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**MEANING-MAKING AND HEGEMONIC
STRATEGIES OF THE ZAPATISTA
MOVEMENT OVER 15 YEARS**

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ABSTRACT

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This work uses visual materials to look for an evolution in the hegemonic strategies of the Zapatista social movement, using critical discourse analysis as a method. The developmental history of the social movement as a concept is reviewed in the introductory section. A brief historical overview of the Zapatista movement follows and is in turn followed by a theoretical section introducing the main concepts to be used in the analytical section. Concepts from Gramscian hegemonic theory and Saussurean discourse theory as well as from the work of Laclau and Mouffe are introduced and subsequently applied in the analytical process. 40 photographs coming from 4 events taking place over a time span of 15 years are used as data, while written texts published by the Zapatistas are used as a supporting element. The photographs are included in the analysis to facilitate interpretation by the reader. When looking closely at the processes involved in the way the imagery shapes discourse, an evolution can be seen in the approach of the movement to international affairs as well as in the turn away from aggressive practices in the articulatory efforts of the Zapatista movement.

Keywords: Hegemonic project, social movement, Zapatista movement, articulation, nodal point, visual material, critical discourse analysis.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Meaning-making and hegemonic strategy are closely related phenomena. The way they shape one another, and the way one can be used to investigate the other scientifically are puzzles addressed in a broad range of scientific literature. In this work, the hegemonic strategy of a social movement – the Zapatistas – will be analysed through the lens of meaning-making processes like those described in the doctoral dissertation of Ortiz (2019), where he posits that “Practices of representation (e.g. language, images, signs, and text) generate and mediate meaning”. (Ortiz, 2019, p.82).

Much research has been done with the Zapatista movement as the object of interest, in a wide range of fields. Some examples, such as Christlieb (2003) with a focus on corporations and rights, Manaut, Selee and Arnson (2006) who look at the peace process in the phase directly after the armed insurrection up until the Other Campaign, Montessori (2011) with a hegemonic analysis via critical discourse analysis methods, Rosa Burgos’ and Harvey and Halverson’s chapters in Howarth et al. (2009), on the Mexican Revolution and the role of women in the Zapatista movement respectively, as well as Godelmann’s (2014) and Collins’ (2010) perspectives on the conflict, Munck’s (2020) overview of Latin American social movements, Vergara-Camus’ (2014) comparative analysis of Zapatistas and a Brazilian social movement with similar goals, and Trejo’s (2012) work on the relation between movements, religion, politics and autocracy are cited in this paper as a complement to materials published by the Zapatistas themselves, some of them extensively. Others, such as the doctoral dissertation of Ortiz (2019), Escalona’s (2012) cultural analysis Master’s thesis, Treece’s (2017) article in Boston University art-themed journal *Sequitur*, Tunali’s (2020) work on Zapatista visibility and representation and Vargas Santiago’s (2015) article on community-making, are of note for this thesis as good examples of the use of visual material in research on the Zapatistas, though they are not cited beyond this introductory section. Among these latter works, only Ortiz (2019) uses discourse theory, as part of a wider poststructuralist framework, in the analysis of visual material. None of the reviewed works use a combination of method and data like the one used in this thesis – critical discourse analysis (CDA) employed in the analysis of visual data. This specific combination presents an interesting contribution to the existing body of knowledge. The author believes that the visual data in question is rich in elements suitable for the use of critical discourse analysis as a method, and that the use of this method can uncover perspectives on the data that other theories and associated methodological frameworks lack

the ability to reveal. It is also believed that the visual data in question is more appropriate for use in this thesis than written text data available from the same or similar sources over the timeframe at hand, due to questions of scope. Another advantage of the visual data at hand is that it can reveal perspectives and elements that language (as written text) keeps hidden. A further contribution of this work lies in the timing of its writing. Some of the numerous papers, chapters and articles cited in the theoretical section with reference to the Zapatistas go back to the early to mid- 2000s, while others, although more recent, were published anywhere from 10 to 15 years ago. Notable exceptions are found in Munck's (2020), Tunali's (2020) and Ortiz's (2019) work. Social movements such as the Zapatistas are fluid entities that evolve constantly, and this evolution is only accelerated by the availability of modern technology (Tilly, 2018). For this reason, the importance of recent research on this topic is paramount, therefore, this paper makes an important contribution. To achieve the research goal of this paper, that is, to look for an evolution in the hegemonic strategies of the Zapatista movement, meaning-making processes will be observed and interpreted using visual material. More specifically, photographic material, created by the Zapatista movement itself and published on their official website will be used as data, while written texts from the same website will be used as a supporting element in providing context. Discourse theory and critical discourse analysis (CDA), an analytical method based on discourse theory concepts, which will be detailed in a later section, will then be used to analyse it. The material will be looked at with these main questions in mind:

What was this image intended to communicate? What, if any, nodal points are being articulated? What articulatory processes are depicted, and what are they intended to persuade the audience of?

In the four analytical chapters, these questions will be answered looking at photographs of four events organised by the Zapatista movement, starting with an event organised as part of the second period of the Other Campaign in spring of 2007 and progressing to more recent years, namely looking at one event taking place in 2020 and another in 2022. The above questions will be used as stepping stones towards answering the main research question of this paper, which is as follows:

How has the hegemonic project of the Zapatista movement evolved in the last two decades?

In the chapter immediately subsequent to this introduction, a brief review of the history of the Zapatista movement, from its inception up until the starting point of the timeframe of the analysis undertaken in this work, is presented. Following this, Chapter 3 discusses the methodological approach and provides the definitions of some discourse theory concepts

necessary for the analysis as well as a brief review of relevant literature on social movements. In addition, the third chapter gives more details on the data that was used and the character of the analytical approach of this thesis. In Chapter 4, the analysis is carried out in four separate sections, each subchapter including the ten pictures representing one event, and some conclusions are made in each subchapter. The fifth and final chapter pulls these conclusions together in an answer to the above research question.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 From Zapata to the Zapatistas

After more than six decades of struggle starting in the period directly after the Mexican Revolution of 1910, indigenous activists in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas started to organise. The legacy of the Revolution remained strong in people's memories as they entered a new era of indigenous struggle (Howarth et al., 2009, ch.6). At the start, their main grievance was over indigenous rights to use of land (Vergara-Camus, 2014). In the 1970s, their efforts were aided by the local government represented by Governor of Chiapas, M. V. Suárez, and the Catholic church, represented by the bishop S. Ruiz. These two important figures supported the organisation of the 1st Indigenous Congress, named in honour of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Bartolomé de las Casas, a Spanish monk who had defended indigenous rights at the time of the Spanish colonisation of the Americas¹. Some five years later, organisations from the left side of the political spectrum with a focus on the rural way of life started arriving to Chiapas. Among these is the CIOAC - *Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos*, or Independent Central of Agricultural and Rural Workers, and the OCEZ – *Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata*, or the Rural Emiliano Zapata Organisation. Emiliano Zapata Salazar was a Mexican revolutionary fighter who operated under the slogan "Land and Liberty". It is precisely his name that the Zapatista societal movement, or movement of movements as designated by Romero (2010), has taken to signify that they operate in his spirit.

¹ Biography of B. de las Casas, https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/l/las_casas.htm

In 1982, A.C. Domínguez, a man with a military history and a member of the by then long-dominant governing party, *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* or PRI, ascended to power as governor of Chiapas, and turned the power of the State against the indigenous activists. This, together with internal divisions within the individual organisations put a temporary halt to state-level activism. On the other hand, organisations operating at the national level such as the UGOCP - *Unión General Obrera, Campesina y Popular* or General Rural and Popular Worker Union and the CNPI – *Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indios* or National Coordination of Indigenous Peoples were founded during these trying times.

In the words of Romero, “every social movement emerges in the presence of a conflict” (Romero, 2010). Following that logic, it can be said that the conflict over indigenous rights of the use of land led to the eventual creation of the EZLN – *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* or the Zapatista National Liberation Army. In this step, the struggle was broadened to a fight for equality and democracy across many fields, such as education, healthcare, and others. (Godelmann, 2014). The EZLN was officially founded in November of 1983. The *Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional*, National Liberation Forces or FLN are listed by Romero (2010) as a key precursor, while Vergara-Camus (2014) speaks of the *Asociación Rural de Interés Colectivo-Unión de Uniones* (ARIC-UU), which translates to Rural Association of Collective Interests – Union of Unions. He states that the EZLN developed “within, and parallel to” (Vergara-Camus, 2014, p. 116) the ARIC-UU and that this organisation was a model for the political structure the EZLN created.

In 1986, the First Rural Congress was held, and the Rural-Magisterial Solidarity was formed and incorporated into the National Rural Corporation, which was affiliated to the governing political party. Organisations such as these, with affiliation to the Mexican government, can be seen as an effort by the ruling party to control the pathway of the movement through a process Vergara-Camus (2014) describes as political co-optation. Until 1988, the Agrarian Rehabilitation Program, also a governmental effort, was in place. During this program, the conflict between the rural indigenous population and the landholders gained an interinstitutional dimension. The newly founded EZLN also claimed legitimacy under Convention 169 of the International Labor Organisation (ILO), aimed at indigenous rights, adopted by the Salinas de Gortari administration in 1989 (Trejo, 2012). In 1991, the ANCIEZ – *Alianza Nacional Campesina Independiente Emiliano Zapata* or National Rural Independent Alliance Emiliano Zapata is formed. The relations between the EZLN and the ANCIEZ were key to the relation of the EZLN to Mexican society and creation of its social bases (Romero, 2010).

Zapatista life became increasingly politicised because of the growth of the movement and gains in numbers of followers and traction. This led to increased intervention of the EZLN, the armed branch, into societal interactions and community affairs.

Some years later, an armed response to the continuous governmental oppression and efforts at integration into the neoliberal world order was planned, since it was felt that the indigenous population was ignored, neglected and deliberately placed into harm's way by the policies the incumbent government was implementing. An organisation was created within the EZLN under the name of the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee - General Command, or as abbreviated from the Spanish form, *Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena – Comando General*, the CCRI-CG (Hansen, 2018). Its purpose was to act as the decision-making body of the EZLN.

2.2 The Declarations of the Lacandon Jungle – The Goals and How to Get There

On January 1, 1994, the Zapatistas published the first of a series of six documents that communicate their worldview, their goals and their intentions to the world. It was titled the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle. The Lacandon Jungle is a vast forested area that crosses from the Mexican southeast into Guatemala and Belize. It is symbolic of the land, nature and culture of living in synergy with it that the Zapatistas strive to protect, while also being the very space they inhabit, where they sought refuge from the oppressive and violent actions of the government. The document starts with a fervent proclamation of resistance, translating as “Today, we say ENOUGH!²” and is addressed to the people of Mexico. It speaks of the indigenous origins of Zapatista rebels, not in the span of the mere few decades mentioned in this introduction but going back entire centuries. It cites the Mexican constitution on sovereignty and the right of the people to change the way they are governed and positions itself as a declaration of war on the Army and the government. It calls on several branches of government to “restore the stability of the nation”³ It also addresses organisations and civil society in a call for help. It distances the Zapatistas from the drug trade and its armed branch, and it refers to the Geneva convention. In its final section, it contains six points, phrased as orders to the EZLN on how to fight the war they are declaring.

² 1st Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1994/01/01/primera-declaracion-de-la-selva-lacandona/>

³ 1st Declaration

In the last point, the EZLN is ordered to stop the exploitation of natural resources in territories under their control⁴

On the same January day that the First Declaration was emitted, the EZLN initiated their armed response to the governmental oppression. In an act of insurrection, they took control of several towns in the state of Chiapas, such as Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, Altamirano and San Cristóbal de las Casas, the state capital. They held the state capital for several hours, released prisoners and destroyed land records (Collins, 2010). The date chosen by the CCRI-CG was not a coincidence. It was the date on which Mexico entered the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA. This was one of the major grievance points of the Zapatista social movement, as they felt the government was prioritising a neoliberal model of functioning that would end up with indigenous people even worse off than they had been. The following armed confrontation lasted 11 days, after which the President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, ordered a ceasefire. (Godelmann, 2014)

About half a year later, the second Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle was published. This one is addressed to the Mexican people, and the peoples and governments of the world, and the addressees are referred to as brothers. It highlights the role of civil society in the conflict and cites the Mexican constitution in the same vein as the first Declaration. It, again, contains six points, among which it mentions orders for a ceasefire, condemnation for the military threats toward the civil society, and reinforcement of the link between the Zapatistas and the Mexican people. It mentions the will for an effort towards a political, pacific solution. It calls on independent political parties (independent of what, is admittedly, unclear to the author – likely the government) to create a transition government. It also calls for continued action on the part of the civil society. This Declaration was promulgated under mediation of the bishop S. Ruiz, who had helped the organisation of indigenous activists some 20 years before. By this point, the EZLN had also met with left-wing (PRD – *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* – Democratic Revolution Party) politician C. Cárdenas in a renewed effort for cooperation with political figures, this time on the national level⁵.

Apart from a turn for the peaceful and political, the major difference from the first Declaration to this one is the attitude towards the constitution. In the first Declaration, the Mexican constitution was cited, and it was said the EZLN would abide by it in its efforts. In the second

⁴ 1st Declaration

⁵ 2nd Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1994/06/10/segunda-declaracion-de-la-selva-lacandona/>

one, there are open calls for “the death of the current political system”⁶ and the creation of a new party framework, a new politics, and a “new Mexican”.⁷ This last point is why Romero (2010) lists social transformation as one of the goals of the Zapatistas. The declaration also states that there had already been negotiations with the government, but they have been refused by the indigenous community at large.⁸

Within the page that contains the second Declaration, a convocation is listed, inviting their audience, Mexicans, to a National Democratic Convention. The convocation lists some considerations on the current state of democracy in Mexico and the Constitution. The rest of the text then calls for an event where these would be discussed, and proposals for a new constitution as well as the transitional government would be created. It specifies that every state of the nation should be represented at the event, as well as that the organisation of the Convention should start from the local level and progress to the state level. It does not, however, specify the date nor place of the event. The final part of the second Declaration is a call to action, addressed to “Brothers, Mexicans”⁹. It emphasises the importance of not giving up and calls for resistance. It is signed by the CCRI-CG and ends with an exclamation for “Democracy! Freedom! Justice!”¹⁰

The third document of the series was published in 1995, one year after the armed insurrection. In its introductory section, it speaks of the process so far, and reiterates the Zapatistas’ efforts for a peaceful, political solution. In its introductory section, it addresses the pre-electoral process of 1994 and the electoral process that followed, by which Ernesto Zedillo, the last president in a 70-year period of single-party government dominance, got elected. Of the former, it says that it created hope for transition to democracy. When it gets to the latter, though, the hope is said to have been stifled, the electoral process is described as undemocratic, fraudulent and criminal. There is mention of an increase in government repression, what Christlieb (2003) and Vergara-Camus (2014) call low-intensity war. It describes the governing party, the PRI, as the “political branch of organised crime and drug trafficking”¹¹.

⁶ 2nd Declaration.

⁷ 2nd Declaration.

⁸ 2nd Declaration

⁹ 2nd Declaration

¹⁰ 2nd Declaration

¹¹ 3rd Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1995/01/01/tercera-declaracion-de-la-selva-lacandona/>

The declaration itself starts with a call for the formation of a Movement for National Liberation. C. Cárdenas, the PRD-affiliated politician that the EZLN had previously attempted to create an alliance with, is personally called upon to head this movement, showing that cooperation with politicians was still on the table as of this point. The 3rd declaration continues the radical reformist tendencies of the 2nd one. It declares the original Mexican constitution, from 1917, as the valid one until a new one is created. It says the EZLN will “help the civil population restore legality, order, legitimacy and sovereignty”.¹² It contains five characteristics desirable for the new, transitional government. The first one is to separate the government from the dominant party, the PRI. The others have to do with electoral law, indigenous rights and the economy.

The alliance that the Zapatistas hoped to establish with Cárdenas, and thereby with the left wing of national-level politics, ultimately failed, and the Zapatistas felt betrayed by Cárdenas (Romero, 2010).

In June of 1995, a convocation for a National Consultation was published. In the end, three Consultations took place, the National, the Youth, and the International Consultations were tools used by the EZLN to obtain the popular opinion on their program and their progress as well as to strengthen their ties to a wide range of subaltern groups and alliances to the civil society. In October of the same year, the peace process continued in a second round of negotiations in San Andrés. A commission under the name of *Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación*, Commission of Concord and Pacification, or COCOPA, was created in the same year. It was supposed to facilitate the negotiations between the EZLN and the government. Military aggression from the government continued, keeping the conflict in a situation of one-sided violence. (Manaut, Selee and Arnson, 2006).

At the start of the following year, in January 1996, the 4th Declaration was published. It, too, has an introductory section, which kicks off by repeating the motto “Everything for everyone, for us, nothing”¹³.

¹² 3rd Declaration

¹³4th Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1996/01/01/cuarta-declaracion-de-la-selva-lacandona/>

It then speaks of the demands the Zapatistas have made, and resumes them in a paragraph, which reads:

“Roof, land, work, bread, health, education, independence, democracy, freedom, justice and peace. These were our flags on the morning of 1994. These were our demands in the long night of 500 years. These are our exigencies now. Our blood and our word lit a small fire on the mountain, and we walked it towards the home of the power and the money. Brothers and sisters of other races and other languages, of other colours and the same heart, protected our light and in it drank their respective fires. The powerful came to extinguish us with his strong breath, but our light grew in other lights. The rich one dreams of extinguishing the first light. It is useless, there are now many lights, and they are all first”.¹⁴¹⁵

This narrative, poetic style with the frequent use of metonymy is prominent throughout much Zapatista writing. The message is clearly interpretable as one of resistance, growth, perseverance and hope. It continues mentioning the events of 1995 and the start of the negotiations in San Andrés between the EZLN and the government.

After the introductory section, the text of the Declaration itself starts off by announcing the creation of a new organisation. The FZLN, *Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* or Zapatista National Liberation Front, is described to be a political organisation. It invites many social groups and the civil society to join the Front. In a peculiar fashion, it specifies that although the Front is positioned in political opposition to the incumbent government and represents a space to coordinate opposition efforts, it is not a political party and does not seek political power. After explaining the logic behind the name, it repeatedly identifies itself as “a political force”¹⁶ Mentions of the creation of a new constitution are also present here, just like in the last two Declarations.

