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

Introduction

1) This comparison does not mean to justify the thousands Iraqi persons killed in this conflict.

2) Poverty in this research is generally understood as a condition of material deprivation. There are many designs to measure poverty in Mexico. For example, poverty can be related to nutrition or patrimony capacities. However, poverty in this research is simply understood as material deprivation in a broad sense, and does not focus on specific measurements of what someone ‘lacks’ in order to consider them poor or not. For a critical account of the measures of poverty applied in Mexico, see Julio Boltvinik’s column ‘Economia Moral’ in La Jornada newspaper.

3) With regard to ‘society at large’, I clarify that this is not the same as ‘civil society’. The main difference between civil society and society at large is that civil society is organised, and it is constituted and named. ‘Civil society’ organisation moves within the realm of conventional politics, and has a determined position and aims. ‘Society at large’ is not organised; its constitution takes place on a greater scale than any civil society organisation. Society at large conveys all sectors, groups, and individuals in a society, and actions can be most powerful and unpredictable. Despite similarities to the idea of the nation state, the idea of society at large is not the same, mainly because the nation state needs to be organised in order to function in a Weberian sense. The distinction between civil society and society at large thus considers the degree of organisation. In summation, civil society refers to organisations such as NGOs and other society associations and groups that come together with shared beliefs and objectives, whereas society at large refers to the whole social body, whether this is organised for specific aims or not.

4) In a conference held at the University of Amsterdam in 2005, Ulrich Beck addressed the problem of trying to find a suitable unit of analysis that allows for a multidimensional understanding of contemporary globalisation. To my mind, cosmopolitanism privileges self-reflexive thinking in order to reassure its own identity. The result of this operation can be double: cosmopolitanism can deteriorate into a narrow self-reflexive discourse that might have a vast amount of subjective principles, which would simultaneously disregard higher possibilities of objectivity. The political discourses employed by the US Bush administration against Iraq in 2003 are an example of this narrow perspective and its ill results. However, if this theoretical cosmopolitan operation results in the reassurance of regional thought, and allows interaction with alternative global cultural consensus, one can expect that after these discursive intercultural contacts take place, renewed ideas about a truly global point of view may emerge.

5) Post-traditional societies are based on the promotion of change and innovation as engines of social action, in contrast to guidance by traditional values and ideas. Post-traditional societies on the horizon of modernity are characterised by a lack of established traditional references for taking action and conducting their activity.

6) About the distribution of the sensible in the world, see Jacques Rancière The Politics of Aesthetics (2007).

7) Here it is important to mention that complex theoretical approaches do not necessarily provide better information. The point being that complexity entails a different position of the observer; in this case, a position necessary to approach the social problem from the analysis of attitudes, desires, and feelings, meaning the personal scale. Complexity also does not mean more complicated or more difficult; it is a position of the observer that allows for an ampler spectrum of elements to be seen and contextualised (critical distance).
8) For more detail on this use of the idea of assemblages, see Saskia Sassen’s *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (2006).

9) The plane of consistency can also be thought of as the plane of immanence in Deleuze’s work, and relates to the *single substance* notion in Spinoza. The important aspect of the plane of consistency or immanence is that it is constituted by the division of substance and therefore the creation of singularities that are at the same time a part of something composed by more parts. It is a fragmented plane where totalities do not exist.

10) Here, the notion of *meadow* should not be confused with that of the *field* elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu. The metaphor of the *meadow* is used in contrast to the idea of the *network*. This comparison is unrelated to the theoretical framework associated with ideas of *capital, field, and habitus* as developed by Bourdieu.

11) In this research I used the notion of power relations as formulated by Foucault and other authors associated with the understanding of power as *forces*. There are different accounts to understand power in society. In this respect, and in connection to the communication field, the work of Manuel Castells explaining power can be useful to complement a theoretical framework for the social sciences and communication sciences in particular. For detailed information on this topic see Manuel Castells’ *Communication Power* (2009).

