movement and repress peasant and indigenous support for the EZLN, the Chiapan state government spent 76.4 million US dollars in the four years after the uprising to buy and distribute some 260,000 hectares (642,474 acres) of land to 1,430 peasant groups. “La Situacion del Derecho a la Salud en Chiapas, Mexico.”
4.2.2 Territorialization

The significance of the recuperated lands in the Zapatista rebellion should be considered in at least two key respects, one recalling pre-uprising conditions and another foregrounding post-uprising possibilities. In the decades before the uprising most indigenous people lived as worker-servants on the land under the rule of the latifundistas, sometimes in near slave-like conditions, working 12-18 hour days, paid in merchandise or vouchers from the latifundistas’ own stores or in the form of locally-brewed liquor.\textsuperscript{14} The recent histories in Chiapas recall pre-abolition United States slave society: agreements between latifundistas to catch runaways; punishments of whipping and being stretched and bound in the sun for days without water or relief;\textsuperscript{15} women in particular subject to the whims and demands of the landowners, in all that entails.\textsuperscript{16} The ability to throw off that system, not just to leave it but to literally run the latifundistas off the land and take it over themselves with enough force and in large enough quantity to hold the occupation, marked a significant shift in the relations of production in the region and provided the material base for the construction of autonomy. As EZLN Lieutenant Coronel Moisés explained,

The land where the [Zapatista] compañeros and compañeras are now is their own property, land we recuperated. We discovered... that what [capitalism] does is make us prisoners of where we work. That’s how capitalism functions: you work on ranches, or work in factories, and the profit is not for the people who work.

Without this, we wouldn’t be where we are today. It is clear to us as Zapatistas that since we became owners of these lands, as they are our means of production, this is the base from which to attack capitalism.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} As presented in Morelia, Chiapas by autonomous communities at the Encounter Between Zapatista Peoples and Peoples of the World, July 2007.

\textsuperscript{15} As presented in Morelia by autonomous communities at the Encounter Between Zapatista Peoples and Peoples of the World, July 2007.


\textsuperscript{17} Presentation July 20, 2007, San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico.
Yet what was enabled by the EZLN land occupations was not simply traditional land redistribution in favor of a peasant class or even the “revolutionary” act of “taking the means of production” into one’s hands, although as we have seen above the latter certainly played an important role. Rather, if the fact of displacement and dispossession via discrimination or “development” characteristic of the Fourth World War signaled a kind of re-spatialization of capital, territorialization became a mechanism for establishing spheres of self-determination (no longer with the need or aim to take hold of the state in order to give expression to political ends). The development of (what we will see below as) the Zapatista autonomous municipalities essentially created a rupture in the system of representation configured by the state.

Representation has an (at least formally) geographic aspect: the terrain mapped by representative authority is purported to segregate and organize population and place for the purpose of governing (Zibechi 2008b). 18 Autonomous territorialization in this case not only ruptured that representative relationship but provided the possibility for another kind of government—“good government” in Zapatista terms. With the successful occupation of land in the uprising, where dominant power lost capacity to justify itself through representation, it was forced to try to exact subjection—from willing or unwillingly subjects—by other means. In the case of the Zapatista autonomous municipalities, where international and national public attention made continuous outright attacks impossible, attempts to reestablish the clientelist bond—through “aid” in the form of small material goods attached to party loyalty—have long been a central strategy. The Zapatista refusal to accept any government aid, a difficult position to maintain in conditions of extreme poverty, was not a dogmatic adherence to an anti-state ideology, as is

18 Zibechi notes that within the logic of territory there may be demands made upon the state, but territory is not organized according to or around those demands as a key objective (2008).
commonly assumed, but rather a barrier to the re-establishment of the representative bond with dominant power.

Representation also carries a certain kind of social bond, or more precisely, the lack of an immediate social bond and the reliance on a form of rule (from “above”) to mediate social relations (Zibechi 2002, 2008a, 90); it is in effect the system that both creates and reflects a “fragmented social body” (Clastres 2004). Autonomous territorialization creates the possibility of another system of social relations. If representation depends on a logic of submission to power in exchange for the ordering of a people and the mediation of conflict, the Zapatista logic of organization would be characterized, as we saw above, as “rule by obeying.” That rule is not limited to the making of formal policy or dealing with conflict, but to the collective generation of a community rhythm—when and how long people want to work, how social times of eating and playing are incorporated and maintained, freedom of and respect for private time and space, etc. Zibechi defines the logic of territorialization as an “inhabitance of difference,” oriented toward the holistic production and reproduction of the daily life of its members “in a totality that is diverse and differentiating” (Zibechi 2008c). The product not of (self) isolation or (state-ceded) special status, territorialization can only come about through struggle, something built both through presence, the living-in a place (inhabitance), and, I think we must add, practice, the establishment of a deliberate collective habituation. That habituation implies that time and space take on a definitive significance, first in being revealed as arbitrary organizations (and thus laden with power and strategy), and then in their use as possibilities for self-organization. The same way that capital’s pace (both of work and leisure) and spatialization (a particular set of stratifications and segmentations) have profound effects not only on the way goods are produced but also on the way subjectivity is formed and life experienced (Harvey 1990; Jameson 1991), the inhabitance and habituation of another kind of territory is also productive and reproductive. “Our
struggle could be understood and explained as a struggle of geographies and calendars,” the EZLN has stated.19

The process of territorialization—the land occupations, a kind of agrarian reorganization “from below,” the expulsion of the latifundistas, and the expelling of the commercial “coyotes” (middlemen) from the communities—constituted a significant modification of the forces at work in the region. While the Zapatista army in some sense cleared the way for this modification, what arose on that territory could not have been implemented by an army, a leader, or by a campaign (Zibechi 2008a, 147). The EZLN colonel continues:

The [Zapatista] compañeros have in their hands the means of production, the land...and they have now constructed more things...like Zapatista schools, Zapatista clinics, warehouses for buying and selling their goods.

This is the change we have undergone; this is what gives strength to the autonomous government of the communities. If we had not taken the means of production, the land, in our hands, the autonomous municipalities would not function, [autonomy] would be only words.20

Zapatista territory thus became not only an escape from direct labor exploitation and an independent means of subsistence, but the literal ground for the construction of autonomy and for the creation, sustenance, and growth of a self-organized collective subject.

If our understanding of social movement strategy as moving from a state focus to one focused on territorialization (as we saw in Chapter Three) revolves on the axis of the shift from the (broadly defined) waged factory to the much more dispersed social factory as place of potential accumulation (both by dispossession and exploitation), then we can understand an important transformation of forms of resistance from an emphasis on (taking or controlling) the means of production to (generating) the means of reproduction. This we could understand as the

19 EZLN, presentation at the Festival of Dignified Rage, January 5, 2009.

20 Lieutenant Colonel Moisés, presentation July 20, 2007, San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico.
power of the “below” of society. “Below” here serves a dual purpose with regard to inhabitance and habituation. It refers on one hand to those who inhabit the bottom rungs of society, the marginalization and subordination from which many territorial movements arise (Zibechi 2008b). But it also refers to the “below” of life, the everyday practices of survival and existence, care of the self and relation to others, that determine our experience in the world. What we can learn from movements for territorialization is that even from “below,” having nothing, people are still able as a matter and manner of organization to decide on the times and spaces of their lives, and thus, in a sense, to have everything. The autonomous inhabitance and habituation promoted by territorialization can thus contribute to the construction of a different subject, not simply an oppositional subject, but to the possibility of subjectivities that are self-determining in the collective temporal and spatial organization of their lives. Further, if an autonomous inhabitance and habituation bring us to the possibility of self-organization, then self-organization opens another possibility, that of a space for differentiation (Zibechi 2008a). A central aspect of self-organization, as opposed to the attempt to implement an alternative hegemonic model, is the space left open for decision, a space that in its unprescribed nature is not only self-determining but continuously differentiating. In this sense, territorialization implies not just a space for difference—an autonomous place where the “different” find refuge or freedom—but a place of difference. That is, autonomous territory is not just a place for difference to settle undisturbed, but for it to be produced. This makes it an important battleground, one tending away from subjection—that subject produced through submission—and favorably toward subjectivization—the possibility of continuous collective self-making. Territorial movements, Zibechi states, do not “win” through the achievement of demands, but rather triumph in their own daily consolidation and expansion (Zibechi 2008c), the degree to which they can become different not only from
what is but from what they have been, and thus literally create new possibilities for what can be
done.

4.2.3 A Space from which to Speak, or, A Window to the World

We saw in Chapter Three that two of the “titanic labors” of the Zapatistas have been
collective survival, literally the achievement of their own continuing existence, and the creation
of the material conditions of resistance, consisting in this case of linking the mechanism of their
collective survival (self-provision and self-sustainability) to a political struggle (for collective
self-determination against state corporatism as much as against “death by oblivion”), and
resulting in the construction of autonomy. We could add here a third branch to those initiatives,
that of aperture, or encounter. I will enter a full discussion of an “ethics of encounter” in Chapter
Five, but here an adequate examination of Zapatista territorialization requires an understanding
that autonomy, as the Zapatistas have conceptualized it, constructed from its inception not as
isolated or self-contained but as an opening of sorts, with important “portals” to the world.
Territorialization provided the Zapatista communities with an autonomous mode of production by
which they could act as a collective subject able to speak for itself. But that voice would need a
space from which to speak. Having rejected the state function of social order and the market
function of social mediation, they realized they would need an alternate place and a method for
entering the social. Without money, visas, or any of the rights and privilege associated with travel
and advanced communications, they built that space in their own territory, both as place from
which to speak as a collective voice and as a “home” for the world (“other worlds” in their terms)
to gather. The first of these were called “Aguascalientes,” a reference to the Convention of
Aguascalientes where Zapata and his supporters passed the Plan of Ayala, denouncing President
Francisco Madero for the betrayal of revolutionary ideals and proclaiming “land and liberty” for
the poor (Womack 1970). The first Aguascalientes in Zapatista territory was put into place for the
purpose of a National Democratic Convention convoked by the Zapatistas in the village of Guadalupe Tepeyac in August of 1994. It was “delivered” into the hands of national and international “civil society” in the EZLN’s inaugural address to 6,000 attendees (EZLN 1994c). When Guadalupe Tepeyac was destroyed by the army in the failed military invasion to decapitate the movement in 1995, the EZLN proclaimed that for every Aguascalientes destroyed, they would build five more. Thus came about the five Aguascalientes of La Garrucha, Morelia, Oventic, Roberto Barrios, and La Realidad, the last of these being the most remote, located deep in the Lacandón Jungle. 21 The Aguascalientes would serve as home and host to multiple national, continental, international, and indigenous gatherings, bookended at their most encompassing perhaps by the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, also known as the “Intergalactic,” in 1996 and the series of “Encounters of Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World” in 2006 and 2007. Plan Puebla Panama, the EZLN announced in 2003, was nothing compared to what they had in the works: Plan La Realidad-Tijuana (to be known as “Reali-Ti”), a proposal with “no budget, no offices, and no staff,” but full of people who, “in their moment, in their place, in their own way, resist” (EZLN 2003a). 22

“Reali-Ti” was perhaps a clever discursive counter to an imperial project, but the initiative of encounter was not metaphorical. In their rejection of mediation, isolation, and alienation, the EZLN would take very seriously the need to create other connections and forms of communication “below,” conscientiously changing interlocutors and attempting to find forms and

21 More “Aguascalientes” were constructed as autonomous spaces in other parts of the world, for example in Mexico City at the Autonomous University of Mexico City and in Madrid, Spain (EZLN 2003d).

22 As not to be “nationalist” in their proposals and because, they added, they wanted to contribute to a new world, the EZLN proposed for the American Continent “Plan Morelia-North Pole,” for Central and South America “Plan Garrucha-Tierra de Fuego;” for Europe and Africa “Plan Oventik-Moscow,” and for Asia and the South Pacific, “Plan Roberto Barrios-New Delhi.”
spaces that would allow for a different kind of action and decision. This would be a long and experimental process. Some of the initiatives launched would find echo and take flight; others would fall flat. But the networks that emerged from the initiatives of encounter and the impulse to speak with others framed the construction of autonomy in Zapatista territory through exchanges of ideas, advice, funds, experience, and inspiration, and it is this thread which helps us understand a construction and a relation that both fester in the cracks of the “old” and pushes the edges of the new. It is not the solidarity from elsewhere or the inspiration from within Zapatista territory, both admittedly important elements, that most profoundly characterize this encounter, but earnest attempts at opening other possibilities for organizations of life that, for better or worse, must be lived together.

Encounters in Zapatista territory always have an aspect of other worldliness, only partly because of the politics of building “another world” that draws this particular set of people to Chiapas. As we saw in Chapter One, the Zapatistas have been given credit for initiating a cycle of struggles and pattern of encounters that took root and grew in different directions—most notably the World Social Forum and the global anti-neoliberal protests at G-7 (now G-8 and G-20) meetings—including what for some came to be critiqued as the summit-hopping jet-setters, a young middle-class activist crowd with spare time and spare change for travel who could go anywhere and represent no one. Zapatista encounters of course always have their share of jet-setters, adventure-seekers and “revolutionary tourists,” but they have also been characterized by a particular diversity: many older activists from the US and other parts of Mexico, experienced in the civil rights struggle or the radicalisms of the 60s and 70s or estranged from dominant leftist

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political currents and enticed by the Zapatistas different language; whole families from all over Mexico attracted to a kind of political action undertaken by the whole of the Chiapas communities rather than the lone militant or guerrilla cluster; peasant farmers from other parts of the Chiapas countryside who spend scarce funds on transport to get to much-admired autonomous territory; people of color groups from the US; and a whole range of “subcultural” or marginalized young people principally from European and Mexican cities. The effect is first of all visually startling: the proximity of pink mohawks and black braids, leather pants and woven skirts, old and young, pastors and church laypeople alongside punks and goths, all huddled over sweet weak coffee and giant pots of beans or packed together on the backless benches of the simply constructed auditoriums build to host them. The scene is ripe for clichés about difference, but there is an undeniable effect of the mixture. It comes in part from a shared purpose and space—not just in a strictly political sense but in a whole new common history: shared heroes (the fallen of the struggle), shared stories (the legends of Don Durito and Old Antonio, Marcos’ literary characters), a new collective memory (a series of encounters and communiqués, moments of attack and defense, victories and tragedies), and a kind of criss-crossing journey through moments of struggle to free political prisoners, break military sieges, and bring down lucrative transnational contracts. This genealogy has been built not just in Zapatista territory but in spots and moments all over the world as encounters multiplied and those exposed to the process of construction of autonomy in Chiapas spread out over the world like a kind of Zapatista diaspora. This is the political generation that has been apprentice, assistant, and witness to the creation of the Autonomous Zapatista Municipalities in Rebellion.
4.3 The Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in Rebellion: An Experiment in Autonomy

This change in starting from below for us meant not organizing ourselves or other people to go vote, or to go to a march, or to shout slogans, but rather to survive and convert our resistance into a school. That’s what we did compañeros, not the original EZLN, that small group, but rather the EZLN once it had its indigenous component. This is what we call, in broad strokes, the construction of Zapatista autonomy.

4.3.1 The MAREZ

The creation of 30 Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in Resistance (MAREZ) in Zapatista territory had been announced in the first year of rebellion, on December 8, 1994, in a communiqué that made clear that the EZLN was not the head but the armed wing of (and subordinate to) the communities in resistance. In principle, it would be the communities that would make decisions and the EZLN that would execute them (Le Bot 1997; Zibechi 2008a, 136). This was an important distinction in historical terms: this would not be a guerrilla or people’s army with “support bases” in the traditional sense of the term; it was, rather, an organized people with an armed wing at its service (Gilly 1997). In Esteva’s words, Zapatismo could not be defined, as had been the guerrillas of the era, as “the fish that swims in the sea of the people;” the burgeoning autonomy of the communities insured that Zapatismo was the sea, not the fish (Esteva 2005, 13). The MAREZ were charged with enacting and assuring compliance with three sets of laws: the 1917 political constitution of the United States of Mexico (a document reflecting the victory of the Mexican revolution, before changes were made during the neoliberal era); the Zapatista Revolutionary laws of 1993 (implemented in Zapatista territory as of the uprising); and the local laws of the autonomous municipal committees as determined by the

support bases (EZLN 2003c). There are currently over 40 autonomous municipalities (El Kilombo 2008), organized into five regions, each of which hosts one Good Government Council. The municipalities are each made up of a cluster of communities, their sum surpassing 1,000 communities in all (Muñoz Ramirez 2010) and around 300,000 individuals (El Kilombo 2008).

Until 2001, the autonomous systems were run principally out of the MAREZ, the autonomous municipalities, which were linked in large part through the EZLN military leaders corresponding to each zone. While civil authorities from the Zapatista communities had a large degree of local control, connections between municipalities and to the outside world were almost entirely coordinated and dominated by the military structure of the EZLN. The five Aguascalientes provided a common space, though even these were primarily under the control or coordination of EZLN army cadres. During the silence characterizing the years after the government betrayal of the peace accords in 2001, a kind of political restructuring was taking place. As the EZLN itself would later report, their own principles of rule by obeying were belied by a hierarchical military structure that exercised a non-democratic decision-making force over the communities (EZLN 2003c; El Kilombo 2008). Those years of public silence were dedicated to removing the military presence from internal Zapatista civil affairs and turning over all decision-making powers in civilian matters to the communities themselves (EZLN 2003c). This wasn’t, it appears, a strategy aimed at carrying out an ideological program or utopic vision of democracy. According to the EZLN, as the communities in resistance struggled to find ways to survive outside of government control and clientelist support, they began to notice that this process advanced more rapidly and along more egalitarian lines where military commanders were not as present or available (El Kilombo 2008, 45). In this way, while the EZLN maintains an internal hierarchical structure as an army, its action as an army is subordinate to a democratic structure in the communities.
While the Aguascalientes had served their purpose as a meeting and dialogue point for the EZLN and civil society, they also came to represent the mediatory role of the EZLN between the public in general and the Zapatista communities, as well as a drop-off point for those supporters suffering from “Cinderella Syndrome” to leave their “leftovers” or propose their ideas of what the communities needed (EZLN 2003d). In June of 2003, the EZLN declared the Aguascalientes “dead”; their death would mark the birth of an entirely new body, the “caracoles,” literally conches and symbolically spirals, which would serve as “doors to enter into the communities,” “windows to see in and out,” and “to remind us that we must be vigilant and pending all of the worlds that make up this world” (EZLN 2003b). The caracoles would be the home to the new structure of self-governance in Zapatista territory, organized through the Good Government Councils.

The caracoles also marked a new kind of opening to the world outside Zapatista territory. While the first National, Continental, and Intergalactic encounters were hosted by the Zapatista communities but given Zapatista voice by the EZLN commanders and authorities of each region, a new series of “Encounters Between Zapatista Peoples and People of the World” were designed with a novel use of time and space in the caracoles where the voice of the Zapatistas was provided by a multitude of ordinary members of the communities. These were common peasant-farmers from across Zapatista territory who served as health and education promoters in their communities or were taking their turn on the Good Government Councils, some of whom barely spoke Spanish, had certainly never spoken in public, and may never have traveled further than the canyon where their community was located. Using the caracoles as platforms for their voice, the first two “Encounters of Zapatista People and Peoples of the World” (December 2006, July 2007) and the third, designated “Encounter of Zapatista Women and Women of the World” (December
2007), provided a way for the Zapatista communities themselves to explain and circulate the endeavor they had undertaken in the autonomous systems.25

The autonomous systems outlined below have come about through a long and gradual process of trial and error, experimentation, training, decision-making, and evaluation. Each autonomous program in each zone is worthy of a research project in itself; I have chosen to examine their operations here primarily through the space (the encounters) and words chosen by the autonomous communities themselves, and the account I provide here is a mere summary. It is not an evaluation of the systems or the movement, theoretically or ethnographically, but is rather an attempt to understand the Zapatista project from their perspective, as created in word and deed in their territories, on their calendar, or as they put it, “a nuestro modo” (according to our way), a way that they acknowledge is often different, mostly improvised, and usually unexpected. I am not concerned here with documenting accuracy; the sheer abundance and diversity of community members describing their work in the autonomous systems performs its own cross-checking and provides its own balance of perspectives; getting this many voices to adhere to a “party-line” or describe a utopic vision rather than the reality in which they work would be improbable, or else a political feat of epic proportion in itself. Thus I have not tried to problematize their words or deeds (with what would surely be inevitable and innumerable contradictions and complications), but instead try to give ethnographic context for the moment, in time and space, in which they are speaking. There is certainly no question that communities embedded for centuries in a patriarchal

25 This was also a form of reporting and accountability for the autonomous systems, as the initial funds and resources for their launch often came from national and international solidarity projects and donations, an important source for establishing a groundwork for self-sustainability in the absence (refusal) of government aid. In the words of EZLN Lieutenant Colonel Moisés at the inauguration of the encounter: “The compañeros are giving you a report of the work they have done with all of the solidarity you have provided over the years.” Closing remarks at the Second Encounter of Zapatista Peoples and Peoples of the World, July 2007.
system continue to have patriarchal practices, or that a hierarchical authoritarian political-military structure (the EZLN) continues to have hierarchical authoritarian tendencies, or that the process of building the autonomous systems do not always adhere to an ideal holistic, horizontal egalitarian implementation of autonomy and self-determination. The intention here is another: to examine one exercise or experiment in mechanisms of organization to create a collective subject which can practice a politics according to its own capacity and creativity for construction. This is not putting word into deed, or “theory” into “practice,” or creating means adequate to the desired ends; there is no preceding idea to be carried out as action that can then be measured according to its proximity to the ideal.26 The creation of the autonomous systems depends on the capacity of subjects to construct that system, and thus both system and subject are only created in the making. The circularity in that statement is not accidental or incidental. The endeavor to create a collective form of life that allows for a continual reciprocal relation (and disintegration of distinction) between thinking and doing or between means and ends (El Kilombo 2008) is a process of experimentation. Thus I am not interested here in judging the failure or success of the movement according to standards of “adherence to ideals” or a kind of coherence of structure (these being commonly accepted undertakings with regard to social movements studies in general). Rather, my interest here is in providing a window into how experiments of “autonomy in practice” have been set up in Zapatista territory, a process that cannot be measured by or evaluated against anything but its own capacity to continue the experiment.

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Marcos wrote in 2004 a communiqué called “In Defense of the Giraffes,” making

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26 As EZLN Commander Sandra explained to international at the Second Encounter of Zapatista Peoples and Peoples of the World in July 2007, “Compañeros, we did not have a manual to do this!”
giraffes, with their awkward ambling gate, excellent sensory organs, and asymmetrical physicality—something between “ugly beauty” and “beautiful strangeness”—an animal icon of difference: their difference is beautiful precisely because it is so “other.” There are, he claims, women giraffes, adolescent giraffes, homosexual, transsexual, and cross-dressing giraffes, people of color giraffes, peasant and paperless (undocumented) giraffes, and so on, all of whom refuse or reject to conform to certain standards of beauty and behavior. Neoliberalism, the communique continues, labels these giraffes as “others,” the unwelcome, ugly, and asymmetrical among us, that is, the great majority of humanity, slated for extinction or hunted for their unique skins. In lieu of the lack of an endangered species act to protect us, we have instead our resistance and rebellion and our capacity to unite in our otherness. The story seems like a screenplay for this “Encounter of Zapatista peoples and Peoples of the World,” what seems to be the oddest and most unlikely assortment of people. What is it about this movement that appeals to housewives, sexworkers, students, farmers, artists, priests, poets? There is a new Slovenian solidarity group at this event, they are just getting started. Giant, strangely dressed, oddly styled and generously tattooed Europeans move awkwardly through this territory as the young girls from the local communities, not old enough yet to don ski-masks, stare at them with wide eyes or giggle behind their hands. Giraffe people indeed.

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4.3.2 Good Government

In addition to the operations of the Good Government Councils examined in Chapter Three, one of the most interesting aspects of autonomous governance is the justice system. The autonomous justice systems operate in the local indigenous languages, an important aspect in a region where the majority of people, especially women, do not speak Spanish and where state courts have rarely provided translation services and often used this as a pretext for unjust trials
and incarcerations. The councils handle everything from petty theft to land disputes to cases of homicide and rape. While there are some Zapatista laws that apply to all of autonomous territory, each region decides for itself, based on the case and the situation, what the punishment or resolution should be for specific violations (Morelia 7/23/2007). Not so much a court, “We are a bridge,” one council members explains, “we listen to each case and investigate the charges and allegations of each side” (La Garrucha 7/24/2007). “We don’t want high-security prisons,” another explains, the councils attempt to reconcile anyone in violation of a law back into the collectivity and cohesion of the community (Morelia 7/23/2007); conflict resolutions are therefore specific to community need. Another council member explains for example that the perpetrator of a murder in his zone received the punishment of sustaining both families, his own and that of the victim, for the rest of his life (Morelia 7/23/2007), a punishment that for the families involved makes more sense in terms of their own survival than a lifetime jail sentence. In one zone a “human-trafficker,” these being notorious in the region for charging Central Americans exorbitant prices to take them north across Mexico, was forced to give the migrants their money back and received as punishment seven months of community labor, while the migrants were given food, lodging, “an introduction to the principles of autonomy,” and permission to stay in Zapatista territory as long as they liked (EZLN 2003c). In most zones human-traffickers caught on a first offense are “punished” with community labor or a “lecture”

27 The citations throughout the rest of this chapter are from the Second Encounter Between Indigenous Peoples and Peoples of the World. The encounter was organized according to topic areas for each Zapatista zone, where community members presented on their work in health, education, government, production, etc.. I identify information and quotations here by zone (Oventic, Morelia, La Garrucha, La Realidad, and Roberto Barrios) and date.
by the Good Government Council; upon second offense they are turned over to the “bad
government” [state government].

Drug laws make for another important realm of the justice system, as any use, cultivation,
or trafficking of narcotics is strictly against Zapatista law (EZLN 2004a), and the “planting”—
literal or figurative—of drugs on the properties or bodies of Zapatistas is a common counter-
insurgency tactic. In one zone the punishment for drug use consists of ten days of collective labor
and six months suspension from the organization; for cultivation punishment is expulsion from
the organization and fees for the destruction of the plants (EZLN 2003c). The autonomous
justice system is also in charge of protecting and handling disputes over the hundreds of
thousands of acres of lands recuperated in the 1994 rebellion, an increasingly contentious issue as
those lands are targets of counterinsurgency campaigns and paramilitary action.