This period is very fruitful in the creation of new organisations and other spaces. Apart from the FZLN, there also is the CNI - *Congreso Nacional Indígena* or National Indigenous Congress that was created in 1996, and the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism was held. Alongside all this, the peace process was starting to produce its first results, albeit only in the forms of agreements. The Zapatistas emitted a *comunicado*, i.e. a text entry on their website. In this entry, created on 15 February 1996¹⁷,

¹⁴ This translation and all the following translations from the Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle have been translated by the author of this work.

¹⁵ 4th Declaration

¹⁶ 4th Declaration

¹⁷ El Diálogo de San Andrés y los Derechos de Cultura Indígena, Punto y Seguido

<https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1996/02/15/el-dialogo-de-san-andres-y-los-derechos-y-cultura-indigena-punto-y-seguido/>

they affirm that the agreements that have been made have not been upheld by the Government, and that the negotiations were not a dialogue, as it was felt they should have been, but rather a monologue wherein the government merely dictated what was in fact going to happen (Romero, 2010). A single day after the publication of the *comunicado*, the first results of the negotiations taking place in San Andrés Larráinzar materialised. The agreements were named the San Andrés Accords, after the place where they were signed (Hernández Navarro, 2010). In one of the documents that formed part of the written form of the Accords, the Zapatistas voice their unconformities with the proposals that the government has put forward¹⁸.

In 1997, as Vergara-Camus (2014) mentions, the government withdrew its signature from the San Andrés accords, and the EZLN refused to negotiate with the government until the accords were upheld, accusing the government negotiators of dishonesty. The one-sided state violence described by Christlieb (2003) and Vergara-Camus (2014) as low-intensity war worsened. One particular instance of violence that would stick around in Zapatista minds was the Acteal massacre, where government forces and paramilitaries killed 45 indigenous people. The Zapatistas interpreted this as a government response to an earlier event, the March of the 1111, which was an event held in order to strengthen Zapatista presence in the civil society (Romero, 2010).

The fifth document in the series of Declarations was published in the summer of 1998. The introductory section to the penultimate Declaration mentions the widespread indigenous participation in the San Andrés negotiations, with the Zapatistas emphasizing that they are not the only ones involved in the negotiations on the side of the indigenous people of Mexico. It also speaks of the government having defected on the Accords, and of the increase in violence, while accusing the government of corruption. The process of modifying and abridging the documents that resulted from the Accords on the part of the government is also discussed. On the other hand, there is also a show of support for the initiative of the COCOPA to incorporate the results of the negotiations into legislation. A discussion on the mediation within the peace process and a critique of the violent approach of the government

¹⁸ Agreement Regarding the Documents: 'Joint Declaration That the Federal Government and the EZLN Shall Submit to National Debating and Decision-Making Bodies'; 'Joint Proposals That the Federal Government and the EZLN Agree to Submit to National Debating and Decision-Making Bodies, in Respect of Point 1.4 of the Rules of Procedure'; and 'Commitment for Chiapas Made by the State and Federal Governments and the EZLN, in Respect of Point 1.3 of the Rules of Procedure

towards the sector of civil society that was involved in the mediation of the peace process is also present.¹⁹

In the text of the declaration itself there is a call for everyone involved in the peace process, starting with the indigenous people, mentioning the civil society and the politicians, and ending with the COCOPA, to do their part in a common effort for a peaceful solution. The text also contains a convocation to yet another consultation, at this time a tried and tested method for the Zapatistas to survey the public opinion and strengthen their social and societal relations. It is named the National Consultation on the Initiative of the Indigenous Law of the Commission of Concord and Pacification and for the End of the War of Extermination. There is a call for members of the subaltern groups that the Zapatistas claim to stand behind to participate, and to certain communities such as politicians, scientists and artists, as well as the civil society, to help organise the consultation.²⁰

Two years after the fifth document was published, there was an important ideological shift in Mexican politics. A 71-year single-party government dominance was ended by the 2000 presidential election, with the victory taken by Vicente Fox of the PAN, *Partido Acción Nacional*, or the National Action Party. Fox made some significant efforts to further the peace process, releasing Zapatista prisoners in the state of Chiapas as well as ordering the withdrawal of government troops from some important locations in the region. This, however, was too little too late. The Zapatistas, at this point, were on a trajectory of distancing themselves from the negotiations and the peace process involving the COCOPA and the government. In April of 2000, a heavily altered and abridged version of a document stemming from the San Andrés negotiations was approved as law, in the so-called COCOPA law. The alteration went so far as to change the definitions of core concepts and the implementation mechanisms of the law, and it was the final straw for the Zapatistas (Manaut, Selee and Arnson, 2006). By then, they were an established societal movement, as defined by Romero (2010) and they perceived the approval of the COCOPA law as a signal, which they took to mean that if you want something done well, you had better do it yourself. And so, they did.

From there on out, the EZLN focused on autonomy. The possibility of negotiating with the government had been all but fully discarded, and the movement focused on the development of its political elements and governance in the autonomous municipalities, which had existed

¹⁹ 5th Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1998/07/17/v-declaracion-de-la-selva-lacandona/>

²⁰ 5th Declaration

– with varying levels of organisation and influence – since 1994, the year of the armed insurrection (Vergara-Camus, 2014). The municipalities were, and are to this day, called *caracoles* – translating as snails. The *caracoles* were, back then, as they still also are today, governed by their municipal councils. In 2003, eight JBGs – *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* – or Good Government Councils – appeared as a new, higher level of autonomous governance. Each JBG oversees five to six municipalities, while also working with the CCRI-CG, which they replaced as the highest echelon of Zapatista autonomous governance, and the regional government of Chiapas (Vergara-Camus, 2014). As stated by Romero, in these gradual developments of autonomous governance, we see that “movements start out by living locally the change they want to see globally” (Romero, 2010). In 2004, a year after the development of the JBGs, the EZLN celebrated 20 years of its existence, and 10 years of public efforts.

2.3 The Other Campaign - La Otra Campaña

In June of 2005, the sixth and final Declaration was published. In the previous declarations, many mentions of political efforts and projects, many consultations and other ways of changing the Mexican political landscape are made. The sixth declaration is the main document synthesising the results of these efforts and plans for further action into what will come to be called the Other Campaign (Roux, 2006). The name is a reference to the fact that 2006 was an electoral year in Mexico. It brought on the return of the PRI, which would last in the presidency until 2018. The Zapatistas say that their plan, too, is a campaign, but it is the other campaign, because it is not electoral.²¹ This is in line with the claims made in the previous Declarations, where the Zapatistas always eschew political power. Roux (2006) also says that the 2005 Chapultepec Pact, also known as the National Act for Unity, Rule of Law, Development, Investment and Employment was the direct counterpoint to the Sixth Declaration. This was a document promoted by Carlos Slim, owner of telecommunications company TELMEX, and signed by him and 16 other entrepreneurs from various sectors, which details objectives on five topics – rule of law and public safety, just development, forming human and social capital, development of physical capital, and public administration reform (Gómez, 2006).

The Declaration is divided into six parts. The first part, titled Of What We Are, briefly introduces the Zapatista movement and states that their goals of bringing democracy,

²¹ 6th Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2005/06/30/sexta-declaracion-de-la-selva-lacandona/>

freedom and justice are to benefit all Mexicans, but concentrates on indigenous people. The Zapatistas' will to fight alongside their supporters, whom they describe as humble, simple people who suffer from exploitation, is emphasised. They specifically mention people from cities, which is a new angle considering their hitherto mostly rural focus, and their protests against the armed violence. The Declaration also mentions the participation of non-Zapatista actors in the peace negotiations and the unwillingness of the government to adhere to the documents produced by them, such as the San Andrés Accords. The Acteal massacre is also mentioned, as are international meetings and dialogues on the Zapatista cause and other struggles around the world.²²

The second part, *Of Where We Are Now*, mentions a unilateral decision of the Zapatistas to comply with the San Andrés Accords. It speaks of the development of the relatively new autonomously governed areas and says that this development stems from "several centuries of indigenous resistance and the Zapatista experience"²³ This section also refers to the organisation and administration of these autonomous areas, in that the political, democratic branch of the movement should be above the military branch when it comes to governance and administration. The improvement in the standard of living in the autonomous areas and the help of the civil society in achieving this progress is also addressed. This section is closed off with a statement of "desire to unite with the workers of the city and the field"²⁴

The third part, named *Of How We See The World*, explains the Zapatistas' anticapitalist worldview. They express their negative regard of neoliberalism and the globalisation of capitalism, and define capitalism itself as "In capitalism, those who have the money and the things govern and those who only have their ability to work obey"²⁵, highlighting the asymmetry of capitalism and the inequalities it produces. They consider capitalism a destructive force, saying that by its functioning, it eliminates the defining characteristics of a country. This is a reference to the many transnational corporations that were operating in Mexico at this time, driving small and medium Mexican companies out of the market. They hold that "capitalism of neoliberal globalisation is based on exploitation, dispossession, contempt and repression"²⁶ Similarly to their treatment of the concept of politics on the national field, they also define their own way of globalisation, on the international field, calling

²² 6th Declaration

²³ 6th Declaration

²⁴ 6th Declaration

²⁵ 6th Declaration

²⁶ 6th Declaration

it a globalisation of rebellion, and counterposing it to what they call the neoliberal globalisation. The participation of several subaltern groups in this globalisation of rebellion, such as the LGBTQIA, women, migrants and youth is mentioned. The rights and struggle of women, specifically, among all the other subaltern groups, have always been of importance to the Zapatista movement. Even before the Declarations, in the early years of the movement, they established a Zapatista Women's Revolutionary Law, which details the rights of women in the movement, such as education, work and participation in community matters. (Howarth et al., 2009, ch. 10) In Zapatista documents where they specifically outline their demands, there are always specific demands concerning women and their struggle. (EZLN in Joseph and Henderson, 2002)

In the fourth part, Of How We See Our Country, Mexico, the Zapatistas narrow their focus onto their perspective of the national situation. The start of the section accuses the government of destroying the country and criticises the Mexican accession to NAFTA. Large transnational corporations are accused of exploitation and criminal activities such as child labour. They also criticise the government over the unemployment situation in the country and the poverty levels, with a mention of the many Mexicans that migrate in order to seek a better life. They say that they consider Mexico to be dominated by the United States and accuse the government of allowing and supporting that situation. The governmental efforts in privatising institutions are also mentioned as detrimental to the country, and the government is accused of organised crime within the state institutions.²⁷

The fifth part is titled Of What We Want to Do and describes the desired results of the Other Campaign. It issues a worldwide call to action, and describes many international efforts, such as solidarity with the people of many Latin American countries including Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina and Uruguay. It differentiates between the people of the United States, who they perceive to be people like any other, and the government of the United States, who they accuse of bad government and giving a bad reputation to the citizens. There is also a mention of willingness to support European struggles as well as a brief sentence on Africa, Asia and Oceania. The Zapatistas present a plan for cooperation with leftist organisations in Mexico, and to travel to all parts of Mexico where "humble and simple people like us"²⁸ live. They then plan to "ask them how their life is, their struggle, their thought". There is the hope to unify the struggles of many into a common programme, and

²⁷ 6th Declaration

²⁸ 6th Declaration

a plan to then carry out the resulting programme. In the last part of this section, Mexico is defined as between the Río Bravo (the river that flows on the border of Mexico and the US) and Río Suchiate (the river that flows on the southern border of Mexico, with Guatemala) and between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

In the last part of the document, titled *Of How We Will Do It*, it is defined as being the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle. It commits to a peaceful process, without “offensive military movements”²⁹ and to an open political process, without creating “secret relations with political-military organisations, national or foreign”³⁰. It mentions that the Zapatistas will defend, help and obey their indigenous communities and regard these as their supreme command. There is a promise to improve the standard of living as well as strengthen the autonomy and the good government. There is also a plan for another international meeting, though the time is not specified. The overarching goal is stated as to build a “leftist alternative for Mexico”³¹. The desire to reform politics and create a new constitution is reaffirmed, and the Mexican population is asked to consider supporting the initiative.

At the time of the publication of the 6th Declaration, there was a red alert issued by the Zapatistas, which suspended some of the activities on autonomously governed territory and cautioned residents and visitors. It was due to renewed governmental aggression and international security operations regarding movement of drugs and gang members. This alert came in the form of another publication, the first *comunicado* of the CCRI-CG, the decision-making body of the EZLN. In November of 2006, the FZLN, which had been founded as the political branch of the EZLN, was dissolved among the first period of Other Campaign efforts, as it was no longer necessary.

As per Romero, there are four pillars to Zapatista discourse – resistance, dignity, history and myth, custom and language. She also states that Zapatistas engaged in identity construction that “reconstructed and resignified collective identities such as indigenous and Mexican.” (Romero, 2010). She also states that Zapatism seeks a social and cultural transformation of its communities. Finally, Romero defines the Other Campaign as an antihegemonic effort. Having provided a brief overview of Zapatista history in the above chapter, this thesis shall now review some theoretical concepts necessary for analysis in the next one.

²⁹ 6th Declaration

³⁰ 6th Declaration

³¹ 6th Declaration

3 DATA AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Social movements

The social movement is a form of contentious public politics well known in our times for advancing the interests of groups concerned with the many injustices they see in the world. Contentious is taken in this work to mean interfering with the interests of other actors. All manner of economic, political and gender inequalities are the subject of social movements. The rights of men, women and children, LGBTQIA+ rights, the rights of immigrants and those of indigenous people, nuclear energy, issues of race and ethnicity, climate change, capitalism, religion, health, life and even death are but a few examples of broader issues that social movements have made claims to authorities on. In doing so, three key elements appear in synthesis within their efforts. Firstly, they employ campaigns, defined as a “sustained, organised public effort” (Tilly, 2018, p.6) in claim-making targeted at authorities. At the least, three kinds of parties are linked in such an effort, the actors making the claim, or claimants, the ones they are targeted at, or objects of claims, and a public. Secondly, a repertoire consisting of actions such as the creation of associations for a certain purpose, organising drives to obtain signatures for petitions, giving statements to the media and demonstrating, among others, is used. Thirdly, they display four key factors – the “worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment” (Tilly, 2018, p.6) - abbreviated to WUNC - of themselves, their supporters and those they represent. These four are defined as follows:

- *worthiness*: sober demeanor; neat clothing; presence of clergy, dignitaries, and mothers with children;
- *unity*: matching badges, headbands, banners, or costumes; marching in ranks; singing and chanting;
- *numbers*: headcounts, signatures on petitions, messages from constituents, filling streets, retweets, repostings, and numbers of *likes*;
- *commitment*: braving bad weather; visible participation by the old and disabled; resistance to repression; ostentatious sacrifice, subscription, and/or benefaction.” (Tilly, 2018, p.7)

The claimants mentioned above put forward three different kinds of claims. Program claims, on the one hand, speak of support or opposition to an action or a proposal. On the other hand, identity claims assert the claimants as a unified force under an identity. Finally, standing claims identify ties and similarities to other actors in a given field, such as supporters, allies, minorities and more (Tilly, 2018).

Such distinctive combinations of the abovementioned elements as constitute a social movement were not, however, always present, nor did they suddenly materialise all at once. While political authorities have always existed and so have contentious interactions between them, or their opponents, and the populace, the way these interactions were carried out only started taking the shape of social movements in the late 18th century. During the 18th and 19th centuries, social movements developed and were active mainly in Europe, with some activity also present in British colonies in America. (Tilly, 2018).

The 20th century would see the expansion of social movements on an unprecedented scale. The relations between authorities and social movement organisers became increasingly routinised. Elements such as campaigns, displays of WUNC and performances reacted to the changes that were taking place in communications. Social movement campaigns were adopted by opponents of radical, reformist movements and all the elements of a social movement, campaigns, repertoires and WUNC displays adapted to local contexts outside of countries where the phenomenon originated. (Tilly, 2018).

Latin America, of course, was not excluded from the spread of social movement activity during the 20th century (Trejo, 2012). Munck (2020) mentions a different definition of social movements, one less reliant on the presence of specific elements and performances than the one put forward by Tilly (2018). This definition is found originally in the article “The Concept of Social Movement” published in the *Sociological Review* journal by Mario Diani and cited by Munck, defining social movements to be “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities”. (Diani, 1992 in Munck, 2020, p.1).

Munck (2020) also cites the definition put forward by sociologist Alain Touraine in his book *The Voice and the Eye*, saying “a social movement is the action, both culturally oriented and socially conflictual, of a class defined by its position of domination or dependency in the mode of appropriation of historicity, of the cultural models of investment, knowledge and morality towards which the social movement itself is oriented” (Touraine, n.d.³² in Munck, 2020). Touraine did not consider Latin American mobilisations to be social movements according to this definition. After Munck cites this definition, however, he goes on to say that such an exclusionary definition is not conducive to the way he wishes to study social movements and that it reaffirms the necessity for a new paradigm to be developed.

³² Publication not dated in original citation by R. Munck.

In the same 2020 book, Munck also provides an extensive overview of social movement activity in Latin America. He engages in a cognitive mapping of these movements, developing on pre-existing matrixes by Maristella Svampa to group them into clusters, including a peasant-indigenous one, said to be “inscribed in the *longue durée* of Amerindian history” (Munck, 2020, p.115), followed by a national-popular cluster based on thinking from the 1930s to 1950s relating to industrialisation and the advent of populism in Latin America. Next, movements built upon “a class-centred left” (Munck, 2020, p.115) are said to reflect 1970s attitudes of class essentialism and finally an autonomist cluster, rejecting party politics and advancing horizontal democracy, is said to be acting on thoughts and events starting from the beginning of the 21st century. These movements are further separated into categories of workers, peasants, community, women, indigenous and environmental. Among workers’ movements, Munck lists initiatives in Brazil and Argentina, as well as a transnational struggle against the Free Trade Area of the Americas. The struggle of the *Sem Terra* (MST) of Brazil, alongside movements in Colombia and Chile are listed as examples of peasant movements, and the Zapatistas are also mentioned, but not listed as a case. Community movements are represented by Brazilian neighbourhoods, the movement of Afro-Colombians and their descendants, the *piqueteros* and other movements in Argentina. The Argentinian *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, Brazilian feminists and Venezuelan *Mujeres populares* are listed as examples of women’s movements, with the transnational initiative of the Global Sisterhood also mentioned. In the environmental category, the movement against the privatisation of water and gas in Bolivia is listed as well as initiatives in Ecuador and Brasil and the transnational *Buen Vivir* (Living Well, loosely translated) philosophy. Indigenous movements of Bolivia and Ecuador are listed alongside the Zapatista movement. Munck makes the distinction between the EZLN as an organisation and *Zapatismo* as a transnational movement and goes on further to also distinguish between those two and the indigenous movement located in the Mexican southeast, which is not made in this thesis, although the transnational aspect of *Zapatismo* is also beyond its scope.

