Mexico and the global problematic: power relations, knowledge and communication in neoliberal Mexico
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Chapter Seven

COMMUNICATION AND THE GLOBAL PROBLEMATIC

Whatever moral philosophers may say and whatever warnings they may hand out, ‘progress’ just goes on. Usually, the technological decisions are taken first and ethics may reflect on them after the event. Thus ethics becomes the agreeable topics of interesting seminars about norms and values.

(Hamelink: 2000: 6)

Introduction

In this chapter the attention turns from the idea of understanding what it is (a commercial-democratic communication setting) towards an analysis of what it does. It is a relational analysis.

In order to approach this problematic I depart from the hypothesis that the prevalent logic of power relations around the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico has prevented and limited society at large from the possibilities of a proper relation with social assemblage as it relates to communication technologies. This particular situation is translated into the excommunication (1) of society at large from the possibilities to use the post-traditional technolinguistic social assemblage to support its desires. In this context it may be pertinent to ask what the communicational configurations are in Mexico. It can be suggested that this condition of excommunication is the outcome of social forces and their interaction with a commercial-democratic communication configuration found in Mexico.

General Remarks

Communication possibilities in Mexico during the 1980s were controlled by three organisations: the public media managed by the state, the media represented by the private sector (e.g. Televisa), and the collective or truly public and social use of frequencies in the form of communitarian projects (e.g. Radio Campesina). A closer look at each of these forms of organisation offers us the following insight: in the case of the state, the role of communication technologies in the early and mid-1980s was reduced due to the restructuring of its infrastructures, wavering from a state-public vision to a failed commercial one. During that same period, the private media group Televisa registered a great expansion, and even though it was subjected to some degree of state control, it nevertheless gained significant power within the political and social arena. Finally, by the end of the 1980s, the social and collective use and implementation of communication technologies was reduced and
marginalised, as revealed in the case of Radio XEYT or Radio Cultural Campesina, later renamed Radio Teocelo in 1998. Civil society was not yet an actor in the communication arena during this decade.

At the end of the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari in 1994, and after the process of privatisation, a small group of highly influential families had taken control of television, telephone, radio, and other media. The Azcárraga family owned Televisa, Cablevision, Direct TV, Sky TV, Univision, Galavision, radio stations, football teams, and other businesses in the music and editorial industries, while Ricardo Salinas Pliego had consolidated TV Azteca, integrating it into his other businesses in retail furniture (e.g. Elektra). With regard to telephony, Carlos Slim Helú consolidated his telephone monopoly, expanding his business into other communication enterprises (e.g. Internet provision) using cable infrastructures that were managed by his recently acquired corporation Telmex. In 1988 the Vargas family also entered the privileged group of media tycoons with the concession to operate the Multivision MVS company, with its 29 channels of pay-per-view television, as well as radio and some Internet services. In this regard, the Salinas administration is considered as the moment when mass media in Mexico partially opened up for competition with the incursion of TV Azteca and Multivision against Televisa. However, the concentration made by these three companies in terms of services, content distribution, and production reduced the Mexican market in telecommunications to only a few anti-market players. This circumstance indirectly cancelled further competition and the possibility for social uses that enable mass media technologies to achieve purposes other than commercial ones.

Today we see that Televisa and TV Azteca own more than 90 per cent of the available television broadcast capacity in Mexico, while state-owned television has been reduced to a meagre scale. In 2006 Televisa managed 258 television stations, broadcasting in Mexico, the USA, Central and South America, as well as Spain, where it has important investment plans and projects. This placed Televisa as the central television company of Latin America. Televisa as well as TV Azteca also own many radio stations in Mexico. This is significant, since radio is basically controlled and owned by less than twenty families, including the Salinas Pliego and the Azcarraga. Televisa is also a giant in the editorial field with literally dozens of political, entertainment, and other types of printed publications and music productions. However, in terms of printed media the monopoly in Mexico is run by the Vasquez Raña family. Just as the Azcarraga family represent the biggest mass media broadcasting conglomerate in the Spanish language market, the print media conglomerate owned by Vasquez Raña is the biggest of its kind in the Spanish speaking world (2).

The 1990s was a decade in which the state lost most of its ground in communication terms. State television was represented by Channel 11, its best and most serious asset, and other minor
channels like Channel 22. This particular circumstance forced government administrations to transfer certain amounts of power to private mass media owners. This transfer of power translated to convenient regulatory legal frameworks that disproportionately benefitted consolidated communication groups in Mexico, in particular Telmex, Televisa, and TV Azteca. In telephony, it was Carlos Slim Helú who took a central role. Not only all landlines in Mexico, but also all media related enterprises, from cables and infrastructure to the Internet and mobile telephony, fell under the control of this influential individual. In 1990 the government sold Telmex (the national telephone company) to Carlos Slim Helú, who turned this inefficient yet multimillion dollar company into a resounding success. Carlos Slim Helú, who according to Forbes magazine was the wealthiest man in the world in 2010, is also the co-founder of Grupo CARSO, a group that capitalises on sectors other than telecommunications, including copper mining, the construction industry, finances, etc. But it also symbolises the emerging partnership of the state with the private sectors. This alliance, a synthesis that promotes above all neoliberal policies and a free market environment, hinders and obstructs any real attempt at competition, undermining non-profit communicational ventures and initiatives.

In spite of this, communication – embodied in its diverse forms or media, and the uses that civil society and society at large give to it, regardless of the often marginal capacities that this use represents – is still one of the most important resources for protecting society from the often blind interest-desires of the other two sectors. One example in this regard is the expansion showed by communitarian radio stations. In 2006, sixty-nine communitarian radio stations in Mexico were in the AMARC (the World Association of Communitarian Radio Broadcasters, see Chapter Four) directory, twenty-two of which were voting members and forty-seven were associate members. Radio Huayacocotla and Radio Teocelo are voting members on this list. In addition, there are more communitarian radio stations transmitting in Mexico than the total number of broadcasters listed by AMARC.

The explosive growth of communitarian radio stations in Mexico, aided by the Internet, may be considered the result of efforts within the social sector to counterbalance the private sector and its relation to the state, and as a way of countering the strategies exercised by the private sector to reduce the possibilities to use communication technologies, in particular radio and television. Sadly, this has not been enough to achieve the necessary balance within the communication panorama in Mexico. However, alternatives to this otherwise bleak trend of communication in Mexico appear to be emerging. Together with community radio, the Internet, as part of the new communication technologies, offers alternatives for the social sector to counteract monopoly practices and other commercial regulations in the field. During the late 1990s and throughout the first half of the
present decade, Internet related communications have peaked astoundingly, contributing to a sense of optimism. Civil society is creating electronic content in the form of websites and blogs, creating a platform for political and social debate with unrestricted political content that the state and the private sector are not willing to create or stimulate, even though it is necessary to keep society informed and to enable positive collective participation in the future of the nation.