These are only a few examples of what is a wide–ranging sphere of activities that
constitute a cross section of what are usually considered distinct legislative, juridical,

28 The official Zapatista law “On the traffic of undocumented people” states: “All people, regardless of
their nationality, have free transit through Zapatista territory, but must respect the laws of the Good
Government Councils, Autonomous Municipalities, and the indigenous communities….Anyone, national or
foreign, who has been transported as clandestine will be liberated and supported to the degree possible
(with medical attention and temporary food and lodging) and advised to not be fooled by the traffickers”
(EZLN 2004e).

29 Zapatista territory, it is worth noting, is one of few places in the entire nation that is not riddled with or
dominated by drug trafficking, not simply because of their internal laws against use and cultivation, but
because they control their territory in a way that few communities or cities have been able to do. The entire
system of autonomy—the difficulty in corrupting the governing councils because of their rotating function,
the involvement of the entire community in the governing structure, the investment of communities in
maintaining their own economic and physical health—make the formation of the networks necessary for
drug activity, which usually include politicians and police officers that have been bought off, locally
compliant or coerced business owners, and a population of disenfranchised young people available for the
riskiest of activities, unavailable and almost impossible to form.

30 “We have a commitment as Zapatistas: we will not permit that they take those lands from us again. We
will defend them so that our children will never have masters.” As reported by autonomous communities at
the First Encounter between Indigenous Peoples and Peoples of the World, Oventic, Chiapas, Mexico,
December 2006.
investigative institutions. The justice systems have proved to be so successful and well-received that non-Zapatista communities often opt to take their cases or complaints to the Autonomous Councils rather than to the official municipal or state courts (EZLN 2003c). Even non-indigenous and urban dwellers often arrive in the caracoles on “open-court” days of the Autonomous Councils, both for reasons of their efficiency and fairness but also because the practice of restorative rather than punitive justice is attractive to poor communities, indigenous or mestizo, urban or rural, for whom those who make up the official justice system—police, politicians, and judges—have never been friendly forces to call on.

“‘Rule by obeying’ in Zapatista territory is a tendency,” the EZLN reports, “not exempt from ups and downs, contradictions and deviations, but it is a dominant tendency” (EZLN 2003c). The shift from EZLN presence in the management of the affairs of the communities in resistance to almost total civil control over self-governance is evidence that this is a fairly strong trend. One of the principal failures and continuing limitations however is that the number of women members of the community self-governing councils still lags far behind the relative equality achieved in the structures of the EZLN itself. While the CCRI (Revolutionary Indigenous Clandestine Committee, the General Command of the EZLN) varies between 33-40 percent women per region (EZLN 2004b) and insurgents are around 45 percent women (EZLN 2003m), women’s participation in the autonomous municipalities and Good Government Councils after

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31 Such systems are not without precedent. The “rondas,” or community rounds, organized by indigenous communities in Peru to guard against thieves in the 1970s and 80s are a key example. The rondas grew to cover thousands of villages and tens of thousands of square miles of land in the Andes, becoming popular and well-respected not only as a night patrol but as an organization form for resolving other conflicts and a source of pride among participants. See Orin Starn, Nightwatch: The Politics of Protest in the Andes. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990. Also see Laura Nader, Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village, on village courts in Zinacantecoo, Mexico. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990. Another example of self-organized “security” or justice systems include the Community Police in Guerrero, see http://www.policiacomunitaria.org/, or in English, Puaz 2008. We should not neglect to mention the thousands of poor and/or indigenous communities in all of the Americas that have, by necessity, long taken charge of organizing their own security without any fanfare, support, or publicity.
one year of functioning were a small fraction of these gains, as the EZLN itself reported (EZLN 2004b). Autonomous territory could boast a significant reduction in domestic violence, although, the EZLN clarified, this was less due to a newly achieved gender politics in the communities than to the ban on alcohol consumption as stipulated in Zapatista law. The participation of women as health and education promoters is still limited due to traditional perspectives on women working outside the home, though it is worth noting that it has been the Zapatista women who have set a precedent in this regard for the local population in general. As most communities in Zapatista territory are split between the Zapatistas and registered political parties or other peasant organizations, women of the PRI (the conservative center-right party) in recent years began to demand the right to participate in the public sphere and to travel outside of their community, complaining that “only the Zapatista women get to go places” (Radio Insurgente 2004). 32 While the EZLN states its own inadequacies with regard to women’s equality, reports by the EZLN and the Good Government Councils on the rates of women’s participation on community and zonal levels demonstrate in any case an accountability uncommon for a political-military organization.33

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At this encounter, contingents from Via Campesina, an organization of peasants and farmers with membership of 129 organizations in 26 countries worldwide, are in attendance, bringing an Asian and African representation rarely present in these settings. They are given special status by other attendees, who recognize they come not as themselves but as

32 For more information on the Zapatista women’s struggle in general, see Rovira 1997 and Lynn Stephen 2002.

33 See the EZLN report on women’s participation in the Good Government Councils, as local authorities, and in the EZLN, EZLN 2004b.
representatives; the Korean farmer’s league can convoke 100,000 members into the street for protests; the Indian farmer comes from a base of 300 million; the Thai farmer is of the Pagañon indigenous tribe, part of Thailand’s Assembly of the Poor, a grouping of tens of thousands of farmers, fishermen, and forest dwellers.

Watching EZLN Commander Hortensia seated by the representative from Thailand’s Assembly of the Poor, it is impossible not to be impressed by the languages crossed for this encounter: Tzotzil to Spanish, Spanish to English, English to Thai in this case. While Hortensia talks we are trying to figure out how to translate for the Korean farmer, whose translator only speaks English. With two Spanish-English translators, we figure out that if one of us listens to the Spanish and takes notes, she can then translate in English to the Korean translator who simultaneously translates to Korean, while the other Spanish-English translator listens to the EZLN and takes notes. Then we switch, one translating into English and the other listening to Hortensia and taking notes. Sometimes the Korean farmer sends a question back the other direction, from Korean to English to Spanish, which we write on slips of paper and hand to the EZLN insurgents around the table where the commanders are speaking. Is this working okay? I ask the Korean farmer, wondering if the meaning is making it to the end of the translation chain. He nods but says something in Korean to his translator who says to us in English, he is concerned there are so many people working so hard for him to hear this.

The Korean farmer’s league has mobilized 50,000-100,000 people for land rights marches in recent years. They sent 800 representatives to Hong Kong in 2005 to protest World Trade Organization Policies, and a small delegation to Cancun in 2001 to support the protests at the G-8 meeting. There in front of the gates of the summit, Korean farmer Lee Kyung-hae stabbed himself in the heart, the only protest he felt he had left. In India 150,000 farmers have committed suicide in the last decade, out of desperation and hopelessness in the face of massive land
expropriations and evictions. The Pagañon representative reports that during one of their demonstrations, on a caravan to the capital, two Thai spiritual leaders in the movement threw themselves to their deaths in protest of the destruction of native lands and farming techniques. Each tell stories of massive suffering, but they also tell stories of massive power: 71,000 Indian farmers were arrested in a protest in 2001; they occupied the jail where they were being held and ran it until the government paid for their train fare back to their provinces. The Korean organization can simultaneously (and frequently) block every highway in the country with their bodies, and the national system of train tracks with farm implements. The Thai indigenous farmer says he needs to stay in Zapatista territory six months in order to learn more about the construction of autonomy. The most destructive to our people, he states, is not the repression and the burning of houses and forests by the state, as often happens; it is the government education programs that destroy our sense of community and brotherhood.

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4.3.3 Education

Through the 1990s, illiteracy rates in Chiapas hovered around 42 percent, the highest in all of Mexico, with the lowest primary school attendance rates and the lowest level of instruction for school-age children in the country (Casanova Henríquez et. al 1996). There are now autonomous primary schools across all five Zapatista zones, and autonomous high schools in several regions, each already with several generations of graduates. The actual schools are in some cases constructed with the support of solidarity funds, or in other cases run out of the abandoned state schools (Radio Insurgente 2004). Their early formation was a local initiative to deal with what in some communities was the complete absence of schools, in others the sporadic presence of the state-appointed teachers, and in most discriminatory practices toward the indigenous students. Education has traditionally been an instrument of indigenist policies in
Mexico, oriented toward assimilating indigenous populations into “Mexican national culture,” explicitly prohibiting the speaking of indigenous languages or the promotion of indigenous culture (López y Rivas 2010b). Until 1994, in a state where nearly 40 percent of the population does not speak Spanish, no bilingual schools existed in indigenous zones. After the uprising, many more state teachers abandoned the rural schools, and over the next few years paramilitary activity forced the displacement of thousands of indigenous from their home communities. The first autonomous schools were formed to meet these specific needs, assisted extensively by university students from Mexico City. Seven years after the uprising, statistical results were significant: seven percent of children in pro-government communities and 11 percent of children in divided communities had received no primary school education at all, with only 20 percent going beyond primary school; in Zapatista communities all children had received some level of primary education and 37 percent entered secondary or higher levels of education (Sánchez Pérez et. al 2006, 31).

In most zones, the autonomous schools are taught almost entirely by community members who do not receive a salary but are provided with food, transport, and in some cases clothing and supplies by the communities they serve. The absence of salary is in part due to lack of resources, but is also a way by which the community maintains an investment in the provision and direction of its own education (Morelia 7/23/07). Those trained to work in the health and education systems are called “promoters” rather than teachers or medics to describe a different

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34 For an extensive analysis on bilingual education in indigenous areas, see Maria Elena Garcia’s study on education and development in indigenous Peru, *Making Indigenous citizens: Identity, Development, and Multicultural Activism in Peru*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. Note though that Garcia’s excellent study is primarily focused on state-implemented or NGO-implemented bilingual education programs, a not uncommon policy initiative in Latin America as the state attempted (or was forced) to create (at least the appearance of) a multicultural nation that allowed for the valuing of its “pluriethnic” roots and composition. Most studies on these kind of efforts fit into that framework. The Zapatista example I am attempting to bring out here is an effort at bilingual education generated and run by the communities, under their own determination of the value mastery of both indigenous language and the dominant Spanish.
relationship with those they teach or care for, not as experts but as “accompaniment”: “we feel our patients’ pain and accompany it”; “we learn with our students, we are not their bosses” (La Realidad 7/28/07). The increasingly advanced training that health and education promoters have been able to develop, one promoter notes, is not contradictory to that community mandate; it is not a question of level of skill but of how the relationship between action (healing, learning) and subject (patient, student, caregiver, teacher) is both formulated conceptually and structured concretely (Roberto Barrios 7/24/07).

Knowledge is not a given canon to be led through, one promoter explains, but a “relational practice,” relational both to others and to one’s concrete reality (Roberto Barrios 7/24/2007; Oventic 7/20/2007). Different curricula in different zones reflect attempts to do this: in one zone the autonomous schools teach how to develop thought in relation to the 13 demands of the Zapatista struggle (land, work, food, health, housing, education, independence, democracy, justice, freedom, culture, access to information and peace); in another a three year high school program organizes its curriculum by examining the reality of the indigenous communities the first year, the reality of the Mexican nation the second year, and the realities at a global level the third (FLAPE 2008). Students must learn how to learn from others and from each other, one promoter reports, as well as to create new thoughts and knowledge by themselves and among themselves (Roberto Barrios 7/24/07). Others have characterized this teaching philosophy as a remedy to the dual problems of the hierarchization of knowledge and the individualization of intelligence, perhaps most simply summarized by Eduardo Luis Nachman as: “No one educates anyone else, no one educates oneself” (Zibechi 2008a, 144). The official SEP (Secretary of Public Education)

35 Though “promoters” has its own historical baggage, being a term used in development discourse itself. Gustavo Esteva points to this ambivalence in the Zapatista systems, saying that it remains to be seen whether they are able to imbue the term with new meaning (2005).
schools try to construct an “individual conscience,” one promoter explains, “Teachers are oriented toward the teaching of students as individuals, who learn privately and through an individual methodology.” Everything those students do is by “following instructions,” “memorizing like machines,” in a sense, following orders. Autonomous education on the other hand tries to invent a methodology by which the learning process isn’t “closed,” that there is rather a “freedom to open ourselves,” not to absorb information, but “to be able to think” (FLAPE 2008). Most of the schools spend part of the school day in classrooms and part in productive projects, like school gardens, or in tasks, like interviewing the elders of the community.

Education is not just a set of lessons to be learned, promoters explain, but things like knowing how to cure oneself, for example, or learning to “live without fear” (Oventic 7/20/2007). The most important part of autonomous education, one promoter states, is to not separate intellectual activity from manual activity; “That is a capitalist concept,” he says, “to build autonomy we must be capable of conceptualizing and carrying out a task” (Morelia 7/23/2007).

The first autonomous high school formed in Zapatista territory, called the Autonomous Zapatista Education System in Rebellion and for National Liberation, set out as its mandate to teach students “to share with our people what the people have made possible for the student” (EZLN 2003a). This orientation is in turn to work in the service of autonomy by creating mechanisms by which communities educate their own to contribute back to the community, rather than having to accept outside aid or instruction while exporting their own (human) capacities and resources.

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36 Autonomous education systems or indigenous-based and community-run schools are prominent in other movements or places. The primary schools, high schools, and university run by the MST in Brazil are a good example (Caldart 2000). See also http://www.mst.org.br/node/1379. Another example is Columbia’s Universidad Campesina in San José de Apartadó, or the CONAIE’s Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos e Nacionalidades Indígenas in Quito (Zibechi 2005).
Throughout the encounter, as we move between different meeting spaces and topics, there is a marked difference between the way the masked Zapatista communities move, fluidly in groups, anonymous behind their ski-masks, punctual, still, and alert, and the habits of their visitors, mostly late, restless and disorganized, moving with marked individuality, like bubbles that come together and bounce off of each other, refracting each different identity, so intentionally unique and deliberately crafted. I wonder how we of so little collective discipline or practice are ever going to learn to move in concert with a purpose, or what kind of organization could address such fragmentation.

The ski-masks that for the Zapatistas mean safety (from identification) and subjecthood (no one saw us before we wore them, the EZLN says) are for other signs of discipline and uniformity, disconcerting for those who learned that the rejection of discipline and conformity was the only way out of capitalist order, the only way to avoid the imposition of any other order.

Hanging in the balance are one set of stakes over difference What permits one to see the uniform display of individual anonymity, generalized anomaly, collective autonomy, as an emancipatory act rather than a repressive one? Or to see the display of apparent “individual freedom” not as the proliferation of choice but the mass production of an individual general equivalent?

Sometimes the variety seems too wide to bridge. I sleep near a group of New Yorkers. They are pleasant but awkward, eager, generous, vaguely neurotic. They offer me one of their yoga mats to sleep on because my sleeping bag got soaked the night before, and ask lots of anxious questions about traffic and transport and schedules and times, questions without answers here. They eat only Luna bars, Kashi granola, and dried fruit from their coop in New York as not to risk parasitical infection from local food and water. Parasites are indeed abundant here, but
the New Yorkers’ supplies have created for them very cumbersome baggage. They speak a little Spanish and are trying earnestly to understand everything they can. On the other side of me is a man and his young daughter who traveled by foot and by truck 13 hours, 150 pesos, from a village near Motozintla, Chiapas, to be here. They have one small backpack between the two of them. There are seven families in their community who want to become Zapatistas, and they are organizing to try to get bigger. They have sent this man as their representative to listen to the Zapatista Good Government Councils. I talk to him a while before I realize he is blind and his daughter guides him as they travel. I wonder if he has met the New Yorkers. “Borders are for bad government,” he is saying as I ponder this, “the new world will never be built that way.”

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4.3.4 Health

The autonomous health systems arose in a context and region of abysmal health conditions. Chiapas has long held the highest infant mortality rates in the country, around 20 percent (Casanova Henríquez et. al 1996), ranks third in the country for maternal mortality (twelve times the average for industrialized countries, twice the average for Mexico) (Casanova Henríquez et. al 1996), and has a malnutrition rate among children in the poorest half of the state upwards of 70 percent (official indices qualify an area that reaches 80 percent to be in conditions of famine). The ratio of doctors to population in the state is one per one thousand persons, the lowest in the country; in areas where the indigenous population is higher than 70 percent, the ratio is one per twenty-five thousand persons (CIEPAC 2001). Official statistics (2000) stated that one million Chiapan residents had no access to medical care at all (CIEPAC 2001). The year of the EZLN uprising, in a study carried out by an independent team of medics and nutritionists in the highlands and jungles areas, zones key to EZLN organizing, many communities were identified as in “nutritional alarm,” a category equivalent to famine (Casanova Henríquez et al.
Universally across what is now Zapatista territory, over a large land area and a population of hundreds of thousands, community members report that previous to the EZLN uprising and the launch of the autonomous systems, the sick “almost always died in transit” (Morelia 7/23/2007). Indigenous patients who made it to the hospital were subject to procedures without consultation and sterilizations without consent (Morelia 7/23/2007). Infants commonly died of diarrhea (mostly due lack of access to clean water) and women and children of malnutrition and curable diseases (La Garrucha 7/24/2007).

Aided initially by medical students from the Metropolitan Autonomous University of Mexico City, with early and continuing advisory roles played by medical personnel from other parts of Mexico, the Zapatista Autonomous Health System (SSAZ) was constructed as one of the Zapatistas’ answers to its own demands: the right to holistic health. In 2007, the autonomous health systems were calculated as having 200 community health clinics, 25 regional clinics, some of which have been in operation for 10 years (Heredia Cuevas 2007), and several municipal hospitals (Muñoz Ramirez 2008). The significance of multiple autonomous hospitals must be put in context: no state or private “advanced” hospital existed at all in Chiapas until 2006 (Heredia Cuevas 2007).

The health systems vary widely across zones in their resources and capacities, but clinics usually consist of a combination of western technologies and laboratories with herbal pharmacies and traditional remedies (Oventic 7/20/2007; La Garrucha 7/24/2007). The supplies and training in each zone vary from capacities to do blood analysis, vaccinations, and basic health screenings,

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37 These studies are based on anthropocentric indicators of weight and arm perimeter of children below school age, a method accepted by the World Health Organization as the best indicators of nutritional and epidemiological processes (Casanova Henríquez et. al 1996).

38 As well as with a small base of “health promoters” already existing and trained in the communities as a result of NGO efforts in the 1980s and early 90s.
to treating external hemorrhaging and carrying out minor surgeries (Oventic 7/20/2007). An ophthalmology center in one zone treats conjunctivitis, myopia, and manufacture lenses for eyeglasses (Oventic 7/20/2007). A clinic-hospital in one zone has an in-house surgeon, trained from the communities, as well as a dental center, clinical analysis laboratory, and gynecological center (Oventic 7/20/2007). There is a special emphasis on sexual education and women’s reproductive health across the zones, with some promoters trained specifically in this area, including midwives who use a mix of traditional customs and modern technologies to assist births (Oventic 7/20/2007). At least two zones now have ambulances, specifically designated to service the autonomous territories and under the control of the autonomous clinics and governing councils (Oventic 7/20/2007; La Garrucha 7/23/2007).

While there is no official data measuring differences between autonomous areas and non-Zapatista areas in terms of health, independent studies have documented important gains, including most centrally lowering maternal and infant deaths, the diagnosis and treatment of basic illnesses, and the provision of safe transit to hospitals in serious cases (La Garrucha 7/24/2007). In some autonomous clinics in the Jungle zone, where maternal mortality was once the highest in the country, there have been periods of up to eight years without any maternal deaths (Heredia Cuevas 2008). Independent epidemiological and health studies in Chiapas in 2003 compared autonomous and state-served territory: 63 percent of women in Zapatista communities received prenatal care, compared to only 35 percent in non-Zapatista communities; 74 percent of households in Zapatistas communities used latrines, compared to 54 percent in non-Zapatista communities. These are aspects that speak as much to general community health knowledge as

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39 Interesting here is that pro-government communities actually had the highest number of installations of septic tanks and bathrooms, but the lowest level of use of any waste-control or sanitary system. See Sánchez Pérez et. al 2006.
to actual access to care or facilities (Casanova Henríquez 2009). In a global study of the relation of autonomy (here referring to the degree to which a population can provide its own sustenance) and the prevalence of famine and epidemics, epidemiologist and nutritionist Pablo González Casanova Henríquez found a consistent inverse correlation between hunger and autonomy (Casanova Henríquez 2003), even factoring in the negative physical and psychological health effects of long-term low-intensity war. In this case Henríquez concluded, the benefits of the autonomous systems in Zapatista zones seemed to outweigh even the severe impediments to community well-being caused directly by the war (González Casanova Henríquez 2003).

One foundational principle of the health systems in an emphasis on prevention, on “knowing how to care for and heal oneself,” and on understanding health as a collective phenomenon (Oventic 7/20/2007). Health is not just lack of illness, several promoters insist, health is also desire, such as “the desire to participate,” and the capacity for camaraderie, knowing how to respect and “take one’s compañero into consideration” (Morelia 7/23/2007); “individualism is ill-health” (Morelia 7/23/2007). Prevention and knowing how to care for and

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40 One of the few statistics contradicting the pattern here is the number of households without in-house running water, in which pro-government and divided communities were at less than 27 percent and the Zapatista communities at 39 percent (Sánchez Pérez et. al 2006). It is interesting to note in this case that many Zapatista communities have rejected in-house running water as a priority for project funds because it eliminated women’s common space at community rivers and wells and further added to the domestic isolation of women’s work.

41 The negative health (and other) effects of low-intensity war are well documented in Pablo González Casanova Henriquez, presentation en Second Indigenous Encounter of the Americas, San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas (1999) and Andrés Aubry and Angelica Inda (1997). These include, to mention just a few, the inability to acquire clean water due to military patrols and harassment of women who leave their homes, the destruction of food crops by paramilitary forces, the physical and psychological effects of fear, stress, and anxiety on a population subject to ongoing violence and threats of violence, the rise of prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases around army bases, increases in drug-trafficking, and higher rates of alcoholism.
cure oneself includes caring for nature, they add, as this promotes wellness not only in terms of the knowledge of plant medicines and herbal remedies, but also in understanding how nature interacts with the living environment and how the community can preserve this. This understanding requires not just a generalized understanding of illness and wellness in terms of concepts of hygiene and self-care, but also an attentiveness to the particular conditions of one’s environment and a tailoring of health care and prevention to that environment, something that varies even between each zone. Each autonomous health system thus undertakes its own studies of the common illnesses in its area, which range from polio and tuberculosis to skin infections and parasitical infections (Radio Insurgente 2004), and to the available natural remedies of their area (Morelia 7/23/2007). In this way they develop their own regional system of knowledge around the health of and risks to a population, and can incorporate this knowledge into prevention campaigns.

In most autonomous clinics appointments are free for Zapatistas, while some charge 10 pesos (less than USD$1) or ask a small donation from non-Zapatista patients. Medicines are given away if they were acquired as donations, and sold at cost if they were purchased; “we don’t make health a business,” one promoter explains (Radio Insurgente 2004). The health promoters in most zones are provided by the communities they serve with food, transport, clothing, and supplies. Some zones have experimented with monthly stipends paid for through collective production projects, but the most consistent system has been community-supported subsistence (Garrucha 7/24/2007). The health systems have been so successful and popular that many non-Zapatista indigenous go to the autonomous clinics rather than official clinics, where they have the advantage of being able to speak and be addressed in their own languages, as well as what is an historically unprecedented experience (for indigenous people in Chiapas, the promoters report) of being treated with respect (La Realidad 7/27/2007). This has provided one important bridge
between what could otherwise could easily become political antagonists, the Zapatista population and communities loyal to political parties. In fact, as an indicator of overall social benefit, in many communities where there were no health services before the 1994 uprising there are now two: where autonomous clinics were established the government felt pressured to build “official” clinic to compete for allegiance and legitimacy (Alquicira Martinez 2008). The SSAZ have also been able to challenge what has been an official state health policy: a cost-effect evaluation of the provision of health services (to be resolved with administrative rationality) and an insistence on treating illness as a result of “unhealthy” individual and familial conduct (things popular education in “hygiene” could alleviate), rather than addressing questions of poverty, marginalization, and discrimination (Chavez Vera 2008).

Overall, the goals of community awareness of illness and collective commitment to an integrated health, qualitative rather than quantitative factors, are difficult to measure (Heredia Cuevas, personal correspondence). The SSAZ’s definition of “true health” as “dignified life, good housing, land, justice, food, education, work” and orientation of health policy as “free, respectful, knowledgeable, disciplined” is indicative of the “right” to health defined in terms of the capacity “to live without humiliation” (Community Moisés Gandhi). Perhaps the best indicator in this

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42 While the autonomous clinics are consistent with the Zapatista mandate of not accepting any government aid, there are a few instances of cooperation of the SSAZ with the National Health System, for instance in acquiring the vaccines for vaccination campaigns (regulated nationally), or in communicating information about epidemics. One particularly interesting case was the detection of an outbreak of whooping cough by autonomous health promoters in one Zapatista zone. State and federal health officials at first ignored the alerts and the outbreak continued to spread. Finally personnel from the Pan-American Health Organization (a division of the World Health Organization) confirmed the outbreak and were able to implement measures. Several children in communities attended to by the Mexican Social Security Institute died as a result of the outbreak; there were no deaths in SSAZ-attended communities.

case is signaled by the promoters insistence that good health is manifested as “the desire to struggle,” and “the strength to feel desire” (Oventic 7/20/2007).

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Amid the general noise and movement of the encounter, all fall quiet when EZLN Lieutenant Colonel Moisés strides through the crowd, surrounded by insurgents. He joins other commanders, men and women, on the wooden stage built for the encounter and these soldiers of strict military discipline try to give instructions and directions, with incredible patience and unexpected tenderness, to the throngs of “intergalactics” below, very unused to following orders or conforming to collective discipline.

I am impatient with their (our) high-maintenance individuality and spoiled self-absorption, but our Zapatista hosts are endlessly tolerant. “Compañeros we know things are difficult here,” they repeat each time they give instructions or facilitate a meeting. The rain and the tents and the latrines are problems we know, they explain, we are accustomed to this but we know you are far from home and have different ways. “Please move to the auditorium now,” “please keep your interventions brief,” “please come on time in the morning.” Nevertheless it is the people in the ski-masks who dance all night in the rain, the music of the cumbias just dying down as we are dragging ourselves out of wet tents in the morning, and yet they never miss a meeting. Stamina for celebration like stamina for struggle.