Another perspective on the Zapatista movement is offered in the excellent ethnographic comparative analysis by Vergara-Camus (2014). He puts the Zapatistas side by side with the Brazilian MST in a detailed comparison and emphasises the importance of autonomy for both movements. He says both movements engender an “alternative popular power” (Vergara-Camus, 2014, p.291), but also mentions that neither movement bears any immunity to contradictions or internal power struggles. He also speaks of the capability of both movements in this direction in terms of the movements acting as replacements of the

state in the provision of “political representation and basic services” (Vergara-Camus, 2014, p.72). For Vergara-Camus, the EZLN is the focus of the study, and he refers to the EZLN as the Zapatistas throughout his work, adopting a narrower approach than the one used in this thesis.

Trejo (2012) offers a perspective on the Zapatistas and the Mexican case, elaborating on the origination of social movements in autocratic regimes. He claims that a main factor in indigenous mobilisation in Mexico was the changing religious and political landscape on the local level and the competition it created, and that the coercive neoliberalisation other authors mention merely acted as an accelerant (Trejo, 2012). His study is also interesting from a methodological perspective, given that he combined statistical analysis with case studies and life histories in his work.

When looking at these studies, criteria and definitions, it becomes clear that the Zapatista movement, in the state and condition it existed in during the timeframe studied by this paper, complies with most definitions listed in the reviewed literature and is considered a social movement by all the authors whose work was reviewed for the purposes of this thesis.

It can therefore be said that the Zapatista movement is indeed a social movement. This paper will regard the Zapatista social movement as constituted by the EZLN, FZLN, Zapatista *bases de apoyo* (help bases), the *caracol* residents, *caracol* administrations and JBG members, affiliated civil society and individual supporters. This wide definition has the objective of obtaining an understanding of the hegemonic strategy of the movement as a whole, as opposed to focusing on particular organisations.

3.2 Discourse Theory

Discourse theory stems from the work of Swiss linguist Saussure and post-Marxist streams of thought. These are combined and related to a Gramscian logic of hegemony by, for example, Laclau and Mouffe, into a theory where discourse and the discursive is interpreted as encompassing all objects and being constitutive of their identities, using Derridean thinking to move towards poststructuralism. Hegemony and related concepts are, of course, important in analysing a social movement like the Zapatistas, where the struggle exhibits the obvious asymmetry of a rebel movement localised to one state of a federal republic against whose entire institutional apparatus it is fighting. To get a clearer look into these concepts, a mention of the work of Donoghue (2017) is of great use, as he describes the fit of these concepts into critical discourse analysis with much greater emphasis than many

others. Donoghue considers Gramsci's interpretation of the relationship between the ideational and material a great fit for critical discourse analysis, a method developed on discourse theory that I will elaborate on further below. In the Zapatista case, this can be seen as the relationship between the texts and other forms of discourse that they have created and the real impact of their actions. Another important Gramscian concept that Donoghue mentions is common sense, which he defines as the internalisation and normalisation of a particular worldview. In this way, ideological representations are stripped of their visibility as ideologies, they are considered natural and cease to be questioned (Donoghue, 2017). This can be related to the Zapatista case as the process that ingrains the features of the ideational aspect of their movement in its members and supporters, thus enabling the realisation of the material aspects. The transformation of identities mentioned by Romero (2010) can be seen as one part of such a process. As Donoghue (2017) says, social identities give strength to forms of meaning. By transforming them, then, one also transforms the meanings that they fortify. Finally, there is the concept of the war of position, which is defined by Donoghue (2017) as a stage of struggle for control of civil society, ideological apparatuses and common sense. It is said to be the precursor to the stage of war of manoeuvre, which represents an open assault on the ruling class. Donoghue also states that the inclusion of the Gramscian concepts he mentions strengthens the ability of discourse analysis to investigate the challenging of dominant discourse by what he calls non-elites (Donoghue, 2017) which is exactly what this thesis intends to do.

Rear and Jones (2013) also provide a definition of hegemony in their paper, stating that it is "the expansion of a discourse or set of discourses into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements [...]" (Torfing, 1999 in Rear and Jones, 2013). They mention the Gramscian distinction between regressive hegemony, which involves a state apparatus, and progressive hegemony which comes from the popular collective spirit (Rear and Jones, 2013).

A useful perspective of concepts related to hegemony can also be found in Alan Hunt's 1990 paper titled *Rights and Social Movements - Counter-Hegemonic Strategies*. Hunt, like Donoghue, relies on Gramscian concepts in his work and points out that in much other work on related topics, their implications are overlooked. He differentiates between discourses of interests and discourses of rights, where the difference is that a discourse of interests concerns itself solely with matters of immediate importance whereas rights-discourses have goals beyond these. He considers this difference a key strategic element of subaltern-hegemonic political struggle. It can be said that the Zapatista movement focuses on making

long-term impacts in their political efforts, thereby incorporating this key element into their hegemonic project. Hegemony is defined by Hunt as an “active process involving production, reproduction and mobilization of popular consent” (Hunt, 1990). The concept of dominant hegemony is mentioned in the work of Hunt, meaning an actor who has successfully imposed their views on subordinate groups, creating a hegemonic environment where said actor dominates. In relation to dominant hegemony, the concept of counter-hegemony is defined as “the process by which subordinate classes challenge the dominant hegemony and seek to supplant it by articulating an alternative hegemony” (Hunt, 1999). It is stated that dominant hegemony is not achievable by only furthering the interests of the dominant group. The interests of other, subaltern groups must be included in the hegemonic project, creating what Hunt termed incorporative hegemony. Hegemonic consciousness is another Gramscian concept that Hunt refers to, positioning it as a stage in the hegemonic process. It is said to be the stage at which projects in the political and ideological spheres first appear. There is another concept that Hunt introduces in his work, one of local hegemony, which entails the “construction of some hegemonic project within some particular area or region of social life” (Hunt, 1999).

These concepts and definitions will help define the scope and character of the hegemonic project of the Zapatista social movement. The hegemonic project of the Zapatista social movement as seen over the timespan addressed in this paper was largely limited to the state of Chiapas or even further, to their autonomously governed territories. Therefore, it can be said that the movement was undertaking a local counter-hegemonic project. The author of this paper posits that relatively shortly before the start of the timespan considered in this thesis, the movement entered the stage of hegemonic consciousness. The project is constructed based on elements of the dominant discourse, and it unites diverse subaltern groups such as youth, indigenous peoples, women, agricultural workers and others. Concepts such as campaigning, governance, ownership and use of land, autonomy and self-determination are commonly used by the dominant hegemony in the area that the Zapatistas operate in. The Zapatistas’ own creations, such as their system of Zapatista territories, called *caracoles*, autonomously governed by councils and overseen by what they term Boards of Good Government or indeed the Other Campaign itself are based on these same concepts. However, in Zapatista hands, they are used as tools in the creation of a discourse that challenges the one that the dominant hegemony produces to propagate itself. The author of this paper also argues that the Zapatista movement was at the stage of a war of position – preceding a war of manoeuvre - during the Other Campaign. While it can also

be argued that the Zapatista movement has already taken the fight to the ruling class once, in 1994, one can refer to Hunt (1999) where it is stated clearly that the process of a hegemonic struggle is not linear.

Further discourse theory concepts to be used in the analytical section are sign, signified and signifier. These concepts stem from the work of Saussure, who defines them as follows: A signifier is the form of a sign. A signified is the concept the sign represents. In Chandler (2019), the former is exemplified as the word “open” on a shopfront, and the latter as the fact that a shop is open for business. A sign, then, is the result of the relation between a signifier and a signified, i.e. that “open” means the shop is open for business. For Saussure, however, the sign was the basic unit of a structure, a closed system. Derrida’s thinking moves these concepts into a space where signs become open to reinterpretation, denying thus the finality of meaning (Ortiz, 2019). Meanings are attached to signifiers through discursive processes. Signifiers of particular importance, around which a certain discourse or position of an object in the discursive space is shaped, are called nodal points. Nodal points are “an empty signifier, a pure signifier without the signified” (Žižek, 1989, in Rear and Jones, 2013). Nodal points are also described as “points of crystallisation” (Ortiz, 2019, p.71).

Rear and Jones (2013) draw on the work of discourse theory scholars such as Foucault, Fairclough, Fouliraki, Žižek, Laclau and Mouffe to analyse discursive struggle. They state that a discourse contributes to the transformation of a social reality. In their paper, articulation, a concept that is crucial to the creation of discourse, is mentioned. Articulation is said to be a process whereby a nodal point “acquires meaning through its positioning relative to other signs” (Rear and Jones, 2013, p.379). Laclau and Mouffe reject the deterministic nature and over-reliance on economic concepts of the work of Gramsci, arguing that in hegemonic processes, religious, nationalistic, ethnic or other references can also be articulated. (Ortiz, 2019). The concept of articulation is also defined as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985 in Montesano Montessori, 2011, p.172). If the nodal point is located in a fundamentally contested discursive space – as in fact tends to be the case – it is considered a floating signifier, a signifier that has meaning assigned to it by a certain discourse with the caveat that there is “an ongoing struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of signs” – an articulatory process. (Rear and Jones, 2013, p. 7)

There are articulatory moments, defined as a location, time and event by Laclau and Mouffe, where articulation is carried out, by attempts at modifying or renegotiation of structured totality by agents of discourse, to change meanings of floating signifiers used by agents of other discourses (Rear and Jones, 2013) It can then be said that articulation is used in discursive struggle to assign meanings to floating signifiers. In this research, an attempt will be made to locate nodal points of Zapatista discourse and study the articulatory processes through which their meanings are assigned in order to look for an evolution in the hegemonic project of the movement.

3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Authors like N. Montessori (2011), and Rear and Jones (2013) have used a combination of concepts from Discourse Theory, relying mostly upon Laclau and Mouffe, Foucault, and Derrida, and analytical methods from Critical Discourse Analysis, relying upon the work of Fairclough and Chouliaraki. The justification for the use of CDA is the fact that Discourse Theory carries a major drawback to the analytical process in that by itself, it lacks a methodological framework. CDA introduces some quantitative elements into the research, using content analysis as its first step.

I intend to apply this methodology to the selected photographic material. The content analysis part of my CDA methodology will be done according to Chapter 3 of Rose (2006). Within this part of the analysis, individual elements of the photographs will be identified and categorized in order to facilitate further examination.

The first category will be the presence of people in the photographs. There will be a subcategory to denote whether the faces of the people are revealed or not. This subcategory will be used to determine whether the people present in the photographs are members of the EZLN or not. If they appear with their face revealed, it will be taken to mean they are not members of the EZLN as these are widely known to never reveal their faces to the public.

The second category will be the presence of text in the images. The text will be analysed as part of the image. The presence of text and its contents will be analysed as separate factors for their significance to the hegemonic project of the Zapatista movement.

The third category will be the location. This is to be understood as the location the photograph depicts. Elements such as landmarks or captions will be used to determine the location of photographs where appropriate.

The gender of the people in the images will constitute a fourth category. It will be noted whether the gender of the people in the images is discernible, whether it holds any relevance

to the context of the image and whether it can signify anything in relation to the hegemonic strategy of the Zapatistas.

The fifth category will look at the presence of Zapatista symbols such as the *paliacate* scarf, symbolic colours, traditional indigenous or rural clothing or tools and any logos or other symbols of the EZLN or associated organisations.

Rose (2006) describes two types of discourse analysis in her book on the analysis of visual materials. Both are said to be based on Foucault's concepts. Rose states that the purpose of discourse is to be persuasive. Therefore, the focus of discourse analysis is on looking at the strategies a discourse uses to achieve this, as it is concerned with the social production of human subjects as an effect of discourse. There is an important mention in this work of not only focusing on what one sees in an image, but also on what is not seen. Intertextuality, the interdependence of meanings carried by discursive images or text, is mentioned as well. A process similar to what Rear and Jones dubbed articulation is described by Rose as discursive formation, defined as the way meanings are connected in a particular discourse. With all these things that both types have in common, their more detailed focus is what differentiates them. The first type of discourse analysis Rose mentions is called Discourse Analysis I, which focuses on "discourse as articulated through various kinds of images or verbal texts" (Rose, 2006). It analyses how images construct specific views of the social world. It focuses on the social modality of an image, which is defined by Rose as "the range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used". (Rose, 2006). The second type is called Discourse Analysis II, which focuses on the practices and apparatuses of institutions and issues of power, using the production of an image and the audience that it was intended for in their social modality as the main point of view. (Rose, 2006).

Rose states that sometimes, these two types of discourse analysis are not easy to distinguish, and that they are not mutually exclusive in any one work. In the analytical section of this paper, the first type of discourse analysis will be used, as the images themselves are the source, and the compositional and social modalities of these images will be the main focus. All three sites where meaning-making occurs in images as per Rose (2006) will be important to the analysis, that is the site of production, the site of the image itself and the audiencing site. The Zapatista social movement as the author of the images will be regarded as a part of the site of their production. According to Rose (2006), it is a part of said site that is often overlooked. The remaining aspects, namely the production and

image sites are regarded by the author as closely related and providing context, making it indispensable to consider them alongside the main aspects.

3.4 Photographs, appropriation, and the analysis of visual data

The data I will be using to investigate my research question consists of photographic material. The photographs that have been selected are taken from material published by the Zapatistas on their official web site, from two events that took place in 2007, and two events that took place in 2020 and 2022. The events were selected based on the availability of sufficient photographic material for further selection as well as the type of event. The guideline for the selection process was to look at two events from each time period that would have something in common, and such a parallel was found in the foci of the events at hand, where one event with a domestic and one with an international focus was selected. Subsequently, ten pictures were selected from among the available material from each event using convenience sampling, that is, the author picked them out of the ample range of available material using the analytical categories of this paper – which are described in detail in the section on CDA above – as a guideline. The photographs from each event will be used to reach a conclusion as to the research question of this paper, on which more is written below

The character of the material brings some drawbacks that should be addressed. The fact that the photograph is a representation of a single infinitesimally short moment in time, is no doubt a limiting factor in what kind and amount of data it contains. The resolution of the images, especially the ones taken and uploaded in 2007, is sometimes rather poor and this may cause many details to escape the eye of the researcher. For example, there is a risk of text being rendered illegible. Aside from that, it could be said that the provenance of the images, produced by the Zapatistas and taken directly from their web site, may introduce biases. After all, who would not be trying to put forward their best angle when taking a picture? The nature of the research question, which is mentioned at the end of the theoretical section, however, attenuates this bias by making it a feature of the research. The imagery produced and published by the Zapatistas was also more readily available for viewing and appropriation as per Möller et al. (2021) than material from scientific or trusted journalistic sources. Moving away from the nature of the material, other sources of potential bias can be found. The positionality of the researcher relative to the data used in this work makes it impossible to eliminate observer bias, neither in the selection nor analytical process.

Although the researcher has lived in Mexico over two separate years, in the period 2014-2015 and 2018-2019, as well as made their best efforts to familiarise themselves with the background of the Zapatista movement and the contexts that are necessary to perform this kind of analysis, potential gaps in this knowledge are a risk that augments the severity of observer bias as well.

Möller et al. (2021) and the use of his concept of appropriation in this paper addresses the positionality concern, as well as the way the visual material is to be used for the purposes of this study. While different from the examples in the article that is referred to, it is nevertheless believed that the juxtaposition of images produced in different time periods to create a data set and use of this data set for analytical purposes constitutes an appropriation of the material to be used. It is also in agreement with the definition of appropriation as stated in the work in question, as “reuse of existing visual material – either in its entirety or in part – without substantially altering the immanent characteristics of the appropriated visual material.” (Möller et al., 2021, p. 6). The rules on adding and removing elements from the image and engaging with neither authorship nor originality (Möller et al., 2021) are also seen as being in accordance with the way this study will use the visual material at hand. There will also be some discussion of this concept within the analytical section of this work, since some of the photographs to be used contain material previously produced by others and appropriated by the producer of the photograph for publication.

Photography, the material it produces and the relation of this material to reality is understood by this work as complex, approximate and elusive. In the work of Möller and Bellmer (2023), complexity as a property of visibility is understood as the possibility of as many different interpretations as there are viewers to an image. In their work, this concept goes as far as casting doubt upon the notion of sameness itself, that is, that the image the individual viewers contemplated was the same image at all. Approximation, for Möller and Bellmer (2023), is a property of photographs “recognising that we never exactly know what a picture ‘really’ shows” (Möller and Bellmer, 2023, p.148), the counterpoint to which would be fixing the meaning of an image. The example they provide speaks of fixing the meaning of an image using language. Finally, elusiveness is a property said to describe the plurality of possible verbalisable interpretations, therefore of meaning, in an image. The article goes on to say that that all of that plurality is equally valuable. (Möller and Bellmer, 2023).

Each of the photographs used will be included in the analysis section, above the text that describes the findings of the analytical process. The presence of the photographs is meant

to encourage the reader toward an “active three-way interaction (looking-changing-sharing)” (Möller et al., 2021, p. 14). That is to say, this work is not only for the reader to view and accept the conclusions it draws from the visual material it utilizes. The role of “image-actor” defined by Möller (2021) as “...we locate images in an overall visual framework conditioned by active interaction...” is therefore not confined in this work to the researcher, although the researcher most positively does assume it. The sharing of this role with the reader is considered a key aspect of this work, as the kind of analysis being undertaken is not to be taken as producing what Möller and Bellmer (2023) term “accuracy-as-facts” as its results. This is perceived to alleviate concerns of observer bias.