When thinking about the communication technologies assemblage in Mexico, these very few players hold all the stakes: Carlos Slim Helú and his connection to the Internet and telephony business; Azcarraga’s business in the field of television and radio is the biggest player in the Spanish world; and Vázquez Raña in printed media. These three massive anti-markets and powerful forces that centre their activity and operations in Mexico raise the question of the very limited and weakened space or possibilities they leave for society at large and civil society to use, benefit from, and communicate with what is left of the Mexican communication social assemblage and its potential.

**Mexico Actual**

The uneven distribution and dispossession of society at large and good segments of civil society from the possibilities provided by the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico can be associated with other types of problems. While Mexico experienced intensification in the manifestations of the global problematic with the 1982, 1988, 1994, and 2006 crises, the country is currently characterised by still further intensification of political, social, and economic polarisation, and instability and violence. As in the past crises, the new cycle of turbulence currently experienced in Mexico is intimately associated with global processes. For example, the economic collapse in the US in 2008 affected 80 per cent of the international market exchanges made by Mexico. Furthermore, the deterioration in oil prices dramatically limited public expenditure. Other apparently disconnected events, such as the outbreak of the swine flu pandemic in 2009, also aggravated the situation of instability. These events expose a Mexican government unable to demonstrate and reaffirm its authority and legitimacy to society. The administration headed by Felipe Calderón began operating under extremely unstable conditions, as mentioned before; the problematic electoral process in 2006 and the dirty campaign propelled by the mass media translated after the election into an overall lack of legitimacy.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the government’s main functions as the national authority is to assign rights and legitimacy to those social assemblages which are sufficiently differentiated and constituted. This makes social assemblages liable to insertion into power relations and to being named, identified, and recognised. In other words, governments and figures of
authority recognise social assemblages, which may be considered forces – social or/and political. Following this line of thought, recognised social assemblages are those which form part of the prevalent logic of power relations taking place in Mexican territory. A word of caution is needed here, as this does not automatically mean that all of – or only – those assemblages named by the government are taking part in these processes. There are opaque interpersonal networks that can work in the dark, outside of public scrutiny, and hence cannot be named but remain in secrecy. Other assemblages are simply ignored for many disparate reasons. This problematic goes hand in hand with a deliberate lack of recognition of other social assemblages, like those social mobilisations in Oaxaca or Atenco, where the government’s perspective regarding these contestant organisations belonging to civil society and society at large is one of criminalisation.

While the apparent inoperability of the Mexican government assemblage has triggered the unrest and suspicion of society at large, the outcome has basically been the decrease of legitimacy of authority figures. Since the first days of Calderón’s administration the fragility of the Mexican political system has become more and more apparent. The government’s problematic – recurrent political scandals, the rise in prices of basic consumer goods, repression of social mobilisations and protests, economic crisis, unleashed violence related to organised crime, and numerous cases of impunity – is visible in the form of massive public protest across the Mexican geography. This ugly array of events gives form to and describes the environment in which the present administration executes its neoliberal economic project against all odds.

The Intensification of the Global Problematic in Mexico: Poverty and Violence
As mentioned earlier, neoliberal policies are central to Calderón’s program. But beyond neoliberal ideologies and their polarising effects, there are other intentions within Calderón’s political project. Since the Fox administration, and probably even before, there have been signs of political interest in what is now called the war on drugs. Today, the war on drugs, and especially on drug production, dealing, and traffic, are the ‘personal seal’ on Calderón’s administration. During the Fox administration the political discourse on organised crime was levied to combat drug traffic (narcotráfico) and the cartels controlling the market. During Calderón’s administration, significantly, the discourse changed from combat to war.

This rather small seeming discursive shift has unfolded into quite the expected outcomes, and has produced tremendous change within the social assemblages of power relations. Unfortunately, it has notably increased and intensified the violence perpetrated by organised crime and the government. Needless to say, the most affected by this violent situation is society at large. This is an appropriate example of the effects and implications of discourse: the impact of what we
say on the material and social world. The implications are especially dramatic when the statements are uttered from within power positions: leaders, presidents, etc. Mexicans are now dealing with high insecurity levels, violence related to organised crime, the military, and the police, which the government (via Calderón’s political discourses) has set in an apparent state of war.

Drug traffic in Mexico is not a recent phenomenon, as is often portrayed in national and international mass media outlets. Its origins lie in fact in a series of secret arrangements between the Mexican and US governments during the 1940s, in which it was agreed by both states that Mexico would provide the US with poppy and other plants needed to produce morphine. Morphine was in high demand at the time, as many army veterans (from conflicts such as the Second World War and Korea) were being treated with this drug. Later on, peasants who had been planting and harvesting poppy shifted their production to cannabis (marijuana). This was obviously capitalised on by organised crime, whose wealth and power grew proportionally to the increase in drug use, and thus demand, in the US. In the late 1990s, the Mexican cartels also attracted and took control over the cocaine market produced in South America, after Colombian cocaine king Pablo Escobar was killed by Colombia’s armed forces in December 1993.

Since organised crime is undoubtedly an important assemblage in the panorama of power relations in Mexico it is necessary to further explain its component parts. This will aid in understanding what it is, something which has been dealt with in previous sections when the government assemblage, the private sector assemblage, and the civil society assemblage were presented.

According to the government, organised crime related to drug traffic and narcotics may be identified by cartels. In 2009, the government identified seven cartels active in the logic of power relations in neoliberal Mexico: Cartel Tijuana, Cartel Sinaloa, Cartel Del Golfo, Cartel Juárez, Cartel Beltrán Leyva, and Cartel Family Michoacan. Plenty of other smaller criminal organisations such as Los Zetas and Maras Salvatruchas, Gente Nueva, and so forth, have also eagerly participated in the ‘crime industry,’ while groups dedicated to kidnapping are known to attach and sometimes synthesise with the drug cartels. The cooperation between these groups has proven to be potent enough to challenge all types of force in Mexico, including political, social, and economic. This sadly has also meant that organised crime, when confronted by government authorities such as the army or the police, on its own has the strength and the means to besiege any group that so much as threatens its criminal conduct or illegal operations.

The repercussions are severe. Mexico has reached the top five in several global lists of crime rates, attacks against journalists and independent information organisations (e.g. local newspapers, communication radio stations), and the like. Unfortunately, the government assemblages are unable
to prevent and counter this situation, reflecting the lack of resources to manage and control the totality of Mexican geography and territories. So while Calderón is fighting his drug wars, organised crime is only profiting and increasing its wealth and power. Similarly to the private sector assemblages and the civil society assemblages, the organised crime assemblage has also synthesised sufficient components (money, recruits, weapons, knowledge, information, etc.) to sustain and enforce its status within its power relations with the government and other assemblages such as the military or the police, thus effectively shaping an identity of Mexico based on the rule of crime, which is as uncertain as it is unsustainable.

