Mexico and the Global Problematic
Power Relations, Knowledge and Communication in Neoliberal Mexico

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

Organised crime was responsible for more than 30,000 executions in Mexico between 2007 and 2010. To put this number into context, during this three year period in Mexico there were more executions perpetrated by organised crime than the total number of approximately 15,000 US soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001 (1). Aside from the intensification of violence in Mexico, there has also been a considerable increase in the number of persons and specific populations entering the nightmare of poverty, misery, and extreme material constraint. Between 2007 and 2010, approximately 8 to 10 million persons fell into poverty, joining the 40 to 60 million Mexicans already labelled as poor (2). Under this grim introductory scenario of increased violence and material constraint, it may be pertinent to ask the question: Is Mexico in a state of war? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. Although Mexico is not involved in any international conflict, there is war going on inside the boundaries of the country. The war against drugs declared by the Mexican government in 2006 is the most visible manifestation of this conflict; however, it is not the only one. The war between drug cartels, the war declared by the *Zapatistas* and other rebel groups against the government, the low intensity warfare engaged in by the government against hostile or 'dangerous' groups are all different examples of the general state of the war experience in Mexico.

The uneven distribution of wealth and well-being is distressingly visible; it is not uncommon to see five year old children begging at the traffic lights everywhere in Mexico. Social disparity is evident and a proper explanation for the situation is difficult to find and articulate. A generalised attitude that thinks "reality is harsh, there's nothing one can do to change that" paralyses any collective aim and destroys any hope and possibility to solve the most poignant social problems at the root. A large part of the problem lies precisely within the collective attitude, which in tandem reflects the individualised nature of Mexican society, regardless of social class. This *modern* individualism is coupled with a traditional social framework and a corrupt and rather inefficient state system.

Status, *hierarchy*, and *power* shape important aspects of Mexican society and therefore its collective attitudes. Status can lead to exacerbated individualism, hierarchy transforms into intransigent tradition and immobility, while power usually adopts the form of corruption and impunity. Unfortunately, these aspects systematically determine the nature of social and political relations in Mexico, thus preventing the possibility of reaching new social alternatives, and eventually achieving a more balanced social 'equality' and sense of justice in Mexico. Following this line, personal or collective merit, achievement, solidarity, and integrity are attitudes that are not very visible in what we can consider to be determinant factors in the Mexican 'public sphere,' to

frame this in Habermasian terms. Under this assumption of a lack of socially constructive attributes (solidarity, integrity, legitimisation) in the contemporary Mexican public sphere, a general feeling of unrest and lack of trust is deeply rooted in society at large (3).

To approach this unrest and lack of trust, in this study the theoretical perspective that frames the social problem in Mexico forcefully deals with the notion of globalisation. In general, globalisation is understood as an encompassing planetary *idea* based on capitalist principles. Closely related to the idea that opening up national markets to international influence generates economic growth, globalisation thus affects Mexican territories and populations. Economic, political, technological, and cultural globalisation processes play a role in shaping the particular identity and possible subjectivities developed by individuals and groups everywhere in the world and within the Mexican nation state. However, one of the main problems brought about by the broad concept of globalisation is precisely the lack of suitable *units of analysis* to comprehend the correlation between contemporary global processes and the social problem, or what I define in this research as the *global problematic*, namely the experience of poverty and violence.

In a conference held at the University of Amsterdam in 2005, Ulrich Beck (4) stressed that the main problem hindering a proper analysis of globalisation, at least in the social sciences, is the lack of a proper unit of analysis. This concern is not minimal and rests at the core of the possibility of properly defining the idea of globalisation and notions associated with it (e.g. global poverty, global economy). On that particular occasion, Beck proposed *cosmopolitanism* and *self-reflexive thinking* as a possible way out of a lack of consensus on what we may understand as globalisation, and in tandem, to establish certain units of analysis, which may be used from within the social sciences to address the social problem.

This thesis ignites the discussion on the importance of developing a proper unit of analysis for contemporary globalisation, arguing that together with the conceptualisation of the *social problem* there is a need to address the so-called *global problematic*. The theoretical conceptualisation performed in this research is not meant to substitute conventional approaches towards the *social problem* in general, but to complement these views and frameworks in the hope to enable a better understanding of globalisation processes and the human problematic derived from them.

