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

VIRTUAL SCENARIOS PLAUSIBLE FOR MEXICO

Introduction

It is worthwhile to elaborate on the possible futures for communication in Mexico, taking into consideration the material objective conditions that have been previously exposed. One thing is clear: the tendency to create differentiation is intimately linked to capitalist practices. This observation applies of course to different parts of the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico and is not exclusive to the communication sector, though this work has focused primarily on communication. Following this line, a panorama of further practices of concentration/excommunication in communication is tenable. Economic and other interest groups remain great forces at a time when the need to reshape the nature of the Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage is urgent. If the reform of radio and television supported by Televisa and other interest groups becomes the legal framework, further exclusion suffered by society at large can be expected.

One problem faced by society at large to effectively challenge the communicational configuration in Mexico and the excommunication of society is the monological behaviour of certain social assemblages, in particular government assemblages. This monological type of encounter produces a kind of nomadic interaction. In this nomadic interaction, contact is tangential and does not produce substantial knowledge due to the reduced scope of the visible and the articulable taking part in the relation (e.g. lack of transparency). Contrary to nomadic encounters, proper communication (dialogue) consists of those encounters that compose the relations and synthesised social forces seeking conditions of justice. Dialogue triggers processes in which knowledge production is ratified among parts, generating the possibility to build up an event that ties together the parts of assemblages. Although reaching consensus is a highly important aim, in these types of relations it is not the only desirable outcome. In social assemblages theory, this action – dialogue – translates into the possibility to build a shared destiny, a co-evolution among those assemblages involved in these processes of communication and interaction. The tension between capitalist-individualising processes of differentiation on the one hand, and processes that build a shared destiny and social co-evolution on the other, dominate the field of forces shaping the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico. How can the tension between modes of differentiation be released in order to open up the opportunity for a more desirable performance of communication technologies?
To effectively change or challenge the status quo of mass media management means a ‘declaration of war,’ an economic war. The desire to challenge hegemonic groups is shown by many (e.g. alternative globalisation organisations), though these groups are still not synthetic enough to engage in processes of irreversible change or plain justice against those who monopolise the benefits of administering the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico. Furthermore, it is difficult to assert that the situation will improve even if irreversible change takes place in the modes of differentiation between language and technology. The material objective conditions visible in 2011 make it difficult to think that the intensification of the global problematic will decrease or halt any time soon. Associated to this, it can be suggested that the process of *excommunication* from parts of the technolinguistic social assemblage takes place by means of commercial-democratic practices of communication. Is it possible to challenge this capitalistic form of organisation, or is it possible to attain capitalist practices that enhance better distributive capacities that would invert processes associated with the global problematic?

**Final Scenario: Neoliberalism by Militarisation**

Although not the most desirable, there is a plausible future scenario for Mexico, namely that of military neoliberalism (Harvey: 2006). This means that the techniques of differentiation based on capitalist principles will continue to shape a type of commercial-democratic technolinguistic social assemblage, as its exclusionary practices are supported by repressive military presence. It is likely that the monological tendency of government assemblages will persist, and therefore the government will continue to engage in police-military violent operations to keep intact the dialectics of state *security* via the idea of economic *freedom*.

The most recent example of the consolidation of this trend in Mexico is the takeover of the LyFC (*Luz y Fuerza del Centro* – the electricity company in charge of providing Central Mexico with electrical power) by the Mexican government on 11 October 2009. The LyFC was a former *parastatal* (a state run company) tied to a state owned company (CFE – *Comisión Federal de Electricidad*) with a strong labour union (SME – *Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas*), which in spite of its vices had been able to subsist under very unfavourable conditions for many decades. Using arguments of inefficiency, the government, aided by the police and military, took the installations, infrastructure, and buildings of the LyFC by force on a Sunday evening and fired over 44,000 employees overnight. This was conveniently the same Sunday evening that hundreds of thousands of Mexicans were watching on television the football match in which Mexico’s team would qualify for the 2010 World Cup.