The role of drug traffic in today’s Mexico is extremely important. As an assemblage it influences the country in many ways. Two points are relevant: it is a source of violence and a source of employment and income for impoverished individuals and groups. This evidences an additional feature of the drug traffic business in Mexico. In spite of being extremely powerful (in its use of violence, for instance), and of producing enormous profits, it is nevertheless a rather unsophisticated organisational structure, something that becomes visible in, for instance, the communicational strategies that cartels choose to interact with society at large.

Cartels are not high-tech war machines, but they nevertheless manage to capitalise on their methods (extreme violence, corruption, deterrence). How, then, does this assemblage communicate with society and the government? The methods and techniques are obviously brutal and unsophisticated, but they are tremendously effective in delivering their message. One of the preferred tactics is embodied in unspeakable acts of violence; cartels position themselves and transmit the message of their power by killing, beheading, and scattering bodies along their path. Another type of communication is manifested in literal ‘message boards’ (narcomantas), signs with textual notes attributing to themselves certain actions or exposing names involved in crime, hung up in public spaces such as on walls, streets, pedestrian bridges, or attached to assassinated bodies. Rudimentary and brutal as these tactics seem, they nevertheless manage to convey messages to Calderón’s administration and to other opponents in crystal clear terms. This type of social communication is interesting because it takes place outside the realm of new communication technologies. It is, however, just as effective. The medium is the street: the only place which, up to now, remains public and unrestricted to expression. Needless to say, it is also a very inexpensive and effective way of communicating a message.

This type of public communication is a part of what I refer to as the more complex technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the beliefs of society. And it certainly leaves its marks on what Mexican society sees and says about the government and its failure to deal with violence and crime. This type of communication also plays
an important role in determining power relations. As the government focuses on triumphant discourses, the messages of beheaded folk bearing cardboard posters with openly offensive attacks on the government and other opponents speak louder than political demagogy. They bring back to reality the experience of the global problematic at home, challenging even further the government’s credibility, legitimacy, and authority.

In the past, the Mexican political scenario was predominantly the domain of the government, the private sector, and other social forces (e.g. labour unions). In spite of its omnipresence, organised crime had kept a low profile in terms of determining or influencing the decisions of the national government regarding internal and foreign policy. This changed at the turn of the millennium when drug traffic, and to a lesser extent terrorism, were the two prime motivations supporting the signature of Vicente Fox to the ASPAN (Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America) agreement with the US, the second phase of NAFTA. It is also important to repeat at this stage that the reason criminal organisations engage in drug traffic is intimately linked to the massive consumption of drugs in the US (i.e. the demand). But they have succeeded mainly because they are able to control and dominate (either by cooperation or by coercion) other groups and situations at all levels within the Mexican government.

Certainly, it is important that governments engage in this problematic conflict with organised crime. The urgency of addressing and effectively tackling this problem should not be underestimated, since the social (and other) costs of neglect are extremely high. But in order to do this properly, governments and authorities will have to devise better strategies to coordinate these efforts. This raises further questions, which are quite discouraging. Firstly, what could these strategies be, and secondly, how effective would these strategies be under the rule of impunity, corruption, and coercion within Mexican power relations and institutions? This brings an inherent contradiction to light, namely the distance between the intentions behind the fight (or war) against organised crime and violence, and the characteristic impunity of Mexican Realpolitik (3).

The violence exercised by the government in its strategy to fight organised crime can be better understood if we follow recently exposed data and information in Mexican mass media and other information outlets. In the first three years of Calderón’s administration there were 16,000 executions related to organised crime. In his fourth year in power, Calderón with his ‘war on drugs’ managed to raise the drug related death toll to a staggering five thousand executions, homicides, or other violent deaths in 2008 alone. In 2009, 2010, and 2011 these rates have kept on rising, and there are few signs of this increase halting in the near future.

The control of drug traffic and its cartels has been rather unsuccessful to date. However, drug traffic is not the only expression of violence in neoliberal Mexico. Repression of public and
social protest is another form of violence against the general population or society at large. One regrettable and as yet unresolved expression of violence, which is simultaneously another example of the incapability of the Mexican government at its different levels of administration to tackle violence, is the mass murder of young women. Though this problem is most acute in Cuidad Juárez and other border cities with the US, these killings occur everywhere in Mexico, in rural environments as well as in cities (e.g. Iztapalapa in Mexico City), and the victims, predominantly female, are usually low wage workers. In these cases, which deserve a much more detailed account than is provided here, we can see once again the convoluted double-bind between crime and impunity. For decades these horrible crimes have been perpetrated against young women, but impunity has been the common denominator in all of them.

Tragedy and injustice are then brought into the equation, and as frustrating as this might seem, it is not a surprise (after the analysis presented earlier) to realise that in Mexico justice in power relations and social communication still have a very long way to go. But it also demonstrates the multifunctional aspects of the Mexican government assemblage: the simultaneous involvement in criminal organisations and practices coupled with the continuous, but inefficient, fight against crime. In short, the contradiction lies in the fact that while the government fights crime and violence, it simultaneously reproduces crime and violence. This situation has largely defined the Mexican political system in recent years.

In this regard, an interview with Miguel de la Madrid in May 2009 by journalist Carmen Aristegui is quite telling: de la Madrid claims that in Mexico justice often obstructs the ‘work’ of the government. This ‘work’ is understood as the benevolent relations among and between political and economic forces, two assemblages that are important components of the actual Mexican political system (Aristegui & Trabulsi: 2009). This has enormous implications if we approach the problematic from the perspective of assemblage theory. If impunity, in the form of a benevolent relation, is a necessary component of the Mexican political system (as noted by de la Madrid), this means that Mexicans must endure impunity and the lack of justice it entails whether they like it or not, unless there is not only change per se, but fundamental change (Marcuse: 2009). This would have to be a radical change, a revolutionary change, in order to establish a different political system that rejects the notion of impunity as a necessary component. A new logic of power relations with a more professionalised bureaucratic apparatus and personnel would be one way to move ahead from this problematic.

In spite of there being many more problems afflicting Mexican society today – permanent or chronic struggle for economic recovery, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and instability, to name just a few – the struggle (not war) against organised crime, violence, and the lack of safety
are perhaps the most urgent tasks which have to be tackled and solved in the next few years. Without this, any attempt towards a true process of social well-being, peaceful societal coexistence, and political consolidation will most certainly be fruitless. The quest for sovereignty, and the control over violence, insecurity, and crime, will blatantly fail if the ongoing chaos and turbulence is not only carefully but also effectively countered. Today, however, these problematic forces are determining the destiny and the co-evolution of Mexico’s social assemblages.