The table on women’s rights is one of the most animated. The EZLN women, many of whom don’t speak Spanish, describe their struggle not only to earn a place in the decision-making structures of the community and the common space of the movement, but to construct their own discourse and practice of “feminism” which made no sense to them as introduced by feminists from elsewhere in Mexico and the world. “Women’s rights” are not something that can be taught us or given us, they explain. Our freedom and choice is not so much a “right,” as they
put it, as the result of a struggle for something we have decided we wanted. That’s why they have a “Revolutionary Law for Women” rather than a universal declaration of women’s rights. At one point they whisper with their heads together and then a young woman who speaks more Spanish takes the microphone. The Zapatista women want to ask “the women of the world” a question, she says. We want to know how you deal with physical and sexual abuse? We also want to know how you see us, how you view us here in our struggle? It is a sincere question; they are curious, these women from all over the world who made it all the way here to their home must know something about this struggle of women! But the crowd is silent for an embarrassingly long moment. Someone finally stands and says, well, we denounce these crimes, for ourselves and for others, and we demand justice. But running through many minds is: the implementation or execution of such laws for many of us depends on who you are and the amount of social power you command in a given society. That is not freedom exactly; it is a degree of relative privilege. Another woman from the crowd stands to say, we have been watching the Zapatista women, to learn how to create our freedoms rather than receive them. Or wager them on someone else’s unfreedom, we could add. This is debated late into the evening under wet tarps and bare bulbs over pozole agríco (a sour cornmeal drink), atoló (a sweetened rice or oat drink), and café de olla (coffee boiled with maple sugar and cinnamon).

In the evening Subcomandante Marcos makes an appearance but speaks only in Tzotzil, the language of the highlands where we are meeting. Commander Hortensia addresses visitors in Spanish. The cumbias start playing soon after and the rest of the days’ questions are resolved where, as the Zapattistas like to say, happiness should be kept, in the feet.

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4.3.5 Production

Each zone holds an extensive variety of cooperatives, including coffee coops, artisanship coops, garden projects, bakeries, and chicken or livestock raising, which collectivize work and commerce with the goal of minimizing labor, creating the possibility for a larger capital investment and enabling the automation of certain tasks without compromising the integrity of the product, process, or person laboring. It is important to note that these projects are not built around the idea of “collectivization” in any traditional state-socialist sense, but rather very practical issues and obstacles of small-scale production and commerce. One of these is the intensive labor, especially women’s, required in the daily tasks of grinding corn by hand, for example, or the inability to generate a substantial enough base for chicken or livestock reproduction on an individual or familial level. This has been addressed in the coops through collective purchases such as corn-grinding and rice-shelling machines, or animals that provide food or the opportunity to sell food (Rovira 1997). Another common problem is the instability created by market fluctuations, especially during neoliberal deregulation, and vulnerability to the intermediary exploitation of market whims and community needs, which usually consists of being forced to sell low during harvest times and buy high during lean times (Oventic 7/20/2007). One the most notable projects in this regard are the collective warehouses in the Jungle zone. These warehouses provide the communities with a collective storage space and an accessible commercial center which allows them to evade the market fluctuations and predation by intermediaries, as well as the transportation costs in going to market, which often nearly eliminate any profit margin (La Realidad 7/27/2007). These warehouses have been so successful that they

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44 Collectivization in that sense refers to the processes prescribed discursively and implemented historically in state communist regimes whereby individual property was eliminated, labor “collectivized” and the surplus assumed by the state.
are able to use their extra earnings to support other activities in the movement—such as marches or encampments—and to send their own solidarity to other places of struggle.\textsuperscript{45} In some instances the autonomous systems overlap: in one autonomous school, elementary school students each bring a chicken as “tuition,” which has allowed the school to develop a full chicken coop from which there is a constant source of eggs and meat for student meals. Agricultural projects are another aspect of the autonomous productive systems, including the development and use of bio-insecticides, composting, the development of organic fertilizer, the rejection of genetically modified seed and chemical treatments, and the preservation of soil and conservation of native seeds.\textsuperscript{46} Again, while official statistical data is unavailable with regard to health indices in the autonomous communities, general indices of severe poverty in the region have shrunk, and, as reported by the EZLN and no small feat in rural Chiapas, hunger has been eradicated in Zapatista territory (Castellanos 2008a).

While these projects in collective production are oriented in large part toward subsistence, they also have an important commercialization and trade aspect which allow communities to acquire products they cannot themselves produce, as well as to create a collective surplus that can be reinvested in other community projects (La Realidad 7/27/2007). The

\textsuperscript{45} In 2005 corn was sent to “the people of Cuba;” 2006’s contributions were sent to the resistances in San Salvador Atenco and Oaxaca.

\textsuperscript{46} Mexico is home to 53 different races and at least 16,000 known varieties of corn, for example, which hold a wealth of nutritional qualities not found in the standardized yellow corn produced, for example in the United States (Serratos et al. 1995). When NAFTA went into effect, dropping drastically the market price for corn and putting millions of Mexican farmers off their land, US yellow corn, grown primarily as livestock feed in the US, flooded the Mexican market. Large Mexican food companies found it cheaper to by US corn then local corn, thus profoundly changing the nutritional makeup of important national food products. As the Mexican population depends on corn for 45 percent of its diet, this has profound effects on the health of the population (http://www.fao.org/docrep/t0395e/t0395e08.htm, accessed November 20, 2010). This was accompanied by aggressive campaigns by companies such as Monsanto to distribute “terminator seeds” and other genetically modified varieties in all of Mexico, which has both jeopardized the ongoing use of native seeds, exhausted soils through the necessary chemical outputs necessary for their seed brands, and contaminated local seed varieties.
development of economic programs that go beyond subsistence are an important aspect of creating autonomy in a real sense. As several analysts of “alternative” development have pointed out, the propensity to confuse all market interaction with neoliberalism can condemn communities to a minimum subsistence level and an ongoing dependency structure (Le Bot 1997, 42). The autonomous production and agricultural projects all have important effects on a small scale—the generation of a wider nutritional range of organic food under local control—but inherent failures on a larger one. The use of locally adaptive and nutritionally rich inherited seed is threatened, for example, by massive agro-industrial campaigns to distribute commercially-produced and/or genetically modified seed, commercialization is still somewhat limited to solidarity niche markets, and seasonal failures can not yet be subsidized by a large enough or developed enough base to maintain the most vulnerable of innovative or sustainable practices. The capacity to create a productive base or a market function or sphere not dependent on the solidarity niches or commodity chains of what we today consider the market, is no small task, but an important one for a collective social and political actor capable of making choices for life beyond subsistence.

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Those who echo this last point most clearly are the other heroes of this encounter: the representatives from the Movimento Sem Terra of Brazil. They have been functioning for 23 years, have over two million members, with 350,000 families living on occupied land in 23 of 26 states in the country. The size of their “recuperated” territory surpasses the land area of Italy. But reflecting on their struggle they comment that they have gone from depending on the latifundista who owned the land to depending on multinationals that possess the seed and growing technology. At one point they converted all of their fields to organic crops and came up against the same enemy: the three certifying companies for organic produce in the country were
subsidiaries of the same multinationals that owned the dominant non-organic seed technology against which they were fighting. “This is what domination consists of today. It’s not enough anymore to take the land, or the ‘means of production,’” they stated. “It is an immaterial domination situated in a knowledge market.” And in a knowledge market one can’t resist by creating one’s own corner on the market, or with one’s own particular patent. Immaterial accumulation is only contested with some kind of open access or common-ness, and that can’t be created alone. They comprehend what the Zapatistas are trying to do here, in networking their own autonomous practices, in bringing people together, in trying to increase the opening and the intensity of each aperture.

The Good Government Councils continue giving data for each caracol: income in, income out, number of clinics, primary schools, promoters trained, length of governing terms, philosophy of education, pedagogy, etc. I am startled sometimes at the amount of information they divulge. There are most certainly undercover police in the attending public, and intelligence agents, and paid “orejas,” literally “ears,” civilians that are paid for gathering information. What precedent do we have for an organized resistance that is not only not hidden, but that is in fact displayed and described by its “perpetrators,” people who publicize their project but live semi-clandestine lives? What can we understand about a situation in which antagonism must be open in order to be effective and individuals made anonymous in order to be seen? Or more precisely, what are the parameters of a project that is antagonistic to capital, evasive of individual interpellation, and open to self-disclosure? Or perhaps the question is, how does one first make oneself collective, and then become simultaneously collectively intelligible to others and inaccessible to dominant power? Can the collective subject escape the trap of governance? Can territorial self-government address immaterial domination?
4.3.6 Communication

In a region where 36 percent of the population does not have access to running water and 35 percent do not have electricity, communication capacity—not only to receive information but to produce it—once seemed a very distant reality. While Zapatista communities still have limited or sporadic electricity, each zone has been able to develop autonomous programs in radio broadcasting and video-production. Each of the caracoles now has computer access and a satellite internet connection, and each Good Government Council learns to use word-processing and internet-browsing programs. Where as military aggressions and human rights violations were previously covered and reported by non-governmental organizations from urban centers in the state, now the Autonomous Councils draft, publish, and circulate their own denunciations as autonomous authorities, documents that have come to be respected and circulated by state and national newspapers and national and international human rights organizations. Communications promoters have learned to use video and photographic cameras for the documentation of abuses and aggression within their communities as well as the recording of constructive aspects of community life, both for internal circulation and self-education as well as for distribution outside Chiapas. Radio Insurgente, the EZLN’s mobile pirate radio station, broadcasts (though sometimes sporadically) in multiple indigenous languages across the state, presenting programs on current politics, Mexican history, gender issues and women’s rights, information on other

47 Access to electricity is aided by a variety of energy sources provided by solidarity projects, including water turbines and solar panels, but complicated by the fact that many of the Zapatista communities are part of a vibrant nation-wide resistance movement against overcharging by the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) and refuse to pay electric bills. As the CFE periodically cuts off electricity to the communities in resistance, community members have learned to reconnect and mend electricity lines, making it difficult for the CFE to keep up with the resistance in denying electricity access.

48 In these cases, initial training is usually provided by outside organizations or advisors; the most successful of which manage to facilitate and internal reproduction of knowledge, though this is not always the case. The communications area, more than any of the other autonomous systems, have tended to rely heavily on outside advisors and support, in part due to the technology required.
social struggles in the country, reports of repression or problems in certain areas of Zapatista territory, and updates on the situation of political prisoners, mobilizations, or other current movement initiatives in process.\textsuperscript{49}

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In this encounter we move between three different caracoles, sometimes with 18-22 hour rides between communities on the back of pick-up trucks where we stand clinging to the iron bars that frame the truck beds and swinging into each other as the trucks bounce over rocks and through mud. By the 20th hour we can barely stand. In one caracol it rains for three days but there is no water to bath because the tubes are broken and there has been paramilitary activity close to the river and it is not safe, they tell us. We pack our unbathed selves into the trucks to the next community where the sun blazes relentlessly for the next three days and the wind has swept away the tarp that was to provide shade during the meetings and there is no option but to sit and simmer as it beats down on us. The electricity is out, as it often is, and the bottled water gone, a result of the thousands of parched foreigners, so one can only buy a very warm coke for relief. In my tent we eat salt on a few carefully divided precious pieces of watermelon to replace what is lost through sweat. The restrictions of negotiating so many different languages and the abundance of different ideas, combined with intentional and accidental efforts to do something un-tried and un-prescribed provides a unique sociality. You have to express yourself more clearly, perhaps less precisely, but more honestly, without the crutch of small talk or conversational shortcuts. It is both invigorating and exhausting but never tiresome.

\textsuperscript{49} Radio Insurgente has its own webpage: http://www.radioinsurgente.org/index.php.
4.3.7 A New Generation

While the autonomous systems began primarily to substitute for absent or poor state services in health, education, and employment, and later to maintain the Zapatista insistence on rejecting state aid all together, what they became went far beyond simply substituting, improving, or making these systems more “inclusive” (Zibechi 2008a, 31). They become integral parts of the emancipatory process itself and the creation of subjects both constituted in and capable of constructing that process. What happens to the children who grow up in [the context of] resistance? Who go to autonomous schools, who see their brothers and sisters begin to serve as health promoters, who witness not only women insurgents but women commanders? What happens to young people, the EZLN asks, who have seen the solidarity and heard the stories of resistance of people from all over the world who have come to their communities? Who as adolescents learned to set up mobile radio stations and as teenagers become insurgent radio announcers? “They are new,” the EZLN answers itself, they are “other,” and “they are better than us, than those of us who started the EZLN and carried out the uprising”; “they have a broader vision, a firmer step…” “they are more open, better trained, more intelligent, more determined, more conscientious” (EZLN 2005e).

Over and above the obstacles from “outside”—the imposition of neoliberal policy, the onslaught of war, the challenges of survival, the brutality of counterinsurgency—autonomy has a “self-limit,” Zibechi states. The society of dominator-dominated, of master and slave, of leader and follower, is internalized into the subject through alienation from work (the separation of conceptualization and execution), from self (the separation of mind and body) and from others (to whom one relates only through the commodity). That subject is trained to look for answers, ideas, expertise, and instruction—in effect, orders—always elsewhere; in short, “to locate the organizing axis of life outside itself “(Zibechi 2002, 5). That is the “state inside,” the subject that
can not imagine, much less construct, how societal provision, purpose, interaction, and excess would be organized outside of a transcendent rule. To be rid of those characteristics of blind obedience, subordination, and dependency cannot be an individual decision, Zibechi conditions, but must be rather a collective practice. The set of social relations and use of time and space initiated in struggle and enabled by a shared, self-organized daily life and territory are motions that orient collective practice toward an increasingly coherent collective subject, and thereby the elimination of the self-limits of the individualized subject. It is only that collective body, in a continual process of self-construction, that can delegate tasks, respect leadership referents, and assign responsibilities without displacing political subjectivity. The autonomous institutions, we can see here, are part of the conditions of possibility for the construction of another, an “other,” subject.

There are different kinds of anticapitalist resistance, Marcos says, with reference to the denunciation by one of the participants in the encounters that that the indigenous communities in resistance sell Coca-Cola in their autonomous stores. One kind consists of attacking the consumption side of capitalism, to avoid consuming certain products, a valid, respectable (“and above all healthy”) position,” he concedes. There is another kind that targets the distribution aspect, promoting small or cooperative businesses, providing direct benefit to the disenfranchised of the market. There is yet another kind of resistance, he states, that sees that workers receive a salary not equal to their output, do not control their own production, and that a few individuals own almost everything while a great many have absolutely nothing; “You could change the consumption habits and the means of distribution of a society, and if property of the means of production doesn’t change, neither will exploitation.” As Zapatistas, he clarifies, we have chosen

50 Presentation given at roundtable on “Land and Territory,” July 20, 2007, San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico.
this kind of resistance, to “take the means of production back from the bosses.” But there is still something else, he adds. In the Lacandón Jungle, in the most remote of communities, Marcos narrates, there has long been practiced a method of fermenting sugar cane or corn, grown by those same communities, that makes an alcoholic beverage, produced by the same people who grew the corn or sugarcane. In this production, he notes, without exploiting a labor force, without consuming buying from transnational companies or enriching corporate executives, the indigenous inhabitants who themselves live on the land, grow the corn, and produce the alcohol, would themselves get drunk, something that often resulted in domestic violence. That may be “anticapitalist alcoholism.” he says “but it is a crime in any case.” And what we understand, he continues, requires a resistance that does not only consume responsibly, distribute fairly, and own the means of production; it must also, to put it bluntly, produce men who don’t get drunk and beat their wives. That is the production of subjectivity, the work that capital is always doing and the work that many in movements, drawn so easily into demands for and negotiations over elements within the terms of capitalist exchange, fail or forget to do. The capacity of a movement to create itself—to produce and reproduce new subjectivities as a practice charged with ethical dimension and political decisions—is perhaps the clearest demonstration and biggest challenge of autonomy.

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Indeed one of the first things one learns now in Zapatista territory is that the ego most of us hold and carry around is not an inherent human trait but something like a collectively adopted individual distortion, a spectacle performance of self. It may surface as a display of being competent, confident, and powerful, or as insecure, uneasy, and inferior, but it has no play in any form here where human relations don’t traffic ego with the same value. That sense of individual self hangs in the air on a visitor as if they had a tail. It is unseemly, awkward, an obstacle to authentic communication. Visitors with tails sense this baggage and turn around clumsily to see
what is the matter with them and knock things over with this awkward appendage. But to speak with people without tails is disarming, illuminating; interaction lacks the pretense of trying to come off a certain way or impose a certain impression. It composes part of the “magic” felt there, I have noticed that people come back again and again searching it out. But it is not magic and it is not an inherent trait of the indigenous; it is a symptom of a particular system of social relations. On an individual level it is pleasant, a mix of humility and dignity that inspires empathy and bans pity. On a collective level it is an overwhelming tangible energy that exudes power but permits no measure of its force.

When I get up to speak for the collective I represent in the US during one meeting stretching late into the night, the lights go out again, and the thousands of faces in front of me disappear. Lieutenant Colonel Moisés comes from the back of the stage and tells me to try to speak into the dark. He stays with me and makes encouraging comments as we see if the lights and the microphone can be hooked up to a generator. What can be said with accusation or accolade of people who changed the collective political imagination of an entire generation and are so humble as to care what each of us has to say about our collective, in our city, in our country? How to understand a movement that has earned the power and rapport to convoke a meeting of thousands in a remote and hostile jungle under military occupation, who from their own absolute poverty send relief aid to the hurricane damaged coast of Chiapas, water to flooded Tabasco, corn to Cuba, coffee to Bolivia, who, upon earning the space to speak, sit down to listen?

Having been for many years part of the national resistance against over-charging by the federal electric company, the Zapatistas know how to reconnect cut power lines. The lights come back on and the microphone screeches and somebody yells “viva la autonomía!” and the crowd shouts “viva!” Then they are silent so I can speak and be followed by many more, rain again
providing the soundtrack to all of these voices in their second and third languages, struggling to create a common one.

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4.4 Conclusion: The Tightrope of Democracy

All of this now, everything we have and do now, good or bad, it is we as Zapatistas that decide and do it, not the bosses/masters.

This is why our people hope that [our account of] our practice is useful to you, brothers and sisters from elsewhere, Mexico and other countries. Because when the people rule, no one can destroy them. And also, we have to realize that the people, our peoples, can fail, can make mistakes. But then, well, there’s nobody to blame.

Lieutenant Colonel Moisés

The plans in the works through the Mesoamerican Corridor, Plan Puebla Panama, IIRSA, and the Merida Initiative hold several levels of strategy. The highways, railroads, and other large infrastructural projects that make for contentious battles with the thousands of communities to be displaced or erased by their installation are merely small side projects (and a good development front) for investors and planners who have their eye trained on the massive resource extraction potential for which Latin America has been given a global role. These “growth” projects however are focused less on the necessities of the world’s population (the purported necessity for the efficient export of raw materials to efficient manufacturing centers) than on the “necessity” of maintaining a certain profit margin. But layered over that, and most importantly, the principle purpose of these plans is not the lucrative nature of each investment venture but the re-establishment and reproduction of the “general conditions of valorization” (Ceceña 2009b, 2) that provide the basis for not just economic but total control in the region. Those goals require not just

51 Address to European Solidarity Caravan, La Garrucha, Chiapas, Mexico, August 2008.
a compliant population but in many respects a cooperative one. And as we saw in Chapter Three, those who “won’t cooperate” have no place in the “public” realm, now so thoroughly appreciated by private capital.

The mega-projects described above are a parallel, not an alternative, to war as a tool of domination, in Chiapas carried out primarily through what has been widely identified as the low-intensity war on the communities in resistance and increasingly through a wider criminalization of protest in the region (and the country) as a whole. In some cases, the mega-projects offer a role to the affected population—as symbols of authentic indigenousness in tourist attractions or employees in services offered—an opportunity to “join” the chain of accumulation with a very tiny cut. In other cases they offer only criminalization and repression; if the conquest of both territory and subject are resisted, then the “unmanageable” can only be removed.

The resistances to this strategy are not few. But individual resistance in this context has no hope and even collective resistance in the form of localized protest has limited possibilities, fragmented both by disconnection from other local protests and by all of the internal difficulties that fighting the external current provokes. Understanding the complex strategies behind these public-private development plans, their connection both to the violence of making war and the subtleties of producing subjects, is a necessary step to evaluating the ground for a project antagonistic to those plans. What has been created in Zapatista territory, I have tried to demonstrate here, is an autonomous social-spatial organization broad enough in scope to not only protect a population but to provide for a self-organization of (the defense and production of) difference. The Zapatistas’ impulse to simultaneously create a strategy on the ground (for themselves) and an opening (to others) is no small advance in the attempt to begin to create fronts of struggle adequate to the battle lines—in all of their social, geographical, and subjective dimensions—of the Fourth World War.
Perhaps what is most unique to Zapatismo has been a consistent ability to select strengths and wean out weaknesses from historical traditions as well as contemporary forms. This includes inventing or experimenting with new models where needed and working through a process of recuperation, elimination, and refinement to create an ecology of practices that work together to increasingly intensify the principles from which they arose. The caracol is not only a symbol of convocation but a style of walking, the Zapatistas say: it does not go straight from one point to another, nor is it a circle that returns to its beginning point, but rather a series of paths that, while circling, always move forward (EZLN 2003b).

The structure of the Good Governing Councils and the functioning of the caracoles are oriented toward promoting a politics of what we called above non-domination. But such a politics cannot be “mandated”; it is not a platform or a series of policy positions, but rather a constant interaction, process, and play of forces. It must be created over and over in the actions of subjects and communities everyday. Zapatista self-governance, then, might be seen as an attempt to create a series of practices that systematically recreate the possibility of a politics of non-domination. This requires not permanent mobilization so much as constant participation, an “unlimited access to politics” that makes manifest the idea that autonomy is not only or not even principally a political project but rather self-generated social life (Ornelas 2004). The power of community and emphasis on collectivity emphasized in so many ways in Chiapas is not due simply to indigenous tradition or geographical organization or mechanisms of survival, though it is in part all of those things. The social power that has come from the development of particular laws and practices in Zapatista territory—the Revolutionary Law for Women, the prohibition on alcohol, the rotating

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authority positions—are progressive, but not in themselves radical. Their radicality comes from the fact that they are collectively decided upon and implemented, networked with other practices and subject to the continual re-approval or removal by a collective body. My reading of Zapatismo is the lesson that any particular policy in any particular moment can have progressive or regressive effects; what makes politics is the capacity and structure to decide on those policies in democratic fashion, and to hold open the space for the constant and continual reevaluation or recreation of that decision. What has been constructed in Zapatista territory—through the Good Government Councils, the autonomous institutions or systems, the entity of the assembly—is that capacity, not progressive policy but rather an enormous social power and potential.

In that sense, under this politics, there are no guarantees. There is no policy or order that can protect us from tyranny or repression, from fascism or domination. One can create no permanent law (which would stand above society) that keeps a force of domination (the state, or another body of practices) from forming. There is only the decision of the people of the present—that is, the infinite decision-making capacity of the present. And there is no way to guarantee the goodness of what the people of the present decide, there is only the guarantee that it will be their decision. “When we learn to govern ourselves, the communities in general learn to rule and keep vigil over the work of their governments and the governments learn to obey,” one member of the Good Government Councils says, “the people as a people are wise” (Radio Insurgente 2004, emphasis mine). Another Council member adds, “We may still make errors ourselves, but they will be our errors, not those that are imposed on us” (Radio Insurgente 2004). True democracy is a tightrope walk; it is always a risk, but it is also always the possibility for a collective life free of domination and free for self-construction.

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As we leave La Realidad, the starting point of “Reali-Ti,” where this Encounter between Zapatistas Peoples and Peoples of the World comes to an end, it feels as though we are standing on the edge of time, under a nearly full moon, smelling the rain out the cracked window as jungle turns back into mountain, the head of the Korean farmer’s league representative falling with sleepiness onto the shoulder of a Zapatista farmer in the back window of the truck in front of us. Zapatista autonomy and its constant aperture and appeal to the world is what provides us with an example of what the local-global conundrum has disguised: it is not that you must overcome the local to reach the global, or deny the global in order to embrace the local, but rather, in practice, if you dig deep enough into the local, you hit the global. Not from the top, where things seem to connect, but from the bottom, where they have never been separated.
5. **Encounter: The Politics of Bridge-making**

Behind our black mask, behind our armed voice, behind our unnamable name, behind what you see of us, behind this we are you. Behind this we are the same simple and ordinary men and women that are repeated in all races, painted in all colors, speak in all languages, and live in all places. Behind this we are you.

Brothers and Sisters of the entire world, welcome to the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. Welcome to this corner of the world where we are all the same because we are different. Welcome to the search for life and the struggle against death.

EZLN Mayor Insurgente Ana Maria

5.1 **Introduction: A Farewell that is not a Farewell**

After the birth of the caracoles in summer of 2003, the EZLN and the Zapatista communities kept a low public profile and initiated little external communication. The Good Government Councils were working out the kinks of a wholly self-governing territory and their relationship to non-Zapatista indigenous communities and nearby city-dwellers. The Councils trained and retrained as rotating members filed in and out, handling the issues of each day, the administration of the health and education programs, agrarian problems, and externally-sponsored projects. Things seemed to be moving along in the autonomous systems of the Zapatista communities. Even the 10th anniversary of the uprising, January 1, 1994, was celebrated relatively quietly, without public demonstrations or communiqués, and quickly, with the communities returning promptly from fiestas in the caracoles to their work in the Councils and autonomous systems. It thus came as a surprise when on June 19, 2005, the EZLN declared a red alert in their territory.

The red alert announced that all caracoles would be closed until further notice, that all EZLN insurgents would be withdrawn from the communities with only civilian Zapatistas

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1 Welcoming remarks at the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. La Realidad, Chiapas, Mexico, July 27, 1996.
remaining, and that all national and international “civilian society” should leave rebel territory immediately. The following day the EZLN issued another pair of communiqués announcing that it had completed a process of military restructuring begun in 2002 to create substitute chains of command (as well as the separation of political-military functions from the civil structure in the communities) in order to survive the annihilation of the current leadership in case of enemy attack. The reason for the red alert, they explained, was that the CCRI-GC (General Command of the Revolutionary Clandestine Indigenous Committee) of the EZLN was entering a process of referendum with all of the Zapatista communities. The referendum would address the current moment of struggle and the national and international context, and propose to the communities—the “supreme command of our movement”—a new phase of struggle that would “risk everything” that had been gained so far. The EZLN command was thus “returning the word” to its bases of support for this decision, and, if approved by the majority, giving all Zapatistas the liberty to choose to continue in this next step (EZLN 2005c).