12) The interviews conducted during the fieldwork in Mexico were unstructured or semi-structure interviews. I met with the interviewees in different venues in Mexico City between 2005 and 2008. 1) Senator Federico Doring, with whom I had three meetings. Two were informal and a third one was recorded on video and is available in the digital version of this dissertation. 2) Director of *e-Mexico* national program, Antonio Pérez Mazatán. 3) *Delegado de Sedesol Edo. México*, Gustavo Arturo Vicencio. 4) Ilda Solís, from the national program Enciclomedia. 5) Two formal meetings with Olínca Marino, the Manager-Director of *LaNeta* website and server. (Audio available in the digital version of this dissertation) 6) Expert on Science and Technology Studies at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Dr. José Luis Talancón. 7) Former member of the Board of chairs of *Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones* (COFETEL), lawyer Clara Luz Alvarez. 8) Owner of *webcom.com* and former founder of the *Alianza Cívica* website, Alejandro López. 9) Owner at *Select*, Dr. Ricardo Zernoño. 10) To this data I added the information of two events where politicians, academics and activists converged. First, *Tercer Encuentro Internacional de la Radio* at Museo de Antropología e Historia, May 6-9, 2005. Second, *VI Bienal de la Radio en México*, at Centro Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, May 15’19, 2006.

### Chapter One

1) ‘*Combinatorial sum*’ is a mathematical notion that refers to the idea that objects are more than the sum of their parts. All entities make up more than their components individually, and develop their own identity and sets of capabilities. This is associated with the idea that objects and things develop functions in relation to the components they are attached to, but more importantly to the notion of how these components *synthesize* in order to create different capabilities than those of the parts alone.

2) To read more about Deleuze’s position on Kant’s perception of the exterior and appearance, see Gilles Deleuze’s *Foucault* (2000).

3) A rational epistemology that is confused with phenomenology drives to impose subjective truths over the reality outside our minds, generating an epistemology that creates universalising claims that can be imposed over other persons and groups many times by means of force.

4) See SWITCH Interview with Manuel de Landa in *Art and the Military*, available at http://switch.sjsu.edu
5) In this respect, and to compliment the elaboration on power and knowledge and the way in which individuals perceive visibilities and statements, Nicola Abbagnano in his *Philosophy Dictionary* explains that departing from the German concept of *Perspektivismus*, Nietzsche understands it as the condition by which “all centers of force – and not only humans – build the rest of the universe from itself; lending the universe dimensions, forms and model measures proper to the force at play” (Abbagnano: 1994: 913). Following this line, it can be argued that any determination about any phenomena is a matter related to the positioning of the observer – what is and what is not an assemblage – and thus, is always determined by it.

6) To get a fair understanding of the idea of composing relations, see Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Of particular interest is Part IV entitled *Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions*.

Chapter Two

1) In order to frame the notion of contemporary globalisation there are four space scales to be considered. In this research, they are the global, national, local, and personal scales. The first three scales, despite having a more immaterial nature than the human scale of feeling, are also real. They actualise and generate effects at different scales over social assemblages, including those constituted at the human-personal scale (e.g. the global financial crisis). The space scales mentioned here – the global, national, and the local – and the social assemblages found within them – different from the identifications by sense perception at the personal scale – can be identified by the human mind by means of imagination, calculation, and abstraction. These human techniques to articulate other space scales too small or too large, too slow or too fast, for personal perception translate into the design of models that may be used to identify the activity that escapes our senses but which we know are real (e.g. the use of calendars).

2) Milton Friedman emphasises the preponderant importance of economic freedom before political and civic freedom. The argument is that without economic freedom progress cannot be achieved. Friedman sustains that as the economy starts to grow, the other two types of freedom also benefit. A case study of a model where economic freedom was put over political and civic freedoms was Hong Kong under British administration. To read in more detail about Friedman’s ideas on freedom, see his book *Free to Choose* (1980).

3) Exclusion is the condition of being put apart from certain goods or opportunities. It is often associated with low income and conditions of poverty and vulnerability. Neoliberal policies have been pointed out as a source of exclusion by many authors. For a detailed account of exclusion and neoliberal policies (in Spanish), see Franz Hinkelammert’s *Cultura de Esperanza y Sociedad sin Exclusión* (1995).