Media and the Global Problematic
In this context, civil society struggles in the midst of grotesque asymmetries in media access – not only consumption – in its attempt to recover some structural means of communication and discursive space to provide units of information while hindering news that enhances perplexity (4). However, the question remains of how the main components identified beforehand within the Mexican nation state (e.g. government, private sector, civil society) engage with and enact the process of differentiation between language and technology. In looking at this process of differentiation, we may gain a better idea of the material objective conditions and virtual possibilities provided mainly by language and economic resources associated to the technolinguistic social assemblage.

In neoliberal Mexico, the technique to differentiate between language and technology is rooted in a process which is based upon capitalist principles and logic. Capitalism has a clear way of creating difference: whatever sets competition and creates profit and gains may be acceptable to create difference, and furthermore may establish the infinite particular relations possible between language and technology. In this case, it is clear that the government and the private sector, in the proximity of communication assemblages, establish their system of differentiation by means of capitalist practices. The result is a communicational setting that produces a mass media environment prone to commercial and entertaining discursive content, which ultimately fulfils monetary or financial aims almost exclusively. Alternative types of media engage in a process of differentiation with similar characteristics but with different aims than competition and profit alone. In the case of alternative media they also depend on monetary resources, but the logic of differentiation is based on social concerns and appeals. An example of these forms of differentiation is the case of international organisations like the Association for Progressive Communication (APC).

Regardless of the type of differentiation (e.g. capitalist, socialist, communist, fascist), communication technology, and in particular mass media outlets, do not cause the experience of the global problematic in Mexican territories or elsewhere. Nevertheless, mass media are a component
part of the global problematic. This becomes clear when considering that social inequality, poverty, and violence have been prevalent in shaping the experience of Mexican populations, even before the introduction of new communication technologies. Contrary to this, it can also be claimed that the enormous technological leaps witnessed in the last three or four decades with regard to communication technologies have not been the engine or transformational force, the ‘synthetic power’ geared towards a more balanced global society, that they were hailed by some to be; on the contrary, uncertainty, risk, and insecurity are inevitable components in the lives of far too many people, and sometimes media outlets support feelings of fear to sustain this uncertainty. In this regard, it is obvious that there was violence and poverty well before communication technologies arrived. Nevertheless, the increase in communication potential has not fulfilled the ideal expectations that some theorists had in the 1990s during the Internet revolution, for example. This deserves an explanation. It can be claimed that development around communication technologies has been the result of an emphasis on the potential for communication technologies to make profit and gains, instead of looking at these technologies as instruments for constructive social change outside of (only) the market.

With regard to mass media’s participation in the actualisation of the experience of the global problematic, one characteristic of the ongoing technological developments in post-traditional societies stands out, namely the increased capabilities of communication technologies. Storage of information, speed of communication, and interactivity are some features of these new communication practices, as both David Harvey (1990) and Manuel Castells (2000) highlight. Arguably, specific social assemblages have capitalised on the development and progression of communication capacities and technology, and these have formed powerful economic and political groups. For instance, this can be seen in the process of consolidation of broadcast companies such as Televisa. This capitalistic form of communication marks the formation of particular relations established between language and technology in Mexican territories. This is relevant mainly because the interaction between powerful groups and the technolinguistic social assemblage shapes a good part of what Mexican society receives as visibilities and statements.

To clarify the role of mass media in relation to the global problematic, there are plenty of examples of advanced research that have dealt with the effects of mass media on disparate issues such as physical obesity, violence, and antisocial behaviour, to name only a few. However, no conclusive results can be drawn to establish a direct relation between mass media consumption and the social problem. Under this scope, and if the causal relation between media and the social problem cannot be drawn, what are the options? Is making mass media’s content – or those who are in charge of communication technologies – responsible for the failure to achieve social balance,
justice, and development by means of technology a limited vision of the problem? This would make mass media something comparable to ‘the bullet that killed the boy’ (see Introduction); media are not the only institutions responsible when the global problematic intensifies or finds new modes, of course, and the situation is far more complex. Hence, a more appropriate way of putting it is to say that the communicational setting in Mexico supports the actualisation of the experience of the global problematic, a situation in which mass media outlets play a predominant role by decomposing social relations rather than synthesising and composing them, in order to achieve higher aims or desires that resonate with social concerns.

How do social forces (including mass media) shape the technolinguistic social assemblage, and therefore assist in explaining how the technolinguistic social assemblage may support or attach itself, directly or indirectly, to the particularly problematic situation of neoliberal Mexico? As mentioned earlier, mass media and its outlets in post-traditional societies are not the only cause that intensify or promote the experience of the global problematic or decompose social relations. These have aided in the identification of the nature of mass media outlets; mainly two aspects upon which media industries foster the stratification of processes of instability, polarisation, and violence in Mexico. First, mass media groups are supporting practices of political simulation. Secondly, media outlets engage in the propagation of units of confusion. These two aspects or actions crystallise the lack of credibility found in mass media groups. Political simulation and the propagation of units of confusion aided by mass media interests make mass media communication a component of the global problematic and its continuous feed of processes of instability, polarisation, and violence in contemporary post-traditional societies. It is a set of actions that eventually leads to states of perplexity and the normalisation of chaos at the personal scale.

One Problem: Four Scales
The communication social assemblage has broad connotations and could be approached at many scales and levels, as has been suggested earlier. In this regard, there are four space-scales to be considered: the global, the national, the local, and the personal (individual). At the global scale, the Mexican communication social assemblage has been attached and somehow synthesised with other similar assemblages: big mass media groups in Mexico have joined the global scale of anti-market mass media organisations, becoming the giants of the Spanish speaking world (the equivalent of News Corp, Time Warner, or Disney in the Anglophone world). At the national scale, the observable conditions reveal that communication practices are performed under the notion of exclusion. The monopolisation of mass media production and broadcasting added to the alliances set at the highest levels of government (e.g. Ley Televisa) have led to the excommunication of
society at large across the country. In Mexico, uneven competition and uneven access to resources for communication is a persistent condition at the national scale. At the local scale, the current observable conditions enhance processes of consumption, triggering a double consumption bind. There is consumption of information and entertainment, as well as consumption of infrastructure and services associated with having access to the technolinguistic social assemblage and the benefits derived from it (e.g. Internet). Processes of exclusion, excommunication, and consumption at different space scales are also experienced at the personal scale.