On June 21, 2005, the EZLN sent out to all of its national and international supporters “a goodbye that is not a goodbye,” stating,

If there is one thing that we as Zapatistas treasure it is keeping our word. All this time we have told you we would fight for the indigenous peoples of Mexico. And that is what we have done. We told you we would try the paths of dialogue and negotiation to achieve our demands….And that is what we have done. We have also said, falta lo que falta (what is missing is yet to come), and well, it is time to start looking for that missing piece. Not looking, building. Building something else, something ‘other.’…It has been an honor to work with you. If you decide to delink from us as we take this next step, you are free and welcome to do so. If you want to take this next step, to build this ‘other’ thing with us, you are free and welcome to do so” (EZLN 2005d).

The world that had watched the Mexican southeast for over 11 years was stunned, some excited, some panicked, many confused. Speculation proliferated about a possible guerrilla offensive, a return to warfare, or an imminent military attack that would require a massive defensive mobilization. The non-governmental and human rights organizations attentive to the
movement bustled about, adrenaline high, dragging out maps and theories and plans without a clear idea of what should be mapped, theorized, or planned. Solidarity collectives all over the world and national and international workers on the ground in Chiapas blinked in bewilderment at the goodbye that was not a goodbye.

The Zapatista referendum resulted in a 98 percent approval for the new step. It was almost exactly one year before the much-awaited and much-hyped presidential elections in which the “progressive” PRD party, defrauded in 1989 of the presidency, was widely expected to win. A renewed enthusiasm for the institutional left was circulating throughout many parts of the country: after seventy years of unchallenged and near dictatorial rule of the PRI ended with PAN victory in 2000, and after the first PAN government was largely judged as a disappointment and a failure, many placed renewed hope in a PRD administration to provide change for a country riddled with corrupt and ineffective government, deepening poverty, and increasing violence. As the presidential campaigns were already in full swing, and with the mass media dominated by polls showing a clear PRD victory, the Zapatistas released “The Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle” in which they announced the launch of “The Other Campaign,” their proposal for an anti-capitalist, non-electoral movement for an “other politics.”

The great majority of recognizable leftist actors and institutions in Mexico, as well as in other parts of the world, met the announcement with a mix of confusion and rage. According to the pragmatic “correlation of forces” analysis that has long characterized leftist programs in Latin America, this was not an appropriate evaluation or adequate move in the “current conjuncture.”

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2 The first five declarations had come out at intervals, beginning with the First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle, dated December 31, 1993; the Second Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle on June 10, 1994; the Third Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle January 1, 1995; the Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle January 1, 1996; the Fifth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle July 17, 1998. Seven years passed before the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle was released in June 2005.
For the first time in decades, the institutional left in Mexico had a chance, a seeming near guarantee, of winning the presidency, with a charismatic, apparently corruption-clean and morally sound candidate with a broad popular following. The Sixth Declaration however denounced all of Mexico’s registered political parties and candidates, including the PRD, as violently repressive and openly complicit in the neoliberal project. They pointed to the unabashed cross-over of PRI politicians into PRD ranks when the latter party showed electoral promise, to the left-handed administration of rightwing policies in Mexico’s massive and important federal district under PRD control, and to the violence of PRD-sponsored armed groups in Chiapas operating against the Zapatista communities. Given the total delegitimation of the political class, the EZLN claimed, a new force “from below and for below”—an “alternative to neoliberal destruction”—was needed. They declared that even the extensive autonomous systems in their territory could not withstand what they forecast to be the coming social, economic, and political crisis in Mexico and in the world, and that, in addition, “what we want can’t be won alone.” Our struggle “wants to be bigger,” the Sixth Declaration said, but the path and form of this struggle “doesn’t yet exist.” In simple, second-language Spanish, the document stated that in the effort to build this path, solidarity would no longer be sufficient and called on all those who are “humble and simple” yet “dignified and rebellious” to “walk with us in something very great which is called Mexico and something even greater which is called the world.” The EZLN invited everyone, as individuals or collectives, interested in this project to join the effort as “adherents” of the Sixth. “This is our simple word,” the document stated, “because it is our idea to call on others like us and to join together with them, everywhere they are living and struggling.”

The process set in motion by the Sixth Declaration has so far been understudied and only very partially examined. Large numbers of those in Mexico and around the world who had sympathized with Zapatismo deserted the movement upon the release of the Sixth, including most
of the intellectual left in Mexico and abroad, contributing to the lack of analysis surrounding this process. The marginality of those convoked by the Sixth—the lowest rungs of society—also added to this limited visibility and recognition.

This chapter will introduce just a few trajectories of the nascent practices of an “other politics” that will, if the EZLN is correct, force us to think difference and collectivity in the context of social and political movement in much different ways than we have been able to so far. The movement for an “other politics” had national and international components, beginning with the national-level “Other Campaign” to build a new program of struggle “of the left, anti-capitalist,” and “from below.” Such a task had to start, in the EZLN’s analysis, with a process of encounter among those “below,” emerging “through the ruins left by the neoliberal wars” to construct relations of recognition and respect, unmediated by the party and state bodies that had almost always controlled (or prevented) such interactions. This process would be initiated by sending a delegation of EZLN top commanders to every state in the nation to meet with other people in struggle, with the first of these journeys to be made by Subcomandante Marcos. As a representative of a community organization in North Carolina—“adherent” of the Sixth Declaration—I accompanied that initiative, and it is that journey that will provide the ethnographic thread leading us through this effort at building an “other,” anti-capitalist politics.

The bridge I would like to build here is between what may seem to be the micro-level encounters of anonymous actors in insignificant places in the Other Campaign and the Zapatista politics of encounter more generally, and the possibilities these encounters hold for what is one attempt at a post-neoliberal politics of struggle in Latin America. Far beyond the creation of an organized front or alliance of groups to wage a particular battle or win a certain victory, the goal of the Other Campaign, I will claim here, was essentially an attempt to create a collective subject, across and maintaining a wide array of differences, and capable of acting in concert, not just
toward a particular goal but toward building a common project that would (aim to) become a different society. The discussion here will attempt to follow that construction by re-visiting some of the specific encounters along the Other Campaign’s initial journey, something that could be understood as a net cast wide to start to pull together an extremely diverse set of actors in a common project. The anchor for this discussion will be what was an extremely significant point of rupture for the EZLN and Mexico in general and a point of pressure across the continent—the break with the electoral cycle and the institutional left. Toggling back and forth between the construction of the Other Campaign’s net(work) and its points of rupture with the dominant system will allow us what can still only be a preliminary glimpse at what is being constructed, via a new time and space of struggle and society, as a kind of common.

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When Subcomandante Marcos emerged from the Jungle on January 1, 2006, to begin the first journey of the Other Campaign, it was on an old motorcycle, unarmed and unprotected. In the caravan that followed him we could barely keep up, weaving through the rocks and potholes of the rough dirt roads that require two hours of jaw-rattling driving from the Zapatista caracol of La Garrucha to where the highway starts in Ocosingo. It is a dozen years after the uprising. The arrest warrants for the commanders of the EZLN are technically still valid, but the Zapatistas are counting on vigilance for the stays granted as part of the San Andrés peace talks and after which they were never officially reactivated, as well as sufficient public support to make execution of the arrests unfavorable. Fifteen EZLN militia members, men and women, follow the motorcycle in a van; they will accompany Marcos (known in the context of the Other Campaign as “Delegate Zero” to signal that he was the first of many more commanders to journey out into the nation) through Chiapas before turning him over to Other Campaign members in the next state on the route. The militia members are not armed either, and aside from their silent presence
behind “Delegate Zero” during the first events in San Cristobal de las Casas, there is no security for the military chief of a rebel army that had so frustrated the Mexican army’s attempts to decapitate the movement and the Mexican government's attempt to discredit it. Marcos will travel the entire country like this, in EZLN uniform, radio, ski mask, and nothing in his hands but pencil and paper. We would become accustomed to this contrast throughout the journey, his quiet, alert, unprotected presence, listening intently and scribbling notes, but this day we are hanging on through the jarring ride and trying to maintain a semblance of the route organization so carefully established beforehand.

On the back of the motorcycle rides “el Pinguino,” a new symbolic EZLN mascot, a crippled chicken-turned-penguin that walks strangely upright, in part because of its disabled leg, but more importantly, the EZLN insists, because everyone has the right and desire to choose what they want to be and this chicken wants to be a penguin.

We pass state police patrols and federal security agents as we near Ocosingo, something else that will become commonplace along the way, but today it is still shocking to drive by them, without a second glance, with the EZLN commander they have sought for so long heading up this strange convoy.

At the gas station in Ocosingo, where we had agreed no one was to leave their spot in the caravan, everyone pours out of the vehicles and runs for the bathrooms. All of us. The masked militia women and about 15 more women from the caravan fill up the bathroom with its three meager stalls. Mas rápido! someone yells, button up outside! We race in and out of the stalls in various stages of undress. Somebody slams the door on a news camera hovering outside trying to get pictures of the militia women. We race back to the cars, which are already rolling out of the lot back onto the highway.
The plaza of San Cristobal de las Casas is packed that night for the first event of the journey, and the first public message of the Other Campaign is about love. Other loves, to be exact. Here “below,” where we are creating the Other Campaign, Subcomandante Marcos says to the thousands gathered, we have to make and respect our own paths and manners of building. And one of those things to be built involves “the question of love, “...we have learned as Zapatistas that in the world there are many paths and manners of love. And sometimes love is between men and men or between women and women...and like the indigenous, like young people, like women, these [forms of love] are repressed and exploited and dispossessed by capitalism. And so they must also have a space.” Making one’s path and manner a place of dignity, in love as in other things, is always a struggle. The Other Campaign, he proclaims this first day of the journey, is a space for such struggles.

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5.2 Election or Encounter

A large crowd again packs the next day’s meeting of adherents of the Other Campaign at CIDECCI (Indigenous Center for Integral Training) outside San Cristobal, with that strange assortment of people that would characterize many meetings of the Other Campaign: peasants, punk groups, professionals, NGO workers, local families, indigenous people from the highlands region around San Cristobal, students, academics, dinosaurs of the old local left and the anonymous anarchist contingents from various urban areas. We crowd into the wood-floored, pink-painted, aluminum-roofed octagonal building of the CIDECCI, it is strewn with multi-colored Christmas lights and hosts a blinking nativity scene in the corner. Everyone who wants to speak gets to speak, with the EZLN only speaking at the very end, and the meeting goes late. That night those of us who will continue on the caravan sleep on hard wooden tables in a drafty room part
way up the mountainside. The highlands are freezing this time of year and we can't get warm, but the clear crisp night is not made for sleeping. The night seems to race by even though we do not rest, and we have sweet coffee and clementines for breakfast while the cars warm up. We test the walkie-talkie radios for the road and wait for the departure signal.

We are off again toward Palenque, a five-hour drive that takes nine in the caravan. It is a winding mountainous road and the walkie-talkies chatter constantly trying to keep the caravan together. "Tope convoy!" Speed bump ahead. "Despejado." Clear passage. "Camiones queriendo pasar." We let two passenger buses pass us. The rearguard car got cut off, and we slow to wait for it. "Puerco de lado izquierdo," the vanguard car reports up the road. Pigs on the left? They must mean police, we concur. We prepare to photograph and videotape what we expect to be police photographing and videotaping us. But half a kilometer ahead we pass two enormous pigs ambling along in the left lane.

On the other side of the mountains the terrain flattens out and heats up. The Northern zone is incredibly hot, even in January. We near the army base outside Palenque and see that it is covered with Zapatistas. The Zapatista communities from the Northern Zone have come by the thousands to usher in the EZLN commission. They form human chains on either side of the caravan and they walk us, the entire caravan, from the army base to the town square. They are not militia or insurgents, but entire families, kids, old women, babies. Many of the women walk barefoot on the hot asphalt, the men in hot rubber boots. The young girls wear plastic sandals, and everyone wears a ski-mask in the boiling heat. They chant "viva’s" for the two hours it takes us to move a little over a mile. Viva el Subcomandante Marcos! Vivan the autonomous municipalities! Viva Delegate Zero! Viva national and international civil society!

Palenque is a PRI town. Its citizens peer out of their houses as these long lines of masked indigenous people, who live far from the concrete houses and paved streets, take the city by the
thousands, the first time they have entered hostile Palenque en masse. The people watch from their windows with a mixture of admiration and fear, it seems to me. The Zapatista chains close behind the last vehicle of the convoy, encircling us. I have never felt so safe. After standing and walking all day, the communities keep guard in shifts all night, arms linked in a circle around the entrance to the building where Delegate Zero stays. Each autonomous municipality is identified by a different color ribbon tied to their ski-masks, and every couple of hours a new ribbon color stands up, forms straight lines, and marches into the previous security circle, linking hands and expanding outward until they “burst” and replace the old one. The retiring security circle trickles away to rest on plastic tarps on the cement streets, where we are also sprawled uncomfortably, intermittently sleeping and watching this process. In the morning they again form chains and walk us back out of the city.

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5.2.1 The Right-handed Left

The world into which the Sixth Declaration and the Other Campaign emerged is what Raúl Zibechi marks as a significant transitional moment in not only Mexican but Latin American history (Zibechi 2009). The implementation of structural adjustment programs and the most brutal forms of neoliberalism had met fierce resistance across the continent in the 1980s and 1990s. The implementation of such programs in Central and South America through fear and violence (of dictatorships or far right-wing administrations) and shock (of economic fall-out and austerity)3 were no longer effective as population-management for policy-implementation. The movements that formed in resistance to neoliberalism had taken progressive administrations into

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3 See Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) for an analysis of how economic shock and physical violence have been used as a method to create public paralysis in order to implement unpopular neoliberal reforms.
power in many places, where often those administrations carried out new modes of neoliberal reform more effectively than their conservative counterparts (Zibechi 2009). While the primary “progressive” party in Mexico did not reach the presidency as expected in 2006 with popular charismatic candidate Andres Manuel López Obrador, it had in fact gained the second most important level of government in the country—the mayorship of Mexico City—in 1997, with the same man. The PRD, formed in 1989, had, even in the context of its more solidly leftist platform in early years, siphoned off movement leaders and incorporated them into its ranks as functionaries and party leaders, breaking down the movement momentum that had arisen in the 1960s and 70s (Anguiano 2010, Rodríguez Lascano 2008a). But as the only significant opposition to the oligarchic but seemingly all-powerful PRI that had ruled Mexico for seven decades, it was the claimed representative body of most of the left. Even the EZLN, early on, hosted PRD representatives in Zapatista territory and afforded them an exceptional role within the political class. It would be difficult to contest evidence that it was in fact the Zapatista movement that created the aperture for such substantial PRD growth in the 1990s, with the EZLN largely responsible for breaking the PRI’s 70-year stranglehold on Mexican politics, delegitimizing not only the current government but the neoliberal project in general, something no other force, including the PRD itself, had been able to do on a national level (Esteva 2005). That rupture, which effectively unhinged a large discontented population from what had seemed like the inevitable inertia of PRI control, generated a massive wave of support for the PRD as an alternative project. Upon winning the administration of the Federal District in 2000, Mexico’s most important city and home to 22 million people at the time (one fifth of the country’s entire population), the PRD assumed a powerful position in relation to movements and the left as a whole in the country. The PRD remained highly popular for the first years of its administration, even as it began to implement on a city level the same, though in more sophisticated a manner,
neoliberal policies as its PRI and PAN counterparts in the federal government. The PRD contingency in the federal congress simultaneously began to gather force, and in 2001 joined the PRI and PAN in rejecting the “Law for Indigenous Rights and Culture,” as we saw in Chapter Three, instead passing a weak, nearly farcical version widely considered to be a betrayal of the San Andres Accords (Castro Soto 2001; Gomez 2005; EZLN 2001). At the same time, the PRD top ranks at national and state levels began to fill up with “recycled” PRI politicians, fleeing the crisis of their own party after their historic loss of the presidency in 2000. In Chiapas this phenomenon was particularly acute as ex-PRI politician Juan Sabines received the support of López Obrador and the national leadership of the PRD to win the governorship of Chiapas under the PRD flag. His advisors and cabinet members consisted of other ex-PRIistas like the son of Roberto Albores Guillén, who as governor between 1997 and 2000 had waged a brutal low intensity war on the Zapatistas (with undisguised support for the paramilitary groups operative in those years), and Constantino Kanter, notorious leader of the anti-Zapatista elite of PRI politicians and plantation owners in Chiapas. Under Sabines’ government attacks and evictions against Zapatista communities increased, and at a national level López Obrador’s team (itself full of ex-Salinistas, members of the much maligned administration of PRI ex-president of Mexico, Carlos de Gortari Salinas) were silent (EZLN 2007a).

In this case, a progressive administration did not have to reach the presidency in order for the part-merger, part-split between movement and party to take place. According to the Zapatistas’ denunciation of the entire political class and disinterest in the left’s electoral hopes for 2006, the phenomenon of the party of the “left” with policies of the right, something that had or would happen repeatedly in other parts of Latin America, had been made clear to them years ago.

Their denunciation of that phenomenon, though, would cost them a large sector of civilian support and some of their most important alliances with the political and intellectual left.

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Chiapa de Corzo, Tuxtla, Tonalá, the towns begin to pile up on our itinerary across Chiapas. Each place has its own story. Everyone who wants to speak is allowed to do so. This can take many hours. At the end, when Marcos addresses each place, he begins by talking about the local issues, which often takes the shape of a short history and description of capitalism via the local fish price, or the situation of the shrimpers, the farmers, the cane-workers. He asks them if the politicians, of whichever party, have fulfilled the promises they made when they handed out sandwiches and trinkets on the campaign trail. Is a sandwich what you wanted? Did they repair the roads? Did they fix the bridge? Is there potable water?

In Joaquin Amaro on the Chiapas coast I am pressed in with 15 women under a tiny tarp that provides about that number of square feet of shade. They are listening and consulting each other, nodding and muttering, “Yes that’s right, they said that. No, it’s not going to change. That’s right, it doesn’t matter who wins, it will be the same, all empty promises…” In Huixtla the caravan is again received by human chains of Zapatista communities who encircle us and walk us to the event space. We eat oranges and candy from street vendors for four hours before the event starts. The roads are terrible here, they were damaged by Hurricane Stan in 2005 and the reconstruction has been almost completely stagnant for years. Marcos mentions that the work crews were sent out today, but only when the press came following the Other Campaign. “It’s true!” the people around me shout, “they never work otherwise!” Nobody can say where the state and federal money for reconstruction efforts ended up. At this meeting there is an alliance of pirate tricycle-taxis who want help from the Other Campaign. The tricycles are the local public transportation, they are pirate-taxis because they refuse to pay the (extortionist, they say) taxes
charged to register their taxi-trikes. They want Delegate Zero to be their “spokesperson” and to represent them when he talks to President Fox. Marcos explains at the end of the meeting that he can’t represent anyone, that he has no intention of talking to Fox, that this is about creating a struggle in which all can help each other below, not ask for help from anyone above. Many people aren’t used to this yet. Some insist on the need for a better leader, some think it should be Marcos. The trike-taxistas are disappointed, but they stay and listen. Later, after the first journey has finished and as we are traveling between caracoles in Chiapas during one of the international forums, a contingent of taxi-trikes accompanies us through the city of Las Margaritas with signs and horns supporting the forum and shouting vivas! to the Other Campaign.

At the Other Campaign meeting in Juchitan, Oaxaca, a drag queen, naked except for a tiny g-string, high heels, and wrapped in clear plastic, heavily made up and quite stunning, strolls through the town square with a sign proclaiming, “$$PRI, PAN PRD, Information Here$$” The plastic was covered in brand logos; claiming these letters (of the principle political parties in Mexico) are as easily bought and sold as the McDonald’s french fry cut out that covers the crotch of the plastic dress.

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There are adherents of the Other Campaign in Tepito, Mexico City, the poorest neighborhood of the historic city center, site of what they say is the largest black market in Latin America. It is recommended that no one go there alone, not during the day, and that no one go there at all during the night. But Tepito is known not only for its underground market but for its internal strength as a community. It was one of the most significant source of autonomous organizing efforts after the 1985 Mexico City earthquake in which tens of thousands were killed or buried in the rubble and large parts of the center city destroyed (Cleaver 1988b; Esteva 1991).
In the administrative confusion and government ineptitude of the PRI administration that followed, many communities quickly realized that saving their neighbors and surviving themselves would be up to them. Tepito, with its simple, rough housing units organized around common courtyards, was an almost entirely low-income neighborhood, but it was also a low working-hour neighborhood, depending for the most part on an independent occupational life in the street markets. This made for a vibrant and active social street life, and the community was consequently, and comparably, well-prepared to face the after effects of the earthquake, turning the moment of crisis into a moment of community opportunity, instead of the displacement which would face many other post-disaster victims, in Mexico City in 1985 and in many other parts of the world in the next decades (Cleaver 1988b). As center city housing either crumbled or was destabilized in the quake, the moment was ripe for property owners, long limited by rent stabilization laws, to demolish existing buildings and “rebuilt and renovate” with remodeled housing that would inevitably be unaffordable for most existing residents. This was something they had long desired for but which had been repeatedly thwarted by Tepito’s internal organizational strength.\(^5\) In the weeks after the earthquake, Tepito residents set up their tents directly in front of their home tenements, maintaining control over their territory, and, with other organized neighborhoods, forced the government to itself expropriate the buildings for public renovation or to then sell them directly, at affordable prices, to Tepito residents themselves (Cleaver 1988b). This organizational tactic gave them the strength to resist another twenty years of private investment attempts to “renovate” this part of the city center and maintain their community and common way of life.

\(^5\) Tepito in fact, in opposition to “urban renovation” plans for the historic city center, had in 1981 created its own local “autonomous” development plan, with help from sympathetic student architects from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, in Mexico city, and in fact won an international prize for the plan from the UNESCO. See Cleaver 1988.
Tepito is now under attack by similar interests but by a very different force. Being so close to the city center, the community occupies valuable blocks of what could be part of the “clean-up” and “renovation” to which the rest of the city’s historic district is subject.

Businessman and investor Carlos Slim, who currently ranks as the richest man in the world, owns much of the property in the historic center and additionally bankrolls many of the real estate and development ventures formally sponsored by the city tourist department—now administered by the PRD. Under PRD leadership headed by mayor Marcelo Ebrard, the city demolished several housing complexes and community marketplaces in Tepito, for reasons of “criminal activity” and “urban renovation,” achieving under the progressive PRD administration the urban displacement of low-income residents that many decades of PRI government had been unable to pull off.

People in Tepito formed the Movimiento Unido por el Barrio de Tepito (United Movement for the Tepito Neighborhood) and joined the Other Campaign.

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Everything is sold here, gadgets, electronics, appliances, clothes, books, movies, medicines, everything. Tepito is a massive producer of pirated CDs and movies. I meet a family that has an entire living room lined with towers of CD-burners, each stacked 15 high. They can make 15,000 CDs or DVDs a day. I meet a video collective, also adherent of the Other Campaign, who started a production business with the Tepito families. Now instead of the pirate pornography that characterizes much of the video-reproduction industry, some families make thousands of copies of leftist documentaries that then circulate cheap on the informal market. If we can get 200 houses like this one reproducing at this rate, they say, we can compete with Sony.

I go back to Tepito on my own later, on the day that the Movimiento Unido por el Barrio de Tepito plans to hold an event in the zocalo, a “lucha libre” (like WWF wrestling) between their community-created wrestler-hero, “Mr. Tepito,” and “Chucky-Marcelo,” the latter a
combination of Marcelo Ebrard, PRD mayor of Mexico City sponsoring the “cleaning up” of the neighborhood, and Chucky the evil doll from Don Mancini’s “Child’s Play” horror series. So far there have been two major evictions of about 400 families each, and Tepito is angry. They are denied permission to hold their wrestling match in the zocalo and so decide to hold the event on their own streets. I have been talking to several of the Tepito women I met earlier on the Other Campaign visit and they shove me in a car with them to go the few blocks in which the city center turns from hotels and tourist attractions into this rough neighborhood.

Today is Tuesday, Tepito’s day of rest, so the streets stands are picked up and stowed and everyone is relaxed and off duty. Most people are friendly. Many also have black eyes or wicked scars. I remember one young man in particular who looks like at one point his cheek must have been hanging by a thread but it has healed intact into a sickle shape on the side of his face. The intersection where we are, where the streets of Tenochtitlan and Jesus Carranza cross, is said to be the most dangerous in all of Mexico City, but early this Tuesday evening, with thunder rolling gently over us and evening sun washing over the clouds, with families relaxing with their doors open to the breeze, Tepito is...lovely. A little girl with hot pink wristbands does handstands on the sidewalk while a dozen men unload the portable boxing ring they have rented for the fight. Entire families ride around on mopeds with their kids sitting on the front or hanging off the back. I get on one moped with two other women, “this is how we get around in Tepito,” the woman driving says as a fourth woman hops on and a little girl crawls onto the handle bars and we ride, the five of us, up and down Tenochtitlan and Carranza, past La Fortaleza, la Costa Rica, La Cuarenta, all of the housing complexes that have been expropriated or are scheduled for eviction. There are small clusters of policemen on some corners. The police, the women say, under Ebrard’s command, come around asking who the big guys are—the narcos—as if that was something we could answer without getting ourselves killed. Nobody asked us what we think would make Tepito
better or safer or happier to live in, they add. These are the “poor” in whose name and on whose support the PRD built its party image as the defender of the lower classes, “For the good of all, first the poor,” was the party slogan.

But the “poor” here have constructed an entirely different social imaginary. We ride back to the lucha libre and watch the exaggerated flips and somersaults and body slams as “Mr. Tepito” pulls out a dramatic hard-won victory over “Chucky-Ebrard.” The rain starts to come down in torrents so the wrestlers take a break and the crowd yells “TEPITO! TEPITO! TEPITO!” to the usual rhythm of the cry of “MEXICO!” that characterizes soccer matches all over the country. They read out loud their letter to Mayor Ebrard, which explains that Mr. Tepito, the masked and costumed wrestler-hero

is a symbol of the resistance and dignity of the men, women, young people, children, and elderly of the Tepito community…Mr. Tepito has no face because all of our faces are in him. Mr. Tepito has no price, because the attempts to buy him with a commercial plaza or other bribe will not succeed, the barrio is not for sale. Mr. Tepito is one and a thousand and he acts according to the orders of the community. Mr. Tepito fights, yes, but peacefully.