In this research, I propose the re-conceptualisation of the *social problem* as it is presented in the social sciences and humanities, in order to enable this concept to better fit global complexity. In very brief terms, the idea that I propose as a unit of analysis suitable for a research agenda on globalisation, capable of moving beyond a purely economic perspective, is what will be referred to as the *global problematic*. In this regard, the global problematic needs to be a unit of analysis that is

flexible, variable, and dynamic: a unit of analysis that can systematically approach the complexities of the processes of contemporary globalisation, in particular those related to the experience of poverty and violence in post-traditional societies (5).

The re-conceptualisation of the *social problem* into the *global problematic* may be explained by the idea that the aim of the global problematic is to collapse all social problems into one single problematic or set of interrelated problems. The global problematic approaches the social problem not as a myriad of problems to be independently analysed – poverty, violence, abuse, exploitation, malnutrition – but as the intensification of one complex problematic. Therefore, the global problematic approaches the social problem as a *whole*. This re-conceptualisation unifies undesired social outcomes into one unit of analysis, instead of having them as dispersed fields of sociological inquiry where poverty, violence, and other social problems are approached independently and not as a human condition that is manifested regardless of cultural, geographic, and national specificities.

To elaborate on the forms taken by the global problematic in the specific case of Mexico, there is a need to think the notion of globalisation within the social sciences and humanities. The main concern in global analysis is the asymmetries in distribution processes among nation states; for example, of ideas, medicines, education, technology, security, risk, disasters, goods, wealth, and natural resources. Following on from this, I argue that contemporary globalisation can be characterised as a *process that organises and distributes **change** upon society*. Beyond an economics approach driven by international politics based on nation-states, I propose that the study of contemporary globalisation could also refer to the analysis of the main *social assemblages* and *power diagrams* that organise societies, rule mobility, and distribute the sensible in the world (6). This study analyses contemporary *modes* of distribution and change and the social assemblages and power diagrams attached to these modes. This theoretical statement uses the *global problematic* as its unit of analysis. Furthermore, an analysis of the global problematic needs to consider the *personal scale*, attending to attitudes, feelings, and *desire*.

In order to approach the social problem as a *whole*, and to deploy the concept of the global problematic theoretically, a particular viewpoint or subject position is required. Positioning a subject capable of registering the intensification and variation of the global problematic from an *ethical* perspective is essential to this work. It is a question of building or devising research instruments for the social sciences and humanities that respond to the *ethical* debates posed by contemporary globalisation, recovering the meaning of *responsibility* – not only *agency* – in social actors. It is my belief that to apply theoretical and analytical tools that consider the ethical dimension as an important component of understanding a social problem is of relevance. This is why I attempt to put assemblage theory and power relations theory together, and bring the *ethical*

dimension to the realm of social scientific enquiry. This has been proposed before by dependency theories and emancipation theories in the Latin American context. Work from authors such as Enrique Dussel and Franz Hinkelammert, among others, are good examples.

Systems Theory's Contribution to the Theoretical Framework

The present research comes close to some versions of systems theory (e.g. feedback, non-linearity, complexity, irreversibility, autopoiesis). In the first stages of my research and before adapting assemblage theory as a referential frame, the work of Luhmann (e.g. 1986, 1995, 1997) and Maturana (e.g. Maturana & Varela 1998) played a significant role, stimulating me to conduct research in a more complex fashion. Later on, borrowing from Latour's ANT (Actor-Network-Theory) (2007) and Habermas' *Excursus on Luhmann's Appropriation of the Philosophy of the Subject through Systems Theory* (1987), I developed a critique on the use of systems theory and *networks*. The latter is a rather new addition to academic discourse, which has often been associated with the Internet and new communication theories (e.g. Castells). I encountered several relevant contributions from these theories that need closer inspection, as the theoretical framework is overshadowed by an epistemological narrowness that prevents systems theory and ANT from fully unfolding the potentials latent in their use of complexity. For example, one problem with ANT and Latour's "parliament of things" (Latour: 1993: 142) is that from such a position it is possible to assume that *action* is the product of network communication-interaction among the elements within the network. Objects gain a certain type of agency that, following Latour, has not been properly identified by classical social science (Latour: 2007). Without disputing the fact that objects can affect other objects without human interference, the problem here is how to understand this supposed agency performed by objects. Below, an exaggerated example illustrates my point.