Chapter Four

1) Niklas Luhmann pointed out that language has the power to reduce reality open possibilities. The reduction of open possibilities has resonance with the ideas formulated in this work, as it is considered that language shapes in meaningful ways our sets of beliefs. Language reduces the frame of open possibilities after we have made use of language to orient our desires and actions. For a more detailed elaboration on language and communication, see Luhmann’s *Social Systems* (1995).
Chapter Five

1) Adolfo Gilly in his book *La Revolución Interrumpida* or ‘The Interrupted Revolution’ (1971) claims from a Marxist point of view that the social revolution that took place in Mexico from 1910 to 1921 was unfinished. He points out that the Constitution of 1917, which is the written product of the struggle, is in fact a document for the elites; however, it includes some of the most important aspects of the social movement’s ideals. For Gilly, the Constitution of 1917 and the PRI that is its political expression are the signs of a real defeat for the social cause that lead to the Revolution. Taking this argument further, Miguel Angel Centeno, in his book *Democracy Within Reason* (1999), claims that the real revolution that transformed Mexico was technocratic. This revolution began with Miguel de la Madrid and it showed its peak in Salinas de Gortari’s administration with the implementation of the NAFTA agreement. For these two authors, the missing points in both revolutions are social justice and an effective strategy for true development in Mexico.

2) The southern border with Guatemala is as problematic as the northern border with the US. Illegality, abuse of migrants, racism, and other negative implications associated with the existence of uncontrolled borders are apparent between Mexico and Central American countries. The significant number of migrants crossing Mexico to reach the US makes them subject to attacks by organised crime and corrupt authorities, something that the federal or local authorities cannot prevent. In 2010 the bodies of 72 murdered illegal Central American migrants were found in Tamaulipas. This is, unfortunately, not an isolated case.

3) For a critical account of the measures of poverty applied in Mexico, see Julio Boltvinik’s column ‘Economia Moral’ in *La Jornada* newspaper.

4) For a complete explanation of the notion of ‘the fifth race’ see José Vasconcelos *The Cosmic Race* (1997).

5) *Presidencialismo* (presidentialism) is the product of the specific organisation of power found in the PRI party. Presidentialism represents a hierarchical structure of power where the president of Mexico is at the top of the pyramid. All political and social actors are subjected to the president’s power and actions. In the last 10 years, with the PAN party taking over the executive branch of political power, the practice of presidentialism has changed; however, it remains a component part of the Mexican political system.

6) Some members of the Mexican Council of Businessmen are: Emilio Azcarraga Jean (chair of Televisa), Carlos Slim Helú (Carso Global Telecom), Juan Sanchez Navarro (Modelo Group), Roberto Servitje (Bimbo), among others.

Chapter Six

1) In 1973 the war of Yom Kippur and the support by the US and other European countries for Israel led to the formation of AOPEC (Arab Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) – an international organisation bringing together oil producing Arab countries that were part of OPEC to use oil as a weapon in the Israeli-Arab conflict. At the time of its creation in 1960 the aim of OPEC was to increase the price of oil. Certainly this was the case in times of conflict. During the Six Days War in 1967, and later in 1973 over the Yom Kippur War, AOPEC applied an oil embargo on the US and other countries like Holland as retaliation for their support of Israel’s military power in the Middle East.

2) In 1948 under Miguel Alemán’s administration, Guillermo González Camarena and Salvador Novo were put in charge of assessing the possibilities for state television in Mexico. González Camarena was the inventor of colour TV. For such a reason, he was
granted the concession of Channel 5 in collaboration with Televisa, during a time when Televisión Mexicana was still in charge of Channels 2, 4, and 5; channel 2 belonged to the Azcárraga family, Channel 4 to the O’Farrill family, and Channel 5 to Gonzáles Camarena. Gonzáles Camarena always worried and had great affection for the children of Mexico, which is why Channel 5 focuses now on programming for children’s audiences. Salvador Novo, the other personality put together with Gonzáles Camarena to make this international analysis about television, is considered one of the most important Mexican intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century. He was an important personality of the Mexican intellectual group called Los Contemporaneos, together with Javier Villaurrutia, José Gorostiza, and Miguel Covarrubias, among others.