The reader, seen as sharing the role of “image-actor” with the researcher, is therefore encouraged to think about, question, interpret and otherwise interact with the analytical text produced in this work and the images used in its production as they wish, and share the results of this interpretation with others. This is thought to help foster a “self-reflective knowledge production” (Möller et al., 2021, p. 3)

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 Mexico City 3 May 2007 - Day for the Freedom of Political Prisoners.

This event was held on the anniversary of the police repression against Zapatista people in San Salvador Atenco. On May 4, 2006, during a Federal Police intervention against Zapatista demonstrators blocking a highway, more than 200 people were arrested, two killed and thirty women violated (Vergara-Camus, 2014). The demonstrators were protesting construction and development projects as well as earlier governmental action against Zapatista flower vendors in the locality of Texcoco. Apart from being detained without cause, the people were subjected to cruel treatment including physical violence and sexual harassment by the police forces. At the time of the event pictured below, many of those arrested had not yet been released. Within the Other Campaign, this event is situated in its

second period, a route across regions that started in Northern Mexico from March 2007 onwards. The Other Campaign travelled this route with the goal of distributing Sixth Commission delegates to work alongside people and organisations associated with the goals of the 6th Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle.

Image 1



Image 1, as far as the first analytical category – the presence of people – goes, shows a row of people holding rolled-up banners. The faces of the men are revealed. The third category, the location of the photograph, is important here, since the Angel of Independence, an emblematic statue in Mexico City, is depicted in the background.

The fourth category, gender, comes into play here as the people are all men. They are depicted standing, in a defiant pose, looking out to some point behind the camera. The fifth category, the presence of symbols, is represented here by the men wearing and carrying red scarves, called *paliacates*, a garment and colour symbolic of the Zapatista movement. The scarves have some inscriptions, but they are illegible. They stand at the front of a crowd on a tree-lined street.

The depiction of men with revealed faces suggests these men are not EZLN members, given that EZLN members have a reputation of never showing their faces to the public, for fear of prosecution. It can therefore safely be assumed that the men in this image are supporters,

but not members. (Network for Police Monitoring, 2015) The publication of an image depicting men standing in a defiant pose, but otherwise peaceful manner while wearing and/or holding items symbolic to the Zapatista movement is a representation of resistance against hegemony. Created as it is by a state apparatus, this hegemony would be described in Gramscian terms as regressive. (Rear and Jones, 2013) Resistance against the dominant hegemony is a nodal point of Zapatista discourse, following the definition used in Rear and Jones (2013) as it is a signifier without a clear signified and a large part of Zapatista discourse is organised around it. By publishing an image of men standing, defiantly though peacefully, wearing and/or carrying Zapatista symbols, the Zapatista movement attempts to articulate this nodal point. In Saussurean terms, there is an attempt to fix its meaning temporarily by providing it with a signified, creating a sign (Chandler, 2019). The men and their poses are, however, not the only thing in the image that provides meaning to the signifier of resistance against regressive hegemony. The sizeable crowd at the front of which they stand and the location, signified by the presence of an easily identifiable Mexico City landmark in the photograph – the Angel of Independence – are also of clear importance. The notion of the presence of Zapatista supporters *en masse* in the centre of the capital of the country, i.e. right in the heartland of the dominant hegemony which they resist is a key part of the meaning ascribed to resistance against regressive hegemony by this image. It can then be said that the articulatory process shown here attempts to create a sign that states that the presence of Zapatista supporters in Mexico City means that the Mexican public supports the Zapatista cause of resistance against regressive hegemony. Taken from the viewpoint of Rose (2006) on the inherently persuasive nature of discourse, the point can be made that this articulatory attempt by the Zapatista movement was intended to persuade the audience of its *comunicados* that the movement has supporters in important places and that the supporters represent a significant presence, in line with the goals of the Other Campaign.

The audience of the *comunicados* is taken by the author of this paper to be the Mexican public. Due to their universal availability, it can be stated that their intended scale of distribution is indeed global. The primary language of publication, as well as to whom they are specifically addressed, however, supports the point of view of the author.

Image 2



Image 2 shows a few people around a large banner in the foreground, and a crowd visible in the background. The faces of the people around the banner are revealed. Two of the people are facing backwards from the camera, as they appear to be interacting with the people holding the banner. The second category, the presence of text, is represented here by the banner, which calls for the freedom of unjustly imprisoned indigenous people. The banner accuses the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) of protecting murderers, rapists, and torturers. It also contains a slogan related to the Other Campaign, which says “Zapata lives, the Other Campaign continues!” The banner is attributed to the Zapatista collective of telephone operators. The word in brackets, “(tlacuilo)” is the word for scribe or painter in the Náhuatl indigenous language (Karttunen, 1992). The Náhua tribe is the largest indigenous group in Mexico and a precursor of the Aztecs. As to the location, in the background, the Angel of Independence is shown. The banner also contains the logo of (presumably) that organisation, and a red star, belonging to the fifth category used here for content analysis – the presence of Zapatista symbols. One of the people is wearing a T-shirt with a red star on the back, a known Zapatista symbol, also representing here the fifth category

Like Image 1, Image 2 also depicts people with revealed faces. Although they are not EZLN members, the banner they hold up contains Zapatista slogans and symbols. The text of the banner accuses the authorities of abusing their power and demanding the freedom of those

they imprisoned. Their imprisonment is regarded as unjust, and the people involved as innocent. The inclusion of a banner with a slogan about political prisoners is in line with the main theme of the event itself. The publishing on the website of this banner, where the motto of the event appears together with slogans related to the Other Campaign is an attempt to discursively link the event to the initiative it is part of, given that the people whose freedom it demands were imprisoned while working on the Other Campaign. The notion of resistance against regressive hegemony (Rear and Jones, 2013) as a nodal point of Zapatista discourse is also present in this picture. The depiction of the same landmark as in Image 1, representing the location of the event – the Angel of Independence – signifies that the banner is flying less than 10 minutes’ drive away from the seat of the SCJ. This is a representation of the Zapatistas’ courage and their will to resist and defy the authorities. However, beside resistance to regressive hegemony, there is another nodal point of Zapatista discourse present in this image, one that extends beyond the Other Campaign context. The content of the image targets a specific organisation (the SCJ) and the articulatory process at play attempts to use the signifiers “assassins”, “rapists” and “torturers” to signify the operatives of the State Police that arrested and violently repressed Zapatistas who came to the aid of flower vendors while they were being harassed by the same operatives. This is consistent with the disdain and contempt for state authorities that also shapes much of the Zapatistas’ overarching discourse, just like resistance against regressive hegemony. Therefore, it can be said that disdain and contempt for authority is another nodal point in their discourse.

Image 3



The next image depicts a substantial number of people around a cardboard mock-up of a tank or similar vehicle. Around the vehicle, people walk on stilts, dressed in camouflage and mock police uniforms. The faces of all the people in mock uniforms are revealed, although one of them is wearing a helmet. The faces of most of the people around the stilt walkers in mock uniforms are also revealed, though there is one man at the front of the picture and one woman in front of the vehicle mock-up whose faces are masked. The face of one man is covered by a *paliacate* scarf. On the vehicle are puppets, one in uniform and one in a suit. The vehicle also features a flag of the USA hanging off the right-hand side from the perspective of the camera. As for text, the second category, some of the people in mock uniforms wear banners around their necks with disparaging and vulgar slogans discouraging people from looking at them as contents. He is carrying a banner calling for the freedom of political prisoners. As for gender, both men and women are visible in this photograph. Zapatista symbols are also depicted. One of the men at the front is wearing a t-shirt with an inscription that reads EZLN, and two women are wearing clothes that are reminiscent of the traditional wear of indigenous people of Mexico.

The depiction of the mock-up of a vehicle and the people in uniforms with disparaging and vulgar messages represents the nodal point of Zapatista discourse that was identified in Image 2, a disdain and contempt for authority. Authority can be defined here as the Mexican state and the institutions that uphold it. The US flag hanging off the vehicle communicates

an association of these authorities with the USA and therefore the neoliberal regime the EZLN so fervently opposes. The uniformed people walking on stilts represent the perception of the state authorities as looking down on everyone from a position of power.

Just as in the previous images, here too the intention is to articulate a nodal point. The crudeness of the vehicle mock-up alongside the authority figure statuettes-caricatures riding on top of it is to signify disdain and contempt for authority. Depicting the mock-up together with the stilt walkers in the middle of a large crowd signifies popular support. In the image, there are mostly people with revealed faces, again indicating they are not EZLN members but supporters. By publishing this picture, the Zapatistas seek to persuade the viewer of the post that they have a deep disdain and disrespect for authority, and that the people of Mexico, at least those who support them, share this disdain and disrespect.

Image 4



This image is a detail from Image 3. It depicts one person, and her face is revealed. It also shows a banner that is also visible in the above image, off in the background. The banner depicts police in riot gear and people with their hands bound on the ground. One of the police officers is depicted groping a woman while another removes her clothes. The other police officers are holding and using batons on the arrestees. There is text on the banner, on top is a question that states “Is this the rule of law?” and at the bottom is “The violation against women in Atenco must be punished” As for gender, the person depicted here is a woman.

There is another nodal point of Zapatista discourse present in the depiction of this woman. The movement has a great interest in defending indigenous women and their rights and express themselves to this end regularly. Of the 34 demands they formulated in 1994, many concern

exclusively women’s rights (EZLN Demands at the Dialogue Table, March 1994). The depiction of a single woman as a detail image articulates the nodal point of concern for

women's rights alongside the contents of the poster itself. The contents of the banner the woman holds do not address women exclusively, but they do so quite poignantly through the depiction of the physical violation of a woman and the slogan at the bottom. As part of the Zapatista discourse at the time this image was published, it is best seen in context of the prolonged struggle of the movement for the rights of indigenous women as well as in light of the particular incident the banner, and indeed the entire event it was a part of, addresses. The publication of this photograph on the Zapatista website is intended to persuade the audience of their concern with women and their rights, by use of the banner, as well as the depiction of a woman.

Image 5



In this image, a large crowd is depicted. In the crowd, the majority of faces are uncovered, though in the foreground there is one woman wearing a scarf covering hers. In front of the vehicle mock-up a banner is being carried, though its inscription is illegible in the image. There is also the top part of two other banners visible, one in the foreground, smaller and bright orange coloured, and the other in the background, larger, white with red lettering. The only text that is (partially) visible on both of them reads "freedom". The location can be inferred from some elements of earlier photographs, like the vehicle mock-up with the caricatures-statuettes, as well as the statues that line Paseo de la Reforma, the street on which the event is taking place. We see three of the statues. The Angel of Independence,

seen in Images 1 and 2, is at the very back. In front of it, though still far in the back, is the Monument to Cuauhtémoc - the last *tlatoni* (governor) of the Mexica tribe – and the monument to Christopher Columbus is in the immediate background. Both men and women are visible in the photograph. As for symbols, several people in the crowd are wearing straw hats reminiscent of the headwear worn by agricultural workers in rural areas. Some of the people are also wearing red *paliacate* scarves and shirts or T-shirts and carrying red flags. Two of the people in the crowd are carrying machetes with some illegible inscriptions. Similarly to Image 1, the depiction of a crowd of people, wearing red and carrying red flags, with most of their faces revealed, alongside recognizable CDMX landmarks in this image signifies popular support for resistance against hegemony in the Mexican capital. The image appears to have been captured from an elevated vantage point in order to showcase the multitude of supporters. The people depicted chanting and shouting, waving flags, and carrying banners are to symbolise the fervency of the support. The surprising element of this image, given the Zapatistas' discourse on peaceful resistance against the regressive hegemony, is the depiction of people carrying machetes. The visualization of these weapons may be an allusion to the association of the movement to rural and agricultural workers, as the machete is a tool that they would use in their work. It can also be interpreted as a discursive effort at the articulation of another nodal point of Zapatista discourse, the commitment and dedication to their cause. In the latter case, it would constitute an attempt to persuade the audience of the post that the supporters of the movement are serious about their support and are ready to participate in its activities.

Image 6



In Image 6, a few people are depicted. Most of their faces are revealed, only one can be seen with a covered face. As for text, one of them is holding a machete inscribed with the misspelled word “freedom!” The people with the machetes are all men. As Zapatista symbols go, the man in the foreground is wearing a red shirt and a straw hat. Five of the men in the background are also carrying machetes with inscriptions, and one is carrying a red flag with a partially visible symbol. One of the people in the background is wearing a straw hat. The unusual aspect of depicting weapons, while at the same time expressing a desire for peaceful and political action has been addressed in the analysis of the previous image. However, it warrants another mention here, given that the publishers of this image on the Zapatista website chose to not only depict machetes in the photograph of a crowd listed here as Image 5 but included a detail where 6 of them are present in the same image. This means that the machete as a symbol carries a significant amount of importance. In the analysis of Image 5, the purpose of the depiction was also speculated on. With this image, however, there is another aspect of the depiction, and indeed of the weapon itself, that the previous one was unable to address. Namely, the inscription on the machete held by the man in the foreground is legible. The word “freedom!” painted on a machete surrounded by the colours of the Mexican flag, carried by a Mexican man, is a signifier in Saussurean terms (Chandler, 2019). By publishing it on their website, the Zapatistas seek once again to signify

the commitment and dedication to their cause, articulating the nodal point of commitment and dedication to their cause.

Image 7



In this image, a large crowd is depicted. The faces of the people in the crowd are revealed. Most of them are looking in the direction of the camera or at a point behind it. In the back of the crowd, many banners are being carried above the heads of the crowd. At the distance at which they are depicted, they are however not legible. The statue visible in the background is an indicator of the location. It is the so-called *caballito de Reforma*. It is a functional statue of a horse head (doubling as a drain vent) that replaced the statue previously situated here, one of king Charles IV of Spain on a horse. It is situated near the Zócalo, the main square of the centre of CDMX. There are both men and women present in the photograph. As for symbols, red flags are seen carried by some people in the crowd. In analysing previous pictures included in this paper, the argument has been made that the Zapatistas' depictions of crowds of their supporters were to signify popular support for the movement. In no other image, however, has that been as prevalent as in Image 7. The composition of the picture, where the crowd takes up more than half of the picture size and the immediate foreground is out of focus, the focus of the image being far in the background, suggests that the singular intent of the image is to showcase the size of the crowd, to clearly

depict as much of it as possible in a single image. The presence of the landmark in the picture is to communicate where the crowd is located, the nearby Zócalo – officially called Constitution Square – being a place for many events and gatherings, political and not, located in the heart of the city. The publishing of this picture on the Zapatista website, then, is another signifier forming part of the articulatory effort of ascribing meaning to resistance against regressive hegemony (Rear and Jones, 2013), as well as being aimed specifically at communicating the extent of this support by depicting the size of the crowd, as is evident from the production site of the image (Rose, 2006).

Image 8



In Image 8, there is a person in the immediate foreground speaking into a microphone. Her face is revealed. Behind her there are two people with covered faces, identifiable by their style of dress as a man and a woman. On the left, with his signature pipe in his mouth and hat on his head, stands *Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos*, leader of the EZLN and literary author. The identity of *SCI Marcos* is an exception to the Zapatista rule when treating their identities and public appearances, in that it is known, or at least thought to be known. At the time this picture was taken, the Mexican authorities had in fact already been claiming to know it for around 11 years. In 1995, E. Zedillo's administration identified *Marcos* as Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente. Despite that – and having been proclaimed a terrorist by the same administration - he continued to make public appearances such as this one and continued to cover his face during them. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024).

On the right, in clothes featuring the indigenous *bordado* (embroidery) art style, is *Comandanta Hortensia*, another leader of the EZLN who had, at the point this picture was posted, already made several appearances at events associated to the Other Campaign and spoke at the one where she is depicted, demanding justice and liberty for the Zapatistas and supporters attacked and imprisoned at Atenco, with a specific mention condemning the violence towards women (3 de Mayo en el DF, Enlace Zapatista). Her identity is, to the author's knowledge, not publicly known. Based on the text in the post about the event and their style of dress, they can be identified as two of the EZLN members that participated in the event. The person with the microphone is a woman, and she is holding a machete with inscriptions. Some of them are only partially legible, the only one completely legible says *ATENCO*, the name of the place in Oaxaca where many Zapatistas and supporters were taken prisoner working on the Other Campaign. Zapatista symbols are represented here by the machete the woman is holding.

Behind the three people in the picture, there is a banner. The inscriptions on it are illegible since the banner is too large to be captured in the photograph.

The author makes the same argument here as in the previous images to the purpose of the depiction of the inscribed machete, that its depiction is an attempt by the Zapatistas to articulate the nodal point of their commitment and dedication to their cause. The choice of publishing an image where a woman is depicted holding the weapon is considered here to be somewhat of a counterpoint to the woman depicted in Image 4. In that image, the woman stands idle and silent, holding a banner. She is also depicted as supporting the Zapatista cause, but the purpose of her depiction in the published images is to stand as a signifier for the Zapatista movement's concern with the rights of women, to say they care. Here, the author makes the argument that in Image 8, the purpose of the depiction of the woman is different. She is depicted in a role of active struggle, fight and resistance, speaking to a crowd and holding an inscribed machete to symbolise her dedication. Her depiction is to signify the active participation and role of women in the struggle for the rights of subaltern groups, which represents an articulatory effort towards the nodal point of equality. The same nodal point is arguably articulated by the depiction of *Cdta. Hortensia*, a woman who is in a leading role in the EZLN.

The depiction of the EZLN leaders behind the speaking woman with the machete is intended to signify the presence of members of the movement at an event largely composed of its supporters. By showing the audience of the post that members of the EZLN were also

present at the event, the Zapatistas reinforce the discursive link between the movement and the Other Campaign as well as the event in question. The way it is shown, having them stand behind a supporter while she speaks, is to signify the support of the EZLN leadership for the movement and for its supporters as well as to say that when their supporters speak, they listen. The Zapatistas are acutely aware that they do not exist in a vacuum, and they have always made effective attempts at communicating with their surroundings, be it the civil society or the Mexican population in general. By publishing this picture, arguably, they attempt to articulate three nodal points at one time. The nodal point of popular support for the Zapatista cause, that has been shown across several pictures in this analysis. One that has not been seen yet, the nodal point of active role of women in the Zapatista struggle, and the third one, also appearing for the first time here, the presence and support of the EZLN leaders in the everyday activities of the movement.