In 2011, the case of LyFC is still on the table of discussions, and entails a much broader
dimension than the purely political one, as it involves important questions of energy management in Mexico. Nevertheless, this is a good example of the uncritical attitude of Mexican society, and demonstrates how the state and mass media can join forces, to achieve their shared capitalist aims. Furthermore, it makes explicit how the renewed forms and techniques of differentiation characteristic of military neoliberalism may be interpreted in specific cases (Harvey: 2006). Time will tell if the signs that have become evident in this research, and therefore the warnings that result from this analysis, are entirely correct. Further violence and instability will seriously put at risk the integrity of the Mexican nation, making it almost impossible to think about a coherent development between territories and their populations. This would render the existence of the current state apparatus useless.

Because of the deep roots of the current social problematic in Mexico, the idea of fundamental change becomes interesting to consider. In this research, fundamental change is associated with a mode or modes of differentiation that use non-capitalist principles to succeed. Is it possible to live in a society that is not ruled by money and profit? This question is a challenge for our modern imagination. The possibility to set alternative perspectives, which may be significant to bring about fundamental changes in the logic of power relations, seems to be a difficult task in Mexico; particularly as this problem relates to the current perspectives and desires enacted by social assemblages in the territories.

The Corruption of Language and Government

Between scales and modes of distribution, the Mexican government seems to suffer a disjunction by polarising its interests. It composes relations with global assemblages while it decomposes its exteriority relations with national and local assemblages. In this sense, since the nature of the Mexican government has changed so much in the last decades, is it still possible to name it in the same way, or should it change to another identification? In other words, does the name match the thing? When looking at the characteristics of the exteriority relations observable in the Mexican government, it may be more precise to call it something along the lines of a transnational corporate Mexican government. Is this identification (name) a better description? Does it corrupt language less and does it describe more accurately the actual Mexican government assemblage? The corruption of language in Mexico is in focus here because of the implications it brings for society at large. An example of language corruption is visible when government assemblages use the mode of differentiation based on competition and profit when confronted with opposition or resistance, which, in addition to its lack of ethics, is systematically sustained and enforced by police and military force. Despite this, the government assemblages still maintain that the government’s
institutions are democratic and fair.

**Plausible Alternatives to Neoliberalism: Seek to Recover Sovereignty**

In Mexico there is quite a political tradition associated with anarchism, and in particular a certain version of anarcho-syndicalism. At first glance anarchism may sound radical and difficult to instrumentalise politically in Mexico. However, we can trace the political idea clearly to before the Revolution of 1910. The Flores Magón brothers are important intellectual precursors in this sense, and can be identified as the ideologues responsible for bringing anarchist ideas into the Mexican social struggle for justice under the Porfirio Díaz regime. Anarchism as a political tendency was also explored and developed by Russian intellectuals like Bakunin and Kropotkin. They were two of the main influences in the Latin America context regarding anarchist ideas, of which anarcho-communism was particularly important.

Anarchistic impulses call for forms of social organisation which avoid the presence of the state and private ownership over the means of production, and avoid bureaucratic authorities and *patrones* (1). In the Mexican case, these ideas turn into specific results. The Flores Magón brothers and other Mexican intellectuals pushed to establish a Mexican legal framework, from which constitutional articles were born. Of particular importance is Article 123 on workers’ rights, inscribed in the 1917 Constitution. Despite the fact that the result of this constitutional article did not avoid the private sector assemblage and the existence of *patrones*, it established a horizontal relation between the private sector, government, and labour union assemblages.

At the time this constitution was written it could be considered a great advance and success for social forces seeking justice with regard to labour relations. Today, however, the Mexican legal framework still lacks support for types of property other than capitalist private property. Production and distribution is still in the hands of *patrones*. This situation as such is not inherently problematic, but it becomes problematic when the government and the private sector engage in the *benevolent* relations that allow for the unjust exploitation of workers, as alluded to by Miguel de la Madrid in a 2009 interview (Aristegui & Trabulsi 2009). The benevolent relation between government and the private sector assemblages promotes processes of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey: 2006), and the conflicts derived from this type of synthesis.