3) Journalist Carlos Ramirez, in his analysis over López Portillo’s administration, found that corruption was actually considered a collateral cost during his presidency. López Portillo was not interested in tackling the problems and costs related to corruption. On the contrary, during his administration corruption and nepotism reached scandalous levels. One of the most emblematic examples of this is the case of his childhood friend Arturo Durazo Moreno, appointed Mexico City’s chief of police between 1982 and 1988. Durazo was well known for his inappropriate use of federal resources and authority. The book Lo Negro del Negro Durazo (1983), written by José González G., provides detailed descriptions of Durazo’s excess and power abuses. Durazo was put in jail in 1988 as soon as President de la Madrid took office, Durazo being the perfect scapegoat for the so-called Renovación Moral or moral renovation policy set by the new president.

4) Sacado dolares literally means ‘pulling out dollars.’ In this context, the expression makes reference to people who deliberately pull their money out of Mexico to avoid any loss of value during times of economic devaluation, a group consisting mostly of wealthy families that speculate with important amounts of money for their particular interests. Usually the sacado dolares enjoy privileged information that allows them to retire their money just before devaluations take place. In particular, President López Portillo suffered from this during his administration and claimed that this group of people was responsible for the bankruptcy of Mexico in 1982.

5) GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade – is an organisation that was founded in 1949, and since 1994 has existed under the World Trade Organisation.

6) Sexenio is the name given to the six year presidential administrations in Mexico.

7) During their more than seventy years in power, the PRI established a succession system called dedazo presidencial. This political practice allowed the sitting president to appoint the next official presidential candidate. Until the year 2000, the winners of electoral processes were always the candidate chosen by the sitting president. The word dedazo refers to the action of pointing out someone as the chosen one. Dedo means finger and dedazo would mean ‘pointing out’ in colloquial Spanish.

8) Created during the administration of George Bush senior and Carlos Salinas, NAFTA (the North America Free Trade Agreement) joined in one economic block the national economies of the US, Mexico, and Canada. In general, this economic trade system has been of great benefit for big capital and companies. However, debate and disputes around its conditions and frameworks have always been prominent. Complaints come from workers and small entrepreneurs affected at the medium, small, and micro industry levels in all three countries.

9) El error de Diciembre is mainly attributed to an artificially overvalued peso against the dollar, kept by Salinas in order to sustain the fragile success of his administration. After he left office, Zedillo replaced the entire Salinas economic group headed by Pedro Aspe Armella with people from his own team. Some opinions point out Zedillo’s impatience as the source of the mistake that generated the error de Diciembre. The chaos and uncertainty
in this political circumstance was fuelled by the volatility of international financial capital, provoking the financial crash of the Mexican stock market and later the global economic crisis that was internationally known as the tequila effect.

10) The murder of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta is an unresolved case. The main theory provided by federal authorities pointed to the idea of the solitary murderer, a man named Mario Abruto Martinez. However, considering the specific situation in Mexico at that time, and the political instability reigning inside political groups, this theory of Colosio as the solitary shooter never convinced the general population. This case is condemned to be as unresolved as the Kennedy murder in the US. Mario Ruiz Massieu, in his book Yo Acuso: Denuncia de un Crimen Político (I accused: A Denunciation of a Political Crime 1995), settled the results and conclusions over his investigation as Attorney General of the Republic in regard to the killing of his brother José Francisco. Mario Ruiz announced that the killing of his brother was a political crime orchestrated by the PRI elite, though without pointing to the concrete reasons that motivated this action.

11) Olinca Marino interviewed on 29 April 2004 in LaNeta offices in Coyoacan, Mexico City.

12) Aguas Blancas is a town in the state of Guerrero. On 28 June 1995, a state police commando killed 17 people and wounded several more. Some victims belonged to the Organización Campesina de la Sierra de Sur (OCSS) (Peasant Organisation of the Southern Sierra). One year later, more than 5,000 people met at Aguas Blancas to commemorate the anniversary of the massacre. At the end of the demonstration, more than one hundred well armed and masked guerrillas appeared. That was the first time the Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR) (Revolutionary Popular Army) presented itself in public. Contrary to the EZLN army, the EPR did not consider negotiations with the Mexican government because they viewed it as murderous and repressive.