At the person scale, the scale of human individual experience, there are some communication affects I would like to address in detail. First, consider that the main effect of language at the human scale is the shaping of beliefs. Although this research is not concentrated on content analysis, it is nevertheless worth asking which types of content (statements) have been delivered or produced by mass media outlets, and have contributed to the process of the collective symbolic construction of reality. Which characteristics can be found in the visibilities and statements delivered by mass media and alternative media in order to complement the thinking processes of persons and populations? There are two rather undesirable outcomes of communication and how they relate to the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico at the personal scale, where visibilities and statements are abundant: a great deal of political simulation can be seen and heard, the outcome of which is the delivery of what I interpret as units of confusion. These two actions performed by mass media assemblages and the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico are focused upon here because they create or promote states of perplexity at the personal scale, preventing proper forms of organisation and communication that may aid the reduction of the experience of the global problematic. Perplexity prevents conscious states for dialogue; confusion, misunderstandings, and monologue all characterise perplexing communication, and prevent mutual recognition and the desire to compose relations within the possibilities of the situation.

**Society at Large and its Discontents**

The research carried out in Mexico for this study included conducting interviews with individuals relevant to the topic of social and political communication in Mexico. Politicians, state employees, entrepreneurs in the communication industry, and members of civil society organisations offered their views on the general situation of present day Mexico, and on the political and social trends in communication. The information gathered was used to frame the basic principles that established the differentiations made between language and technology among the identified social actors or assemblages in Mexico. In addition, this information allowed me to speculate on how the
economies of power and the economies of knowledge are managed in order to prevent the possibility of achieving fundamental change in the organisation of power in Mexican territories. Thus, it exposed the general conditions upon which economies of power (action upon others’ actions) and economies of knowledge (what we see, say, and think) are based in neoliberal Mexico.

One of the results of the economies of power and knowledge prevalent in Mexico has been the reform of radio and television, the so-called Ley Televisa, which was debated in the Senate in Mexico in 2005 before its ratification in early 2006. Leaving aside the problematic nature of how this reform was passed and the initial discontent it triggered in some groups, it should suffice to say that by 2010 the consequences of the reform (as they were explained in Chapter Six) have become more than evident. In summarised terms the four main consequences are: 1) the RES capacity of Televisa and TV Azteca has quadrupled with the support of the government; 2) permissions and concessions to powerful media groups have been granted without any economic costs for these groups; 3) other types of (non-profit or non-commercial) communication outlets have been neutralised and reduced to a state of quasi unavailability; and 4) competition among groups has been neutralised, as can be seen in the rejection of a third television company in Mexico.

These reforms shape the use of and rules for exploitation given to many components of the post-traditional technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico, indirectly affecting all scales of communication with its consequent process of differentiation. The end result is a reform designed for a communicational configuration based on radio, television, and Internet focused on consumption and entertainment, instead of giving primacy to social concerns, facts, and culture. Moreover, it is a communicational setting that is under the control of few owners. This sole fact alone has serious consequences, mainly in that it shapes the ‘nature’ of an important component of the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico: it creates a communicational configuration format that prevents any form of meaningful or significant social interaction with mass media outlets, and thus the uncritical production and consumption of information. This communicational configuration is prone to create perplexity and units of confusion without the possibility of open contestation by the public, because the public does not have access to or control over communication infrastructure or legislation. Thus, the public does not have access to voice opinions or concerns at the global, national, or even local levels of communication, and it may not have sufficient capability to prove the existence of false information, which is deliberately spread without being debunked as ‘conspiracy.’ This communicational setting is prone to enable impunity and corruption, thus feeding an economy of power (action upon others’ actions) based on the lack of accountability in Mexico.

Arguably, the intention or even the teleology behind the actions taken by mass media
tycoons and organisations do not deliberately go against the Mexican population or society at large. Instead, the approach is presented as a good business plan, designed by capable lawyers, which nevertheless shows no regard for social concerns nor any intentions to achieve progress in matters of the public good. What is more, these intentions replicate the notion that the only important matters are money and revenue, totally in line with ideologies linked to neoliberalism and freedom (see Chapter Two). Under this logic it is ‘understandable’ for a company to protect its interests; accordingly, it seems unacceptable if the government fails in its duty to regulate such interests, especially if these interests work against the broader national development.

In relation to this, the socio-economic composition of the population in Mexico falls nothing short of polarised. Less than 20 per cent of the population enjoys a relatively high living standard and economic freedom. Nevertheless, if we consider that this represents around 30 million people, it becomes quite clear that this is not an insignificant amount of individuals with the capacities to engage in lucrative entrepreneurial activities. This raises the question of whether it would be possible or even desirable to attempt to bridge the gap between markets and anti-markets and their practices, by encouraging a portion of that potential social segment to engage in media business. This would enable and further a more competitive and, at least in theory, more democratic communication environment in Mexico. It may also provoke a better distribution of visibilities and statements, which would enrich the thinking process of populations and groups.

A more diverse environment against the concentration of capital and discourses would be relatively easy to achieve in Mexico’s communicational setting if there would be the political will, the vision, the mental picture of the future to do so, or the responsibility and perspective to work for it. Not doing so is sadly the prevalent attitude, which partially explains the discontent nestled in Mexican society, in particular when it comes to mass media outlets. Other factors contribute to this discontent, such as the expansion of communication technologies in the last decades. The communicational conditions present in Mexico in 2011 respond to the successful economic exploitation of the RES and other means and technologies of communication. It is important to remark that these advancements in communication technologies did not diversify the communicational environment in Mexico but rather stimulated a double concentration process: concentration of capital and concentration of discourse (5).

Concentrations of Discourse
The temporal discourse concentrations (language as an assemblage) in mass media outlets can be enforced due to the enormous power that mass media have, and can be used to leverage interest at any time when power groups feel the need to settle or spark public debate. Discourse concentrations
at particular times are understood as critical moments of influence performed by mass media and other synthesised particular interests. Concentrations of discourse are not a permanent practice; nor was Joseph Goebbels’ Nazi practice of repeating a lie a million times to make it true. Instead, this type of concentration of discourse comes to the fore every time powerful interests are at stake (e.g. ‘dirty campaigns’ before or during elections, as López Obrador’s case shows). These tactics (of defamation, for example) are closely related to the aforementioned formulation of units of confusion, and are not necessarily related to a consistent practice of bias in mass media outlets.

Concentration of discourse can be utilised to spread units of confusion. Generally, these units of confusion may work to radicalise positions instead of intensifying affinities, promoting states of decomposed relations that are accompanied by doses of confusion and lack of agreement. This is possible by posing the wrong questions in public debate. Once a wrong premise has been set off in the public debate, confusion is an expected outcome. This operation of language as an assemblage necessarily reduces the public debate, affecting the nature of the social dialogue around the most important issues. Opinion makers often cultivate perplexity and confusion by objectifying subjective opinions as credible. Other notions such as ‘free speech’ are also involved in this process. While free speech undeniably enriches public debate, it also reduces the visible and the statements issued as ‘thought worthy’ material. The quality of speech may be more important than free speech alone when looking at the necessary reduction in or shape of beliefs it promotes.