Image 9



In Image 9, as regards the first analytical category, the backs of a few people's heads are visible. In the background of the image, the Zapatista leader from Image 8 is visible. As for text, one of the people is holding up a bright green banner that says "*Tepito* youth present

for the freedom of the political prisoners”. *Tepito* is a part of Mexico City reputed for its “roughness”, though despite its reputation, or maybe due to it, it is known as a site of commercial activity among locals. It is inhabited by about 50 thousand people, many of whom come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. A bigger portion of the banner behind the Zapatista leader is visible, on which it is now possible to distinguish the bottom half of the word “freedom” and the word “Atenco”.

The depiction of a banner mentioning the youth from *Tepito* is a signifier meant to articulate yet another nodal point in Zapatista discourse. The focus of the movement on subaltern groups, represented by the mention a *barrio bravo* (rough neighbourhood) is a central part of the discourse of the movement going all the way back to the creation of the EZLN in 1983, and arguably before that. The depiction of the Zapatista leader, *Cdta. Hortensia*, in the background of the picture is to reinforce the discursive ties of the EZLN to subaltern groups by communicating the leaders’ presence at and support of events those groups participate in.

Image 10



Image 10 shows two people. *SCI Marcos* speaking in front of the banner that was also present in the last two images is the first one. Behind him is another person. They both appear with covered faces. Based on the text in the post on the event, it can be assumed that the person in the back is the third EZLN member who spoke at the event, Amos. Amos

is designated in the text as *Compañero* Amos, which can be understood as companion or colleague in English. He is signed off in the text of the post as a “help base of the Zapatista educational system”. An external source found by the author – a blog posting Zapatista content, but not part of any official EZLN media³³ – also speaks of an interview with a figure identifying himself as *Compañero* Amos, stating that he is in charge of an educational system within the Zapatista framework. The text on the banner behind the two EZLN members is partially readable, it can be made out that the top text is the name of the event. The people are both men. As for symbology, one can see the straw hat and *paliacate* scarf Amos is wearing.

Displaying the leader of the Zapatista movement at the time as he speaks articulates the nodal point that is also present in Image 8, that is, the presence and support of the EZLN leaders in the everyday activities of the movement. This is emphasised by also including an audio recording from his speech in the post. Such a depiction is intended to reinforce the Zapatistas’ focus on understanding of and communication with their surroundings, in this case, mainly their supporters. Displaying a leader alongside another EZLN member – and including his speech in both audio and text form – states that the presence is not limited to leaders, and that everyone gets a say. It is also worth mentioning that the included speech of Amos is much longer than the one made by *SCI Marcos*, which served more of an introductory role.

Another interesting point to be made here, on Zapatista discourse in general and the nodal point of inclusivity in particular, is the attempt at introducing inclusivity into the inherently gendered Spanish language - which follows the grammar rule of the generic masculine, meaning that mixed groups are addressed in the masculine – by using @ signs in place of the letter Os that would indicate the masculine in the words *presos* – prisoners and *políticos* – political. The use of @ signs for this purpose is fairly common in the lower, informal registers of the Spanish language in Latin America, and their use in this banner – and depiction in the related post – is another attempt at articulating the importance of inclusivity to the Zapatista movement.

In the photographs analysed in the above chapter, the first analytical category is represented very strongly. There are people in every photograph of the event, in some cases large crowds of people can be seen, in others the groups are less numerous – but no less meaningful. In two cases, an image highlighting a single person is seen, as if to put

³³³³ <http://factorculturasomosmas.blogspot.com/p/educacion-en-tierras-zapatistas.html>

emphasis on those depicted. Mostly, people with revealed faces are depicted, therefore taken to be supporters of the Zapatista social movement but not members of the EZLN. The presence of people signifies, here, resistance against regressive hegemony. The third analytical category, the location of the photograph, represents here an articulative effort in the same direction. Showing landmarks to display spatial proximity to the hegemonic authorities they resist is a key element in this articulative process. The second category is also represented in the photographs from this event. The text present in the images articulates disdain and contempt for the authority of the State and some of the elements representing the fifth category, symbols, do so as well. One aspect of note in the text is the @ symbol used in place of the O, articulating inclusivity. Further representations of the fifth category, symbols, such as the machetes, red flags, stars and scarves articulate commitment and dedication to the Zapatista cause. Supporters of a social movement self-professed to be peaceful and political, despite the violent actions of – at the time of this event – a not-too-distant past³⁴ carrying raised machetes in the centre of the capital of the country is a rather aggressive way to present the message of strong, dedicated popular support to the audience. It also brings the peaceful character of the movement into question, as a machete – even when painted and inscribed – is still a weapon capable of causing severe injuries. Commitment was also an important factor in the analysis of Vergara-Camus (2014). As far as the fourth category, there are both men and women depicted in the photographs showing crowds, though a large proportion of the crowds are men. In depictions of people speaking, the genders are equal, there is one image with a man (Marcos) and one image with a woman speaking. The machete, a symbol that much emphasis is placed on, is shown wielded in the hands of both men and women, though again the majority of those depicted wielding machetes are men. This would be in line with another observation Vergara-Camus (2014) made, namely that on the impact of traditional gender roles and behaviours on the participation of women. (Vergara-Camus, 2014).

4.2 The 2nd Meeting of the Zapatista peoples with the peoples of the world, July 20th -28th 2007.

The Meetings of the Zapatista peoples with the peoples of the world were events organised by the EZLN to discuss shared experiences of struggle and organisation on an international

³⁴ <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1994/01/01/primera-declaracion-de-la-selva-lacandona/>

scale. The individual issues were addressed at so-called *mesas de trabajo* (working groups), where discussions took place. At the first Meeting, organised in the winter of 2006-2007, 2000 people from 47 countries participated, as well as 3000 Zapatista help bases, members of all 5 JBGs active at the time, several members of the CCRI-CG, as well around 200 members of the 40 Autonomous Municipal Councils, a Zapatista administrative unit. (SIPAZ, 2007). At the second Meeting, images from which will be presented and analysed in this work, the turnout increased. According to the spokespeople from the CGT – the General Confederation of Work, or *Confederación General del Trabajo* – a Spanish organisation whose delegates participated in the event³⁵, around 3000 people from many countries were present. The dynamic of the working groups and the issues discussed were largely similar to the first Meeting. (CGT, 2007). The topics addressed at the second Meeting were health, education, community organisation, collective work, women’s struggle, autonomy, good government and balance in the autonomy construction process³⁶. The event was planned as a tour across five Zapatista territories (*caracoles*), but the weather created conditions that forced the organisers to limit it to three of them, Oventic, Morelia and La Realidad

³⁵ <https://rojoynegro.info/articulo/termino-el-ii-encuentro-entre-los-pueblos-zapatistas-y-los-pueblos-del-mundo/>

³⁶ 2nd Meeting of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, 2007

<https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2007/06/29/ii-encuentro-de-los-pueblos-zapatistas-con-los-pueblos-del-mundo/>.

Image 11



In Image 11, some people are standing in front of and sitting inside of a canteen. The faces of the people are revealed, suggesting they are attendees of the meeting and/or inhabitants of the *caracol* as opposed to being members of the EZLN. The background of the picture shows part of the inside of the canteen. Behind the canteen, a parked car and more people are visible on the right side of the picture. Though it is dark, it is visible that there are people sitting inside the canteen itself is marked as such with a banner. In black, on top, the banner says “Canteen” and includes pictures of a sandwich and a drink. Under the text identifying the purpose of the building, in alternating red, green, blue and black, there is the text “Eat and cooperate with the Secondary Technical School ‘Thought and Dream of the Maya People’”. The author has not been able to find information on the existence of such a school on Zapatista territory on any Zapatista source but has been able to do so on the archive of *Kaosenlared*, a Spanish blog describing itself as an ideological collective of anticapitalist movements. There are both men and women depicted in this photograph.

Though the event depicted in this image is not directly related to the Other Campaign initiative mentioned in the analysis of the previous event as well as the introduction to this paper, it takes place at a time where the Other Campaign was underway, in its second phase. As mentioned earlier in this paper, in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle

the Zapatistas speak of the standard of living in the autonomously governed areas they inhabit³⁷. They mention the improvements in the standard of living they have already achieved in one of the sections and promise to improve it further in another. The Meeting took place more than two years after the release of the Sixth Declaration. Therefore, referring again to Rose (2006) for her viewpoint on the persuasive nature of discourse, it can be argued that by depicting infrastructure in the autonomously governed areas, as well as depicting visitors using the infrastructure, the Zapatistas seek to persuade the viewer that the mentioned development in standard of living is real. In Saussurean terms, as per Chandler (2019) the depiction of the canteen is to signify the nodal point of development, and the depiction of the use of the canteen by visitors is a signifier for the sign of the canteen's quality.

Image 12



Image 12 displays a considerable number of people. Since the image was taken from behind the seating area, most of the people are depicted so that their faces are not visible. The people whose faces are visible do not have them covered. In the immediate foreground on

³⁷ 6th Declaration

the right, a banner affixed to the side of a building is visible, which reads “We require freedom for our companions, social fighters” and names of places are listed. Two place names are visible, Chiapas and Atenco. There are children as well as adults, men as well as women present. As for symbols, the banner contains red stars aside from the text, and under the roof of the stage, the flag of the EZLN hangs beside the Mexican flag.

Depicting people in attendance of the panel discussions, or as they call them, working groups, in the same image as people engaged in other activities of everyday life suggests that the Zapatistas intend to display that holding the event does not have a negative impact on the life of the inhabitants of the *caracol*, that their lives can go on as normal. The depiction of people attending the panel discussion in itself is to persuade the viewer that the discussions are interesting to the attendees, that the issues handled at the working groups are important to them. The banner in the photograph alludes to the events that sparked the public demonstration and march that was the subject of the first chapter of the analysis section of this paper. The presence of this banner in the photograph points to the Zapatistas having wanted to demonstrate that those events are not forgotten and to link the Meeting discursively to the movement’s other activities such as the Other Campaign. Just like in the banner in Image 10, the depiction of the use of the @ sign in place of the generic masculine O is to articulate the nodal point of inclusivity. Another interesting discursive link lies in the juxtaposition of the flags hanging under the roof of the stage. The EZLN flag depicted next to the Mexican flag signifies the nodal point of patriotism and points to how, despite their constant, scathing criticism of the Mexican authorities, the State and its apparatus, the Zapatistas are concerned with their homeland, have a connection to it and a desire to make it better through their plans and activities.

Image 13



Image 13 depicts some people, though they are all in the background and out of focus. Not all their faces are visible, but those that are, are not covered. There appear to be both men and women. In the foreground, Image 13 shows a green tent with a Brazilian flag draped over the top of it. There is no text visible. Next to the tent, a tree branch is used as a flagpole. There appears to be one large flag hanging from it, alongside smaller flags on the top. None of them are identifiable as flags of any country, movement or organisation known to the author. The long wooden building in the background does not have any markings that would identify its purpose, but it does have a mural of some kind painted on the side.

By depicting a tent with a Brazilian flag on it, the Zapatistas intend to emphasise the international character of the Meeting by displaying that there are international attendees staying at the *caracol*. Thereby, they attempt to articulate the nodal point of international cooperation. In other Zapatista production, notably in the texts of the Declarations of the Lacandon Jungle, there are mentions of international projects that have been carried out and ideas and intentions of more. From these mentions as well as from the fact itself that the Meetings were organised, it can be derived that international cooperation is indeed an important aspect of the functioning of the Zapatista movement, and publishing images

related to international attendees of the Meeting is their way of communicating that they are succeeding at it.

Image 14



Image 14 shows a group of people with masked faces on a stage. Most of them are standing behind a set of tables, while some of them are in the immediate foreground, in front of the tables. There is no text visible. Their styles of dress suggest that all but one are men. The person speaking is identifiable by his clothes and accessories as *SCI Marcos*. He is reading a speech from some papers. Behind the people, there are flags hanging from the roof of the stage. Just as in the background of the previous picture, here too it is a Mexican flag next to an EZLN flag. Most of the people are wearing *paliacate* scarves.

The depiction of *SCI Marcos* speaking at the event is to articulate a nodal point that has been mentioned in the first chapter of the analytical section in this paper. Specifically, in Images 8, 9 and 10, where Zapatista leaders are also depicted, it was argued that the nodal point being articulated is the presence and support of the EZLN leaders in the everyday activities of the movement. In this image, the case is the same. It can, however, be said that the other side of that coin, so to say, is also on display here. The group of EZLN members that is depicted around *SCI Marcos* as he speaks is a strong statement. Standing, silent and

respectful, they listen. This is another nodal point on display, namely, the respect and support of EZLN members for their leaders.

Image 15



In Image 15, a stage similar to the one from Image 14 is depicted. At the table, a person with a masked face is standing holding a microphone, presumably speaking. On both the immediate left and right of the person speaking, similarly dressed people with masked faces are seated. Behind the three people in the foreground, three other people are discernible. Two of their faces are visible, and they are masked. There is no text visible. The person speaking is wearing clothes in the style of the traditional wear of indigenous women from south-eastern Mexico. The person on the left (from the perspective of the picture, i.e. the speaker's right) is dressed in clothes in the style of indigenous women, while the one on the right (i.e. the speaker's left) is dressed in the style of clothes habitually worn by indigenous men. There is a green cloth visible, hanging behind the people. If this stage is the same as the one photographed in Image 14, it may be the left side of a Mexican flag.

The depiction of a speaker wearing womens' clothing (and therefore presumed by the author to be a woman) speaking at the event during a working group discussion is an attempt to articulate the nodal point of equality. Equality is an important principle in the activities and everyday life of the Zapatista movement, as evidenced by much of their written production as well as images shown in this work in the previous chapter. The depiction of women who are members of the EZLN participating in the discussions, as well as addressing their struggle directly in the content of the Meeting (2nd Meeting of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, 2007) is an attempt by the EZLN to show that women have a role and an importance equal to that of men, and everybody else, within the Zapatista movement.

Image 16



Image 16 shows the entrance to Oventic (also spelled as Oventik in some works), one of the three *caracoles* hosting the Meeting, and the one at which it was commenced. In the immediate foreground, part of the back of an SUV is visible, with a cargo box on top. In front of it are two trucks with empty beds and part of the front of another SUV is also visible on the rightmost side of the image. In the background, a bus is partly visible, standing next to some buildings. Over the road the cars are on, a red and yellow banner hangs. It says, "Welcome to the inauguration of the 2nd Meeting of the Zapatista peoples with the peoples

of the world, Caracol II Resistance and Rebellion for Humanity and against Neoliberalism, Oventic, Chiapas, Mexico, on the days 20 and 21 of July 2007". On the banner, beside the text, faces are painted in black, red and white, Next to them is an image of the Earth, with a crowd of people painted in red under it holding a red flag

By displaying means of both individual and public transport arriving to the start of the Meeting, the Zapatistas are attempting to persuade the audience of their website, as per Rose (2006), that the Meeting fulfilled its intended purpose of attracting attendees. The banner containing the place name and event name unequivocally communicates the location and time of the picture, which, alongside the Zapatista symbology on the right side of the banner is the discursive link tying the Zapatista movement to the event. Thus, in this picture, the Zapatistas communicate that the Meeting is indeed of the Zapatista Peoples, as evidenced by the contents of the banner, and that they are meeting with the Peoples of the World, signified by the cars and bus arriving to the location. Apart from that, the name of the *caracol* itself, where the event inauguration is taking place – seen in red on the banner – represents a clear articulatory effort towards resistance against regressive hegemony as a nodal point (Chandler, 2019)

Image 17



In Image 17, three pairs of people with revealed faces are visible, standing in front of a building. Some text that is illegible from the image appears surrounded by an outline, and directly on top of the doorway there is a text that says “There is no weapon more effective than the truth in thought. There are two pairs of men, one on the left side standing idly and the other in the doorway, appearing engaged in some conversation. On the right is a pair of women.” As for symbols, the building is painted in several motives in black and white, with the exception of the painting of the woman on the door as well as small areas of red, green and blue. On each side of the door, on a striped background reminiscent of rain, a figure is painted. On the left, an EZLN member, a man with a masked face and a rifle. By his hat and accessories, the figure can be identified as representing *SCI Marcos*. On the right, a man in clothes in the style of Mexican revolutionary fighters from the early 20th century, also holding a rifle. The figure on the right is likely a representation Emiliano Zapata Salazar himself. On the one visible half of the door, half the face of a woman appears. The lower portion of her face is covered by a *paliacate* scarf. The tone her skin is painted in is similar to the skin tone of southern Mexican indigenous people. Above the door, plants, likely corn, are depicted on each side, with a pair of men painted on the left side of the doorway and a pair of women on the right, with agricultural tools in their hands. A logo or symbol unrecognizable to the author, and which further research also failed to identify, is on the top centre.

The murals depicted in this image contain an indigenous woman front and centre, surrounded by symbols and mottos of the Zapatista movement. The publishing of a picture of these murals on the Zapatista website entry on the Meeting is an appropriation of these images as per Möller et al. (2021). The use of this image on the website is a reuse, and it also fulfils the criteria of not changing the image that is presented in the definition (Möller et al., 2021). In this appropriation, the original artwork is used to signify the importance that the Zapatista movement ascribes to its historical background. This can be argued given the quasi-juxtaposition of the leader of the EZLN and the historical figure in whose name the movement was founded, as well as the depiction of the indigenous woman in the centre of the image. The field workers depicted on the top of the doorway as well as the corn plants next to the doors are an allusion to the rural roots of the movement. The text – the part of it that is legible in the picture, at least – refers to truth. Openness and honesty as values were mentioned by the Zapatistas in textual production referring to the peace processes in the years following the armed insurrection and are therefore arguably also a nodal point to the movement. The depiction of people with revealed faces next to the building that the murals are painted on going about everyday activities shows that it was in use by *caracol* residents

or Meeting guests during the event. This suggests that it is a building that is in everyday use and not just an art installation. The depiction of the presence of art signifying the Zapatistas' knowledge of and regard for indigenous history, which is a nodal point of the Zapatista movement, on a building of everyday use strengthens the idea that the daily functioning and activities – such as the Meeting – of the movement are driven by this nodal point.