13) Acteal is a town located in the state of Chiapas. In December 1997, heavily armed men entered Acteal. This paramilitary group associated to the PRI was composed mainly of indigenous people from the nearby locality of Chenaló. They stormed the town and after hours of shooting and killing, 45 people had been killed: twenty-one women (four of them pregnant), fifteen children, and nine men. A further seventeen were wounded. This strategy belongs to the ‘low intensity warfare’ applied by the Mexican military since the uprising by the EZLN in December 1994. There are around 50 indigenous people from Chenaló in jail. However, those in high command – government and military personnel – responsible for the massacre escaped Mexican justice or simply enjoy impunity.


15) Atenco is a small town to the east and outside of Mexico City. The problems for the population of Atenco began when Vicente Fox announced the construction of a new international airport in this area, the most important project of his administration since it would bring great expansion in economic terms to Mexico City. However, the Mexican government negotiated on a poor basis over the payment for this land to its owners, among them those in Atenco. Therefore, a group of Atenco people led by Ignacio del Valle protested the government’s imposition and the obligation to give up their land. This movement acted aggressively, occupying local offices and taking some officials hostage. The government tried to repress the people of Atenco but failed. Vicente Fox eventually abandoned the airport project, a decision that was negative in many senses. However, the situation in Atenco remains delicate. In 2006, a new conflict required federal forces to repress a protest and disorder in the locality. This time the government forces committed severe abuses to human rights. Together with Oaxaca, the case of Atenco is a sign of the inability and lack of political skill of Fox’s government to handle difficult social situations,
and reveals the propensity to repress social unrest instead of engage in dialogue with these groups.

16) The crisis in Oaxaca began on 14 June 2006, with the brutal removal by state forces of Oaxaca of the XXI section of the national teachers union and the group *Promotora de la Unidad Nacional en Contra del Neoliberalismo* (promoter of national unity against neoliberalism) from the city centre, ordered by Oaxaca governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. After the abuse of power demonstrated by the authorities, several civil organisations and individuals protested on 17 June 2006 to demand the immediate removal of Ulises Ruiz. After the crisis grew Ulises Ruiz was unable to govern because of the intensity of the protests. Vicente Fox approved the assistance to Oaxaca official forces by federal units to reduce and repress the protest held by the APPO, an organisation that formed out of this civil society action. Similar to the results in *Atenco*, the crisis escalated and severe cases of human rights abuses against citizens were reported. The leaders of the APPO and its most public face Flavio Sosa were captured and sent to a high security prison, the same fate that befell Ignacio Valle, the *Atenco* leader, months before. The propensity for political and social repression was the closing seal of Fox’s presidency and it continued under his successor Calderón’s first months in office. This government attitude was reinforced publicly in its official discourse and rhetoric. It was not until July 2010 that Ignacio Del Valle was released from jail, innocent and without charge.

17) In order to force Vicente Fox to desist from the application of the *desafuero* against López Obrador, many strategies were followed by Obrador’s team and political party the PRD. One of the most effective consisted of a massive non-violent protest in Mexico City on 29 August 2004, where the PRD and civil society managed to organise a gathering of more than one million people walking in the streets of the city centre. This display of muscle by civil society and the opposition leader Manuel López Obrador made Vicente Fox abandon his efforts to disable the leftist candidate via this judicial recourse.

18) Video scandals were a strategy aimed to weaken López Obrador’s possibilities to win the presidential elections in 2006. An important part of the dirty campaigns was supported by mass media; in particular, the role of *Televisa* was crucial.

19) The expression *decretazo* is a colloquial way to exaggerate the importance or relevance of a normal presidential *decreto* or decree. Vicente Fox did produce enormous propaganda about how much the advance in the democratic realm in the decree of 2002 meant for Mexican society. However, the groups opposed to the decree found this attitude irresponsible. In order to make clear their point against Fox, they used the exaggerated expression of *decretazo* to make clear their negative reception of Fox’s administrative decision.