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5.2.2 The Stakes of the Sixth

Even before breaking completely with the institutional left, the Zapatistas had launched repeated initiatives to create a time and space of political activity outside partisan and electoral politics, not just for themselves but on a national and international scale. Even an abbreviated list of these is extensive: starting with the National Democratic Convention (CND) in August of 1994; the National/International Referendum on Indigenous Rights in August 1995 with over a million Mexicans and over 100,000 foreigners participating; the National Indigenous Forum in January 1996; the First Continental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in April 1996; the Special Forum on the Reform of the State in June 1996; the First Intercontinental
Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in July 1996; the first meeting of the permanent National Indigenous Congress in October 1996; the march of 9,000 Zapatistas through San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, in February 1997; the "motorized march" of 1,111 Zapatistas in September 1997 to Mexico City; the National Referendum on the COCOPA proposal (legislative version of the San Andres Accords) in San Cristobal de las Casas in November 1997; the massive national and international Consulta (referendum) in 1999 in which three million Mexicans took part; the Second National Encounter in May 1999; the Democratic Teachers Referendum in July 1999; the February 2001 March of the Color the Earth to Mexico City to demand implementation of the San Andres Accords; and the inauguration of the caracoles and the Good Government Councils in 2003. The flow of people in and out of Zapatista territory and the strategic sending out of Zapatista delegations would create a kind of constant encounter and exchange that, the EZLN would later report, was what repeatedly transformed the Zapatista movement, preventing internal ethnic fundamentalisms and stretching their analysis and capacity for innovation (El Kilombo 2008, 18).

Throughout these initiatives, the EZLN had taken care to distinguish between certain forces “above”—usually the PRD—and the rest of the political class, targeting particular processes and politicians as objects of enmity. And while their initiatives of struggle always aimed at systemic phenomenon, neoliberalism in particular, they had rarely explicitly defined their struggle as anti-capitalist. The Sixth Declaration changed all of this. Its significance was in part its willingness and insistence on naming in clear terms its enemy, capitalism, and define that enemy’s axes of operation, identified as exploitation, plunder, discrimination, and repression. This was an important qualification in the Mexican context: at issue was not just the corruption of the political class (something generally accepted to be a given) or the ideologies or policies of any
particular administration. With the Sixth the EZLN signaled not a party, policy, or politician at fault but a system in its entirety:

We can choose, compañeros y compañeras… We can say that everything we see and live every day is our fault, that we haven’t sufficiently developed our spiritual being, our good vibe, or because we haven’t lit enough candles. Or we can say that the problem is that one party is governing and we should change it for another party. We can think that our problems will be resolved there above. Or we can choose to look at ourselves and listen to ourselves here below…and realize that responsible for all of this is a system, the capitalist system (EZLN Other Campaign meeting in Veracruz 2/3/2006).

The analytical value of the Sixth was not only identifying these axes and their various forms, but outlining a strategy that recognized the system’s attempts to recuperate and incorporate dissent: the organization of the time and space of the worker, both in work and outside of it (laboral and social discipline); the individualization of the subject and its subsequent interpellation or marginalization (governance or criminalization); the inclusion of some sectors in the structures of power in order to ease the tension of social inequality by shifting the pressure of exploitation to weaker sectors (a ranked system of inclusion); and the invitation of certain oppositional forces to the negotiating table in order to convert their demands into something negotiable rather than antagonistic (internalization of the opposition). These tactics of capture and incorporation were what had repeatedly neutralized and domesticated union-based and sectorial struggles as well as multiple vectors of oppositional party politics. Their recognition would provide a foundational strength for the Other Campaign, as the PRD would attempt to pull into its ranks supporters from both the strongest (most powerful) and weakest (most vulnerable) sectors, and the PAN, in possession of the presidency and thus with power over federal security forces, would strike with calculated violence at the same—at the strongest (riskiest) and weakest (least protected). Governance or criminalization, attack or invitation, a smile at the “leaders” and a swat at the bases; this would be at play throughout the entirety of the Other Campaign.
There was no way out of this system, the EZLN concluded, on an individual or even sectorial level, one could not “opt out” alone:

we have reached a point where we cannot go any further, and, in addition, it is possible that we could lose everything we have if we remain as we are and do nothing more in order to move forward….A new step forward in the indigenous struggle is only possible if the indigenous join together with workers, peasants, students, teachers, employees…the workers of the city and the countryside” (EZLN 2005b).

As of the release of the Sixth Declaration, encounters within and outside of Zapatista territory took on a new characteristic: no political party participation, no representatives from “above,” no negotiations or dialogue with the “Society of Power.” Before the historic departure of “Delegate Zero,” the EZLN called for a broad series of “preparatory” meetings, inviting people all over the nation to Zapatista territory as a first attempt at generating a collective discussion of the basic principles under which the Other Campaign would be developed. These were divided into sessions convoked by unit or sector: indigenous peoples, social organizations, political organizations, collectives, individuals and families, and a final meeting for “anyone who couldn’t make it to any other meeting” (EZLN 2005f), culminating in a grand plenary held September 16, 2005, Mexican Independence Day.

Throughout the fall of 2005, Zapatista territory once again served as a global hub for generating a new political imagination. But, as the EZLN had already recognized, it was time for another kind of encounter. The forums in Chiapas relied too heavily on others’ money and means to travel to the remote Lacandón Jungle. Alliances with other “sectors” of society were important, but the most visible and accessible organization of these sectors—occupational, party-based, issue-oriented—led the organization of struggle too easily back into the territory of capital through demands that had to be negotiated on power’s field, i.e. wages, elections, legislation, providing for relations of competition or alliance within but not necessarily antagonistic to that
field. The “other politics” of the Other Campaign started, then, with the question of how to find and meet each other, to recognize “others” without the typical intermediaries, which functioned to establish representation and rank or separation and segregation, and to begin to lay groundwork for that “something else.” The Other Campaign proposed to do this by going to “where the people, humble and simple like ourselves, live and work” (EZLN 2005b).

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As the Other Campaign progresses it collects stories like sedimentary layers of capitalism in a previously undocumented topographical map. In La Venta, Oaxaca, all of the trees, bushes, even the weeds lean permanently in one direction due to the strong south winds that blow through this flat land. They did, that is, before the installation of massive wind turbines that tower over fauna that is now not allowed to grow over three feet tall, as not to inhibit the harnessing of the wind power. The isthmus, Subcomandante Marcos says in one town, is where the ocean hugged the earth and left her a waistline. The isthmus has its own identity, it crosses two states, Veracruz and Oaxaca, but the people who live there identify not as Oaxaqueños or Veracruzanos, but as people of the isthmus. The organizations that have resisted the megadevelopment projects have suffered severe repression in the last few years, with many members jailed, killed, or disappeared. They are the geographical and symbolic link between the Mexican southeast and the central and northern zones of the country, the spot that Plan Puebla Panama would essentially turn into a new border, making the central and southeast into tax-free maquila zones.

Salamanca, Guanajuato is the most contaminated city in the most contaminated county in all of Mexico. The people cite high indices of leukemia and other cancers, skins diseases, asthma, and respiratory diseases. The source of the pollution is the factory Tekim, a US company, which employs some 500-700 workers in the town. But it is not just the workers who are sick. None of
our women are healthy, a middle-aged woman, a cancer-survivor, claims, we all have cancer, leukemia, other diseases, and now our kids are born with these diseases. The factory has to release emissions all night because it is too much to bear during the day; even just the smell can make you vomit. A few years ago there was an explosion in the factory, and the people say that when the yellow mushroom cloud rose above the factory the food in their houses went bad and clothing disintegrated. There are only two more factories like this in the entire world—one in China and one in India. We are given blue surgical masks to cover our mouths and noses before we enter the town, but it feels shameful to put on a safety mask in front to the people who live and breath here every day. In any case, the yellow smoke and putrid smell are absent today, the factory paused operations when the Other Campaign came through. The health conditions do not get attention, one man says, the same people who feed us this massive toxic cocktail everyday are those who hide the information about health in the region. The Plan Puebla Panama will create many more Salamanca’s another worker warns, “never again another Salamanca!” he shouts. “Never!” the crowd repeats. Not in Mexico, not on this planet he adds, walking away, disappearing back into the poisonous streets of this town.

On our way to Yerba Buena, Colima, an indigenous Nahuatl community situated halfway up the side of a volcanic mountain, the volcano erupts in front of the sunset, treating us to pink and yellow and purple tinged gases rising from the mountain. This is the volcano that local land bosses and the municipal governments deem too dangerous for habitation and are threatening the relocation of the indigenous communities. The danger does not, however, they tell us, seem to apply to the luxury resort to be built on the same lava-laden land, one of the most exclusive on the continent, costing close to USD$3,000 a night. Bad enough would be if we were turned into servants of the international rich on our own land, one man comments, but there is not even opportunity for work. These hotels—this one’s owners are in Hong Kong—come with labor
power included. They bring their own workers from elsewhere. The people of Yerba Buena, where the soil is black with ash, say, “this culture that we have is much older than this flag [of Mexico] that we have just saluted. This culture is what we want to preserve.”

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People in many of these places know their coasts, clouds, soil, soot, storms, like rooms in a house. It is familiar to me, from growing up on a farm, where the weather is one’s boss, god, friend and enemy, interchangeably and with little seemingly little warning except for those who know the signs of the sky. If agro-industry and urbanization has for the most part erased such knowledge in the US, here forced migration, displacement, pollution, and in some places, gated resorts, do the same. “From the ruins of the neoliberal wars…” the Other Campaign had said.

Listening in this context is a strategy, an action, an art. As a strategy it runs counter to the ideologies of education of the masses, the recruitment of followers, or the establishment of party bases; it is a very different project, both politically and philosophically, from telling the people what they need to do and the program/party/platform they need to follow. As an action, it is not the listening we associate with sitting in an air-conditioned conference room with cold bottled water, hot coffee, a big comfortable chair and a carefully monitored time limit on all participations. It is hours and hours of standing outside under a scalding sun, or in a suffocating humidity humming with biting flies and mosquitos, or squished into an over-crowded under-ventilated primary school classroom, sweaty, hungry, thirsty, always thirsty, tired, and the meetings can go on for hours, three, four, seven hours. There might be three or four meetings a day. Imagine doing it in a ski-mask. As an art it requires overcoming the tendency only to hear what we already recognize as familiar, or to fit what we hear into the categories we already recognize, to see in the mirror always, to seek a confirmation of who we are and how we see things, instead of allowing, looking, longing in fact for a sign of something different.
The EZLN never spoke in these meetings until everyone in every place, no matter how extensive the assembly or long the meeting, had spoken. The conflictual factions and the great multiplicity of groups and communities in general who organized each stop on the journey entered this process of meeting each other in the process of organizing the visit of the EZLN commission, and hearing each other in this chain of encounters. “The wisdom of this man,” one journalist on the caravan overhears a woman say of Marcos after a meeting in Chablekal, Yucatan, “is that he knows to be quiet so that we have to listen to each other” (Gibler 2006).

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Later, another group of Other Campaign adherents, The Mothers of the Disappeared of Chihuahua, receive us in Ciudad Juarez. They are the women who organized in the late 60s and 70s to demand an accounting for their children, then young adults, who were killed or disappeared in Mexico’s dirty war. Many are now in their 70s and 80s; they are gracious and seem all-powerful. They have learned to love everyone like they loved their lost sons and daughters. In the meeting of adherents of the Other Campaign one woman gives their collective perspective on the Other Campaign, worth quoting at length:

We the mothers of the disappeared were ripped from the fires of our kitchens, from the food we prepared everyday with love for the rest of our children. At some point each of us realized, these older women that we are, that we had to stop complaining, in order to start organizing.

To just complain was part of the process of submission to a system, the system that our lost sons and daughters confronted, that capital invents to invest us in its project of death…. We must be insubordinate and rebellious.

And with much pride, we say, my guerilla son, my warrior daughter, trained me, taught me. When we confront the government and its military, we never cry. Our gaze is always even. Waiting. Proud to be part of the blood that was the life of our children.

In this project of organizing ourselves, the mothers, we were first in this country to took the highways….We achieved the solidarity of the truckdrivers, of the men and women driving on the highway….We were the first who took over the government palaces. The mothers of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, took the government palace and we told the
governor, you sir, are kidnapped. We were repressed. We were hauled out of the government palace, we were weeks at a time in the Plaza Hidalgo, with our sound system and chairs, camped out, telling the people what forced disappearance were about, what the project of death of capital was about.

We always refused to negotiate….This radicality we learned from the paths of children. These footprints in the history of our beloved children had germinated in our hearts…

We had to understand that organization is vital….The disappeared has never been understood. We always had to start from ground zero, even with “solidarity” sectors….A disappeared child you can’t negotiate. This has no price. But we went with the campesinos, with the telephone workers. Up and down, here and there…why? Because we had learned to leave egoism in the house in order to learn to be transmitters of and participants in organization. The word teaches, friends, but an example sweeps up everything in its path.

We have to walk with all of the liberators and workers of this country, who are insubordinate and rebellious and who have understood our principal enemy is capital and it must be destroyed….This homeland is in pieces, how are we going to rebuild it? How are we going to rebuild it if we don’t understand the context in which we live? We have to study, discuss, analyze, what is the context of today? Because it keeps changing.

We want a revolution. There is no other choice. We have to create an environment that is totally insurrectionary….We need everyone, You who are for better services, or for land, young people who are reclaiming culture, we have to make a strong citizens movement, that knows how to define its enemy. This is the moment of definition, to recognize a whole project of transnational and multinational capital.

We want this revolution, and we want to organize with all of you, to learn from you, we want the young people to teach us….It can’t be one little struggle here and one little struggle there, no. We have to fraternize, to make a project that is alive, national, organized, with a political project, a new constitution.

How good that the Other Campaign has come to Chihuahua. How good that we are a multitude. If I have differences with another group [in this organization], that group is not my enemy. My enemy is capital and its governors that have made such a poverty of politics (Personal recording, October 30, 2006).

There are hundreds in the room today and it is absolutely silent, Before stepping down she tells us of one especially beloved woman among the mothers, Mama Corral, who is 85 years old. One of her children was disappeared and two more were killed in the dirty war. But we never see Mama Corral discouraged she says, “She is always thinking of this process of freedom, of
struggle, even though she can’t walk, she can barely move anymore. She is a great example for us.” She leans toward us, “I do believe we are going to create an organization, a strong one, I believe we are on the right path,” She looks with something like maternal admiration and tenderness at Marcos and adds, almost in a whisper, “and we have an army on our side…”

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5.2.3 An Other Time and Space

The question of struggle within or outside the existing political system, characterized by what we know as representative democracy based in an electoral system, has become the framework for analysis by and evaluation of oppositional forces across the continent, especially with regard to the progressive governments that swept much of South America in the last decade. Raúl Ornelas outlines the trajectories of what he terms “counter-hegemonic movements” versus “movements for emancipation” (Ornelas 2006). In this schema, counter-hegemonic movements revolve around the state as a cohesive site for social, political, and economic ties and the necessity to target that state, whether through its overthrow and domination or its temporary occupation for its eventual disappearance, in order to address the political conduct of society. This strategy is usually guided by a logic of unity-as-political-necessity, the priority of unity in combating the enemy over internal differences, and by a logic of the “correlation of forces” that, according to a particular revolutionary agenda, permits effective action in the “right” moment when the accumulation of oppositional forces or moment of dominant power’s weakness is ripe or timely. Movements for emancipation, in Ornelas’ framework, focus rather on the recuperation and control of reproduction of the subject through community ties, the occupation and re-signification of territory, and loose alliances of affinity (rather than unity within a program). This allows for a break with the realist pragmatism (the impetus to vote because “this
Ornelas points to the identifiable consequences of these types of movements: counter-hegemonic movements, when they have “achieved victory” in the form of state or state-like power, have not so far led to “another world” or even a different system. That is, they have not been able to break with the dominant reality as their alternative or anti-capitalist content is almost always replaced by the bureaucracy of population and resource management. Emancipation movements on the other hand, Ornelas claims, while often achieving gains in redirecting social wealth and attaining a certain self-determination, remain fragile and have not grown adequately across sectors to the extent that they could provide a significant break with the dominant system. Ornelas’ analysis serves to get us past reductive pro-state/anti-state ideologies to a more careful study of the actual methods and effects of these strategies, but we are still left with the question of what would enable the rupture—with dominant power, order, or logic—and sufficient expansion or growth through diverse sectors that would constitute significant “change.” Raquel Gutierrez attempts to further break down emancipatory movements by dividing them into “interruptive insubordination,” those volatile moments of unleashed social energy that have destructuring effects on power, and “sustained insubordination,” movements of intensive, stable, autonomous processes that are sustained by local rearrangements of social relations that undermine the most fundamental pillars of capital—social class, private property, exploitation, and accumulation (Gutierrez 2005). In Gutierrez’ analysis, the force of interruptive insubordination—its moment of fierce and visible antagonism in key moments or intersections of power’s calendar—is also its weakness: the gap produced by the destructuring moment is dangerous without a restructuring alternative, allowing in the waning of the moment’s intensity for a movement’s tactic to be subsumed and subverted into power’s inertia. Sustained insubordination in her analysis provides
exactly that structuring alternative with new practices of social relation and self-rule, but can easily fall into isolation due to the necessary intensity of continuous internal work, risking losing antagonistic force on the immediate plane, or risking the congealing of its own structures into state-like forms. Both of these formulations, Ornelas’ and Gutierrez’, work to point to the seeming contradictions between providing a direct, immediate, and visible challenge to dominant power and building real and stable alternatives to the dominant system. The question at stake here, I believe, is how rupture is made, where it is located, and how it is sustained; what, that is, are its conditions of possibility and conditions of sustainability.

Grupo Acontecimiento, collective author of a magazine of the same name in Argentina, offers some insight to this question. Taking exactly those instances of actual or potential institutional victory in Latin America by progressive parties, they point to the way that arguments for political action that follow or respect a “correlation of forces” strategy—usually electoral—insist that while a radical change and alternative to the system (as representative democracy based in elections) is necessary, in its absence or “for the time being,” we must take advantage of weaknesses in power’s fabric or possibilities of progressive policy or candidacy to assume the gains available (Grupo Acontecimiento 2009). These arguments usually revolve around particular practices or policies that have not only a progressive discourse but an actual material dimension in the form of some basic survival and welfare policies that are always given political precedence. Who can advocate against improved conditions of survival for everyone, especially, and here is the moral charge, those most in need? (Grupo Acontecimiento 2009, 12).

In today’s political environment, surprisingly consistent in some aspects across many national contexts, this usually means advocating for the “least bad” option, even while admitting the limitations therein, with appeals to the current absence or impossibility of another option and the kind of “real-needs realism” that demands that any gain be accepted in this harsh playing field
(Grupo Acontecimiento 2009, 9). The threat underlying this insistence is that evil hovers on the horizon, we must avoid the worst excesses and brutalities of that evil and take advantage of current conjunctures (again, usually electoral) to avoid or evade such threats (Grupo Acontecimiento 2009). We could see this as something like a leftist version of TINA—the Thatcherite *There Is No Alternative* (to neoliberal capitalism)—which becomes in this case *It Is Never Time* for an alternative, the eternal deferment of any radical move in favor of the relatively “less bad” option in a cycle that repeatedly, under examination, ends up functionalizing a political rightward shift and condemning attempts at rupture as “inappropriate” to the current conjuncture, “playing to the right,” and selfishly or naively jeopardizing the hopes of the “left” with unrealistic or utopian proposals or refusals.

This scenario has been repeated in Zapatista history, even from before 1994, as the groups considered “revolutionary” actors in Mexico and Latin America advised against such a movement: it wasn’t the right moment, Mexico wasn’t the right place, armed uprising would be the subversion of a possible positive correlation of forces in the region for other action (Le Bot 1997). The “wrong time, wrong place” message would be voiced repeatedly by revolutionary and institutional actors with reference to Zapatista action, culminating with the Zapatistas’ delinking from and denouncement of the PRD before the 2006 elections, for which the EZLN was accused of playing to the right, dividing the left, of being utopian, unrealistic, sectarian, and irresponsible (Almeyra 2006), not only by the center left but by those who had long been allies of the movement (Araujo 2008; Dussel 2006; Ross 2006; Poniatowska 2006).

What I believe the EZLN can offer us in this battle over the idea of the correlation of forces is not some kind of political-moral purity of “right” action based in immutable principle, but the assertion that the insistence on or compulsion to intervene, elect, support, or keep quiet according to the “conjunctural” necessities on the field of power—always just for the time being,
with necessary deference to the best available option and in the (eternal) absence of another—is a trap. Not a conspiracy trap, but a subjective one. The time/space of the political system will never offer a time of or for rupture. Opposition is allowable, even necessary, for the dominant system of power to maintain itself: power in the capitalist system today lives off the invitation and/or incorporation of oppositional tactics and forces onto its own field that provide the necessary appearance or marginal existence of conflict—within its own terms—to legitimate itself morally (as democracy) and practically (as justification for necessary measures, compromises, restrictions). But the time/space for rupture with the logic of that system, the eruption of the “new,” will never come. Thus the eternal postponement of anything different and the inevitable continuation of (different versions of) the same.

The importance of the Zapatista movement and the Other Campaign in particular here is that they do not just advocate a break with the corruption, violence, and greed from above, but with a whole system for the determination of decision-making power. What has enabled this break is not an impermeable ideology or constant clash of “interruptive insubordination,” or internal intensity and isolation, but the ability to and insistence on creating another time and space that both allow for and enable another logic of relation. The Other Campaign’s insistence that what has to be built must be built below is not a concession to or heroization of the “subaltern” or most marginalized of oppressed subjects, but an embrace of what can only come from below, another “calendar” and another “geography” that, in their organization and configuration, provide a different system and practice of value. The continual and obstinate resistance to comply with the calendars “above,” from the left or the right, violent or benevolent, is a refusal to allow that alternate value to be derailed or domesticated by politically pragmatic promises of necessary survival or relative social benefit.
In Chiapas this has meant, in some sense, choosing poverty not only as a position of struggle but as a source of wealth. The other option has always been present, the EZLN claims: “if the Zapatistas communities wanted, they could have the highest standard of living in Latin America. Imagine what the government would be willing to invest to achieve our surrender, and to take a lot of photos with us and make media ‘spots’ where Fox or Martita⁶ self-promote while the rest of the country comes apart in their hands” (EZLN 2003b). Their poverty is a choice contrasting to real-needs realism: “poverty is the weapon that has been chosen by our people for two things: to evidence that it is not aid that we want and to demonstrate, by our own example, that it is possible to govern and self-govern without the parasite that is called government” (EZLN 2003b). Their wealth, and generosity, come precisely from that choice.

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In the barrio of La Capilla, Matamoros, Tamaulipas, we meet with a group of sexworkers. They emphasize that they are sexworkers, not prostitutes. They only prostitutes around here, they say, are the politicians: it is the politicians who sell themselves for money, they add, we work. They are harassed by authorities, not just for being sexworkers but for being poor and autonomously organized; the sexworkers organized under patrones (pimps) or who serve cater to rich clients have agreements with the authorities and are left alone. Those without that kind of protection are frequently thrown in jail or beaten, and their scars, they say, are partly from clients and partly from police. They tell the story of one of their compañeros, Pablo, who works under the name of Paula. Paula was working at home and four men entered, two in civilian dress and two from the Federal Preventative Police. They beat her at her home, in the patrol car,

⁶ Referring to PAN president Vicente Fox and his spokesperson-turned-wife, Marta Sahagun.
and in the jail. A medic at the prison said to let her go and they dumped her back at her house. Several hours later she died. No one was ever charged.

Now they are part of the Other Campaign. They met other sexworkers through the Street Brigade in Support of Women, which started in Mexico City in 1991. Over the course of a decade the Street Brigade managed to create a federation—the Mexican Sexworkers Network—that spanned 28 states. The network helped sexworkers form cooperatives that could self-organize their business and collective protection, rather than depending on pimps or madams. They rented their own hotels to work in and split profits among themselves. They began using horizontal organizational models, they said, not because they were following a ideological program, but because without that the state coordinators were easily co-opted by local governments, or the new collectives developed hierarchical structures that made for the role of internal pimps (Zibechi 2007). They formed autonomous clinics that offer free, voluntary STD testing and sexual health education. This was an important step: government clinics before either denied or overcharged service to the sexworkers, and they were vulnerable to stigma or even arrest if they sought out testing. They now manufacture their own prophylactics. The “Encanto,” the condom they make is called, Enchantment. It is officially certified. The package is red and black, red to symbolize love and resistance, they explain, black for elegance. In 1991, when they started, condoms cost about 25 pesos apiece, a price that could nearly erase their earnings altogether. Now in Mexico condoms cost between $1-2 apiece; in context that is roughly equivalent to 2-3 kilos of tortillas. The “Encanto” costs one peso, 8 or 9 cents, and even at that price the Network is able to draw enough profit to subsidize 85 percent of their own clinic costs (Zibechi 2007). The Sexworkers Network now sells three million Encantos a year. The Street Brigade worked with a group of university students organized as a health collective to create a sexual education manual in the context of the Other Campaign, called “The Other Campaign for Sexual and Reproductive
Health for Indigenous and Peasant Resistance in Mexico”; Subcomandante Marcos wrote the epilogue.

The Sexworkers Network is one of the most militant and organized sectors of the Other Campaign; their sense of compañerismo is highly developed, from the necessities of life on the streets and an almost universal condemnation and disdain from society. They have been looked down upon by every sector and class and political wing; there has never been even the condescendingly charitable mercy for a “noble savage” version of the sexworker as there have been for other sectors of the poor. They have understood something about the Other Campaign that has been difficult for many: that no one would give them a place or a role in this movement; they would have to construct it themselves. Until they were called to and invited by a primarily indigenous and peasant movement to form part of this struggle, they had certainly never been publicly recognized as political actors. Now they hold annual National Encounters for Sexworkers. They denounce attacks on any individual or unit of their own network and respond immediately to denunciations from other sectors of the Other Campaign. They carry no shame or shyness; they have had to construct dignity from scratch, and that is an irreversible process. They have known physical abuse, exploitation, violence, and incarceration, and they put the labor and exploitation of the body—as well as its revindication, pride, and pleasure—at the center of resistance. They have their own political prisoners, now embraced by the entire Other Campaign. They took Zapata’s cry of “the land belongs to those who work it” and made it, “the streets belong to those who walk them!” Talonear, “to work the corner,” becomes a verb of labor like any other.

In 2004 Marcos co-authored a novel with famous detective novelist Paco Ignacio Taibo II in which a Zapatista intelligence agent, Elias Contreras, an indigenous man from rural Chiapas, falls in love with a transgendered sexworker, Magdalena, while on a mission in Mexico.
City. In the Other Campaign Marcos takes up the story again and explains how, mixing fiction and history, having “Magdalena” in the movement forced them to rethink even further the standard categories of identity, even that of compañero and compañera. Compañeroa, he coins this discovery, in the voice of Elías. Magdalena understands perfectly the indigenous struggle to self-determine. Elías’ relationship with Magdalena becomes a point of encounter for the entire Other Campaign, and Magdalena takes a place of honor alongside el Viejo Antonio as a hero and literary legend of the movement.