As soon as mass media outlets deliver information meant to radicalise positions at the individual or the personal scales, instead of to intensify affinities, the social dialogue and consensus are hindered. This hindrance applied to public discourses simultaneously enables states of perplexity and confusion. Agreement is difficult to achieve, and the gap created by radicalising units of confusion, which are enabled by means of concentration of discourse, cannot be closed. This radicalisation at the personal scale and the individual realm translates to the impossibility to articulate agreement among social assemblages at the local and national levels. This means that radicalising discourses at the personal scale and the uncertainty they create by normalising chaos prevent other scales of organisation (global, national, and local) from synthesising effectively in order to reduce the experience of the global problematic.

Generalised feelings and desires about the aforementioned situation can be collected in forums and chat rooms that have been enabled by mass media communication outlets for these purposes (e.g. online newspapers). In spite of the limitations of these types of interactions, it is interesting to see the consistency in public opinions in this part of the discourse available in the mass media. Three positions are visible with respect to the general opinion about the performance of politicians and government in Mexico. First, there are the optimistic government supporters,
second are the opposition and the fierce critics of the establishment, while a third group can be identified by their disenchantment over Mexican reality and politics. All three groups and opinions, however, revolve around one single fact: the perception that the manifestations of the global problematic in Mexico are intensifying, maybe to irreversible levels. In other words, what has become evident to every group is that processes of instability, polarisation, and violence supersede the current Mexican structure and logic of power relations and the government establishment which is meant to harmonise it. Animosity and disbelief in politics and politicians mark the relations between government and society at large, regardless of whether these are right, centre, or left political orientations.

The problematic consensus reached by the public in Mexico is, as Denis Dresser’s (2009) public debate about the economic crisis in 2008 shows, the outcome of a sort of paralysis. In her presentation she states that the logic of power relations in Mexico eventually turns into a political system that creates a variety of “state monsters” (corrupt labour unions, monopolies, oil industry bureaucracy, etc.), which after some time overcomes the state and government and makes the government assemblage afraid to act, perpetuating and aggravating the loss of sovereignty that comes together with a bearably functional government assemblage. As Dresser points out, this spiral of continuous weakening of the state and governmental components also means a greater challenge for society, and for achieving a coherent relation between populations and their territories. Still following Dresser, the weakness of the Mexican system can be explained as a case of crony capitalism (Stiglitz: 2003), or as Dresser translated it in her presentation, el capitalismo de los cuates. This type of capitalism is synonymous with nepotism, clientelism, and other vices common to modern democracies.

Populations and governments need a territory (space) to be sovereign and to maintain specific social practices that respond to the tradition, history, and desires of determinate populations. The loss of sovereignty, which is a lost opportunity to control national social territories and their possibility of becoming coherent with the practices and interests of local populations, is furthered when social assemblages constituting the nation state create deep disruptions. A state of perplexity is an expected outcome of this lack of sovereignty. In Mexico the economic crises that struck the country after the inception and advance of neoliberal policies enforced the process of the erosion of sovereignty. Failed or faulty economic management, however, is not the only source of this erosion, and other factors have played a large role. Drug dealing and its embedded illegal economic revenue, remesas (remittances, wages earned in the US and sent to Mexico), and commercial informality, a practice that is often accompanied by other forms of illegality, account for approximately 50 per cent of the total real economy of Mexico. On the one hand, the
government is tied by international organisations to control its formal resources, while on the other hand, it has no control as it cannot tax around half of the economic resources ‘produced’ in (or sent in as remittances to) Mexican territory.

Economic mismanagement in Mexico is not the only answer to the current loss of sovereignty in the country, but it certainly plays a crucial role in the intensification of the experience of the global problematic associated to poverty. That the government, or the state, has lost control of the economy translates to a loss of sovereignty: as the process of denationalisation-privatisation that has been going on in Mexico since the technocratic revolution in the 1990s. This loss of economic control also shapes the nature of the synthetic power performed by the government assemblage.

Aside from economic turmoil, the violence experienced by Mexicans in the form of crime is another clear sign of the erosion of national sovereignty, the lack of coherence, and of decomposed relations between social assemblages. Drug traffic, cartels, illegality, corruption, and organised crime have gained control of important territories in Mexican cities and in the countryside, establishing strong organisations that can compete over the monopoly of violence with the Mexican government. This action undermines fronts of Mexican sovereignty other than merely the economic one. While the government seems unable to stop the progressive loss of control over escalating violence and the economy, this prevents a coherent development between populations and territories. The Mexican government is not providing the necessary guarantees to develop a reasonable state of stability and security. On the contrary, it adopts ever more violent forms of expression.

Regaining national sovereignty may be the greatest challenge faced by the Mexican government social assemblage if it wishes to recover its function and position within society at large. To achieve this, it becomes crucial to look for the conditions that allow the stratification of those power relations that reproduce this ‘apparent’ failed political system. The fact is that this double spiral of violence and precarious economic conditions sustains the intensification of the manifestations of the global problematic. In this regard, Mexico is considered to be a rather even country at the personal scale; violence and uncertainty are suffered and endured more or less evenly across Mexican geography. They are felt most intensively by impoverished people without the resources to push themselves out of conditions of vulnerability, but among the better off and more affluent classes it translates into intense feelings of insecurity, motivated by the recent dramas in the kidnapping industry in Mexico. In a sense, the feeling or experience of insecurity and the lack of safety brought about by violence and deprivation is a generalised one, with different intensities and motivations across different socio-economic strata.
In creating this social environment, there are many identifications or omissions made by Mexican authorities towards a variety of social assemblages. Many of the identifications made by the government, despite the mass media bias, lack the support of society at large, which has become reluctant to believe in the potentials of the government. This has produced distrust and a lack of credibility, something which is very much related to the state of perplexity that I referred to earlier. The criminalisation of social and public protest serves as an example to see the actual setting of power relations in Mexico, and therefore highlights some points of immanence of the global problematic.

Criminalisation is a process that makes sense to certain assemblages, in particular conservative sectors of the government and the private sector. But unfortunately, the founding premise of their actions and beliefs is wrong or false, namely that the risk to security and the loss of control and authority is due to the instability promoted by social protesters. This is an unsustainable argument when analysed carefully, and seems to be a corrupt relation between language identification and the visible (what we see) made by the Mexican authorities. The government turns to repressive practices because it has lost legitimacy in society at large, and it can only apply its authority by the use of force, sometimes unnecessary force and outright violence (e.g. see endnotes of Chapter Six for the cases of Atenco and Oaxaca).