Suppose there has been a shooting outside a school whereby one boy is killed. Network theory can imply that one person shot the gun, and the gun killed the boy. In fact, and to be more precise, it was the bullet that killed the boy. Although it is 'true' and exact (with a high degree of certainty) to say that the bullet killed the boy, it is not *correct*, at least not from the point of view of assemblage theory and its proposed ethical subjectivity position. For assemblage theory there are not only connections between the nodes in the network, there is also interaction and co-evolution of elements and assemblages. The bullet killed the boy, the gun killed the boy, the man who shot the gun killed the boy, the weapons factories killed the boy, etc. All of these statements are also true and more complex than the reductionist (inductive or deductive) network theory statement that can nevertheless be scientifically proven: it is true that bullets can kill, therefore it was the bullet and the bullet's agency alone that killed the boy.

As a hypothesis that can be scientifically proven, the bullet example also exposes something else. It projects a distorted understanding of agency and it conceals individual and collective responsibility. To avoid this type of scientific distortion, but without sacrificing the tenets of complex theories regarding society, I employ assemblage theory rather than systems theory or ANT to approach the manifestations of the global problematic in Mexican territories. This is because the subjective position of the observer achieved by the use of assemblage theory allows for a multitude of answers: the bullet killed the boy, the gun killed the boy, the man who pulled the trigger killed the boy, the weapons factories killed the boy. The scenario is more complex in nature, and it is in this complexity of information where I aim to find human responsibilities, not only material causes and effects – as in the epistemology approach used to address social problems (7).

To satisfy the theoretical necessities of this research, I have chosen to apply *assemblage theory* and the notions of *power relations* and *knowledge* as posed by Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Michel Foucault, along with the more recent reformulation of this theoretical framework made by Manuel de Landa in his book *A New Philosophy of Society. Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (de Landa: 2006). In spite of the uncommonness of this theory within social science and humanities research today, I believe that this approach towards society can advance new understandings and trigger essential learning of global processes and the effects they exert upon the human realm of experience. Ideally, this contribution will enable a different approach that will lead to new paradigms, refreshing the research questions common in social sciences in order to contribute more critically to the development of socio-politics.

The presence of assemblage theory in social sciences is not an oddity. It has its antecedents in philosophy and other fields, though it is still quite new in social science and sociological research. Saskia Sassen has already introduced one form when implementing this type of theoretical approach in her book about territory, authority, and rights (TAR) (8). Although there are some similarities to Sassen's work in this research, the approach taken here towards the implementation of assemblage theory in regard to globalisation holds fundamental differences. While Sassen focuses on territory, authority, and rights as the axis of investigation, in the present research the *global problematic* or the *actual* experience of poverty and violence is the centre of analysis.

Main Concepts

The main concepts I elaborate upon in this research are the global problematic, power relations, a specific understanding of *knowledge*, and the so-called technolinguistic social assemblage. While the notion of globalisation remains quite ambiguous in global studies, even a certain consensus about its economic drive exists. I want to point out that the proposed notion of the global

problematic refers to globalisation in a broader sense than one which predominantly refers to economics – in particular liberal economics – as the central engine of global processes. The global problematic also moves beyond nation states' borders and stresses the idea that knowledge about globalisation processes does not necessarily require the nation state in order to explain the causes and events associated with the experience of the global problematic.

As becomes evident in the text, the problematic I expose with regard to Mexico searches for responsibilities within what can be considered Mexican social assemblages. The role of other nation states or international organisations and institutions are of secondary importance for this analysis, as it is the opinion of the author that the main processes triggering the experience of the global problematic among the Mexican population should be addressed by the people living with or close to the associated problems. It is true that the role of powerful international forces, such as the United States or transnational companies, have a significant impact both within Mexican territories and in terms of linking Mexico to the global arena. However, the erosion of sovereignty suffered in Mexico and the mismanagement of wealth and territories would not simply improve if and when the US were to cease to exist. The global problematic can only be explained from the individual or personal scale, as the scale of the nation state is simply the aggregate expression of smaller assemblages and groups within territories, organisations, and institutions. This is a crucial point since the ethical dimension of the research could not be addressed at the nation state scale. As nation states lack *ethics* as a possible attribute to be researched, my focus is on groups and individuals, and from an assemblage theory perspective I address ethical concerns that help to explain and understand the global problematic and its consequences.