If there is a vanguard in this movement it is these compañeróas, who know the richest and the poorest of men in this society, the most desperate and dignified of women struggling to survive, and the most daring and courageous of both men and women forcing open society’s norms with their own bodies and leaping into the sea of uncertainty with no life vest other than their self-constructed selves. Now they have not only a life vest but an entire network, made up of this movement, to support them.

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5.2.4 A New We

If the journey of the Other Campaign provided a kind of new mobile form for encounter, the EZLN would also have to innovate organizational forms that had no programmatic mandate or model. The task of building a nation-wide anti-capitalist front across multiple sectors of society would challenge all organizational paradigms. The complicated and controversial questions of what was to be constructed specifically—a new government, a constituent assembly, a reconstituted nation, a nationless alliance—were as profound as a method as they were as a goal. If the form of the Other Campaign was initially constituted as a dispersed, asymmetrical network with diverse actors (individuals, organizations, communities, an army in the case of the EZLN), with different levels and structures of organization (families, voluntary membership in
social organizations, community consensus traditions, or a hierarchal political-military structure again in the case of the EZLN), a series of questions about structure, decision-making, communication, and coordination would inevitably arise. In convoking the Other Campaign as something that would produce a body and sense of belonging beyond local struggle in its broadest terms, and an anti-capitalist struggle in its most precise (at least in its initial call), the EZLN was essentially making a convocation for something that had no clear or direct referent and would have to enter a process of simultaneous construction and decision by a large, diverse body of actors. The question was who would form that body and how it would act.

If the question of struggle from within or from outside the existing political system is one that frames the moment as we saw above (Zibechi 2009), then this was a question that had previously been defined, according to Pablo González Casanova, as a choice between peaceful or armed struggle; “Of course guerrillas don’t vote,” González Casanova notes, the options were stark: soldier or citizen, guerilla warfare or democratic procedure (González Casanova 2006, 32). When the EZLN was creating what would become the Other Campaign, they later wrote, they had considered exactly that choice. But while they believed that the system in its entirety was the problem, they also believed that armed struggle was too exclusionary, limited to a particular privilege, preparation, and willingness “not only to die but to kill” (EZLN 2006a). They intended the Other Campaign to provide an alternative to that choice, but this would make for what for many was an “emotional and existential” choice, not only between acting within or outside of the existing political system, but between the familiar, if faulty, institutions of the electoral political system and something was yet unknown in substance, uncertain in direction, and only vaguely defined (EZLN 2006a).

The ‘body-to-be-built’ of ‘those-convoked’ in the Other Campaign, for lack of adequate categorical terms, was distinguishable from other projects in that it would not be founded on a
new or recycled ideological program (Gutierrez 2005), but began rather as “a name to connect a common dissent” and a “commitment to a common struggle” (Gutierrez 2005). That is, the EZLN proposed not an alternative management of government or society (something that could be identified and labeled, i.e. a “socialist model”), but a challenge to the current model of ruler and ruled. The problem with the “pre-existing program” model, writes Sergio Rodríguez Lascano, is that however “correct” its thought and design, it is usually written from one particular historical perspective; “the base of our theory has almost never been our own people, but rather other peoples and other eras,” he states, and our conceptualization would thus be based on an “analogic design” (Rodríguez Lascano 2006, 45). The necessary procedure for the implementation of such a program necessarily involved the privileging of a space where those that dominated the political line could impart lessons to others (Rodríguez Lascano 2006, 46). The problem in this scenario, Lascano continues, is that there is no space for consideration of the moment or by the people in question; their specific experience and perspective is only either marginal or tangential to the political program. But this shouldn’t be read as the rejection of a program altogether, or the assumption that simply including a plurality of voices would lead to an adequate political project.

The Other Campaign began rather from the premise that “the program can’t exist before the subject” (Rodriguez Lascano 2006, 43), and thus the first step must be to find a way to create the possibilities for that subject to exist—what the EZLN proposed in this case be the “listening” of the Other Campaign rather than the oratory of the electoral campaign—followed by the development of mechanisms of organization for that subject to create its own program (EZLN 2005f, 2006c).

Such a project would require not only broad diverse participation, but a sense of “belonging” that in this case would have to both signal and evade the much-evoked “belonging” to the “Mexican nation” long cultivated and imposed by the state in order to produce and
maintain acceptance of a steep national class system (Gutierrez 2005). The Other Campaign put belonging in terms of a belonging to “below” with a strictly delimited relationship to those “above” which could not be overcome or subsumed by a nationally unified identity. In contrast to the walls of the other World Wars, including the Cold War, the EZLN claimed, the walls (borders) of the Fourth World War were horizontal—an increasing demarcation of above and below beyond other limits (EZLN 2003k). In a geometric map of that system, the kind of body that could form under the horizontal walls of the Fourth World War would have to be as innovative in shape as it was in process. The network form that in fact first emerged in the Other Campaign had the unique characteristic not of coordinating solidarity, or even just of exchanging mutual aid and moral support, but of developing the capacity to act collectively for common objectives (EZLN 2006)—from the poor, for the poor.

How does this network of singularities become active or effective? The existence of common problems and a common enemy made for many areas in common—tactics of resistance, ways of producing knowledge, forms of social organization—but that was a shared reality more than a political project. To make that network capable of expression and action there would have to be a kind of subjective hinge with elements of decision and organization that would not only make consensual action possible, but be capable of going beyond “counterpower,” or resistance, and toward the formulation of another option and its construction (Gutierrez 2005). It is in that process, of both naming the enemy and organizing the construction of something else, that new subjects are forged (Rodríguez Lascano 2006).

Raquel Gutierrez aptly points out that key to such a construction was the conceptualization of unity as “we” not with reference to the sovereign model whereby the differences of the particulars agree to cede power/autonomy (in effect, their differences) to a point/power above them for the sake of unity (Gutierrez 2005). The groups or individuals in such
a “sovereign” alliance take on a kind of citizenship quality under the social contract that guarantees compliance through mutual acceptance of submission. Gutierrez uses the “ayllu” model of Andean domestic units and communities as an example of unity that assumes that there is no necessary contradiction between collectivity and (group or individual) particularity, and builds—in discussion, agreement, action—from that premise (Gutierrez 2005, 5). We can see parallels to this model in the internal organization of the EZLN as a “we” constructed from the wide diversity of languages and customs of different Mayan groups throughout Chiapas. The usual objections to the possibility of agreement or consensus without an arbitrating or mediating body I think must be answered with a way of thinking about, for lack of a better term, the “difference between differences.” There is a kind of difference between those unified by an overarching power that makes agreement a tense struggle of “interests” and the battles necessary to negotiate them. But there is another kind of difference where the need to exert or establish priority for one’s interest is unnecessary because the maintenance or importance of one’s difference is not at stake. The diverse knowledges, ways of being, self-constructions, and differences are acknowledged as just that, different, but not preemptive of a common need or project. Autonomy of the parts is thus not questioned or threatened by a new or an other “we” that has more expansive properties or capacities. There is always of course the need to distinguish which differences respect other differences and the values of the common (both virtual, the “we” as objective, and concrete, as the current organizational force) in question (González Casanova 2006, Gutierrez 2005), but the forms of relation of a self-determined network “under the wall” make this a much different question than the negotiations within and between hierarchies of power over the “interests” of their populations or constituencies.

If the strength of the dominant system is partly or even primarily subjective, and when that falters the system resorts to violence out of (its own) weakness, then any exodus or
alternative necessarily implies that resistance to that system must be prepared not only to defend itself but to construct a different subjective position, what the Other Campaign called the new “we.” Here none of the markers of distinctive selfhood would count: “there will be no pay, no positions, no personal recognition” (Other Campaign meeting in Chiapas 1/1/2006) it was repeated in the trajectory of the Other Campaign, things that had long been considered the standards markers and incentives of political participation. The question of a new “we,” the EZLN would try to push adherents of the Sixth Declaration to understand, is how to break not only with the cycle but also the “self” of the dominant system.

In the EZLN’s analysis, in model of the nation-state as hologram for a global “society of power,” the ideal national citizen, the “self-made” (and self-managed) man constituted by and in praise of “individual liberty” (what the Zapatistas identify as “the fallacy par excellence of modernity”) has not disappeared but has rather “been taken prisoner in a jail which is no less oppressive for the fact that it is global.” The “failure of man in harmony,” as the EZLN characterizes the neoliberal era “is concealed behind individual success,” thus hiding “that that success is made possible by the destruction of the other, of the collective being.” That other, “is the face of the rebel Lucifer in the ‘Bible’ of Power (which does not preach redemption but subjection), and it is necessary to once again expel him from paradise” (EZLN 2003l, 6). The individual liberty of the self-managed man and the feared and fearful other created the basis not only for the economic policy and social organization of the neoliberal regime, but for a literal war on the other (the war on drugs, the war on poverty, the war on terrorism). As soon as the individual can be identified and interpellated as such, the other can be recognized and revealed as dangerous, and the common, or its possibility, is plundered or prevented.

This effective enclosure of the common and open “incarceration” of the subject create a vulnerability to the well-marketed myth that the individual is necessarily the distinctive unit with
regard to where agency, decision, and freedom lie, that desire is an individual invention and expression rather than something born and bred in connection. “We think the only real guarantee of individuality, of subjectivity, is the collective,” Marcos stated after the first Other Campaign journey, “the individual…is a myth of capitalism. Individualism in reality is the negation of the individuality of subjectivity” (El Kilombo 2008, 48). The possibility of individuality through collectivity requires an understanding of the possibility of collectivity as a space where difference is not only maintained but multiplied—an aperture for differentiation rather than its restriction. Without that possibility we end up always again with the same twin options: the individual sovereign subject or the individuality of the subject sacrificed to the necessary unity of the hegemonic project, both destined to recreate a homogenized external world as a mirror of that internal reality. The transformation necessary to move from those false options to something else is nothing less than a kind of death of the (sovereign) self and the birth of something else, a body that knows, through its own connections, that the path of the separate (however self-improved) self is just as mythical and ultimately as unsatisfying as that of collective (thoroughly commercialized) conformity.

The EZLN’s understanding of this possibility and its making come from what they initially called a “suicidal will.” Initially this was found in their early statement, “The EZLN has a suicidal will, not the desire that they kill us, but the desire to disappear as soldiers” (Duran de Huerta 1994, 65), or, “soldiers that are soldiers so that someday nobody has to be a soldier,” (Duran de Huerta 1994, 64). The EZLN’s ability and willingness to cultivate that sentiment and

7 Also, in the initial formulation of the uprising there was a quite literal assumption of self-annihilation: “If we rise up in arms, we would be defeated but we would bring attention to the lies of the indigenous. If we don’t rise up in arms, we ourselves will survive but we will disappear as indigenous peoples” (EZLN 2008); and in a kind of refusal of original or authentic identity and an emphasis on collective self-creation, “Marcos doesn’t exist, he was born dead on January 1, 1994” (Subcomandante Marcos quoted in Le Bot 1997, pg 2).
repeat it over and over would bring it into a new millennium as something different not only from any other movement of the late twentieth century but different from itself, something built, by their own account, through encounter (Le Bot 1997, 3, 29; El Kilombo 2008, 19). The will to self-abolishment and transformation would be realized in new capacities to think and act, each time from a new place, with expanded possibilities. The EZLN’s strategies and decisions have demonstrated a continual refusal to assume or accept the moral or symbolic directorship that they were continuously attributed both by their antagonists and by their supporters. It also prevented the possibility of fundamentalism within their own movement (El Kilombo 2008, 18) or their effective debilitation through acceptance of or consent to the (paternalistically) protected corners of a limited “cultural autonomy” that they were offered by the state which sought a way to limit the scope of their demands and isolate their experience from all those who might be inspired and mobilized by it. In their history of encounter I think we can read a continual and simultaneous insistence to abolish the “self” yet never abandon the other.

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In Altepexi, Puebla, the maquila workers describe their production process. They make balls—basketballs, soccer balls, all kinds of balls. They work 12 hours a day, without weekends. They are paid 10 pesos per ball, but if the sewing comes out wrong on one, they are docked 40 pesos. One worker insists “we are not excluded, we are a fundamental part of what is happening, it is our work that is fueling this thing! Another Altepexi worker says, “My kids have been born all over this country because I had to move around looking for work—they don’t have a hometown. That is our reality today.” Another adds that, for better or worse, “we are people of the world now, not people of Altepexi, not of Puebla, not of Mexico. We have to be people of the world.”
In Tuxpan, Nayarit, one man asks, how can they turn us into distant consumers of our own products, employees on our own land? Another points to the student protests in France, the immigrant protests in Los Angeles, their own migration flow out of Tuxpan: capitalism is the same in Tuxpan, France, Brazil, the United States, he says. This is the same struggle, the same empire.

Cañada Onda, Aguascalientes has a broad spectrum of participants—housewives, students, religious clergy, young people, members of the gay community, students, communist party members, etc. There is a fair representation of anarcho-punks present, pierced and tattooed, dressed mostly in black with gelled mohawks or hair coaxed into spiky points. This, they insist, is not just aesthetics, “when we are pursued by the police in the streets or discriminated against, it is not just a rejection of our style, it is a hate of our difference, hate of the other.” A self-identified housewife in Cañada Onda, Aguascalientes, gives an elegant speech expressing gratitude to Marcos’ mother for creating him and letting him think for himself. “We have to commit ourselves to not making obedient people,” she says, “people that process orders,” “A country of ‘obedients’ is of no use.” She reminds us of a tiny elderly woman in Oaxaca, in the tiny town of Union Hidalgo, who declared “better to die a virgin then give birth to fools!” The housewife in Aguascalientes says at the end of her participation, “Today I escaped my house and my work, but don’t forget about all those women who couldn’t come. Our struggle, like this struggle [the Other Campaign], is every day.” Students from the university in the capital of Aguascalientes talk about the fight for public education. “But this isn’t enough,” they say, “the education we’re receiving is capitalist training. We don’t want free capitalist training!” Another University! A local priest stands up with a plea for a different church: the god of life, he says, is from below, and “this god walks to the left, with us, with the soul of the movement.” There may be an official church above but there is also a faith below. Another church is possible! he claims
to his newly found compañeros—these housewives, students, priests, punks, EZLN. Members from a local LGBT speak next, “we are part of you,” and “we don’t want closets any more than we want prisons or graves.”

In Oaxaca City a transvestite collective gives a long, smart and hilarious monologue on the connection between love and struggle and environment and society. They win everyone’s hearts. They had taken Marcos’ theme of “other loves” and turned the “Todos somos Marcos,” (“We are all Marcos”) of the early Zapatista movement, through the “We are all Zapatistas” of the solidarity movement, to a new collective subjective place: “todos somos otros!” “we are all others!”

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I have gotten used to my sleeping bag, how to sleep on a hard floor, a dirt floor, sand, asphalt, concrete, cement. We learn to weigh options: wood is best, warmest and softest, cement is uncomfortable due to its uneven texture, but it is better than concrete, which is freezing; asphalt is always better than cement. Often there is no water in the places we travel, not for bathing, cleaning, flushing, not even for washing one’s face after long travels and short nights. If someone has some we bathe with baby wipes. Sometimes there is no food and we live off gas station snacks. Sometimes there is no drinking water, just syrupy soft drinks. Sometimes the sleepiness and heat of the day are overwhelming and there is no place even to recline one’s head for a moment. Sometimes the cold of the night and the rain permeate every possible layer and it is impossible to sleep. We learn in many places over many days that sometimes the only way to rest your head is, literally, on someone else’s shoulder.

The tents and the sleeping bags have sand from the beach, mud from the countryside, sweat from the heat. There has been no chance to wash, mend, organize, clean. Backpacks are full of dirty clothes and disorganized from hasty packing. The vehicles are dirty with cookie
wrappers, coke bottles, coffee cups, sugar packets, orange peels, and apple cores littering the floors. We collectively have every digestive ailment possible. The pace and stress brings colds, coughs, skin rashes, and stomachaches; there is little diversity of nutrition sometimes, and generally lowered immune defense systems. But there is such purpose in each day that happiness and adrenaline keep people going.

I throw my backpack in with everyone else’s in the back of the car, but today I am switching vehicles to help a tired driver. There is city driving to do, which is always challenging as a caravan. I listen to the vanguard car’s indications: “consolidate caravan!” they call back when we get too far apart. I have great admiration for the driver of the rearguard truck, for whom I am operating the radio. The rearguard races ahead of the caravan and then blocks the intersections from the side with oncoming traffic so that the caravan can move through without getting split up. She then swerves back in and closes the line before the ever-present police patrols and what we now recognize as CISEN (the Mexican National Intelligence Agency) vehicles pass through.

The actual driving is exhausting but the radio network keeps us alert. “Consolidate convoy!” “Speed bumps ahead!” “Steep decline around the bend.” On one mountainside, descending from a small community in Puebla, one of the pick-up trucks loses its brakes and nearly goes over the edge. It stops itself with a sharp but not fully controlled maneuver toward the mountain and rams another vehicle in front of it. I am two cars ahead of them and I hear the crunch of metal, but both vehicles come to a stop on the inner edge of the road, away from the precipice that marks a very long fall down the mountain. We all stop. There are many people riding in the back of the pick-up and they are stunned but unharmed. We sit down on the side of the mountain to try to slow our hearts. After this long on the road together it is like we are connected with threads, the thread of our voices over the radio, of the grueling schedule, of the
impromptu arrangements to make sure everyone sleeps and eats, by moments of our own hunger and the witnessing of others’ pain. And this threaded network, when it is pulled anywhere pulls everywhere. Here differences become both more important—you need the vast array of skills and gifts and affects provided by this vast array of people to get through a diverse and changing set of daily problems; and less important—it doesn’t matter who has more or less access to resources and expendable cash when there are no stores to go to and nothing to buy. It is important to figure out who is over-tired and over-burdened and to try to shift the collective balance to compensate. We don’t always do this well, but we develop some good habits. If there is one wooden table in the frozen sierra and everyone else sleeps on the ground and we are all struggling from little sleep, intense work, and fast climate changes, who sleeps on the table is a big deal. You have to choose well and generously. It’s not that you are moved to be selfless, it’s that you can’t afford not to be. You need the energy and good humor of your fellow travelers at least as much as you need your own, because none of your needs—food, shelter, company, strength—can be met with your own individual resolve. It all depends on them. It is a feeling of total helplessness and exasperation and, sometimes simultaneously, an overwhelming impulse to give them everything you have and more. Because stripped of your privileges, your privacy, your coping mechanisms, your “autonomy,” you can suddenly see, usually only after flailing about for a sense of personal space and power of decision, a different way of being that turns inside out the contained space of your body and sensibility and exposes it, usually painfully, to a bigger being. All the threads tense and wane with full impact on your self and, despite the well-trained temptation to try to wiggle out of them and escape into a more manageable, self-contained sphere, you can’t imagine cutting yourself off from this, ever again.

We are given a day off, on the coast of Colima, at the beach. It is a strange day, to be suddenly at liberty to relax. The abundance of water, even salt-water, after so many days of not
bathing and so many months of scarce bathing immersion, is other-worldly. Most people swim in their clothes because we do not have bathing suits. One of the goth teens, who wears all back—tall high-heeled black boots laced to the knee, a long-sleeved black shirt and long pants covered by a velvet cloak and draped with his long black hair—walks the beach in his boots, not removing a single article of clothing. There is a fishing boat out a ways, some of us have swam out to it and are sitting on its edges, feet in the water. The goth kid says he has never been in the ocean and doesn’t know how to swim, but he wants to go to the boat. A guy from the caravan, from the coast of Jalisco who grew up in the ocean, puts him on his back and swims him out to the boat, with all the layers of heavy wet velvet, on his back—he has left only the boots behind. We jump into the water to help pull him up onto the boat and he is ecstatic at the feeling of being in the ocean.

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5.3 Welcome to the Monster

It is almost May. We have recently passed through San Salvador Atenco, where in 2001 community farmers successfully fought off the government expropriation of their land for the construction of a new international airport. The federal government under PAN president Vicente Fox had announced the expropriation of 5,000 hectares of land in Mexico state, including the ejidal (collectively held) lands of San Salvador Atenco, 20 miles outside Mexico City, for the construction of a two-billion dollar international airport. The airport formed part of a series of mega-projects launched in the last decade in connection with Plan Puebla Panama to “modernize” the country for participation in NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and FTAA. To the 4,375 families of Atenco which would be displaced from the ejidal lands traditionally belonging to indigenous Nahuatl communities since the 1910 Mexican Revolution, the government offered seven pesos (roughly 70 cents) per square meter of land, an inarguably
offensive sum (later, in a second attempt at expropriation, they offered 157 pesos per square meter). Residents of San Salvador Atenco fought the land expropriation, partly through legal battles but also through political resistance that transformed over the course of the battle from methods of protest to forms of community organization. Organizing themselves in community assemblies, Atenco residents forced police and politicians out of the municipality, set up barricades and vigilance commissions to keep them out, and held government officials and government-contracted engineers hostage in exchange for information transparency and the release of their own political prisoners. The sparks from machetes scraping across the streets became a globally-recognized symbol of resistance, much like the ski-masks of the Zapatistas. A national and international solidarity movement formed around the issue, and after nine months and several violent confrontations with police (including one community member beat to death by police), Atenco won. Not only was the airport project called off, but Atenco residents, now organized through the FPDT (Peoples Front in Defense of the Land), exercised their new organizational power to demand educational infrastructure, improved school curriculum, and other community needs. But the high profile struggle left an example and an image in the minds of many, the very public defeat of nationally-managed global capital by internationally supported locally organized farmers. Their taste of their triumph still lingers, sweetly for some, bitterly for others, in the entire region. The FPDT members are both heroes and militants of the Other Campaign; they appear at any struggle or sign of distress of adherents in nearby states, trademark machetes in hand, in solidarity and offering support.

We are nearing Mexico City when coverage of the May 1st migrant marches in the United States hits the news, the biggest single day mobilizations in US history. For four months of the Other Campaign, not quite the halfway point of the Zapatista journey of the Mexican Republic, one theme that arises in every place—city, town, or rural village, indigenous and
mestizo, worker or campesino—is migration. In many of the small towns of Puebla mostly women had spoken, because mostly women lived there—their sons and husbands and brothers had migrated to the US. In Oaxaca an older woman told us that the only way to survive in their region was to have at least one child in the US sending back money; one child in the north was absolutely required, more might be necessary. A woman in Tuxpan, Nayarit said her town was essentially childless. In Zacatecas they say that the state has been effectively transplanted to the US: there are now more Zacatecans in the US then in Zacatecas. A man at a meeting of the Other Campaign in Guanajuato states, “If it weren’t for the remittances sent from the US, this country would be in civil war already.”

Now, in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Charlotte, Dallas, Denver, there are hundreds of thousands of migrants in the streets. How did this many people without papers manage to organize the most massive one-day protests the US has ever seen? We watch with awe at their organization and power. People begin to get excited about the second half of the journey, to the north, eager to get to the border that these migrants have crossed and peek at “the other side,” of which they now have a different perspective.

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Later, on the border in Tijuana, the Chicanos cross over to meet the Other Campaign. They have a video hook up to undocumented Mexican immigrants on the US side of the border so that they can also participate. A delegation of Brown Berets come from Watsonville, California, and do the security work for the Tijuana meetings. They don’t all speak Spanish, or not very much. This is a new experience for and challenge to Mexican nationalism, seeing the pride of these English-speaking Chicanos who embrace their heritage but identify their home as the “other side.”
In Ciudad Juarez we stand on the international bridge between the United States and Mexico, both flags flying over our heads, to have a meeting with people from the “other side.” A US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contingent stands with guns and shields on the US side but they seem, in this moment, farcical, and we walk around them like they are curious, ancient statues. An ICE helicopter sweeps down over us over and over, generating wind and noise so that it is hard to hear or see anything in the meeting. It is simultaneously infuriating and nonsensical, these tantrums of power to try to prevent these encounters. Later Marcos would predict, “If the first journey of the Other Campaign removed the barrier that separated the north from the south of Mexico, then the second phase... we think will erase the [US-Mexico] border, in real terms, that it will be a bridge to the migrants, the Chicanos, to all of the realities that are on the other side” (El Kilombo 2008, 28).

But first the capital city of Mexico, “the monster” it is called with frustration and affection. As we near the city on the toll roads that lead from Mexico state to the Federal District, we see that the tollbooth gates are open and the highway is lined with people waving machetes. It is the Atenco farmers, they have taken over the toll booths and shut them down for the day in honor of the Other Campaign. They wave all the cars through free, caravan or not, shouting vivas to the Other Campaign and the EZLN and thrusting their machetes in the air. Welcome to the monster.

In the city the caravan has to disband because it is impossible to drive here. We use subways and buses. Even Marcos takes the subway. Mexico City is suffering, like everywhere else. In the subway stations and on the trains teenagers, kids really, shirtless, backs bloody and scarred, do somersaults across broken glass bottles for money. They carry the glass wrapped up in a shirt, brown thick glass that looks like broken beer bottles. I watch two boys working together. The first, younger, slimmer, does a somersault across the glass, and while the fresh
blood begins to drip down his back, he hands the shirt full of glass to the older one, more scarred, who pauses in the somersault and extends his legs and does a headstand on the glass. His hair is bloody as they both carry the shirt through the train to collect coins.

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On May 3, 2006, the Other Campaign is in the Plaza de Tlalteloco in Mexico City, where some 200-300 rallying students were shot down on October 2, 1968, just a few weeks before the Olympics were held in Mexico City. Evidence of the massacre was buried; there almost no coverage in the media, the government said only twenty to thirty students had died, and denied that they had been killed by Mexican security forces. Only later did the brutality of the massacre come out, due largely to declassified FBI documents (Doyle 2003). Marcos is speaking today in the plaza, heralding the courage of the students in 1968. The meeting is paused because there is a call from the FPDT in Atenco. They had gone to help their neighbors in Texcoco, Mexico state, flower-vendors who were being evicted from their marketplace, slated by a private-public initiative as the new site for a mega-franchise store. Residents of Atenco blocked the highway leading into Texcoco in solidarity with the flower-growers, and the police had arrived to remove them. Atenco managed to hold the blockade and turn the police back with rocks and Molotov cocktails, again embarrassing the government and security forces with televised images of the police turning and fleeing from the hail of rocks from the farmers. But a 14-year-old boy had been shot in the chest and killed by supposedly “unarmed” police. The FDPT leaders were being pursued in that moment and would be arrested, bloody from the fight, shortly after. The day’s

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8 Javier Cortés Santiago was shot in the chest with a bullet from a 38 caliber revolver, the kind carried by the State Security Agency (ASE by its Spanish acronym). Wilfredo Robledo, director of the ASE, had said that the police were unarmed. The National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) later determined the ASE to be responsible for both the deaths of Cortés Santiago and Ollin Alexis Benhumea, the latter shot in the head with a tear gas canister by police on May 4. See the CNDH report at http://www.cndh.org.mx/acndh/informes/espec/recatenco/observa8.htm.
events were cancelled and the EZLN announced its forces on alert. They advised Other Campaign supporters to be ready and await indications.