To regard social protesters as criminals and hence to taint protest as a criminal act and a danger, is nothing other than a political linguistic operation and an action performed by interest groups who have the capacity to control and manipulate language. In this case mass media in Mexico fulfilled this operation by disseminating this type of government categorisation of differentiated groups, with the consequences explained in Chapter One (see Tilly: 1999). This is also a clear example of how mass media do not cause the global problematic in Mexico but are an important part of it. They play a role in supporting these conflicts and collection of social problems, sometimes spreading units of confusion to meet political simulation purposes.

Naming assemblages that ‘are not’ and omitting others that express themselves but which, for the most part, remain ignored is a common trend in Mexico. The state of social and political relations and the type of communication between the government and other social assemblages produces a great deal of disbelief, which is persistently expressed in Mexican newspapers and other oppositional outlets (e.g. street protests, strikes, the Internet). Nevertheless, a general feeling of frustration does not lead to social change. Those groups and social assemblages constituted in Mexico which experience frustration about the future of the country have not been strong enough to trigger the chain of events (the feedback) necessary to irreversibly alter the power relations and the organisation of power relations visible in Mexico. The incapacity to effectively challenge the
prevailing economies of power and knowledge prevent the necessary *fundamental change* desired and expected in Mexico. One explanation for this is that a large sector of the population is *materially deprived*, while another segment, a much smaller one, is *culturally oppressed* (Marcuse: 2009).

However, the social environment, or rather the actuality experienced in Mexican territories, cannot be fully simulated by mass media and their efforts to support government actions. Social discontent and public unrest filter into social space, particularly the streets, despite the media’s optimistic biases. Contrary to mass media’s mainstream outlets, alternative media outlets (in particular the Internet) have provided the public with information and opinions which reinforce the suspicion that Mexico is not heading towards a period of stabilisation, as the government contends, but instead towards yet another period of instability and unprecedented and uncontrollable violence. Diverse newspaper columnists such as Julio Hernández from *La Jornada*, Alejandro Gertz Manero, Ricardo Rocha, and Jacobo Zabludouwsky from *El Universal*, and many other public opinion makers, not to mention the thousands of video materials uploaded onto Internet sites such as *YouTube*, openly address this problematic in their writings or productions, criticising the government’s bond to economic interests.

**One Particular Relation: Political Simulation**

After explaining the situation of a vital part of the technolinguistic social assemblage and having seen the nature of the relations between and among social assemblages in neoliberal Mexico, it can be said that the situation of the media responds to something that comes close to what Alfredo Jalife-Rahme refers to as the ‘sovietisation’ of mass media. In very simple terms, the notion of sovietisation in this instance involves the understanding of the media as subject to and at the service of the state (Jalife-Rahme: 2007). In Mexico, however, this relation of dependency seems sometimes to travel in the opposite direction: it is the *de facto* power of mass media tycoons that often sets the conditions and results of the exchange and interaction between social assemblages in Mexico, in particular during the neoliberal period. In short, mass media play a large role in setting the national political agenda.

The current Mexican situation and the ‘state monsters’ it has created lead to undesirable actions, in particular, but not exclusively, regarding *political simulation*. Within an ill-informed society, these simulations and the motives behind them – corruption and impunity – push society at large towards an uncanny form of tolerance, turning it into a witness to the poor quality of public politics, and rendering it incapable of challenging persistent political simulation. In order to analyse political simulation it is necessary to understand the context in which it takes place.
The political and social insensibility derived from the ‘democratic vices’ present in many powerful social assemblages in Mexico is possible because somehow the Mexican government is embedded in an inner neoliberal monologue and an exclusionary attitude, which enhances political simulation and promotes problematic relations instead of productive alliances with some of the most troubled social groups in Mexican territories. The general circumstances in neoliberal Mexico prevent the Mexican establishment from satisfactorily fulfilling its main function, namely of providing the proper recognition – but more importantly the necessary space – to practice the social, political and economic rights derived from that recognition. Instead, the Mexican establishment is enmeshed in a swamp of cynicism. Because of this incompetence it is forced to simulate, to corrupt language; an almost vulgar simulation that claims certain actions and intentions, but which in fact is aimed at something entirely different. To simulate in politics is to simulate the intentions and actions geared towards achieving the common good. However, the reality is that politicians simulate public interest, while in fact they are executing private, group, or personal interests. The discussion here is ethical, not moral. Reactions against this organisation of power and the unethical cynicism it entails can be seen on the streets in the form of mass protest, guerrillas’ proclamations, growing economic informality, and organised crime activities, among other processes that hinder any government intention to order the current social context evolving in neoliberal Mexico. In short, public political simulation ends up taking the form of a propagandistic monologue that is a vehicle for corruption and impunity.

Other Particular Relations: Units of Confusion

It is visible that the weakness in authority and lack of credibility of the Mexican government assemblage has enabled mass media groups, and in particular private mass media outlets, to seize the position of the government in the form of a specific assemblage: the assemblage endowed with symbolic authority and credibility to identify and recognise differentiated assemblages in society. In light of the lack of legitimacy of the executive, judicial, and legislative systems, mass media has turned into the public authorities, the collective ‘judges’ determining who is who in neoliberal Mexico. This is not a small detail if we remember that language and the control over it is a social component which plays a crucial role in the social shaping of beliefs. Whether these work to intensify our affinities or radicalise our positions, it produces statements and visibilities that engage in conscious or unconscious ways the thinking processes of the Mexican population, and hence the social recognition that springs from the proposed identifications. In this regard, the challenge to change the actual form of bias in journalism, for instance, is a difficult struggle that concerns not only Mexican media but also international media outlets.
At this point it is crucial to question the quality of content that the private mass media provide to Mexican audiences. It has been said earlier that a causal relation between media consumption and the social problem cannot be drawn. The discussion around the quality of content in mass media, however, remains highly important. Is the content coherent with the feelings found in society at large? People have no access to or even the knowledge (visibilities and statements) of a variety of sources of information, at least not in a massive fashion. Alternative sources of information in Mexico do not enjoy the power that characterises private mass media, namely that of mass audiences. On the contrary, and in spite of the Internet, alternative sources of information enjoy a relatively limited audience compared to the mass media. The limited audience of the alternative communication outlets prevent the possibilities of synthesis with other similar social assemblages with which to share intentions and aims.

Neoliberal policies reflected by the Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage shift the aim of communication from social and political types of dialogue to an almost exclusively commercial and propagandistic monologue characterised by simulation and inaccurate information. This shift has been enough to enforce entertainment instead of culture and the provision of unbiased information. The current state of mass media at certain times and situations feeds the public with units of confusion, instead of units of information. For example, units of confusion are fabricated by opinion makers, and in turn polarise society into contradicting groups. As has been mentioned elsewhere, the use of subjective opinions as truth is one of the tactics employed. In addition, the media often pose the wrong questions, thus enabling a ‘natural’ state of confusion in the consumption of so-called information (e.g. the war in Iraq and the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction). Units of confusion also depend on the timing and intention, the opportunity to release news. Depending on the timing, news content can act either as a unit of information or as a unit of confusion. On the other hand, in the event that content is based upon false information or distorted interpretation, this is a plain, straightforward unit of confusion (e.g. Venezuela in 2002) (6).