While Chapter One presents a full explanation of the notion of an assemblage, it suffices to say here that the two main characteristics of *assemblages* are their heterogeneous nature and their fundamentally finite state. They usually can be named; one easy way to identify an assemblage is to think whether one can *name* it. Regarding the plane of consistency (9) in which we find assemblages, there are no all-encompassing entities, no absolutes. In the plane of consistency in which this research takes place there are no *pure/essential* entities. All entities, things, or assemblages are made of different components and parts, but the amount of component parts in every assemblage is always limited. This limitation, however, does not prevent change and mutation from taking place. The dynamic nature in assemblages is represented by their continuous exchange of material and expressive components with other assemblages in their vicinity.

The main characteristic of assemblages – to have a limited amount of component parts – is a condition that makes them subject to unique and individuated power diagrams or forces. The finite and limited nature of assemblages is an 'action' that separates and differentiates assemblages from

one another, makes them singular and unique, visible and identifiable. Assemblages are not 'actors' enmeshed in a network, as in *Actor Network Theory* models (Latour: 2007), nor essential beings or monads, but assemblages interacting with an integrative *outside* in a meadow (10), so to speak, not a network. Therefore, a broader definition of an assemblage may be that assemblages are always heterogeneous and finite, always *actual*. In one way or another, all assemblages, including social assemblages, are *machines* or synthetic wholes, forces that necessarily endure permanent *change*.

As previously suggested by Manuel de Landa, assemblage theory is a theoretical framework still in an early stage. It is not yet a finished or fully consistent theoretical and analytical apparatus. However, one of the advantages of applying assemblage theory to approach contemporary society is that it assists in sorting out the theoretical grounding that entails the articulation of the *micro* and the *macro* scales as variables to sustain sociological analysis. In this case assemblage theory considers that all entities are of a multidimensional nature and that they can have *simultaneous* effects at different space scales, the micro and macro included. Assemblages also allow the transversal of other theoretical divides of great importance, between concrete and abstract entities, between material and abstract machines (synthetic wholes). Assemblages may be either material or more abstract in nature. For example, a more material machine is the *military complex* (from bullets to aircraft carriers) in contrast to a more abstract machine represented by the common notion of *capitalism*. Both work in a different plane, one more material than the other. Nevertheless, both assemblages exert change and mutation in the *actual plane* because they have the power to change and exchange components with other assemblages.

Clarity is needed to understand the existing relations between *assemblages* and *power relations/diagrams*. I briefly explain here the forms taken by power relations, and this may be illustrated in the context of social assemblages. My understanding of power relations is based on Foucault's formulations in his essay *The Subject and Power* (1994), and may be summarised as being "an action upon and action on possible or actual future or present actions." This definition works as the leading idea for approaching social change. In this regard, one of my aims is to approach power relations – actions upon actions – among constituted social assemblages in Mexico, in particular among three social assemblages of special importance in the contemporary context: government social assemblages, private sector social assemblages, and society at large social assemblages. Given the vast and abstract nature of the notion of power relations as an action upon another's action, and following the proposed topic in this research, it is necessary to delimit the scope of this concept to the realm of socio-political power relations within modern nation states and their systems of communication.

In addition to the notion of power relations, I elaborate on the notion of *knowledge* as posed

by Foucault and Deleuze. What is knowledge? Following Deleuze (2000), knowledge is composed by the *visible* and the *articulable*. The visible is made of *visibilities* and the articulable by *statements*. The *visible* can be thought of as the world of appearance, it is the phenomenological world that stimulates the senses, the *pre-logic* state of environment-nature, the true realm of human contingency, an *outside* that overpasses our power. On the other hand, *statements* primarily refer to stratified language, the *logic* order of words and sentences that somehow institutionalise certain ideas and practices through linguistic and corporal compositions (e.g. greetings, handshakes) in the political and social realm. Hence, knowledge is made out of visibilities – *what we see* – and statements based on memory – *what we say and express*.

But knowledge is not visibilities and statements alone. In order to produce *knowledge* out of *visibilities* and *statements*, the subject – *I/we* – needs to take part in the process. The subject, which is always an assemblage, contributes to the formation of knowledge while adding the *thinking* process. Thus, knowledge is the product of the perceptions of *visibilities* on the one hand, and of *statements* on the other. However, without human *thinking* that correlates (pre-logic) *visibilities* and (logic) *statements*, knowledge cannot be stratified, or in other words, it cannot be *actualised*. Visibilities and statements do not determine the thinking process of human subjects but play an important role in defining human subjectivities. The importance of what we *see* (visibilities) and what we *say* (statements) takes its relevance.