**Searching for Lost Justice**

To counter social paradigms based on individualising capitalist desires and attitudes, society at large needs to fight for the space of linguistic reduction that shapes in meaningful ways the visibilities, statements, and thinking process of Mexican social assemblages. However, to achieve
significant change in the nature and forms taken by the economies of knowledge and power, the
government assemblage still needs to play a determinant role. In terms of communication the
government needs to set the conditions to provide broader sectors of society with transparent access
to, use of, and revenue derived from the existence of the technolinguistic social assemblage.
Improving the distribution of communication capacities among social assemblages is a crucial input
expected from the government. A simple proposal to open up access to the means of
communication, however, would mean political and economic war for the entrenched interests in
the private sector and government networks and organisations. This is one reason why there are no
signs that may point towards a decrease of the global problematic in Mexican territories. On the
contrary, it seems to be intensifying.

To establish an alternative logic to the commercial-democratic use of communication
technology may help to bridge the gap produced by the corruption of language filling public
communication today. It is key to counter the effects of an unethical setting, which at the same time
contaminates private realms of communication by means of simulation techniques and confusing
sources of information and knowledge. To change the ethics and modes of differentiation between
language and technology in Mexico, it is important to consider that what remains of great
importance is to consolidate and synthesise a change in perspective with the aim of forming other
subjectivities different from those subjected to capitalist-neoliberal practices and ethics.

The change of our social systems of perception and the possibility to transform social
practices is a part of the globalisation process. In other words, the social practice of the actualisation
of language and technology made by social assemblages and forces is what constitutes the
metabolism of globalisation, and is therefore a way to intensify or ease the experience of the global
problematic at the personal scale. It is the thinking process of creating systems of synthesis that
limits the capitalist destructive practices affecting the personal scale that lies at the heart of this.
However, it is here where global forces (e.g. transnational US political and economic power) enter
into the equation. There is a need to have the right attitudes and desires within the boundaries of
Mexico’s social assemblages, but realistically this can only be achieved by effective resistance to
the forces that erode Mexican sovereignty from outside Mexico. To achieve the necessary resilience
to resist international forces and interests, national social assemblages in positions of authority (e.g.
government assemblages) need the power and political will to enforce what, to a certain extent, we
can all agree on: politics to achieve the common good (reduce poverty and violence in the social
realm, and not necessarily at the expense of the market).
From Anarchism to Anarchism: Survival of the Fittest to Cooperation

To find alternatives and counterproposals to neoliberal policy, we can look at the future and try to create new proposals and terminology that would enable new modes of differentiation between language and technology. However, there may already be in the past (statements) and the present (visibilities) some necessary resources helpful to abate the forces currently creating chaos in Mexican territories and populations. The erosion of sovereignty is one reason explaining the intensification of the global problematic in Mexico. In order to find a way out of the current state of affairs, one pertinent question to ask is: how can the differentiated social assemblages in Mexico be synthesised at the national, local, and personal scales in order to regain the necessary prerogatives that allow for a more consistent exercise of sovereignty?

The Recovery of the Usufruct of Work

The problem of injustice and processes of dispossession in Mexico is not new. The revolutionary and anarchist claim for tierra y libertad (land and freedom) can still today provide resources to re-think the established organisation in Mexican territories. The difficulties that these two rather ambiguous notions – land and freedom – represent in the political realm were and are crucial to articulating social demands in Mexico. The main dimension I would like to point out here is that these rather general claims of tierra y libertad make it necessary to discuss and understand one aspect that has been discussed earlier in this text: sovereignty. Establishing a social and political order that permits groups and persons to enjoy the product of their work and possessions (usufruct), at the same time as they enjoy the possibility to have the necessary space to exercise their rights and express their desires, is the aim of sovereign spaces.

To achieve sovereignty, it is necessary for government authorities to engage in a process of proper identification of social forces that may in tandem reflect and be coherent with the development of populations and their territories. Proposals related to anarchism, and to a certain extent what has become known in Latin America as indigenism (2), are not new or original. Some persons share the idea that distribution of wealth and material resources adequate for ensuring the common good can be achieved with attitudes and desires able to compose relations, instead of those decomposing important realms of social interaction through a variety of modes based on scarcity and profit. It is not about being right, it is instead about doing right, particularly when thinking about authority and private sector assemblages that administer public wealth.