Image 18



Image 18 shows the interior of a building. Next to the row of chairs, a line of people standing single file is depicted, with faces covered. Between the row of people and the wall, as well as on the right side of the picture toward the back of the room, more people are visible, their faces covered with black masks. On the wall in the background, posters hang. On the leftmost one, visible only partially, part of the word “Atenco” can be distinguished, as well as “free”. The one in the centre of the image clearly says “Atenco freedom” and “The Other [Campaign] resists”. There appear to be photographs or other materials attached to the poster. Above the upper right corner of the poster, a smaller one with the word “Health” hangs off the rafters. The people are dressed in black, white and red, and wearing traditional

hats typical of the Zapatista movement. Their faces are covered with *paliacate* scarves. On one of the masks, the inscription “EZLN” is visible.

The publishing of a picture with Other Campaign posters shown on the wall, depicted beside EZLN members standing in the room is an effort at communicating to the audience that despite the EZLN focusing on organising an international event, the Other Campaign continues, and the issues it means to resolve and problems that occurred along the way are not forgotten. It attempts to persuade the viewer, as per Rose (2006) that the Other Campaign is present in the minds of the Zapatista movement and on display in the Meeting. The discursive link that this attempts to establish between the Other Campaign and the Meeting – an event with a focus on international cooperation – is in line with the relevant section of the 6th Declaration, where the objectives of the Campaign can be found, including some with an international scope.³⁸

Image 19



Image 19 shows many people. Most of the people are facing the same way, suggesting they are watching something happening off to the left, out of frame. The faces of many of the

³⁸ 6th Declaration

people are not visible, as they are either far in the background of the picture or appear with their backs facing the camera. Of those that are visible, however, most faces are covered. There is no text visible. There are both men and women present. As far as symbols go, traditional dress and *paliacate* scarves are depicted. The production site of this image (Rose, 2006) reveals a lot about its intended purpose, given the exposure setting. The exposure is set so that the people under the shelter, in the shade, are visible clearly. The leftmost side of the photograph, where the area outside of the shelter – and whatever is happening that the people are there for – would be visible, is overexposed as a result. By displaying attendees with masked faces, the publishers of this image seek to communicate to the viewer that there were Zapatista attendees at the events organised as part of the Meeting. By attempting to persuade the audience of their participation in the event that they organise, the Zapatistas intend to display the importance they ascribe to the issues addressed at the event. Furthermore, showing attending Zapatistas *en masse*, the message is that the issues addressed are important to all of them, not just the leadership, not just the local administrations and government boards organising the event itself but the whole of the EZLN and the broader Zapatista movement. By focusing the picture on displaying the people – through the exposure setting of the photograph - as opposed to what is happening, they also generalise this to all the discussions and all the issues.

Image 20



Image 20 bears quite a few similarities to the previous image in its content. There is a group of people photographed seated under a shelter, and their faces are all revealed, most of them looking in the same direction, out of frame. There is no text visible. The decorations under the roof of the shelter suggest the pictures were taken in the same location, or at least close to one another. There are both men and women present. There are no Zapatista symbols. The exposition works the same way as it did in the previous image, where the people under the shelter are visible clearly, but the area outside the shelter that is in frame – visible here on the right side, as opposed to the previous image – is overexposed. Despite the evident similarities, however, this image is worthy of mention in this analysis due to the key difference from the previous one. The difference becomes clear when one looks at the style of dress and the faces of the people depicted in the image. Many of the people in the previous image appeared wearing indigenous styles of clothing and with covered faces. In this image, the dress style of the people depicted is decidedly Western and casual. The revealed faces and dress style of the people depicted in this photo suggest that they are attendees who arrived from outside the Zapatista communities to participate in the Meeting. Alike to Image 16, here too the purpose is to persuade, as per Rose (2006), the

audience of the number of guest attendees to the Meeting. The number of guest attendees also directly relates to another persuasive attempt made by the Zapatistas in the publishing of this image. That is the attempt at convincing the viewer that the Meeting achieved its goals. The purpose of the Meeting is listed in the website entry inviting participants as “That the people, groups, collective es and organisations that fight against neoliberalism in Mexico and in the world know, directly from the word of the EZLN help bases, the process of the construction of autonomy in the Zapatista indigenous communities in Chiapas”. By displaying guests in attendance, the EZLN communicates that this purpose has been fulfilled.

The event analysed in this chapter had a strong focus on sharing the experiences of Zapatista struggle and autonomy across national borders. The first analytical category, the presence of people – EZLN members and leaders as both speakers and audience, and non-members as attendees – signifies here the success of the Meeting in achieving that goal. In comparison with the other events, the second analytical category is underrepresented. That is, there is fairly little text present in the pictures. Of note here is the articulatory effort that is present in the local toponymy. The name that the Zapatistas have given to the *caracol* where the event starts articulates resistance against regressive hegemony. Another important articulatory effort related to text is the motto on the mural in Image 17, articulating openness and honesty as a nodal point. The other two instances of text, the posters on the walls in Images 12 and 18, aim to create a discursive link between the Sixth Declaration, the Meeting and the Other Campaign. The poster in Image 12 also articulates inclusivity, by the use of the @ in place of O. The third category, the location of the photographs was not found to contain any articulatory efforts. The same can be said for the fourth category, gender. In some photographs, the depiction of men is prevalent. When it comes to depiction in a speaking role, the genders are once again equal here, depicted in one photograph each as in the previous event. The fifth category, symbols, is also represented here. Aside from the traditional dress worn by many participants, in two images, the Mexican flag and the EZLN flag are visible hanging side by side, articulating the nodal point of patriotism. The mural in Image 17 is also important in relation to the fifth category, as it contains symbols articulating the knowledge of and regard for indigenous history. The text accompanying the photographs in this section – the invitation for the event – outlines the international invitees

to the event, who are to hail from Brazil, Korea and Madagascar among others³⁹. From the accounts of some participants⁴⁰ it would also seem that the event was attended by people and organisations originating from a diverse range of countries. When it comes to the symbol that the Zapatistas publish to articulate international cooperation – said to be the main focus of the event – however, the flag that is displayed is the Brazilian flag, showcasing cooperation with a foreign nation, though still on the same continent.

4.3 Chiapas, Sunday 13 March 2022 Stop the Wars – Echoes of Sunday the 13th

In March 2022, the Zapatista Sixth Commission published a call to action on the EZLN website. They described an agreement of Zapatista communities to get people together for demonstrations against “all capitalist wars currently ongoing in various corners of the planet” (Zapatista Sixth Commission, 2022). A particular focus is placed on the war in Ukraine, but other conflicts are mentioned. The post also contains the response of the Commission to the call, where they agree to participate. They envision the action as the start of a global campaign that would involve the use of the arts to protest against conflict. A wide range of people and organisations are invited to participate, with emphasis placed on the individuality of the participation, saying everyone should do so in their own way. The day and the place of the Zapatista participation in these protests are identified near the end of the post as Sunday the 13th of March in various towns and localities in Chiapas. The total number of participants in the resulting protests – the first public Zapatista march event since 2012 – is estimated at 20 000 (Mariscal, 2022).

³⁹ <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2007/06/29/ii-encuentro-de-los-pueblos-zapatistas-con-los-pueblos-del-mundo/>

⁴⁰ <https://rojoynegro.info/articulo/termino-el-ii-encuentro-entre-los-pueblos-zapatistas-y-los-pueblos-del-mundo/>

Image 21



In Image 21, a truck is to the right in the foreground. On the truck is a green tarp and two people with covered faces standing in the back. Behind the truck, to the left through the centre of the photo is a banner. The banner says “We are against the war the capitalists are making against the people of Ukraine. It is not life. We are here to help by raising our voice against the unjust war that is made against the people and what the bad government of Russia is doing. No to war, no to death, yes to life”. On the bottom, the EZLN is identified in red letters as the author of the banner. Behind the banner, many smaller banners are visible – carried by people, though not legible from this picture. Another truck with a green tarp is also visible. The demonstration advances down what appears from the picture to be a residential street. The gender of the two people visible is indiscernible. As for symbols, the EZLN logo on the banner is separated in the middle by a red star, and the two people are wearing *paliacate* scarves.

The depiction of the banner carried at the front of the demonstration is to clarify the purpose of the event. The banner speaks of the war in Ukraine and outlines the goal that the event is to achieve. The focus of the event on Ukraine is in line with the text of the invitation, where it was the first conflict mentioned. Discursively, in Saussurean terms as per Chandler (2019), the articulatory process at hand here relates to the nodal point of awareness of – and concern for - international affairs. As in and of themselves, neither the way of protesting nor the interest and involvement in matters beyond the borders of Mexico are new. Throughout the existence of the movement, the Zapatistas made use of mass gatherings and protest marches. In these events and related texts, they also refer extensively to international cooperation. What hasn't been seen before, however, is the Zapatistas holding an event

dedicated to protesting a specific foreign conflict. Through a display of concern with a conflict happening in Eastern Europe, a long way from Zapatista spheres of influence – though certainly in a sphere of relatively recent interest, given the voyage to Spain a Zapatista delegation undertook by ship in the summer of 2021 - the Zapatistas communicate that the movement is aware of - and interested in - international affairs.

Image 22



Image 22 shows a crowd of people walking down a street lined with buildings. The faces of the people are covered with black masks, They hold up banners. The ones in the foreground that are readable in the picture state “Life and peace in the world!” More banners are visible, being carried by the people in the background but they are not readable. The gender of the people is indiscernible. The people are advancing down a residential street, wearing *paliacate* scarves.

The exclusive depiction of people covering their faces with black masks and *paliacate* scarves shows that the participants in this demonstration are members of the EZLN. By publishing a photograph of EZLN members participating in the event, the Zapatista movement communicates to the audience of the post that the “some thousands of Zapatistas” (Zapatista Sixth Commission, 2022) that were mentioned in the invitation did turn up and take part in the event. This articulates commitment and dedication as a nodal point. The slogan “Life and peace in the world” seen on the banners underlines the Zapatistas’ desire for a peaceful solution to all conflicts, local as well as global – pacifism. This has been a nodal point of the movement since the times of the Second Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle.

Image 23



Image 23 is similar to Image 22 in contents, in that it shows a crowd of people on a street lined with buildings. The faces of the people are masked in Image 23 just like in the previous image. Another similarity lies in the composition of the images, in the angle from which the crowd is photographed. The only difference in this aspect is that the photograph seems to have been taken from the other side of the street. In both pictures, the focus is on displaying the people in the foreground and the banners they are carrying. The banner displayed here is another difference. The banner reads “Capitalists destroyers of life”. Another banner, with “Life and peace in the world” on it is readable in the background. The gender of the people is indiscernible. As for symbols, the people are wearing *paliacate* scarves.

Due to the similarity of the images, the purpose of publishing Image 23 can be said to be the same as Image 22, proving the turnout that the Zapatistas planned in the invitation became reality. As regards the banner, the statement on it has a clear anticapitalist sentiment. Anticapitalism is a nodal point of the functioning of the Zapatista movement, a cornerstone of its founding even, and on display here is the Zapatistas’ adherence to this nodal point even close to 30 years later.

Image 24

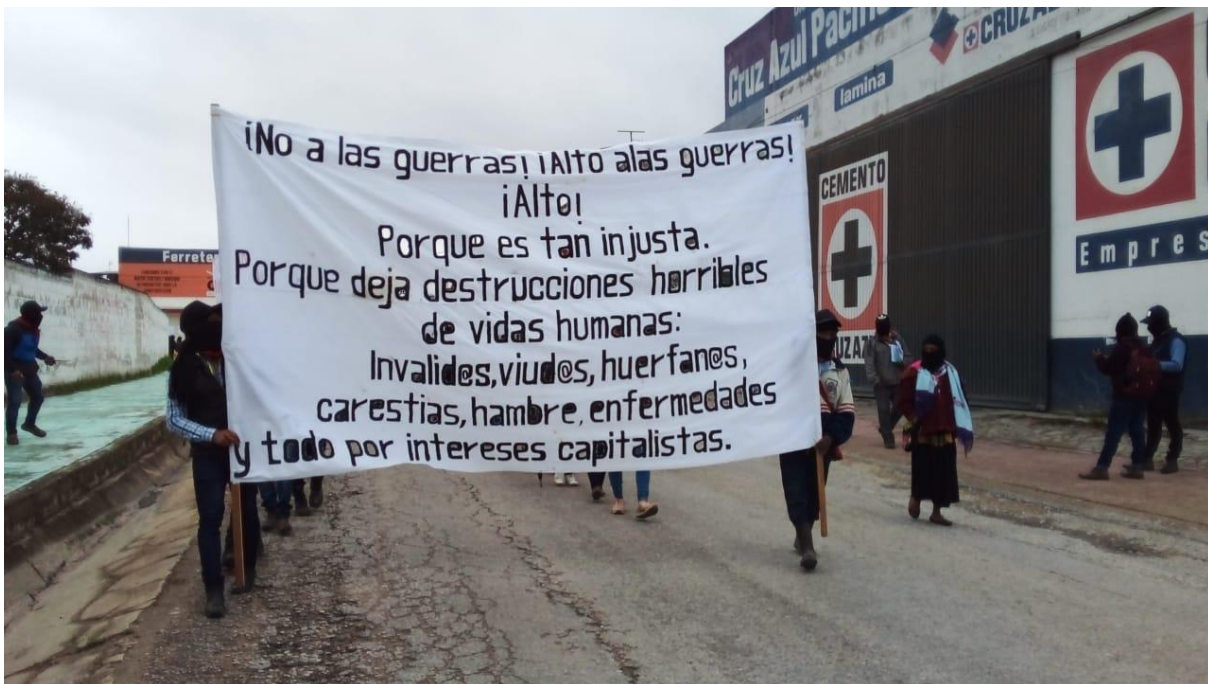


Image 24 shows a few people with masked faces, and the lower parts of the bodies of many others are visible. On the banner, the faces of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky appear with white scribbles on top. The text on the banner says “Neither Zelensky nor Putin, Stop the wars, there will be no landscape after the battle, Zapatistas”. An interesting thing to note is that the letters S in the words *LAS* and *GUERRAS* are smaller than the rest of the text, differentiated by color as they are the only yellow in the banner and stylised as \$ (dollar) signs. The gender of the people is indiscernible. As for symbols, the people are wearing *paliacate* scarves.

As for the banner, most of its contents generally display Zapatista nodal points (Chandler, 2006) that have been seen in previous pictures in this section. The scribbles over the faces of the leaders of the two countries in conflict are there to point out their irrelevance to the Zapatista movement. Their focus is not on who is fighting whom. The nodal point of pacifism, which, as mentioned before, was created within Zapatista discourse with the Second Declaration is displayed most prominently on the banner. The largest lettering on it says “Stop the Wars”. Somewhat more subtly, in the stylings of the letters “S” as yellow dollar signs, the wars are hinted at as having capitalist backgrounds. Anticapitalism is also a nodal point of Zapatista discourse since the foundation of the movement. The motto on the bottom, translating to “There will be no landscape after the battle” has not been seen in Zapatista discourse before or after these events, and is also the title of a corresponding post on the Zapatista website, which speaks to the stance of the Zapatista movement on the conflict.

The post, divided into six sections, elaborates on the anticapitalist and pacifist sentiment expressed in the pictures from the events. Apart from the usual call to action and strong convictions expressed in the typical narrative style, the post affirms that the Zapatistas are in communication with like-minded individuals whom they call “family in resistance and rebellion”⁴¹ located in Europe. This, together with this picture, articulates the one nodal point that some of the images from this event have displayed, while it was not seen previously - awareness of - and interest in - international affairs on a global scale.

Image 25



In Image 25, similarly to the previous image, a few people whose faces are masked are shown. Some of them are carrying a large banner. Around the two people holding the sides of the banner, more people, all with their faces covered with black masks, can be seen. One of them Behind the banner, the legs of people walking in a row are visible. The banner says “No to wars! Stop wars! Stop! Because it is so unjust. Because it leaves horrible destruction of human lives: Disabled, widow(er)s, orphans, shortages, hunger, sickness and all for capitalist interests.” The gender of the people is indiscernible, and there are no visible Zapatista symbols.

When looking at Image 25 in comparison to Image 24, there are many similarities from the viewpoint of their compositional modality (Rose, 2006). Large banners front and centre, held up and surrounded by people with masked faces. Publishing two images with such similar

⁴¹ <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2022/03/03/no-habra-paisaje-despues-de-la-batalla/>

composition in a post about an event, though, also draws one's attention to the differences between them when seeking the possible articulatory or communicational intentions of the publishers. The main difference between images 24 and 25 are their background. The greenery surrounding the road on which Image 24 was taken, when compared to the town street background, suggests that the pictures were taken at two different locations. The different banners as well as the clothes worn by the people visible in the pictures also support this supposition. It can therefore be assumed that this picture was published in order to reinforce the notion that multiple regional or local Zapatista groups or organisations participated in the protests just like the post announcing the protests had mentioned. This ability of multiple independent units to coordinate towards a common goal articulates another nodal point, organisational cohesion. The text on the banner articulates nodal points of the Zapatista movement that have been seen in previous images in this work, pacifism and anticapitalism. Taking another look at the previous image, the banner in it is referring explicitly to the war in Ukraine. On the other hand, there is no reference to a specific conflict in the banner in Image 25, which would correspond to the section in the related post that states that the protest is meant to be against "all capitalist wars"⁴². In relation to anticapitalism, the banner from Image 25 links the suffering of people under conflict to capitalist interests.

Image 26



⁴² <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2022/03/09/domingo-13/>

Image 26 shows people wearing black masks from the back, in the left foreground. In the centre foreground a man is present, who appears to be either giving something to or receiving something from the masked person in the red jacket. In the right foreground a boy with his arms crossed is depicted. In the background, a small crowd of people is shown, all with their faces revealed. Presumably, these are town residents who have gathered to observe the march. There is no text visible in the image. There are both men and women among the bystanders, but the gender of the people marching is indiscernible. The people marching are wearing *paliacate* scarves.