This very brief explanation of power relations – force diagrams – and knowledge – assemblages – should assist in explaining the way in which a third social element, namely communication, finds its way into the analysis of the global problematic and the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico. Undoubtedly, the media has had an essential role in the transformation of contemporary societies. It is so if we consider the unprecedented development of communication technologies and the impact they have had upon social relations and possibilities in recent decades. Mass media outlets play an important role in filling up the distribution of *visibilities* and *statements* in post-traditional social realms. At this point it is important to underline that the present research is concerned not with content or discourse analysis within mass media and communication, nor with analysis of the bias of mass media or the logic of production of the symbolic performed by broadcast companies. Instead, it is based on an analysis of power relations (11).

Unwanted or undesirable effects of mass media can be traced back to two different situations promoted by the type of social and political communication present in Mexico. Mass media has supported high levels of *political simulation* via mass media outlets; this political simulation also allows and normalises social instability and fosters perplexity. Media has played an

important role in the intensification of the global problematic by making 'room' for, or literally giving airspace to, what I denominate *units of confusion*; something that, as I will argue, supports processes of instability, polarisation, and ultimately violence. These two practices, political simulation and the distribution of units of confusion, constitute an environment where fallacious social and political discourses thrive and contribute to the state of perplexity and polarisation in Mexican territories and groups (e.g. corruption, racism).

In summary, the present research approaches three social components of society. First, *power relations* will be translated into the analysis of 'actions-upon-actions' taken by social assemblages in Mexico. Second, *knowledge production* is translated as the analysis of what social assemblages *see*, *say*, and *think* around the global problematic. Finally, I will examine the role of *communication* as an influential part of the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico. This research asks why violence and poverty have been intensifying in Mexico during the last decades, while investigating the role of social and political communication in relation to these problems. What do people *see*, *say*, and *think* that enable the intensification of social problems to become so prevalent? What should we *know* in order to challenge this state of affairs? Following this line, I focus on how the means of communication play a role and participate in the intensification of the global problematic. I analyse how social and political modes of communication prevent necessary alternatives that may provide some relief to processes of instability, polarisation, and events of violence.

Research Question

There are two main questions guiding this research. How does the global problematic *actualise* and *intensify* in Mexico? And how do communication assemblages support the process of *actualisation* of the global problematic in Mexican territories?

Methods

In order to answer these questions I engage in an analysis of the political and social communication setting visible in Mexico during the period 1980 to 2010; three decades that have witnessed the introduction and implementation of neoliberal policies. In order to reveal the characteristics of the Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage during this period, I have used conventional data collection techniques combined with the heuristic device based on the theoretical framework introduced above, namely assemblage theory and power relations. As part of the research, I conducted interviews with selected informants: politicians working for the government, entrepreneurs from the private sector, and managers and representatives from civil society

organisations (12). This information was valuable in determining what the main *attitudes* were with regards to the communication possibilities found in each of the differentiated social assemblages. To collect data from society at large, I conducted participatory observation. In doing so, I took part in social protests organised by Mexican *Zapatistas*, as well as various demonstrations outside the Mexican Senate against new telecommunication legislation. Aside from interviews and observations, I conducted literary research related to the topic in academic publications, newspapers, and political magazines. I also analysed other available statistical data, such as information provided by the Mexican National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics (INEGI).

An Extra Note on Methodology

This research did not move around the analysis of relations of production nor the relations of communication, even if both approaches are implicitly present in the text. Rather, I focus on the logic of power relations in Mexico. Production and communication issues come *after* the notion of power relations and not the other way round. This contributes to the rather historical character of the research in contrast to a more scientific research outlook. The indicative nature of this research is visible in its being more descriptive than normative, and the aim of this analysis of Mexico is not to say what the country *should* be doing in the future (instead of demonstrating what it is going on now). On the contrary, the heuristic device of this research and the results it produces are indications, illustrations, descriptions, and abstractions to reflect upon; they are not instruction. I am concerned with revealing or bringing to light things that are already there but for the most part remain unnoticed (Mikunas & Pilotta: 1998).