Before dawn on May 4, 2006, 3,500 state and federal police entered Atenco and began destroying everything in their path, gang beating anyone they encountered, breaking down doors and entering houses, dragging residents out forcibly and throwing them into police trucks. A 20-year old student was shot in the head with a tear gas canister and went into a coma, his brain exposed, unable to get reach medical assistance. The police hauled away over 200 people, but the violence has only just begun. The trip to the prison in Almoloya de Juarez, called colloquially Santiaguito, should have two hours but it took six.

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Many in the plaza that day had mobilized to go to Atenco to keep vigilance during the night, including many from the caravan, who peacefully commandeered a city bus to take them to Atenco. My German friend Samantha from the caravan was running to the bus and stopped to see if I was coming. Not now, I was waiting on my informal affinity group to gather itself and decide on an organizational plan. Samantha left with the bus. The few of us left reorganized ourselves to get supplies and make a communications strategy and planned to check on the situation early the next morning. But early the next morning it was too late.

“That is where the hell began for me,” Samantha wrote later, about the six-hour ride. An eternal hell for the people in the police trucks, stacked several bodies deep. All they could smell was blood, they couldn’t breath, Valentina said, her own face was mashed into a pool of someone else’s blood, Magdalena with her legs forced open while they kicked her, Leticia forced to perform oral sex repeatedly, spitting semen on her sweater each time. Samantha remembers

9 Not her real name.
seeing wisps of her own hair floating around the truck until one officer sticks them to his head in a dirty blond clump and all the officers laugh, the sounds of pornographic movies in the background vaguely covering the buried crunch of kicks to internal organs in the foreground. The women are forced to lift their clothes and cover their heads with their blouses and are raped repeatedly, in some cases gang raped. The letters of denunciation from the women several days later, from their prison cells, reported vaginal infections and infected wounds on their breasts where they had been bitten; they were without medical attention and had been given, as if it were a joke, parecetomol, a mild painkiller and fever-reducer.

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The official sum of the police attack was 258 arrests, 26 (reported) cases of rape, and five deportations. Nearly all the detainees are badly beaten and some gravely injured, the student who was hit by the tear gas canister was declared brain dead shortly after finally arriving at a hospital, and an unknown number were considered disappeared. The first images to come out on national television showed mobs of policemen, between 20 and 30 at a time, descending on a individual community members and gang-beating them mercilessly. But these images quickly disappeared from the screen as primetime broadcasters from the two primary TV stations in Mexico, Televisa and TVAzteca, echoed government discourse that the “rowdy” townspeople of

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11 Alexis Benhumea was 18, an economics student and dancer at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and adherent of the Other Campaign. He was declared brain dead shortly after arriving the hospital hours after the police attack, and died a month later.

12 One prisoner’s testimony reports hearing police say, during the transfer from Atenco to the prison at Santiagoito, “This son of a bitch couldn’t last. This asshole is dead,” at which point the police truck slowed without coming to a stop and the prisoner heard someone being thrown from the truck. From the International Civil Commission for Human Rights (CCIODH), Preliminary Report on the Events in Atenco (2006).
Atenco had to be controlled and the “rule of law” enforced. “Rowdy” later became “dangerous” to society and the residents of Atenco were criminalized as lawless rebels.

Three police officers who took part in the May 4 raid on San Salvador Atenco state in an anonymous interview with the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center on May 11 that their orders were to “beat everything that moves,” to take prophylactics with them, and to keep the press out of the way (Ballinas and Cuevas 2006). On May 14, Enrique Peña Nieto, governor of the Mexico state and ultimate authority over the state police forces, appeared on national TV declaring: “I insist that we acted with the firmness that was needed. I am happy that peace and order was brought to Atenco. We want to live with peace and order. And in the instance that the law is again challenged, we will again use force.” He is accompanied by Wilfredo Robledo Madrid, State Commissioner of Public Security Forces, who states that “there is no proof of rape,” despite documentation of the crimes by multiple governmental and non-governmental organizations of what the Mexican government’s own Special Prosecutor for Crimes of Violence Against Women and Human Trafficking (Fiscalía Especial para Delitos de Violencia contra las Mujeres y Trata de Personas - FEVIMTRA) later ruled classified as sexual torture, due to the instruments and conditions used in the rapes. Some of the women raped and arrested in that raid would spend four years imprisoned in Santiaguito. None of the police officers involved in the rapes and beating would ever be charged.

The Other Campaign filled the streets of Texcoco and Atenco and Mexico City with marches and protests, “Todos somos Atenco!” “We are all Atenco!” There are protests marches in Venice, Rome, London, Oslo, Barcelona, Toulouse, San Diego, New York, Washington,

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Bogotá, Caracas, Cochabamba, Quito, and many more cities, amounting to 90 global actions by May 19th. Marcos announces that the journey of the Other Campaign will stop until all of the prisoners taken in Atenco are released. The July presidential elections were fast approaching. No one expected an attack of this size or brutality this soon in the Other Campaign or this close to the elections. The media blanket on the attacks continued and Other Campaign supporters and those from the caravan not incarcerated or deported or under judicial processing set up camp outside the prison.

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The first questions are how to light up a dark roadside and a tent city, how to cook for 15-50 people without a kitchen or a stove or refrigeration, how to organize cooking, cleaning, and the guard shifts—someone must be awake and alert at all times to watch over the camp, how to decide how to organize, how to interact with the police, the public, the press, the prisoners, with each other. Someone with electrician skills rigs up a system with electricity pirated from the city lines that serve the prison. Someone donates a two-burner camp cook stove and that, combined with an open fire, make the meals. We organize guard duty in multiple flexible shifts throughout the day and two official shifts during the night, 12-4am, 4-8am. A kind of community existence and survival begins to take shape. The prison administration is pondering our presence, it seems, but they do not try to remove us. There is a lot of press about Atenco, many visitors to the camp, interest from doctors, lawyers, human rights commissions, solidarity organizations. Every evening, late, when the prison is quiet, we do rondines, or rounds, circling the long cement walls to a spot down the road on the east. That’s where the Atenco prisoners can hear us, or at least the women prisoners can. We shout vivas to the political prisoners and Other Campaign

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14 See http://www.ecoportal.net/content/view/full/59620
slogans as loudly as we can. “Que quieren los presos políticos? What do the political prisoners want? LIBERTAD! Que quieren las presas políticas? LIBERTAD!” Over and over until we are tired and hoarse. The next day they tell us in notes sent out of the prison or brief phone calls in what they can hear. We tell them who is present at the camp, so they feel accompanied. One evening the women inside get together and shout back, Viva el campamento! Viva la Otra Campaña!

The camp is built on a concrete slab in front of the prison, under the prison’s guard tower. We construct a roof of tarps woven together and supported by metal rods and wood posts stuck into cracks in the cement. The tarps are held together with rope and duct tape, angled so the rain runs off the back over the chicken wire fence between the camp and the jail and not onto the tents. Even so, it is rainy season and the tents often get wet, the water runs beneath them and turns to mud and the tents have to be turned over upside down in the sun to dry. The fence between the prison and the camp is covered within the first few days with signs and banners, “FREEDOM NOW!” “We are all Atenco,” “May the walls of the prisons turn to sugar.”

We dig a coffin-sized hole off to the side of the camp for the latrines, in a field marked “Federal Property: Trespassing Punishable by Law.” We build a wood plank floor and three wood boxes as toilets. We find metal pipes in an empty lot and make a structure, using heavy plastic campaign posters pulled down from buildings and billboards as walls, dividers, and a roof, so the inside of the latrines are wallpapered with the upside down faces and slogans of Calderon, Madrazo, and López Obrador. We carpet the floor with wood chips and put buckets of lime in the corners for pouring in the toilets. As a special luxury, the pirate electrician hooks up light bulbs to long extension cords, one in each “stall,” and it is almost as if they are modern bathroom units, safely lit at night.
The most stable structure of the makeshift camp is the homemade kitchen, build from donated metal scaffolding and covered with more campaign tarps. This keeps out the worst of the rain and wind. The electric camp stove works for small projects and we cook enormous pots of beans and coffee over the fire outside which we need during the first weeks when there are lots of people. We carefully separate the big plastic jugs of clean water for drinking from the jugs of not-so-clean water for washing. The wash water we refill every few days from the ojo de agua (water springs) in Almoloya, a town a few miles down the road. For the drinking water we have to wait for donations or collect enough pesos to stop the water trucks. We eat lots of corn, lentils, black beans, and rice, always rice. Sometimes there is squash or a little potato.

Those who cook are frugal geniuses. The mother of one of the prisoners does most of the cooking the first weeks, aided by a few other family members and campers. Later when she has to go back to the rest of her family we will take turns. But while she is there she toasts chiles, bits of tomato, onion, and garlic and makes hot salsas that give flavor to the rice and beans and corn tortillas. Fruit is usually scarce but once in awhile we get a donation of cantaloupe or a bucket of guava fruit. There is donated coffee, course grounds that are weak and bitter; probably toasted garbanzo beans, people say. We sweeten it with piloncillo, a kind of brown sugar, which makes it palatable, or good for dunking stale bread. At night we drink atole, cooked sweetened cornmeal or oatmeal. When the prisoners go on hunger strike people all over the country send jars of honey, often fresh from their own beehives, which is the only caloric intake the hunger strikers allow themselves. There is such an abundance of honey that we have plenty for use in the camp too, and this makes everything better.

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Why so many police for a handful of flower-growers? While this was obviously not an issue of rowdy rebels “above the law,” neither can it be identified simply as a series of rebellions
against authoritarian measures. The real danger that Atenco and Texcoco posed was not machetes and Molotov cocktails, but the autonomous mechanisms of cooperation enacted in these places. What the marketplace, whether in Texcoco or Tepito, represents is a semi-urban expression of what the farm is for the peasant: a form of cooperation and self-sustainability that allows some degree of escape from or minimalization of incorporation into the wage relationship. It is not weapons per se that endanger this relationship, but rather the daily material practices of these communities as communities and their decision to defend and strengthen those practices. In this sense, and true to the spirit of these struggles, neither the machetes of Atenco nor the rifles of the EZLN have any meaning without the materiality of the form of life being created in their communities.

If capital’s source of value was a kind of arbitrage (Martin 2007)—the margin of difference created superficially by the conditions of exchange in the market and actually by the labor subsumed in the commodity, an alternative/autonomous source of value would be difference as such. Not difference between, a measure of difference with regard to a general equivalent (of abstracted sameness) or a common denominator (of calculable equality), but the value of difference itself as produced and multiplied through encounter and transformation. “The only thing that makes us the same,” the EZLN often repeated in the Other Campaign, “is that we are all different.”

Difference here is not an issue of multi-culturalism or plurality, but a redefinition of value, a rupture with the logic of the field and terms of the (current) field of power. The significance of these communities or movements “from and for below” is their struggle not for inclusion, for jobs, for representation, but to generate the power, space, and time to create a life not based in a norm by which to measure equality, a wage by which to measure survival, a leader by which to measure justice. Seizing the tools of production in an age of socialized, cooperative
production becomes a matter of creating a resistance with a collective political project as a process of self-valorized cooperation that is always ahead of, or in excess of, its appropriation. And what we have learned from “others” in the Other Campaign is that what must be produced is not only new (forms of) markets but new forms of sociability, new images of happiness, new desires—in effect, new collective valorizations and subjectivities not compatible with capital. It is not possible to combat capital as if it were purely exterior, existing in the halls of government or the economies of exchange: capital is as much the power of sadness, powerlessness, defeat, and isolation as it is the commodity.

The perceived necessity to put political struggle in economic terms and their corresponding political necessities in order to address exploitation has often led to the unintended return of all demands and projects to capital’s field of power and the eternal postponement of rupture in lieu of the choices of the current conjuncture. Politics has been “swallowed” by capital, Grupo Acontecimiento notes, and its re-formulation, an “other” politics, is held precisely in the prospect of a politics understood not as an economic matter (Grupo Acontecimiento 2009, 20). That is something clearly difficult to imagine today, but it is just that prospect—the imagination of a life beyond capitalism’s totalitarian tendencies (Grupo Acontecimiento 2009, 20)—that has allowed for the creation of “calendars” and “geographies” that do not continually return all routes to the time-space of capital. If it was the EZLN uprising, the emergence of what was then a new collective subject acting in concert, that had made possible a rupture with a 70-year one-party rule, creating the possibility of an alternative within the electoral system, the Other Campaign was the effort and body that would attempt to create another collective subject, autonomous and adequate to the task of creating an alternative to electoral system as a whole, now consumed by neoliberalism. This rhythm of rupture and encounter would create a new time-space from below.

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Because the encampment is a small, new galaxy, we have to keep shifting the forms of organization and interaction. There are so many different people tied to this place through their relation to the prisoners: farm families from Atenco, anarchist collectives whose members went to Atenco in solidarity that night of May 3, students, a spattering of foreigners from the caravan or friends of people in the caravan, members of the teachers’ union, the health care workers’ union, and the electricians’ unions in Mexico City who are adherents of the Other Campaign, indigenous people, most notably the Masagua indigenous women whose compañera Magdalena is one of the highest profile prisoners; Amnesty International has publicized her case. There are fishnet stockings, aprons, face piercings, dred locks, combat boots, baseball caps, headscarves, suspenders, huipiles, sometimes even diapers.

There are endless things to do just to maintain daily functioning: repair the tarps in the kitchen and over the tents, chop firewood, cover the old latrines as they fill up and dig new ones. It is rainy season and the repeated dousing of the camp is tedious. When it pours hard in the afternoons or evenings everyone comes out of their tents and grabs brooms to sweep the water away to keep the tents from flooding. It is almost comical, all of us out there in wet pants and hoods up, sweeping furiously at the rain with pink and blue and green plastic brooms. After awhile, when it seems clear we won’t be evicted by the prison administration, and the rain comes down in torrents that make mockery of the small grooves carved in the cement to channel the water, we take a pick and a hammer and chip away at the cement, excavating a wider path between the tents, rounding off the edges so the water can turn the corners. I am a little worried as to why the prison guards watch us doing this on federal property from their posts above us without intervening. But no one else hesitates, and the project works: that night when the downpour starts the water runs through its new drainage system between the tents, emptying out into the ditch. This is very satisfying to watch.
Someone brings us an old TV and a DVD player, which we put by the fire under one of the tarps at the entrance of the camp. This is where we do guard duty. The first shift, 12-4 is easier, a lot of people are still up anyway and a couple of movies—people bring us dozens of pirated movies bought cheap in the streets—make the time pass quickly. Getting up at four is harder. Later, when there are fewer of us, we switch to three night shifts, 12-3am, 3-6am, 6-9am. At first I dread getting the second shift, when everyone is fast asleep or going off to their tents to crawl under the blankets and stay there long past dawn. At 3am it is black outside and I force my eyes open. My guard partner puts on Apocalypse Now II, and the night is filled for awhile with slobbering mumbling zombies and hyper-tough women with hard stomachs and guns strapped to their thighs. It is terrible and predictable but at this hour it is better than the social and political documentaries that make up the other genre of our collection. The rain pours down hour after hour, without ceasing. It seems like it should run out. I have to cross the highway to get to the kitchen to heat up the tepid coffee that only gets a soft brown in the old coffee percolator someone donated. I drink it with honey to stay awake.

The first months lots of people come. They bring food: black beans, pinto beans, haba beans, endless cans of tuna. Once there is a donation of olives, this is a luxury. A community radio station from Mexico City comes with a console, new music, and a whole bunch of DJs and audio technicians who take over guard duty and publicity for awhile, this is a relief. A group of Chicanos from California visit and bring us twelve new tents to replace the torn, sagging, molding ones. Organizations and collectives from Mexico City organize concerts and festivals outside the prison to keep attention on the political prisoners. Three elderly gentlemen from San Luis Potosi, adherents of the Other Campaign, come with bags of corn from their own harvests. Students from the National History and Anthropology School in Mexico City where one of the prisoners, Mariana, is a student, come to hold class outside the prison. Mariana calls them from
a telephone inside the prison during the class, and the teacher and Mariana’s mother cry on the phone. The class writes by hand the entirety one of the texts they are using, to send in to Mariana, because printed materials can’t be taken in. Another collective has hand-copied entire books to send into the higher security prison up the road where the Atenco leaders are held. A group of older indigenous healers from Chiapas make the 18-hour journey to Santiaguito and perform rituals outside the prison. They do rondines with us under a full moon and talk to the prisoners with a megaphone, “Do not worry, you are not alone. We are with you, and we are not afraid of anyone.”

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On July 2, 2006, a very strange thing happens as the voting results are posted on Mexico’s major television networks. The polls had put PRD candidate López Obrador well ahead of the PRI and PAN candidates in the months leading up to the election, and early voting returns marked his clear lead. By 3pm on July 2, López Obrador was forecast to win by 1.5 million votes. But sometime late afternoon the result curves that marked the candidates outcome in the polls shifted pace and direction. By early the next morning Calderon was shown to have taken a marginal lead. The Federal Electoral Tribune (TRIFE) said the results were too close to call.

Months later, after massive protests in the Mexico City and around the country and a PRD sit-in in the Mexico City center, and having refused a much-demanded recount, the TRIFE declared PAN candidate Felipe Calderon to have won the presidency by 1.5 million votes.15

The EZLN had not ceased to criticize the PRD project: in particular López Obrador’s Project Transitsmico as a purified Plan Puebla Panama; his “promiscuous” relationship with Mexican billionaire investor Carlos Slim for private renovations of public spaces in the historic

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15 See Julio Hernández López’ column “Astillero” in La Jornada throughout July 2006, as well as the EZLN’s “Peatones de la Historia” (2006c).
city center, his full-fledged support for the gubernatorial victory of PRI cross-over Juan Sabines in Chiapas, as well as the vocal applause by PRD representatives in Mexico State, where San Salvador Atenco is located, for the police attack on Atenco and the Other Campaign May 3 and 4, and the complicit silence of PRD representatives in the national congress for the same (EZLN 2006a). Nevertheless it is the EZLN who first documents and publicly denounces the fraud. In a radio show on July 3,\textsuperscript{16} and later in a long communiqué (EZLN 2006c), with information corroborated by multiple “inside” sources (EZLN 2006c), they explained the PRI-PAN alliance to shift votes from the PRI coffers to the PAN and then modify directly, as an emergency measure, the results from some voting boxes where oversight was weak (i.e. where vote monitors were paid to leave). Honest people had their votes stolen, the EZLN denounced, in what was Mexico’s perhaps most flagrant fraud yet.\textsuperscript{17}

But in the same way that some movement actors on the left had jumped into PRD ranks when it looked like they would win, PRD politicians jumped into the laps of the PAN when it was clear that they wouldn’t. Many, most vocally the EZLN itself, noted that the PRD leadership was the first to leave the ranks of the protests and make amends with the ruling PAN (EZLN 2006c). In the EZLN’s account, López Obrador had carefully orchestrated the protests against the fraud, proclaiming himself the “legitimate president,” and then shaping the righteous outrage of voters into an early personal campaign following for 2012. For the EZLN, July 2 simply confirmed that “political parties have ceased to exist” other than as electoral umbrellas for a particular political

\textsuperscript{16} “Política de la Banqueta,” July 3, 2007, 8:00pm, radio program of the Mexico City based Frente del Pueblo-UNIOS, adherent of the Other Campaign. The program was subsequently cancelled by the station on orders from Los Pinos, Mexican presidential headquarters.

\textsuperscript{17} 1988 has also come to be known as a fraud of historic proportions, as opposition candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas carried an early lead in the voting until the computer system tabulating votes “crashed.” PRI candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari was declared winner and the ballots were subsequently burned, preventing a recount.
personality or commercial franchise (EZLN 2006c). In their place was something of a “complex cocktail” of cunning personalities, corrupt businesspeople and criminals, and any nostalgia for “programs and principles” were for “infantile radicals” and “ultras” (EZLN 2006c). “Power itself decides who will be its ‘rivals’” (EZLN 2006c) (in this case the smaller parties, the New Alliance Party, PANAL, and Alternative Social Democratic Campesino Party, PASC), and the “rivalry” between the large parties is merely an internal power struggle.

The outraged intellectuals and political commentators on the left accused the EZLN of “playing to the right,” (Almeyra 2006; Ross 2006), though the majority of states the EZLN passed through on the Other Campaign voted solidly with the PRD (Bellinghausen 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). Marcos had begun doing mass media interviews again after the Atenco attacks to draw attention to the political prisoners. In an interview with Carlos Loret de Mola, of Televisa, after de Mola asked “why doesn’t Marcos take off the ski-mask? . . . They say it makes you a clown… that what right do you have to speak if you won’t take off the mask?” Marcos answered, “Who is hiding? Marcos who uses a ski-mask or the presidential candidates that change their discourse from one moment to the next and hide what their project for the nation really is….If I’m a clown or not, it doesn’t really matter because I’m not trying to govern anyone. These other clowns are going to govern a country, they’re the ones that are going to approve laws that will affect the people, who will send in the police and the army at their will, as they did in Atenco…” (Subcomandante Marcos 2006d).

The Other Campaign has become by now, significantly, just “la Otra,” “the Other.” It has its own scandals and squabbles, as the diversity of ideological factions clash and the familiar tactics of cooptation (to take the movement under the wing of the PRD or use its adherents as a new ‘mass’ base for the vanguardist hopes of certain organizations), subversion (to crumble the organization from the inside by promoting factional splits), or just plain “egoism” (the smothering
of the slow process of including everyone by the loudest voices or most impatient agendas).

Many of these moments are documented in the minutes from plenary sessions in Mexico City during the summer of 2006, and by the EZLN’s own accounts in a series of reports to Other Campaign adherents during those same months, “The Pedestrians of History” (EZLN 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e). But the “Actually Existing Other,” as the EZLN called the bulk of the movement composing the Other Campaign, in its great majority indigenous, maintained its integrity, looking “for no one to rule and no one to follow.” Nor did it “look to obtain from above what is constructed below” (EZLN 2006b).

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All the students have gone back to school. There are much fewer of us and this brings us down. There is an anxious feeling that the rest of the world has returned to the rest of life and we’re still living on this cement slab, under plastic tarps amid muddy puddles and barbed wire and soggy banners, shivering in broken plastic chairs and eating off of cheap plastic dishes from which you can’t ever clean the grease, drinking from cups that are actually old cans with the rough edges filed down. With fewer people we get more tired from more guard shifts and there are more arguments. The kitchen is a mess and the more accomplished maternal-minded cooks have had to return to their homes and families. The latrines are full and we need to dig new ones,

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but the novelty of digging up federal property is over. Someone brings us a port-a-potty; it quickly begins to stink and so we start digging three new holes.

But there are new visitors to orient, legal developments to tend to, communications to keep up. The sun comes out one morning and we try to rally the collective morale. Someone has gotten up early to sweep the camp, collect the trash, and take the organic waste down the road. Somebody else washes all the dirty dishes lying around, sorts out the pots from the plates from the cups and stacks them on crates and shelves. Even those who just finished the night’s guard shift, who haven’t yet slept, tackle a project, scrubbing down the kitchen in its entirety, sweeping the floor, binding up the old water bottles that are too dirty to refill into a huge plastic bouquet to go to the dump. Someone starts into a recently donated crate of cactus plants and cuts the spines off the nopales and toasts them over an open fire to eat with scrambled eggs for breakfast. Someone else makes juice from the cactus fruit, green and sweet.

We need money for phone cards for the prisoners, supplies for the camp, and transport for campers to get to town and back. Funds are low, and the camp starts an informal service for visitors to the prison on Saturdays and Sundays, keeping their things for them while they are inside. The prison restrictions are extensive and inexplicable. No gloves, scarves, coats, food, cell phones, keys, deodorant. The visitors give a few pesos donation for the courtesy. When funds get really low we decide to sell rice and toilet paper and honey because we have enough for a decade.

There aren’t as many visits anymore. We don’t do many radio shows anymore, hardly ever rondines. Now just maintaining the camp, keeping guard duty covered, and surviving is a priority. And it is enough. We start learning how to take care of each other, to look out for who is too tired to do guard duty, who is getting sick too often, who has a persistent cold that isn’t going away. With our reduced but somewhat stable numbers, we eat one cooked meal a day together on
a real table, a new arrival, under a tarp. There is a camaraderie here, waiting on each other each
day to sit down to eat. Every half hour or so we have lift up the tarps, heavy with rain water, with
the broom handles, so that the tarps don’t break from the weight. During hard rains it takes three
people, one has to be tall, to move the water. They have to lift three different spots simultaneously
to get the water to run off in the right direction and then it comes down like a wave crashing into
the cement. It is getting colder, but there is a comfort in sitting close to each other, around the
fire. Later I even learn to like the second night guard shift. I love the pouring rain at five in the
morning, lit up by the headlights that never stop going by. From where I sit behind one of the
solidarity banners I can just see a sliver of the street, the drops splatting and bouncing off the
asphalt, faster and faster like notes on a street piano. When light breaks over the curled razor
wire I see that dawn is beautiful however it comes.

I go to town every day to buy a newspaper for the camp. The news vendor expects me, he
either has the paper in his hand for me when I approach or turns his palms over empty, “ya se
acabó amiga.” All out, my friend.

Once I splurge and buy in town fresh lettuce and carrots and tomatoes to make a salad
for lunch. I think we all need more vegetables. That week there is a donation of homemade cherry
jam that, in my memory, tasted like nectar of the gods. An Australian woman brings a salty
spread to put on toast. A Oaxacan man brings homemade cooking chocolate from his village and
we mix it with milk. This is so rich as to be a meal in itself.

I get up for three o’clock guard duty, alone this time to let more people rest. I have had
several nights of sleep in Mexico City. The guard post always smells the same at this hour, like
cornflakes and cigarettes. The night is absolutely icy, I try to type notes and my fingers freeze on
the keyboard through my gloves and the wind enters any corner of my body not heavily layered,
ankles right above the socks, temples between hood and scarf, the tips of my fingers. I look over
the tents in the dark where my fellow campers are sleeping and feel an overwhelming desire to protect them, all of them at once, in these long dark nights, to trust them, to embrace them and tell them they are my family.