This thesis has been critical of radical libertarians and the monetisation of society it produces. Nevertheless, libertarianism and anarchism share many similitudes. Both ideas avoid government bureaucracies and controls. Both approaches centre on the idea of freedom. There are,
however, also significant differences between them (3). It seems now that some dimension of anarchism can be proposed to hinder uncontrollable processes of homogenisation brought about by capitalism and monetisation. However, there are two extremes of the anarchist axis: the libertarian-Darwinian perspective and the anarchist-cooperativist perspective.

The case of contemporary neoliberal Mexico reflects the libertarian-Darwinian perspective, where processes of exclusion and exploitation are constant. I propose to diminish competition desires and attitudes and give room to cooperation, in those spaces where it is necessary. This is not meant to erase difference or to homogenise in the opposite direction to capitalism, but to create room for responsible reciprocity, specifically when the public interest is vulnerable. In order to consolidate a different perspective the idea of profit needs to be complemented with that of reciprocity. For instance, a sign of reciprocity in what we see in Mexico could be the payment of taxes and other costs associated with the commercial exploitation of the RES (radio electric spectrum) by communication monopolies and anti-markets. Payment of taxes and the investment of these resources to implement more democratic structures of communication in Mexico is an alternative in tune with cooperation desires and aims. However, the lack of cooperation desires and the obsession with profit and competition may not make this alternative possible.

Different forms of competition and cooperation are known to everyone; however, we need to balance this knowledge. Competition in sports is necessary, and cooperation within the family nucleus is also necessary. These two paradigms of competition/cooperation succeed in different assemblages. There are plenty of examples of social movements that show extraordinary levels of cooperation against competition desires (e.g. the Alternative Globalisation Movement). However, it is government assemblages that need most urgently to move towards a cooperation paradigm in order to achieve its main functions in Mexico: to harmonise populations and territories, and not only to make profit or desire economic growth. The social discontent in Mexico exposes a government that strives toward competition and profit paradigms, becoming irrelevant for populations and territories while benefiting financial, economic, and private interests.

The transition from competition to cooperation desires and attitudes seems difficult to achieve from inside Mexico because the anarchic arrangement actually visible (neoliberal capitalistic relations) seems to prevent these changes. It may be the case again in Mexican destiny and history that what defines Mexicans’ future is not the country’s own assemblages, but those forces outside Mexico (e.g. international conflicts, oil prices, high international interest rates, global financial crises, pandemics, natural disasters); something that reflects the lack of sovereignty and the uncertain situation that characterises Mexico at the end of the first decade of the third millennium, and evidences a country without a legitimate national project.
To conclude this analysis about Mexico and its systems of communication I want to mention the work of Mexican sociologist Andrés Molina Enríquez. In his book *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales* (published in 1909), he pointed to the concentration of land *latifundios* (4) and the marginalisation of the indigenous populations as the greatest problems facing Mexico at the time, just months before the Mexican Revolution started. The greatest national problems of contemporary Mexico are similar to those pointed to a century ago by Molina Enríquez. Today it is not the concentration of land supported by the Porfirio Díaz regime but the concentration of capital and resources supported by the post-revolutionary and neoliberal government in power in Mexico. The indigenous claim for justice is still unfulfilled. In 1909, as in 2011, the incapacity of the government to deal with social justice in Mexican territories leads to systems of concentration of wealth and the exploitation of the most vulnerable parts of society, particularly indigenous populations. Today, as in 1909, there are reasons and conditions for Mexico to fall into violent anarchy under the precept of seeking justice. The author Octavio Paz describes the 1910 Mexican revolution as the *bloody hug among brothers*, but it is my hope that the desire for justice that exists within Mexico today is possible to achieve peacefully, and that fundamental change can occur without unnecessary violence.