A debate can be formulated around the difference and value of knowledge production between descriptive and projective research outcomes. Here, I only state that I think both approaches are necessary and complementary and that in my personal case I decided to devote analytical thinking to the indicative, more descriptive and abstract nature of this research instead of pursuing normative aims. To indicate relations, however, it is not to come up with a better integral solution to improving the complex situation of the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico. So, why try to put this approach in practice instead of a compact and clear research, where its delivery can be easily recognised and valued? To answer this question, it is my opinion that the work of the social sciences is falling short in its delivery to society. Social science research and methods are not providing society with the input expected from academia and other institutions alike. This is the reason why I have dared to try out a different heuristic device, one that aids us to pose the right questions and learn more about the negative effects of economic, political, and

cultural globalisation. At the end of this work, I remain optimistic that by continuing to elaborate and develop assemblage theory, the realm of the social sciences will be enriched as opposed to impoverished.

Chapter Organisation

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters. The first part, consisting of four chapters, deals with theoretical issues and in particular with building up a position of an observer that gives the possibility to approach the case study from an *ethical* dimension, not only from a scientific understanding of reality. This manoeuvre aims to recover some notions of *responsibility* in relation to human perspectives and actions, in contrast to the notion of *agency* alone. The bulk of the work in Chapter One is devoted to explaining and presenting in a comprehensive manner the basic tenets of assemblage theory, power relations, and a specific theory of knowledge. These elaborations are the building blocks upon which the proposed theoretical device is deployed in the following chapters.

In Chapter Two, the main aim is to generate a theoretical framework around the notion of contemporary globalisation. Some important theories of globalisation are presented and in this way help me to formulate the proposed characterisation of globalisation for this research. This process enables the construction of the necessary conditions with which to approach the case study from the perspective of assemblage theory. In Chapter Three, I propose the idea of the *global problematic* as a possible unit of analysis for global studies, one that goes beyond economic and nation state explanations, but which stays within the boundaries of social science disciplines. I present the main characteristics and forms taken by what I define as the *global problematic social assemblage*; the experience of poverty and violence at the personal scale. Of particular importance in Chapter Four is the description of communication and the *technolinguistic social assemblage*. In general, the elaborations around the technolinguistic social assemblage allow me in later chapters to approach the communicational setting in Mexico to address the question of *what it is*. Furthermore, to understand the communicational setting from the perspective of assemblage theory allows us to *observe* what the technolinguistic social assemble *does* in neoliberal economic and political conditions.

In Chapter Five, after outlining the main notions to be used in the research, namely social assemblages and the concepts mentioned above, I describe the Mexican context using these notions. This part of the research is aimed at providing a fair understanding of what the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico *is*, identifying some of its components, before moving to the realm of what it *does*. In Chapter Six, I put into historical perspective some of the most significant changes

experienced by the communicational setting in Mexico, and the power relations maintained by different social assemblages and specific forms of knowledge and composing desires.

Chapter Seven is an overview of the main *changes* experienced by the communication practices in neoliberal Mexico. In this chapter, attention is diverted from the understanding of what the Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage *is*, to a more *ethical* realm of analysis. Finally, in Chapter Eight I explore some of the *virtual* scenarios tenable for Mexico, considering the nature of the prevalent economies of power and knowledge in Mexican territories and the use made of communication technologies derived from these relations. I conclude with the implication that there is a problematic corruption of language in the social realm. This finding will ideally contribute to bridging the abyss opened by a systematic corruption in the use of language within public discourse as seen in neoliberal Mexico. In this regard, the elaborations in former chapters propose the position of an observer that allows an approach to the Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage from a more ethical account, rather than from mere observations of causality. This helps to elucidate responsibilities and *desires*.

The final conclusions deliver an explanation of the conditions upon which power relations and knowledge in Mexico are based, and the proposal to look at the potential in government assemblages to become a different form of *machine* than a neoliberal one. However, the final conclusions produce quite a feeling of unrest. Is it through new names and categories in social discourses that some studies can contribute to the fundamental change contemporary societies are expecting? The theoretical and heuristic devices deployed in this concluding chapter lead to the creation of new terminology (e.g. social assemblage, technolinguistic social assemblage, the global problematic, units of confusion) that will hopefully enable debate, discussion, and thinking related to violence, poverty, and communication in Mexico, from a different perspective.