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5.4 Conclusion: The Journey Continues

The Other Campaign mobilizations for the release of the political prisoners taken in Atenco continue, but at the end of the summer the EZLN decides to continue its journey north. The majority of the political prisoners remained in prison. Seven more members of the EZLN’s Sixth Commission, Commanders Tacho, Grabiela, Zebedeo, Miriam, Gema, Hortensia, and David, come to San Salvador Atenco to relieve Marcos for the rest of the journey. Many supporters and commentators said that there is no point to going north, that the north of Mexico is practically the South of the United States, lost to any possibility of struggle “from below.” Others (again) advocate for the conjunctural necessity of supporting the López-Obrador-led movement against the fraud. Marcos parodies their attempted persuasions later, “the waters are parting, man, and with the rain coming what we need is an umbrella” (EZLN 2006b). The umbrella, of course, in front of this “historic and pre-insurrectional moment” (EZLN 2006b), is the PRD. López Obrador calls off the protests against the fraud himself, what the EZLN interprets as a dual message to protesters (to go home and prepare for 2012) and to Power (that he can start protests, but he can also stop them—no need to fear). The EZLN insists on maintaining autonomy from the electoral protests and completing the journey. Many people in the country have dropped electoral ranks after the elections, hovering in the liminal space of their supposed citizenship left after the fraud erased their votes, López Obrador sent them home from the protests, and Calderon took
office in what would be an administration marked by unprecedented levels of narco-violence, social unrest, and the increasing militarization of the country.

The release of the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle in 2005 and the proposal for the Other Campaign had made clear that the coming catastrophe—of environmental destruction, economic collapse, social repression, and political explosion—was inevitable, but that the Zapatista communities would not face it passively or alone. The EZLN renounced facile notions that there are political saviors or revolutionary vanguards that could solve any of these problems, or that there are any ideological formulas or theoretical models that would serve as answers. Neither would there be any reward in being “right” about the crisis; one cannot win anything by moral or material accumulation in what is not a zero sum game; as Raúl Zibechi put it, “it does not help to arrive first or fast, but rather on time and with everyone” (Zibechi 2008a). And that would require building autonomy in another sense—to trust in themselves and among others “below” for their own survival, security, sanity, and dignity. It is here that we find the possibility for turning the class without interest—a generic “below”—into the class beyond interest—a self-determined collective subject, or a “political project that is a community” (Hardt and Negri 2004).

The Other Campaign, it is important to note, was entering completely uncharted territory with the venture to create a movement “below and to the left” without the support of the institutional left, and its attempts were experimental, sometimes improvisational, and, as yet, still fragile. But the refusal to concede to the real needs realism of political pragmatism has opened the possibility of a struggle for something other than marginal gain or relative advancement within the terms and value of the existing capitalist system. The series of encounters that make up the journey of the Other Campaign were exercises in creating an initial map and calendar of an alternative time and space based on the value of difference. This alternative calendar-map would have to continually and simultaneously reassert its rupture with the dominant system—the
electoral calendar in this case—and reinforce its own construction of value, created through encounter. It is precisely these moments—of change, risk, or destabilization, when the demands abound for necessary support for the least worst of given trajectories—that our points of reference tremble and a different point of reference or framework of thought can in effect “become” possible (González Casanova 2006). It is here I believe that we find the possibility of the new.

At Santiaguito, there are still 26 political prisoners inside the walls. Some of us will stay on at the prison camp and some of will continue on the journey north.

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*In the North everything is bigger. The expanses of land, the billboards, the buildings, the people. In each indigenous area—the Yaqui, the Pima, the Mayo-Yoreme, Kiliwa, Cucapá, Kumiai, Kikapoo, Comca’ac, Tohono O’odham, Tarahumara—the most important elements of their territories are under threat: the mountain, the bay, the river, the island, the water, the land. Where in the south this was mostly with relation to foreign investment for resource extraction and development projects, in the north it is theme parks, luxury hotels, and tourist resorts.*

*There is no way to adequately recount these stories. The Kikapoo tribe’s land stretches from central Mexico to Wyoming. They have more and more trouble crossing the militarized border within their homeland. The Cucapá cannot fish where they have fished for, it is estimated, some 9,350 years, as the gulf waters of their coastal home were declared, under PRI president Salinas de Gortari, and in violation of international treaties on indigenous rights, a “Biosphere Reserve.” If one of their 35 pangas, or fishing boats, is caught fishing they are prosecuted and jailed. Large fishing companies, however, with over a thousand pangas, continue to fish on a massive scale in the same waters. There are 300 Cucapá; 30 of them have outstanding arrest warrants for fishing for the community. The Kiliwa (or Quililhua) are close to almost certain extinction: there are now just 54 Kiliwa left; only five speak the language. They fought for many*
years to preserve their land and way of life, but have lost almost everything. There are no schools, no health clinics, no electricity. The young people have left to try to make lives elsewhere. Those remaining have made a death pact, not to birth any more Kiliwa children into a life that is collective spiritual death. Marcos promises that during the next fishing season, members of the EZLN will be present here to keep vigil over the safety of the tribes as they fish, and indeed the next fishing season, the EZLN is there. In Sonora an older O’odham indigenous man speaks to the EZLN in humble, country English, like I am used to hearing in the rural Midwest US. He switches to fluent O’odham, and then translates himself into a slightly accented Spanish. This exchange, between this O’odham elder and the EZLN, in the crossover of languages and experiences, somehow speaks more to and about a continent then could possibly be explained with any data, manifesto, or analysis. In some places we visit isolated warrior tribes who have never worked with anyone else, not even other indigenous peoples. But they listen to the possibility of the Other Campaign. In some places we are told that what we see there we have not seen and what we hear we have not heard. Some places we have to learn where the sacred spots are, we don’t dare sit on a stump or put backpacks on the ground until we are sure of this. Mistakes have been made.

We stop at a Yaqui village, another warrior tribe, and eat a greasy delicious cabbage and beef stew with huge flour tortillas the size of pizzas and tiny hot chilies and dark coffee, strong for once. The men wear button down shirts and cowboy hats and the women modest shirt dresses. They have rattly old pick-up trucks and horse-pulled carts and sun-wrinkled faces. They look like Kansans to me.

The desert is so hot during the day and so cold at night. The 360 degree horizon is like looking out to sea in all directions. The night is dark and clear and the sky fits like a great starry bowl over us. The window of clarity of perception in these moments—of what is important and
why—evoked by the words and silences and held by the desert, is vivid and immeasurable. I know already that the time-space of the sea-sky of the desert will seem a distant moment tomorrow when we enter the zone of radio frequencies and the chatter of billboards and cluttered landscape of signs and advertisements. I know that tomorrow normalcy will ensue and this hole in the universe might be lost. Stars fall over my head, as if it were the shooting ones that were common and the still ones cause for amazement. We sleep on the cold ground; the earth feels like a cradle here. I pat it, the earth, like it is a friend and lie down on a flat space among my compañeros to sleep in the sea.

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When we get back to Mexico City in December and return to the prison camp. There are few campers; December in Santiaguito has very low temperatures and an icy wind. Every Monday a few of the sexworkers cover the entire night guard at the prison so everyone at the camp can sleep a full night. In the mornings they do sexual education workshops for the families of the prisoners and distribute Encantos.

Someone brings us a big cooked turkey for Christmas and we eat it around the fire with our fingers. A group of visiting Italians take the night guard so we all can sleep. I have no fewer than seven wool blankets on top of me and I am freezing. I stare at the prison watch lights filtered through the blue canvas of my tent. After the journey, having my own tent now seems like the most extravagant expanse of space and privacy ever. I hear the Italians singing around the fire and someone snoring nearby and horns on the highway. I try to process the reality of places on the journey and that of my friends still inside this prison, the different places and forces of freedom and incarceration, institutional and subjective. There are 29 compañeros still inside. It may have been a class without interest that was incarcerated, but it is an emerging class beyond interest that is increasingly able to free them.
6. Conclusion: *Nadie* and the Class beyond Interests

We will walk then the same path of history, but we will not repeat it. We are from before, yes, but we are new.

EZLN\textsuperscript{19}

The prison encampment would continue for the next four years, long after I had left my tent on the cement slab under the watchtowers, moving the entire camp with the prisoners when they were transferred from Santiaguito to the prison at Al Molino de las Flores several hours away. A few of the political prisoners were let out one at a time, through juridical processes and social pressure. Eight of the prisoners with charges of “kidnapping,” including some the women who had gone in solidarity to Atenco and denounced their abuse in detainment, were released January 25, 2008, and finally, after a massive social mobilization across the country and among international adherents of the Sixth Declaration, the remaining nine were released from Al Molino on June 30, 2010, and the three leaders of Atenco (who had been sentenced to 112 years in prison each) from the high security Las Palmas prison in the Altiplano, July 1, 2010, more than four years after their arrest. In December 2006 and July 2007, the *Encounters Between Zapatista Peoples and Peoples of the World* took place in Chiapas, followed by the *Encounter of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas* in Vicam, Sonora, Yaqui territory, in October 2007, the *First Encounter Between Zapatista Women and Women of the World* in Chiapas in December 2007, and the Festival of Dignified Rage in Mexico City and San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, in January 2009. The Other Campaign was moving and growing, though still with tentative and stumbling steps as to how to turn the network of struggles, now more clearly connected and understood among themselves, into a “national program of struggle,” as the designated next step.

\textsuperscript{19} EZLN speaking in Iguala, Guerrero, March 7, 2001.
At the same time, repression against the Zapatista communities in Chiapas was stepped up significantly, as it was across the country for other parts of the Other Campaign. The second “phase” of Other Campaign, during which more EZLN commanders had begun dispersing themselves to different parts of the country initially visited in the first journey, was put on hold in response to these attacks, and as of March 2009 the EZLN returned to silence. In one of their last public statements, at the Festival of Dignified Rage in January of that year, the EZLN had stated, “We who have made war know how to recognize those signs of its preparation and approach….War, like fear, has an odor. We can begin to smell this foul odor in our lands” (EZLN 2007b).

In the midterm elections during the summer of 2009 in which the much publicized result was the swinging back of some states to PRI control (in many cases a punishment vote to the federal PAN administration), the more significant results came from the six percent “voto nulo” (the submission of a blank ballot as a condemnation of all candidates), and, even more importantly, by what for Mexico was a massive abstention rate: 45 percent overall and 70 percent in some regions (Lascano Rodríguez 2010a). In the 2010 local elections in Mexico City, where voting has traditionally been strong and for the last three decades heavily in favor of the PRD, abstention in some districts reached an unprecedented 70 percent, and the “voto nulo” surpassed ten percent (Barrales Magdaleno 2010). In 2007 the price of the tortilla had shot up 100 percent, later dropping to a 40 percent increase over previous rates. Mexican dependency on the US through remittances, imports (currently 70 percent of Mexico’s total) and exports (85 percent of Mexico’s total) made Mexico particularly vulnerable to the impact of the financial crisis that

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20 The attacks on Zapatista communities and other members of the Other Campaign across the country are well-documented on the Enlace Zapatista page, www.enlacezapatista.org.mx.
began in the US, and according to the World Bank, the Latin American country that has most severely suffered the resulting global economic crisis (González Amador 2010).

The year 2010 marks the bicentennial of Mexico’s independence struggle (September 16, 1810) and the centennial of the start of the Mexican Revolution (November 20, 1910). The year 2012 marks, on the calendar from above, the next already highly contentious presidential elections, and, according to some accounts, the end of the fifth sun on the Mayan calendar, and the beginning of the Sixth. It is widely assumed, from all political, social, cosmological, or electoral angles, that the country is unlikely to get through 2010 or from 2010 to 2012 without a major social explosion or uprising of some kind (Esteva 2010; Hernández Navarro 2010; Rodríguez Lascano 2010c, 2010d; Padget and Mascarena 2009). How that will happen and by what actors is an open debate, as is the critical question of whether that rupture will become manifest as the creation of an organized alternative, a struggle of “dignified rage” in Other Campaign terms, or as the chaos and the tragedy crisis can bring to the least protected.

The Zapatistas have understood their own past and ongoing dispossession, eviction, and marginalization as twin processes of destruction and reconstruction vital, not marginal, to the organization of capital in the Fourth World War. If neoliberalism can be understood as a “new war of conquest for territory,” as the EZLN has said (EZLN 1997), then in that conquest, rural displacement and urban eviction—whether through war, public policy, “development,” or gentrification—represent not just isolated instances of dispossession or continuing primitive accumulation, but a new spatialization of capital. This is the analysis on which the Sixth Declaration and the Other Campaign were based, and required, according to the EZLN, a different conceptualization and imagination of struggle. I want to conclude here by summarizing, with some speculation, what I think the Zapatista struggle, the “Sixth,” and the “Other” have
prompted in our capacity to imagine as other possibilities for social struggle, political action, and intellectual endeavor.

6.1 Visibility or Encounter

The Other Campaign and the Zapatista politics of autonomy and encounter more generally I believe offer us a kind of paradigm for an era of governance for understanding the difference between two possible paths and outcomes of struggle that as forms appear to be similar but as strategies are antagonistic: visibility (as that identification and interpellation of the individual or group) and encounter (as the presence and possibility of a common). At stake here for many struggles, especially those trying to build a movement, is how to become intelligible to each other (encounter) without becoming intelligible (vulnerable to interpellation) to the system. The latter, as we saw in Chapter Three, is the moment of capture for absorption or annihilation, governance or criminalization. At issue in the Other Campaign is how to constitute an “other politics” while recognizing that the subversion of a common produced by and productive of a new subjectivity was frequently the very visibility of that possibility. That visibility often led to its mediatization (commodification), a spotlight in the spectacle of politics, or mediation (representation) into a “public” space of governance. Note here that it is the media realm that functions as a place of politics (as spectacle) and the “public” realm which functions as a marketplace (for the production of subjectivity). The choice of spectacle or subjection poses ever-present political options on a field of power always ready to invite to the negotiating table elements of opposition incorporable into the political system and to marginalize or criminalize the rest.

The temptation of visibility and recognition is the seductive siren of governance that promises self-satisfied and “chosen” consent with sophisticated self-improvement schemes of
safety, security, and success. These effective individualist schemas often play on a sentimental spiritualism or calculated careerism that can easily become generalized into movement tendencies that begin to identify themselves by their “interests,” a set of demands that become an identity in itself, or an alternative practice that becomes a new icon or idol of alterity. This can happen through the fetishization of forms (a sophisticated network of nothing in particular), the crystallization of social potential into a stratification of interests (the marginal privilege of an activist milieu as subcultural scene and the ghettoization of actual common space), and the perversion of what were once radical principles (democracy, liberty, equality) into the vacuous but dogmatic insistence on the necessity for the form of horizontalism, democratic procedure, and skilled facilitation that often make for the hallucination of alternative-building through what is merely hyper-management. These abstracted forms become a protected place where no one is required to open oneself to the process of becoming something other through encounter. It is not security that must be sought, in my reading of what the politics of the Other Campaign suggest, but self-abolition; not safety (from others) but liberty (from self). The neoliberal model that promotes freedom from social entanglements and the webs of common existence is threatened by the encounter that subjects the self to the other and finds absolute difference in/of both.

With some flexibility, I believe we can pose a similar paradigm to intellectual work. Theory, Randy Martin claims, always represents a scarcity with relation to what is possible (Martin 2007, 166). The positioning of the researcher as node in the network, as suggested in Chapter One, rather than above or outside is a form meant to challenge the positionality associated with certain tendencies of some readings of contemporary global capitalism (associated with post-Fordist production and its cultural milieu (Jameson 1991), or, the condition of real subsumption of society under capital (Hardt and Negri 2000, 255). One pole tends to deny the power, spectrum, and systemic quality of global capitalism, attributing these qualities to a
"master narrative" produced by its theorists and thus requiring a textual deconstruction (Gibson-Graham 1996; Prakash 1990); the other is wholly subsumed by that spectrum and systemic quality, resigned to the position that nothing is ever really new, suffering is inarticulable, consciousness delusional, otherness unintelligible, and revolt naïve. The first position, while genuine in its attempt to overcome the sense of powerlessness faced with a powerfully dominant system, seems unable to address the issue that for most of the world contemporary global capitalism is anything but a discursive creation and textual manipulation allows no relief from its effects, but that this does not eliminate the possibility of resistance. The second position is so convinced or consumed by capitalism’s permeation, commodification, and colonization of life—history, present, thought, relation, and emotion—that the options for action or response to this reality are limited to either despair or to a cynical skepticism (accompanied by a mild amusement and aesthetic involvement) for the tragedies, pleasures, and curiosities of such a world (what Antonio Negri calls “sailing the subdued waters of the neoliberal usage of the postmodern” (Negri 2006, 79, 88). This is what Martin identifies as the presence of neoliberal values within the social sciences: the powerlessness of the position exists in perfect harmony with capitalism: complicitly cynical, hopelessly relativistic, harmoniously inactive, exhausting acceptor. In the EZLN’s words, this type of theory is both the reflection and the marketing arm of neoliberalism, promoted by intellectuals who “sell resignation door-to-door” (Other Campaign meeting in Guadalajara 3/21/2006).

In this perspective, attempts at resistance consist mostly of small utopic hallucinations outside of the world and time in which we live, where collective political engagement is not only useless but dangerous (in its passions) and vulgar (in its naïveté). Pushed to its conclusions, such

a position leaves us with a generalized though preoccupied isolation, and only individualized and temporary “escape” (Negri 2006), something, not ironically, offered by the same system. There is certainly no guaranteed path out of those poles of denial and despair, but to position oneself within a network of thought and practice is a perhaps more promising place from which to notice what is different or new, by allowing oneself to encounter it, and thus to reevaluate and revalue what now seems possible.

Placing the anthropologist in the network is still an experiment, but I think a healthy one. One exercise for this was suggested by Andres Aubry, French historian and anthropologist. There must be an intellectual project, he insisted, as thoroughly committed to preventing the formation of an “academic class” as an emancipatory movement is to preventing the formation of a political class (Aubry 2007). An “academic class” in Aubry’s terms, consists of a monopolization over the production of knowledge, largely illegible and unintelligible to others, not as purposeful remove but as the real consequence of a separation between intellectual production and the common sensibility22 and sociality from which knowledge arises. This is a bad formula for study, Aubry says, not because knowledge production isn’t a valid and necessary endeavor but because the quality of research depends, he claims, on the ability to formulate research questions based not on individual intrigue but on relevant realities. I do not read this as a kind of anti-intellectualism or romanticized reach for the “organic intellectual,” but rather an insistence on the necessity for knowledge production as one practice among many in the network of practices that make up movement.

As one practice in a network, knowledge production taken up as the examination of a field of forces allows us not only to escape problematic containments of “fieldsite” as object of

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22 Here I mean not “common sense” in the pragmatic sense, but sensibility in relation to the actual senses, shared affects and physical, emotional, and intuitive senses.
study, but to address “fieldwork” as the place of interaction with the “other” (McGrane 1989). That designated place of interaction, in its tendency to project and prescribe otherness outside the self, leaves the role of the anthropologist, in this case, for all of the individual scholar’s intent and attempt to “participate,” wholly “epistemologically committed to the sovereignty of observation” (McGrane 1989, 124), reinforcing, however unwillingly, the role of “absolute spectator” (Merleau Ponty 1969), capable, from that vantage point, of recognizing difference (unrecognizable to the different) and relativity (a privileged place of cultural knowledge). The imperative of the anthropologist to “never lose control…over his horizon” (McGrane 1989, 125)—of both thought and self, presumably—may be precisely that element which maintains the other as other and the self as spectator. To release that obligation could constitute a kind of figurative suicide, of self or profession, parallel to that, as we saw in Chapter Five, necessary to encounter (respect) difference only through becoming different. The constraints of the profession for permitting that process are not limited to anthropology; they may be largely generalized aspects of contemporary self and society. But anthropology, perhaps, in its explicit address and deliberate positioning of the encounter of difference, could provide a unique perspective from which to challenge those limits.

To work conceptually and even concretely within the context of a network could include (and these are only experimental formulations): not to describe something but to enact it, following Jean Genet, or not to represent a particular reality but to transform the viewer; to be relentless transformers in both the cyborgian and social sense in “bursting the limits of language’s poverty” (Haraway 1990, 70) and challenging the rationality of thought; to rid ourselves of the imprinting of old logics (Wu Ming 2003) and their inertia; to perform a kind of “lyrical hacking” in the recombination of old elements in a new fashion that may signal the old but is saved under a new name and locates the “file” in a new place (Saul Williams 2003); to convince ourselves and
others that the ways of the world are not self-evident and to make the current world anomalous in
the expression of a new one (Taussig 1987); to heed the injunctions made of the ethnographer,
“don’t observe, apprentice!” (Genet 1986), or to stop studying the shaman and become the
shaman (Surin 1993); or finally, in the words of the EZLN, “not to replace old statues with new
ones, but to create a world where statues serve only for birds to crap on” (EZLN 2003). The
question here then may be not how to write about Zapatismo, but how to create a Zapatista
practice of writing. For the anthropologist that is something that requires functioning as part of
the network, one node among many, no more and no less.

The EZLN commented during its first journey of the Other Campaign that this new body
of struggle would need another kind of theoretical reflection. It would require from intellectuals
the humility to recognize when they were faced with something new, the desire to make the Other
Campaign their own, and the willingness to encounter the indigenous, workers, peasants, women,
children, sex workers, street vendors, and all of the others that compose it. “We think the Other
Campaign deserves the best intellectuals in the country,” they stated, “they will have to tell us
with their deeds if they deserve the Other Campaign” (from Other Campaign meeting in

Academia can reproduce models of the individual(ized) subject and reinforce the idea
that the only collectivity possible is a “class with interest,” or it can encourage outlets for
singularization (Rolnik and Guattari 2008) and theoretical accompaniment that responds to and
encourages the formation of a class beyond interest. Perhaps today the traditional anthropological
task of making the strange familiar and the familiar strange should be the ability to avoid the
cynicism both of “there is no alternative” and “it is never time for an alternative” and recognize
rupture and the possibility it brings for the new.

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6.2 Nadie: We are all Nobody

In both the war for independence from Spain in 1810 and the Mexican revolution in 1910, as well as in the resistance to French and US invasions (1862 and 1846, respectively), the indigenous peoples of Mexico fought for Mexico, for independence and revolution, and each time, victory achieved, were subordinated by the new powers in the country and relegated to the margins of society in a racist class system that has survived every struggle for liberty (Rodríguez Lascano 2008b). The EZLN, in recognition of this reality, and in preparation for the initiative taken in the Sixth Declaration, states:

After all this, the strange thing would have been that they didn’t rise up in arms. But they did. In spite of having been the object of contempt and disdain by those of white skin, they did not make their war into a war against a color. And despite having been the object of lies and betrayals by those who speak ‘castilla’ [Spanish], they did not direct their war against a culture. And despite having always been servants in the houses of those who had everything, they did not impose destruction. They made a war, their war, and they make it still. It is a war against oblivion (EZLN 2004f).

But neither, the EZLN clarified, would the indigenous people organized in rebellion accept a return to relegation and submission. In their call to join with others in another fight for freedom, a movement “richer in ideas, proposals, and struggle than this country has ever known” (Other Campaign meeting in Quintana Roo 1/17/2006), they made clear that “this doesn’t mean that we’re going to fight, as indigenous peoples, and then continue living in wood shacks, burning sticks for light and worshipping father sun or mother moon or whatever it is one thinks it is to be indigenous (Other Campaign meeting in Tabasco 1/24/2006). This wouldn’t be a struggle to return to anything previous, “the nostalgia of [Pancho] Villa and [Emiliano] Zapata” (Other Campaign meeting in Colima 3/29/2006); “we want to live with dignity but with respect for our own way of being…and we will fight for that” (Other Campaign meeting in Tabasco 1/24/2006). The previous chapters here have aimed to demonstrate that the entire history of the Zapatistas has been oriented toward what the Sixth Declaration made explicit: not a declaration of war on
anyone but a call to everyone to cease participation in our own exploitation that the calendar and geography “above” imply. It is in this process, I believe, that we glimpse one kind of emerging common. What Zapatismo has been able to show us is that there would be no way to “protect” that space, or its new “we.” The temptation to hold onto it—an effective death—would always have to give way to the compulsion to open it again to another encounter—the figurative “suicidal will” and potential rebirth. That movement, that constant transformation, is a commitment to politics—politics as movement that constantly reopens the decision-making power of the community and the possibility for acting on one’s own (collective) life.

“Somos nadie,” the EZLN has repeated over the years, “we are no one.” Not “no somos nadie,” the correct Spanish formulation of the double negative—“we are not anyone”—but the affirmative, “we are no one.” “No one” here are the “paperless of politics” (Rodriguez Lascano 2010c), those who are not “documented” to participate politically or recognized as public or political actors, migrants of political citizenry and subjectivity. The Zapatistas recognized those “paperless of politics” as a growing class without interest, and made an invitation for an organized collective no one in the initiative and creation of an “other politics,” a class beyond interest. “Here we are, the dead of always,” read graffiti on the wall of a building in San Cristobal de las Casas, one of the municipal seats taken in the uprising on January 1, 1994, “dying again, but this time in order to live.”

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In Homer’s Odyssey, Odysseus escapes the great Cyclops Polyphemus by offering him wine, identifying himself as “οὐ τίς,” literally “no man.” When Polyphemus is intoxicated, Odysseus and his men attack, and Polyphemus’ cries that “no man has attacked him” are ignored by the other Cyclops who think he has lost his mind.
In February of 2009, Mama Corral, the beloved elderly member of the Mothers of the Disappeared in Chihuahua, died in Ciudad Juarez. In the EZLN’s last public communication to date, they wrote “A Story for Mama Corral” in her honor, protagonized by a “little leaf” who happened to be a skateboarder and, in a daring maneuver, fell out of her tree and ended up on the ground. There, for the first time, she saw the world “from below.” The little leaf looked around with wonder, seeing the daily acts of love and pain and struggle, of calendars and geographies of what we consider to be the past and imagine to be the future, and realizes, “nadie, no one, is preparing to confront Polyphemus” (EZLN 2009).

Indeed, in the world that is to be made, the EZLN wrote the year of the birth of the caracoles and the Good Government Councils, “in contrast to this one and previous ones whose style was allocated by a variety of gods, when someone asks, ‘who made this world?’ the answer will be ‘nobody.’”
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