When looking at the compositional modality (Rose, 2006) of the picture, one can see that the man who is either giving or being given something by the marching Zapatistas, together with the small crowd of locals behind him, take up most of the frame. The man himself is the focus of the picture. The depiction of material connection, in giving or receiving something tangible, to a member of the local population is symbolic in showing the viewer of the images the relationship between the Zapatista movement and the local population. A discursive effort regarding a depiction of the relationship between the EZLN and the Mexican population has been shown previously in this paper, at an event taking place in 2007. However, people with revealed faces were shown as participating directly in the 2007 event, which is where it differs from this event. All the participants here have their faces masked, and the locals are shown as observing and interacting with the demonstration.

This picture articulates the Zapatista nodal point of a close, positive relationship to the Mexican people. The Zapatistas also make many commitments to the people of their country in their writings⁴³ which further shows the importance that having a mutually beneficial connection to them holds for the movement.

⁴³ <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2012/12/30/el-ezln-anuncia-sus-pasos-siguientes-comunicado-del-30-de-diciembre-del-2012/>

Image 27



In Image 27, people with masked faces appear in the centre foreground. The person on the left side (from the point of view of the camera) is carrying a portable radio. There are also more people with masked faces in the background. Most of them are wearing full-face black masks. There is, however, one man in the background whose entire face is not covered, he is only wearing a protective mask over his nose and mouth. The flag of the EZLN is the only text in the image. The gender of the rest of the people is indiscernible. A red truck is visible on the right in the foreground, and another silver truck behind the line of people with the flags. The march is taking place on a town street lined with shops and houses. As for symbols, the people are carrying the flag of the EZLN beside the Mexican flag.

The juxtaposition of the Mexican flag and the EZLN flag is clearly the centre of this picture from a compositional standpoint as per Rose (2006). Such a juxtaposition has also been depicted in Images 12 and 14. In those images, it was displayed during an international event taking place in July 2007. Its repeated appearance here signifies, in Saussure's terms, that the nodal point (Chandler, 2006) of patriotism persists in its importance 15 years on,

and that it is important for the Zapatistas to communicate this to domestic as well as international audiences.

Image 28

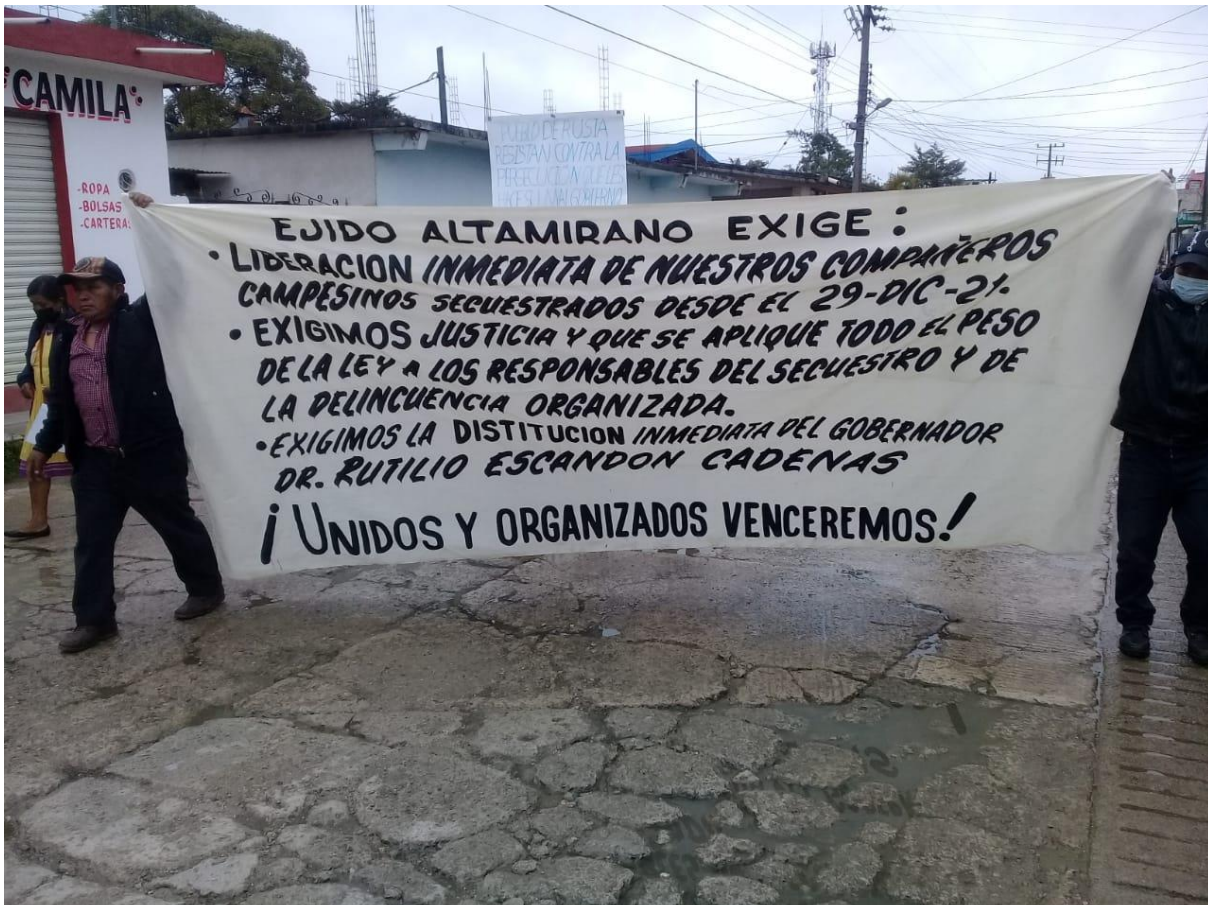


Image 28 shows a long line of people carrying banners on a town street. The people whose faces are discernible are all wearing black full-face masks. Two people with masked faces stand in the centre foreground holding pieces of paper in their hands. It can be supposed they are handing out leaflets. One of the banners they are carrying is partially visible and reads “The Russian Army out of Ukraine” The remaining banners are illegible. The gender of the people is indiscernible. The people marching are wearing *paliacate* scarves.

Pictures of marching crowds of EZLN members (as inferred from their masked faces) have appeared previously in this section, namely Images 22 and 23. In those images, only a fraction of the participants is depicted due to the angle of the picture, displaying the banners they are carrying. The author argues the aim of this image is different. Referring again to Rose’s (2006) concept of compositional modality, it is clear that this image was taken in a way that would display the longest possible stretch of the street. And that street, as far as the eye (or the camera) can see, is lined with marching EZLN members. The depiction of large numbers of participants serves to articulate the nodal point of commitment and dedication to the event, and thereby to the broader cause. On a broader scale, it can also be taken as a way to display the strength of the EZLN in general, and an articulatory effort

regarding resistance against regressive hegemony (Rear and Jones, 2013) as a nodal point, now extending beyond the national borders.

Image 29



In Image 29 three people are visible. The face of the one on the left is revealed, while the person next to him and the one on the right are wearing protective medical masks. Two of them are carrying a large banner. A smaller banner can also be seen above and behind the large one, though the text on it is illegible. The woman on the left may be a passerby. The banner reads “The Altamirano settlement demands: The immediate freeing of our farmer companions kidnapped since December 29, 2001. We demand justice and that the whole weight of the law be applied to the ones responsible for the kidnapping and the organized delinquency. We demand the immediate destitution of the governor Dr. Rutilio Escandon Cadenas [sic]. United and organised, we will win!” Two of the people – those carrying the banner - are men and one is a woman. There are no Zapatista symbols visible.

Per Mariscal (2022), supporters from the local population joined the demonstration in Altamirano at the invitation of the Zapatistas passing through and protested a politically

motivated kidnapping of Altamirano residents that had lasted for about four months at the time of the event as per the photo. Mariscal claims that this is the first time that “non-Zapatistas” (Mariscal, 2022), have been included in a Zapatista march.

The depiction of the banner the supporters are carrying, as well as the invitation for them to join the event as in and of itself, can be perceived as an effort to communicate that even though the event has international conflict on foreign soil as its main focus, the struggles of lands close to home – the Morelia *caracol* is, after all, based in Altamirano – are not forgotten by the EZLN. The articulatory effort here is toward the nodal point of a close, positive relationship to the Mexican people, much like in Image 26. The call to action at the bottom of the banner is a common way for the Zapatistas to attempt to spur on members of the movement, supporters or the Mexican population in general, also frequently appearing in writing posted on their official website.

Image 30



In Image 30, a procession of cars and people is shown. The people whose faces are discernible have them covered with full-face black masks. Many banners are visible throughout the crowd, but of the smaller ones, only the ones in the immediate foreground are legible. They read “Russian Army out of Ukraine! Out!”. The large banner with the EZLN logo and red star reads “Wake up, peoples of Mexico and the world, because one day, sooner or later, they will make unjust wars against us too. It is necessary to organise ourselves.” The gender of the people is indiscernible. The large banner contains Zapatista symbols, namely the logo of the EZLN and a red star.

From a compositional modality viewpoint (Rose, 2006) the image is somewhat

similar to Image 28, showing the entire alley filled with people, depicting the multitude of

participants. Therefore, its articulatory intentions can also be interpreted as similar, in the direction of commitment and show of strength. There is more to Image 30, though. The small banners on the left and the large banner in the right foreground represent efforts to articulate further nodal points (Chandler, 2006). The awareness of, and interest in, international affairs on a global scale as a nodal point has already been discussed in relation to this event, as has pacifism, both expressed here by the calls for the Russian army to leave Ukraine displayed on the smaller banners.

A look at the social modality of this image (Rose, 2006) reveals another interesting side of the articulatory effort displayed in Image 30. The discursive link the large banner makes between a foreign international conflict and the necessity for readiness to face similar circumstances on home soil is formulated as a warning. In this warning, issued to “the peoples of Mexico and the world” in the banner, the Zapatistas make use of their awareness of an international situation in an attempt to rally people to their cause.

The event depicted in this section is similar to the second event of 2007 in its international focus, as well as to the first one in the character of the event, as the event we see taking place in 2022 is also a street march. The first category, the presence of people, is again represented richly in the photographs in this section. A large crowd is used to articulate the commitment and dedication of the participants to the Zapatista cause, and as a show of strength to articulate resistance against regressive hegemony. At a difference to the street march in 2007, however, the majority of the participants here have their faces covered, meaning they are EZLN members. The two exceptions, Image 26 and 29, depict people with revealed faces, as onlookers in the first case and participants in the second, to articulate a close, positive relationship to the Mexican people, through links both material and immaterial. The second category is also strongly represented. Many of the participants carry banners. The text in them articulates several nodal points. Among these are awareness of and interest in international affairs on a global scale, anticapitalism, and pacifism as well as a close, positive relationship to the Mexican people. The use of @ in place of O is also present in one image of this event, articulating inclusivity. An interesting phenomenon appears in Image 30, which contains text mentioning the war in Ukraine, using the conflict as a cautionary tale to the people of Mexico. This instance of using a foreign conflict to rally people to the Zapatista cause is a new tool in the Zapatista repertoire. The location of the photographs was not found to represent any articulatory efforts. The same can be said of the fourth category, gender, since it was impossible to determine given the masked faces of the participants. The fifth category, symbols, is represented here by *paliacate* scarves and

an EZLN logo and star on the banner in Image 30. More importantly, the juxtaposition of the EZLN flag and Mexican flag, articulating the nodal point of patriotism, is present.

4.4 Chiapas, February 20, 2020, Zapatista Mobilisation in Defense of Territory and Mother Earth, for justice for our dead, our missing, our imprisoned and against the megaprojects of death, We Are All Samir.

The events that took place under this lengthy name were part of a series of events named “Days in defence of territory and Mother Earth”⁴⁴ happening over the course of three days in Zapatista territories as well as in the federal capital of Mexico. In the convocation, the numerous undersigned Zapatista organisations list many reasons for the events. Among them figure the invisibilisation of Zapatista struggle by corporations and the State, assassinations and kidnappings of persons associated with the EZLN and the broader movement, corporations profiting from conflict, expansion of neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy and the associated exploitation of land and people in construction megaprojects. According to the writer(s) of the text of the convocations, all of the aforementioned reasons “[...] make urgent the defence of human life, defence of the territories of our peoples and the defence of Earth in a clearly anticapitalist and antipatriarchal perspective.”⁴⁵ The parts of the events that the pictures below come from were organised at the *caracol* level, each one operating independently to carry out their part.

⁴⁴ <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2020/01/07/convocatoria-a-las-jornadas-en-defensa-del-territorio-y-la-madre-tierra-samir-somos-todas-y-todos/>

⁴⁵ <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2020/01/07/convocatoria-a-las-jornadas-en-defensa-del-territorio-y-la-madre-tierra-samir-somos-todas-y-todos/>

Image 31



In Image 31 a group of people arranged into the shapes of letters, forming the phrase “We are all Samir”, as well as a grid painted on the ground are depicted. The grid is presumably to aid in the placement of the letters. Banners, seen at an angle that makes them unreadable, are visible at the bottom of the image and people not participating in the display are at the top. The gender of the people is indiscernible, and no Zapatista symbols are visible.

“We are all Samir”, “Samir lives with us”, and similar slogans mentioning the name of Samir Flores Soberanes are a frequent sight in pictures taken at this event. Soberanes was an activist and the founder of a local radio station. He was a member of the Front of Peoples in Defense of Earth and Water, described by human rights organisation FLD⁴⁶ as an

⁴⁶ <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/organization/frente-de-pueblos-en-defensa-de-la-tierra-y-el-agua-morelos-puebla-y-tlaxcala>

organisation of náhuatl indigenous communities, and of the Indigenous Government Council, described by the North American Congress on Latin America⁴⁷ as an organisation of indigenous groups spanning Mexico, and as having an affiliation to the Zapatista movement. The event this picture comes from was held in his name, on the anniversary of his death. Zapatistas allege that he was a victim of state-sponsored violence and demand justice for him. The slogans such as “We are all Samir”, and the way it is shown here with participation of Zapatista people, expresses solidarity, articulating therein another nodal point of the Zapatista movement.

Image 32



Image 32 shows a group of people, their faces masked with either full-face black masks or *paliacate* scarves. The only people with their faces revealed are the two children in the left foreground. There is no text. Both men and women are present. Many of the people in the group are holding up lit candles, which is a symbol often associated with the dead in Catholic symbology. Some of the people are wearing *paliacate* scarves.

⁴⁷ <https://nacla.org/news/2020/02/18/legacy-samir-flores-one-year-later>

Even though neither the EZLN nor the broader Zapatista movement normally portrays itself as associated with the Catholic faith or the Church, members of it – such as bishop Ruiz mentioned earlier in this paper – contributed significantly to events that led to its founding. Furthermore, the Catholic faith is widespread in Mexico, being the majority religion. In 2020, per INEGI census data⁴⁸ over 78% of Mexicans self-reported as Catholic. Given that this event was held on the anniversary of the death of S. F. Soberanes, a person of importance to the people attending, the candles can be interpreted as a symbol of remembering him. This is to articulate the nodal point of solidarity.

Image 33

In Image 33 there are three people shown. Two of their faces are indiscernible, one is



covered. Two banners are shown. The one at the bottom is being tied down by two people standing on the roof of a building. The banner at the top says “ No to the megaprojects, Resistance and Rebellion!” on a background of a photo of people with masked faces holding an EZLN flag. The megaprojects mentioned on the banner refer to several construction projects started by the federal Mexican government under then-incumbent president A.M.

⁴⁸ <https://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/mex/poblacion/diversidad.aspx?tema=me&e=15>

López Obrador in the centre and south of the country. These projects such as railways, an airport near Mexico City, highways as well as infrastructure for industries such as mining and oil extraction and hydroelectric and wind-farm power plants. The banner on the bottom says “WE ARE HERE! We will defend our Mother Earth until death if it is necessary. No to the militarisation of our originary peoples. No to the exterminatory war of López Obrador. No to the megaprojects of the capitalist system. No to the Maya train. No to the trans-isthmus train. No to the highways. No to the gas pipelines. Long live all the fighters fallen in defense of our Mother Earth.” The two people on the top of the roof are men. The gender of the third person is indiscernible. The face covering of the man in the white hat is a *paliacate* scarf, a Zapatista symbol.

In this picture, an example of what Möller (2021) defines as appropriation can be seen. The background of the top banner is a picture of people with masked faces carrying a red star flag – an EZLN symbol. The creator(s) of the banner therefore took that photograph – existing visual material – and reused it, not having changed anything, for the purposes of creating the banner in question. This complies with the definition of appropriation (Möller, 2021). Given the information available on this event, namely that it is part of several decentralised events organised by *caracoles* independently, the depiction of EZLN members and symbology is an intent to communicate the close relationship between the EZLN as a central organisation and the individual *caracoles*.

The bottom banner articulates several nodal points of the broader Zapatista movement. Among these is their commitment and dedication, communicated in the statement the banner starts with. The protests against militarisation and war can be interpreted as an articulatory effort concerning pacifism, a nodal point also previously mentioned in this work. Defense of the environment, aside from being one of the main foci of the event at hand, is also another nodal point articulated by the bottom banner in Image 33. The text of the banner mentions president Obrador directly, thus articulating resistance against regressive hegemony as a nodal point as well.

Image 34



Image 34 shows only one person, visible partially. A banner is hanging off wooden posts in the centre foreground. The person is working with the banner. Above the banner on the right, the lower right corner of another banner is visible. The background is obscured by a heavy fog, though the outlines of buildings and a pole are visible. The banner itself is white lettering on a red background and reads “EZLN We are originary peoples and of Maya roots With us and in us Samir Flores lives”. Over the EZLN shorthand the face of Samir Flores, likely cut from a picture also used in mainstream media articles on his case⁴⁹ appears, on a backdrop of people wearing black full-face masks with their fists in the air. The logo of the EZLN appears as a symbol.