Chapter One

THEORY AND SOCIETY

> It soon appeared to me that, while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations, which are very complex. Now, it seems to me that economic history and theory provides a good instrument for relations of production and that linguistics and semiotics offered instruments for studying relations of signification; but for power relations we had no tools of study. (Foucault: The Subject and Power: 1994: 327)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to lay out the main notions and theoretical tools for approaching the conditions of social and political communication in Mexico from the perspective of power relations and assemblage theory. As Foucault indicates, there are several methodologies in the social sciences that study relations of *communication* and *signification*. There are also abundant *historical-economic* approaches that look at the characteristics of production and infrastructure. It is my belief that in order to grasp the complexity of social and political communication in Mexico it is necessary to enrich the linguistic-semiotic analysis, as well as the historical and economic study of communication, with an analysis of power relations that is supported by assemblage theory.

The appropriate theoretical framework to reach the proposed ethical dimension of the communicative practices in neoliberal Mexico is based on *assemblage theory* coupled with the notions of *power relations* and *knowledge*. I propose this theoretical framework in order to move from what I consider scientific-essentialist standards towards ethical references when carrying out research. In this effort, a proposed theoretical framework grounded in ethical references instead of relations of causality needs to engage in an anti-essentialist perspective and epistemology. One strategy for anti-essentialist tasks is to break the essence of things into parts. *Assemblages* as well as *folds* are understood as having *insides*, *outsides*, *interiors*, and *exteriors*. The combinatorial sum (1) of these four dimensions, and in particular the interior and exterior, enable the projection of *appearances* into the inter-subjective realm of perception and the sensible. This inter-subjective space-scale can be regarded as the natural playground of the *subject* (us), where visibilities and statements are abundant.

The Fold and the Assemblage

To describe the abstract *fold* and the material *assemblage*, and the way these notions allow a decomposition of preconceived essences petrifying social objects of study, an example that requires a simple operation comes to mind. If we take a sheet of paper and fold it into an irregular oval (as Fig. 1 shows), an empty shape will form inside. Looking through the void in the shape will make it evident that the inside and the outside of this shape are essentially the same: they are both space. Under this theoretical proposition, what we observe is *inter-subjective space*, namely the natural 'playground' of the subject where visibilities and statements are abundant.
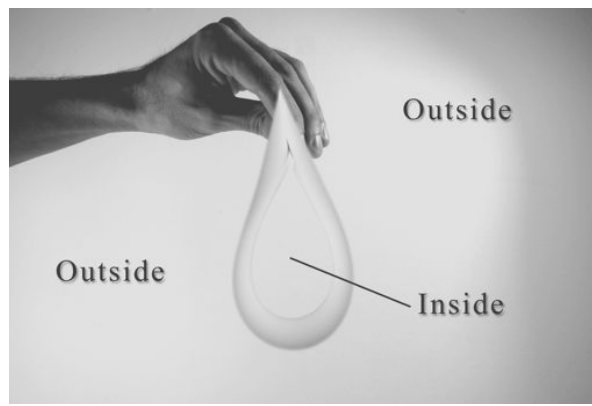
Figure 1 - 'Inside/Outside'

If we then take the folded shape and look at it along its curvature, we will notice that the outside of the fold is the exterior limit, the edge, the shape and the form of the sheet of paper (as Fig. 2 shows). The *exterior* is the material and more visible presence of the paper fold. This physical occupation of space manifests its actual existence. The exterior of the paper fold constitutes most of its appearance, an appearance that is the projection of assemblages into the inter-subjective space existing between visible assemblages.

Figure 2 - 'Exterior'

If we tilt the paper fold on an angle from where we can look inside, to the *interior* of the fold, we realise that the interior directly separates the empty inside from the outside (Fig. 3). It plays a structural role in the fold and it is also material in nature, as the exterior. It does not play an evident role in the exterior appearance of the paper fold; it is, however, a component part of it.
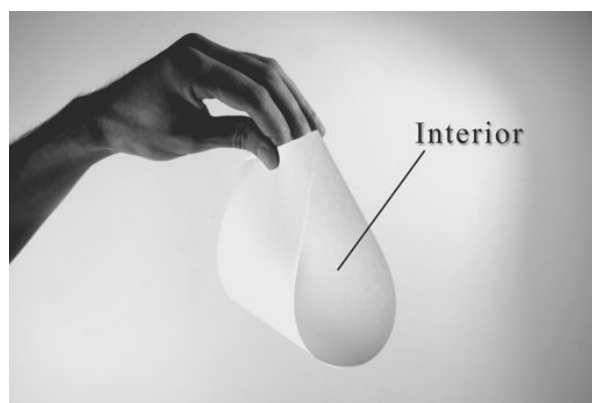
Figure 3 - 'Interior'