20) Out of 1,200 million dollars of the budget and money that was spent during the 2006 presidential campaign, 90% ended up in television and radio propaganda, and in particular in the hands of *Televisa* and *TV Azteca*. See *Instituto Federal Electoral* : www.ife.org.mx

21) See the AMEDI (*Asociacion Mexicana de Derecho a la Informacion*) website: http://www.amedi.org.mx/

### Chapter Seven

1) The idea of the *excommunication* of society within globalisation processes has been approached by Armand Mattelart. In an interview conducted by Costas Constantinou published in the *Review of International Studies*, Mattelart explains excommunication as “any man excluded from a society or a body, and with whom the members of that body no longer have communication, may be said to be excommunicated.” (p. 34) He continues, stating that “excommunicated is today the status of three-quarters of the world population.”
Different groups of society suffer the consequences of excommunication. Mattelart points out that “Those who are ‘excommunicated’ are the new ‘dangerous classes’ and their movements that the established powers criminalise. ‘Excommunicated’ are the cultures and cultural areas that the theologisation of the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil have inscribed in the new code of the enemies of empire since 11th September 2001.”

For the complete interview see: Communications/excommunications: An interview with Armand Mattelart (Constantinou 2008)

2) The conditions under which TV Azteca and Televisa operate are clearly explained by Jenaro Villamil in his article “Los Intocables” (the untouchable) in the Proceso political review No. 1571, published on 10 December 2006.

3) Realpolitik is a German term that was introduced to the Nixon administration by Henry Kissinger. Realpolitik implies a political conduct that works around considerations of power above moral or ethical principals or necessities. It is a political ideology linked to pragmatism and the ideas of Italian author Machiavelli.

4) The Oxford English Dictionary defines perplexity as the inability to deal with or understand something. This short definition of perplexity reflects properly the meaning I give to it in this text. The inability of persons and groups to deal with and understand the current situation in Mexico and the role played by communication in creating this perplexity is one of the main concerns of this research.

5) As the duopoly of Televisa and Tv Azteca consolidated, it also concentrated most of its income generation into advertising and publicity, as became evident with governmental expenses during presidential campaigns. The interest in nullifying the possibility of competition in Mexico is linked to the desire to protect this capital resource for their own benefit.

6) The role played by private broadcast companies in Venezuela during the failed coup against Hugo Chavez is a clear example of the de facto powers using their prerogatives to confuse the public with false information in order to achieve their interests.

Chapter Eight

1) Patrón makes reference to ownership, identifying the person who runs and administers property or the means of production. Patrones have clients and workers. This word also connects with the notion of a protector; in Imperial Roman times it was used to describe persons who protected freed slaves. There is thus a paternalistic connotation in the use of the word that also makes implicit the power asymmetry between workers and patrones.

2) The most representative case of political indigenism is Bolivia under the administration of Evo Morales. Bolivia has implemented a political program based on a different perspective than that of free markets and economic revenue alone, with dramatic results. Bolivia has regained sovereign practices that bring the idea of justice into the social realm, but at the cost of political and ideological confrontation inside and outside the country.

3) For example, we can make a direct connection between libertarian ideologies and Darwin. Darwinism gave in its time a source of scientific support to the idea of the survival of the fittest, which in political and economic terms is roughly translated into the hegemony of the greater force. In theory, species evolve by the selection of the best material outcomes resulted from processes of competition. This idea framed a society with strong individualist desires and attitudes with winners and losers. In contrast to this anarchist tendency associated with social Darwinism, there are other approaches worth discussing here. I refer specifically to the Russian anarchist and biologist Peter Kropotkin. He writes in his biological study, Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution (published in 1902), that contrary to
what Darwin suggests as the engine for evolution (survival of the fittest and natural selection), there is a need for cooperation in successful species. In fact, species that show little cooperation are prone to decay.

4) *Latifudios* were enormous areas of land characterised by inefficacy and exploitation of peasants without land. This has been pointed out as a source of social instability and an unfair form of production/exploitation. At the end of Díaz’s regime the problem of *latifundios* was acute and difficult to control or revert in peaceful ways. To challenge the *latifundista* order at the time was the same as to challenge the economic and financial interests in Mexico today. The novel *La Parcela* written by López Portillo y Rojas provides a literary example of the problems associated with this form of production and labour.