The depiction of the name and face of S. F. Soberanes on the banner – and indeed the very fact this event is being held in the first place – articulate the Zapatista nodal point of solidarity. Image 34, like the previous image, also contains an instance of appropriation (Möller, 2021) in that the background on the top of the banner is a picture of EZLN members, and the face of S.F. Soberanes. Both these pictures were taken from another, original,

⁴⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-47318921>

creator and reused. The only characteristic of the use of the visual material on the banner that would bring the definition of this use as appropriation into question is the overlay of the face of Soberanes over the picture. It is debatable whether that constitutes “substantially altering” (Möller et al., 2021, p.6) the source material. Given the event at hand was independently organised at a *caracol* level by inhabitants of the community, the depiction of EZLN members and the name of the organisation on the banner can be taken as an articulatory effort at the nodal point of organisational cohesion, or the ability of the individual communities to come together in the pursuit of a common interest.

Image 35



Image 35 shows a crowd of people from the back. Some of them are wearing full-face black masks, the heads of others are obscured, and one person is wearing a wide brimmed hat making it impossible to tell whether their face is covered. The banner that is shown reads “We refuse all the neoliberal megaprojects. The Maya train, the trans-isthmus corridor, the mining companies, hydroelectric [power plants], eolic [power plants] and the privatisation of water. Samir lives with us”. The gender of the people is indiscernible. Some of them are holding candles.

The text on the banner depicted here articulates three nodal points already mentioned previously in this work, solidarity by way of the slogan mentioning S.F. Soberanes, and defence of the environment as well as resistance against regressive hegemony by the refusal of the construction and mining projects planned by the federal government, labelling them “neoliberal megaprojects” as expressed in the text above the slogan. The candles the attendees are holding can also be interpreted as articulating solidarity as a nodal point.

Image 36



In Image 36, several people are depicted going about different tasks. The one wearing the white hat in the right foreground is working with the fence, while the group in the centre is working on the banner. Far in the background on the left, another group of people is standing around a banner. One of the people in the picture, the one who appears to be running down the road in the background on the left, has his face revealed, although it is not discernible due to the resolution of the image. The banner that is depicted reads “Welcome truck drivers, bus drivers and general public We have canteen – taco buffet – Zapatista products Free parking”. All the people are men. One of the people working on the banner is wearing a *paliacate* scarf.

Image 36 can be interpreted as an articulatory effort towards two separate nodal points, from two different aspects of the image. Firstly, by displaying Zapatista community residents working on preparations for the event to take place – fixing fences, putting up banners and so on – it can be said that the Zapatistas attempt to articulate the nodal point of commitment

and dedication to this event, and thereby to their cause, although from a different perspective than Image 33, where an articulatory effort toward this nodal point is also displayed. Secondly, the contents of the banner, a message inviting passersby with offers of food and free parking, is a clear articulatory effort towards the nodal point of a close, positive relationship to the Mexican people.

Image 37



Image 37 shows a group of people photographed from the back, some with their arms raised in fists. Only one of their faces is fully visible, the one on the far right foreground wearing the white hat. It is covered by a full-face mask. One other face is partially visible under the red banner on the middle right, though it is not clear whether it is partially covered or revealed. Two banners are present in the image. One of them is the red banner that appears in Image 34, the other a wide banner with text handwritten on a white background, flanked by paintings featuring figures. On the left side, the faces of the figures are covered, with full-face black masks as well as a *paliacate* scarf and they stand in front of a green background. The faces of the figures on the right side appear to be revealed, though it is difficult to see. It reads “EZLN in defence of territory and Mother Earth” at the top. In red under the title, it

reads “No to the transnational capitalist megaprojects of the 4th transformation”. In smaller letters under the slogan, it then lists them: “No to the Maya train. No to the trans-isthmus corridor. No to the oil pipelines. No to the hydroelectric dams” and four more points that are not legible from the image. The 4th transformation is the name the Obrador administration, which governed Mexico from 2018 to 2024, gave to its development policies and economic model. The first of the other three transformations of Mexico, as per de Gori (2020) occurred in 1821, when Mexico gained its independence from Spain. The second one manifested itself as the liberalisation, secularisation and federalisation that took place while Benito Juárez was in power starting with the 1857 Constitution. As for the third one, de Gori describes it as a long process, starting around the time of the Mexican revolution of 1910 and lasting into the 1980s, and including the subordination of military power to the new elite, an increase of presidential power and increased State intervention in the economy at its inception. During its run, the PRI would be created and become the dominant political party, and at its end, the Congress and state governors would see an increase in the scope of their powers. (de Gori, 2020). There are both men and women present. *Paliacate* scarves, a symbol of the Zapatista movement, are visible on the banner as well as worn by the people in the image.

The same way as in Image 34, here too the EZLN can be seen mentioned on the banners created for the event, reinforcing the notion of an articulatory effort in the direction of organisational cohesion. The same can be said of depicting people wearing full-face masks, with the difference being that unlike Image 34, where they were only depicted as the background of a banner, they are also shown in the flesh in Image 37. Four other nodal points are articulated in this image. Defence of the environment, resistance against regressive hegemony and anticapitalism are articulated in the contents of the hand-drawn banner, while solidarity is articulated in the mention of S.F. Soberanes on the red banner.

Image 38

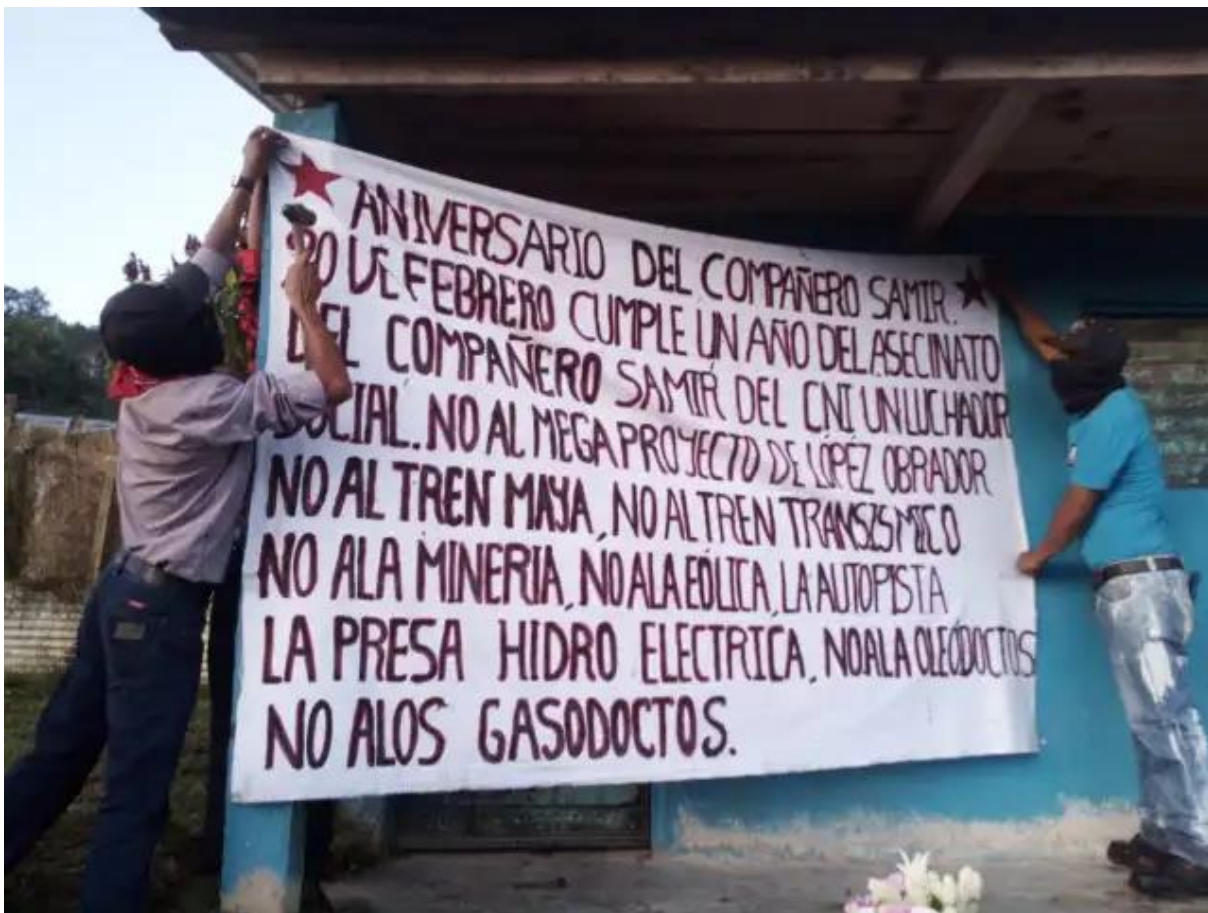


Image 38 shows a group of people with their faces covered, both with full-face black masks and *paliacate* scarves, many with their fists raised in the air, extending from the left foreground into the middle of the image. Interestingly, the only people in the group with their faces revealed appear to be children. On the right there is a person with their face covered, standing on a small stage. Behind the speaker and their stage wooden pillars hold up banners, though they are not legible. Both men and women are present in this image, though women appear to be in the majority. The gender of the speaker is indiscernible. Some of the people depicted are wearing traditional clothes, while others have *paliacate* scarves, as far as symbols go.

By depicting a large group of people listening to a speaker, the Zapatistas make an articulatory effort towards the nodal point (Chandler, 2019) of commitment and dedication to the event – and therefore to the broader cause – a nodal point that has been identified in previous images from this event. When looking at the image from a viewpoint of the site of its production, it can be seen that it was taken from an angle meant to show as many participants as possible while also placing the speaker in the frame. This can be interpreted

as a show of strength intended to articulate resistance against regressive hegemony (Rear and Jones, 2013), similarly to what is seen in Images 28 and 30.

Image 39



In Image 39, two people are depicted putting up a banner on the front of a building. Both of their faces are masked by full-face black masks. The banner has red stars, a known Zapatista symbol, in the upper left and right corners, and reads in handwritten text “Anniversary of the companion Samir. February 20 makes a year from the assassination of the companion Samir of the CNI a social fighter. No to the megaproject of Lopez Obrador. No to the Maya train, no to the trans-isthmian train, no to the minery, no to the wind power plant, the highway, the hydroelectric dam, no to the oil pipelines no to the gas pipes”. Both of the people are men. The red star on the banner, as well as the *paliacate* scarf worn by one of the men, are known Zapatista symbols.

Similarly to Image 36, displaying preparations for the event articulates commitment and dedication to the event, and thereby to the broader cause, as a nodal point (Chandler, 2006). The contents of the banner articulate solidarity, by the mention of S.F. Soberanes, and resistance against regressive hegemony as well as defense of the environment, by the mention of resistance to the various governmental development projects.

Image 40



Image 40 shows a sizeable crowd of people standing on an open space among buildings, with trees in the background. The faces that are discernible, that is, the ones of the first few rows of people, are covered. Some of them appear to be engaged in conversations. There is no text. The gender of the people is not discernible. Some of the people are wearing *paliacate* scarves.

In the final analytical chapter, once again an extensive representation of the first analytical category is seen, in that people are present in every image. Most of their faces are covered, and in the rare instance one is not, it is either a child, as in Image 32, or indiscernible as in Image 36. This means that the participants at this event are EZLN members. This analytical category articulates the nodal points of commitment and dedication and resistance to regressive hegemony. The second category, the text in these images, articulates solidarity, the main focus of this event, as well as a close and positive relationship to the Mexican people, resistance against regressive hegemony and defense of the environment. One innovative approach regards text is the way the people in Image 1 were photographed, forming the letters of the slogan “We Are All Samir”. The location of the photograph was not found to represent any articulatory efforts. The same can be said for gender, the determination of which was complicated by the masked faces of the participants just like in the last chapter. Zapatista symbols are represented here by the EZLN logo and red stars on banners, and arguably by the use of the face of S.F. Soberanes on some banners as well. When taken in the context of a locally organised event, where multiple *caracoles* (all

represented by at least one photograph in the section) create events at the same time and display EZLN symbols, an articulatory effort in the direction of organisational cohesion is found.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the analysis of the 40 selected images spanning 15 years of Zapatista activity, a range of articulatory efforts was identified. Some of the nodal points (Chandler, 2019) that were found to be the subject of these efforts appeared consistently in Zapatista discourse during the time period from 2007 to 2022, others were brought into focus by particular events and in some cases, a nodal point would appear to be articulated intermittently, missing from a particular event or period.

One nodal point appearing consistently in every chapter is resistance against regressive hegemony. Per the work of Rear and Jones (2013) on Gramscian concepts, regressive hegemony has been defined in this paper as the hegemony of a state apparatus. It is then quite self-evident that the Zapatista social movement should resist it in such a persistent way as was depicted in the images analysed in the previous chapters. An interesting feature of this persistence is that in every event, the shape the articulatory efforts regarding this nodal point take is somewhat different from the last. These changes regarding the articulatory process suggest an evolution in the Zapatista hegemonic project. In the first event of 2007, crowds of people with revealed faces – representing the first analytical category – articulate this nodal point, alongside the third category, the location of the photographs. The second category, text, represents another articulatory effort considered by the author to be of importance to Zapatista meaning-making. Namely, the text of the banners, in conjunction with some elements representing the fifth category, symbols, articulates the disdain and contempt that the Zapatista movement feels for State authorities. This nodal point only comes in here, and only here. From vulgar, disparaging messages attached to stilt walkers in costumes resembling the police and military, through displaying authorities as dominated by a foreign power, to banners accusing the highest judicial authority of rape, torture and murder, the text and some of the symbols depicted in the images of the first event represent disdain and contempt. They are joined by other important

representations of the fifth category, the painted machetes wielded by people in some of the images in transmitting a message of direct, open, aggressive defiance.

In the second event of 2007, the articulation of resistance against regressive hegemony is limited in representation, namely to the second analytical category used in this essay, the text. The text in one of the images reveals the toponymy of the starting location of the event, whose name articulates said nodal point.

It is in the depictions of the third and fourth events that articulatory efforts undergo the aforementioned changes suggesting an evolution in the hegemonic project of the Zapatista social movement. The direct, open, aggressive character of the articulatory efforts that is represented in the first event by the people, text and location as well as the symbols seen in 2007 is no longer seen by 2020. In both events taking place in the third decade of the 21st century, the first analytical category is, again, important in the articulation of resistance against regressive hegemony. This articulatory effort is, however, displayed differently in these events than the ones from 2007. Namely, it is displayed in conjunction with the articulation of commitment and dedication to the Zapatista cause, by the depictions of large numbers of people with masked faces – EZLN members. People with revealed faces – local bystanders – are depicted in the 2022 event. The interaction that is depicted between these bystanders and the EZLN members articulates a close and positive relationship to the Mexican people. As for the second category, much of the text depicted in photographs from the 2020 event articulates resistance against regressive hegemony as well, since it states the refusal of development projects planned and carried out by the government. It also articulates solidarity, and a close and positive relationship to the Mexican people. The location of the events is not seen to have any bearing on articulatory efforts. They take place on Zapatista territory, in the case of the 2020 event and in towns and cities near Zapatista territory in 2022. The gender of the participants did not have any bearing on articulatory efforts, though the observations made based on this analytical category matched those Vergara-Camus (2014) made in his research.

With a closer look into the processes through which resistance against regressive hegemony was articulated, and the articulatory efforts that existed in conjunction with the one towards resistance against regressive hegemony in the categories representing these efforts across the four events selected for analysis, then, evidence to support a positive answer to the research question posed in the introduction of this thesis is found. The transition from open, aggressive defiance, depictions of supporters wielding weapons in the centre of the capital and vulgar, disparaging messages articulating disdain and contempt towards authorities to

articulatory efforts and nodal points far better aligned with the peaceful, political character the movement attributes to itself - such as pacifism, anticapitalism, solidarity, defence of the environment and close and positive relationship to the Mexican people, is evidence of an evolution towards more peaceful discursive strategies in the hegemonic project of the Zapatista social movement.

Other nodal points and the associated articulatory efforts are also interesting. Patriotism is one such example. It appears in two events, one from each period. Interestingly, it is articulated using the exact same representation even though the events are distinct in character, a meeting and a street march, and are also separated by 15 years. In both cases, the flag of the EZLN and the Mexican flag are on display side by side. Another example lies in the outlook of the Zapatista movement on international affairs is displayed in the articulatory effort towards two nodal points appearing in different chapters. Firstly, the nodal point of international cooperation is articulated in one of the pictures from 2007. Secondly, the nodal point of awareness of and interest in international affairs is articulated by several pictures of the 2020 event. The two events are distinct in a few ways. One important aspect is the scope of the interest in international affairs, which is widened. Another factor, one that is also significant to the evolution of the hegemonic strategy of the movement lies in the way the international situation is used in an appeal to the domestic audience, presenting a new approach that the Zapatista movement takes in addressing the Mexican people.

The evidence of an evolution in the Zapatista hegemonic project found in this thesis presents a range of opportunities for future research on social movements in general and the Zapatista movement in particular. While critical discourse analysis is an interesting tool to use on visual material, further research using other theoretical approaches would be a valuable contribution. The ample quantity of text that the Zapatista movement publishes on its official website is also a rich source of data on the movement that future research on the topic would do well to explore.

The research methods and analytical concepts used in this thesis presented a fairly complex challenge in their application to the data. As the research progressed, the application of the method began to feel more natural, though moments where it felt somewhat clumsy may be apparent throughout the analytical section. The drawbacks related to the data as mentioned in the theoretical section were somewhat less of an issue than had been anticipated, though the resolution of the images did sometimes pose a problem as regards legibility of text or other details. An effort was made on the part of the researcher to stick to the defined

categories and theoretical concepts in order to lessen the impact of observer bias by avoiding overinterpretation of the images.

In this concluding section, it feels appropriate to come back to the interpretative nature of this work and reiterate the importance of the role of both the author and the reader as image-actor. As per the notion of active interaction found in the work of Möller et al. (2021), the reader is strongly encouraged not to take the results of this work as objective truths, but rather to question and interpret the images and approaches used in this work and its results, applying their observations and sharing them. It is hoped that this will contribute to the body of knowledge within which this research is located in a self-reflective way.

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