A common example of this last situation is the manipulation of numbers when dealing with public manifestations around certain problematic or controversial issues – such as abortion, for instance – but also around other political concerns. The magnification and minimisation by mass media of the numbers of persons assisting these events always depend on the orientation of the event itself. Broadcast groups tend to explain this inaccuracy by suggesting the impossibility of precision in such matters. In Mexico, popular concentrations and social protests have taken on a real massive nature, uniting over a million people under one event of this type. The media naturally dismisses these numbers, and systematically lowers them to ‘manageable’ quantities. This form of
Manipulation is not exclusive to Mexico; mass media conglomerates worldwide have been manipulating information systematically depending on their interest and expectations in a particular instance. A Mexican example is the so-called desafuero brought against Andrés López Obrador, which resulted in a massive public manifestation against then President Vicente Fox in 2005. Mass media outlets ‘play’ with the distribution of units of confusion at their will and without the control of any authority to regulate or prevent them from doing so.

The characteristic types of media delivery that distribute units of information as opposed to units of confusion are those media outlets that provide information of an ethical-historical nature. Units of information move from moral debates to concern over ethical human conduct. Units of information are not aimed at polarising or imposing opinion but at uniting the common destiny of citizens so that they can participate in the constitution of truth in society, building a shared future. This, in theory, will only be possible in a space with sufficient sovereignty and autonomy. It is important to clarify that mass media try to work with the production of units of information, even Televisa and TV Azteca. However, if the situation and their interests are stretched, mass media go to work remorselessly with units of confusion. In Mexico there are countless examples of this, but some of the most notorious events were the alleged presidential electoral frauds of 1988 and 2006, where the role of the media in supporting these electoral ‘irregularities’ was more than obvious.

**After Perplexity: The Normalisation of Chaos**

As if social disbelief in authority figures is not bad enough, the lack of legitimacy and proper political dialogue between government and society at large have fostered outright repression. The governmental establishment and other figures and instances of authority (e.g. organised crime, corrupt police forces) repress any sign of dissent and opposition. The Mexican government lacks resources to tackle the manifestations of the global problematic, pushing the system to act with violence and brute force, often considered the last resources available to maintain its fragile position. The social and political communication regime imposed in Mexico by the struggle among different interests has led to processes of violence and the intensification of polarisation (as seen in the ‘dirty’ election campaign in 2006) and with processes of chaos normalisation (as the drug wars show).

Mexican society is confronted regularly with a chaotic reality that nevertheless is normalised by society at large. Executions, beheadings, kidnappings, corruption, impunity, abuses of authority, open state repression, and so on are visible in the mass media and are normalised in Mexican society due to an uncritical but democratic consumption of broadcast information. The effective simulation and distribution of units of confusion denies society at large the possibility to
act – and think – effectively from informed political positions. Instead, when faced with political simulation, wrongly posed questions, and confusing remarks or opinions, Mexican society tends to polarise.

The destruction, deterritorialisation, and chaoticisation of and among constituted social assemblages in Mexico are digested uncritically by Mexican society. In direct relation to this, the loss of sovereignty and autonomy takes its toll, making the country uncontrollable and prone to episodes of intensification of the global problematic. The paralysis invoked by fear and perplexity is the best recipe for normalising chaos and impunity. The immobility produced by perplexity, and by feelings of insecurity and latent violence, prevents critical processes such as collective thinking, dialogue, and agreements based on fair consensus. Hence, this recipe for a state of perplexity works as a factor that enables the actualisation of the global problematic with the aid of mass media assemblages, whether media simulates or confuses the public.

The role of mass media in the intensification of the global problematic in Mexico is rather indirect. As mentioned before, media are not the only cause in supporting processes that trigger instability, polarisation, and violence, but media are certainly an important component part of the global problematic. The characteristic Mexican commercial and democratic technolinguistic social assemblage works as a buffer between political simulation and the effective action of society at large to correct the government. This condition prevents the proper reconfiguration of power relations in Mexico.

A different set of power relations and arrangements around the Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage is necessary in order to invert the ever intensification of the global problematic and reach a point at which chaos is not normalised by the political, private, and social sectors but acknowledged and effectively acted upon. The forms taken by the normalisation of chaos are the imposition of certain actions and determinations over groups and organisations in a violent fashion. Due to the lack of political dialogue towards el pueblo or society at large, repression by pure brute force is implemented, and not communication. Disqualification of the opponent using baseless criticism, supported and sustained by mass media outlets, is the root of a practice of double-discourse in Mexican politics. Arguably, this type of political discourse is possible due to the current configuration of communication in Mexico that allows for this corruption between language and the visible, in other words, the corruption between what we say and see.

It is important to mention that most of the direct confrontations between the government and society at large are associated with economic matters; in particular, constitutional reforms that further liberate and enforce the exploitation of markets and natural resources in the region are without exception a point of conflict. In this, and as has been elaborated earlier, political simulation
may be understood as the active effort of politicians, and in some instances of public and private power, to protect private interests and groups and not the public interest of society at large. At the same time, those who protest and challenge the primacy of private interests can become the object (and subject) of more aggression. Such aggression is usually found at the point where private interests and politics converge.

Here, the case of the project proposal for a new international airport for Mexico City in the area of Atenco is a telling one. The government interpreted all opposition to this project as a direct threat to its immediate interests, and of course those of private capital and development. In tandem, it acted in such a way as to enforce the ‘dogma’ of the well-being of the market over and against any conflicting social interests. In the light of economic interests, the social cost is secondary. In this operation there are intense degrees of political simulation and the propagation of units of confusion, the same strategy that brings high degrees of perplexity and the normalisation of chaos.

The excommunication of society at large relates to the lack of a viable national project and to the anarchy underlining national politics. For several decades the state has been losing both ground and its sovereign capacities. Corruption, clientelism, and other unwanted forms of assemblage associations (e.g. ‘state monsters’) define the rules of synthetic power in Mexico. Furthermore, it would seem that civil society does not account for the amount of money necessary to confront or challenge the logic of power relations set by the logic of wealth and political power as it is now in Mexico. The ultimate problem found in this type of configuration of power and communication is the excommunication of society at large from the benefits and potential of parts of the technolinguistic social assemblage. This is brought about mainly through synthetic power, which supports the failure of democracy and sustains the loss of sovereignty, but which cannot be recovered due to the high levels of normalisation of chaos that it entails. To this follows the difficult question of how to deal with the technolinguistic social assemblage and communication setting in post-traditional Mexico.