Appearance

Deleuze declared some animosity against Immanuel Kant because Kant had confused and merged the *exterior* of assemblages and wholes with that of their *appearance* (2). The implication of having the appearance and the exterior merged is of great importance, and in one way or another affects the complexity, the subject position from which we can approach objects and things in the world. To believe that the *appearance* matches the *exterior* in the same plane implies that the subject reads assemblages and wholes in a totalising fashion that promotes the construction of truth mainly from subjective grounds. It is a totalising view that prevents the existence of independent beings outside of subjective determination of the world, or of what is perceived as real by the sensible and by thought. It is a logic that tends to be essentialist towards objects and things. However, contrary to this, and in line with the heuristic device proposed in this research, *appearance* is considered to be what the subject makes out of the combinatorial sum – the synthesis – of the parts of the assemblage: inside/outside/exterior/interior/appearance. This very idea entails the existence of independent beings and makes implicit the notion that the constitution of the real and the sensible is more complex than the subjective perception of appearances alone.

To clarify the distinction between exterior and appearance I provide the following example. If we imagine our youthful selves playing with a friend or sibling – pulling, pushing, laughing, and playfully charging against one another – it is not difficult to also imagine how the situation of

playing could intensify to the point where control is less likely. At some point, the one we are playing with suddenly stops and takes a bended position. The bended person starts to move as with uncontrollable laughter, the body still bent, the face contorted and the eyes shut tight. Everything appears as if this person is laughing. But in fact it is not laughter that provokes this bodily reaction; the convulsions come from crying, due to a punch received in the playful pulling and pushing. The realisation is there: the bodily reaction is not what it appeared, not what we thought. Things are not always as they *appear*.

This is a clear example of why the exterior is not the same thing as appearance, as suggested by Kant. In a critique of the Kantian view, if we do not realise that our playmate is crying instead of laughing, the truth of the subject is imposed on the other. It does not matter whether the actual exterior of the other is expressing pain and tears, as long as we think it is laughter. From this perspective, the subjective truth is that our friend or sibling is laughing, regardless of whether he or she is crying. This rather simple example of the implication of matching the exterior and the appearance allows us to imagine the effects of the intellectual stance which privileges subjective perception and determination in more complex or perilous situations.

Western ontological thought that privileges subjective determinations over the real can be traced back directly to Descartes' premise "I think, therefore I exist," and to Locke and Kant. It prevents objects and things from being fully reckoned as independent beings outside the determination of subjects (e.g. solipsism). The negation of the fact that there is a world that exists regardless of our minds' reading of appearances can lead to catastrophic events and human actions. Slavery and colonialism exemplify the implementation of this incorrect match of appearances and actual exteriors of assemblages and persons, as Deleuze has argued. Dehumanising processes such as slavery during the seventeenth century can be linked to this negation, to not accepting that (human) beings are more than what we *think* they are, so that we can impose our subjective truth on them. It is certain that today there still exist forms of organised exploitation and enslavement of human beings around the world. Assuming that the ethical failure of the individuals involved in these contemporary practices and those of former times are equal, what makes the case of colonial slavery extraordinary is the fact that this chosen determination of reality, which justified and rationalised exploitation and genocide, was institutionalised and celebrated in academic and intellectual circles for centuries.

Rationality plays an important role in determining the success of this type of subjectivity. The predominance of the subject's determination over the world and the 'other' is the result of a particular rationality and epistemology or logic, both fundamental objects of study for Foucault. A rational epistemology that is confused with phenomenology (3) prevents true communication and

enforces monologues instead of conversations. It also emphasises process of subjective understanding and represses the processes of learning and realisation (like noticing the crying of our playmate). When these practices are institutionalised they can produce what Foucault refers to as diseases of the state; Nazism and Stalinism, for example. I would add to this list colonialism.

It can be said that certain rationalities and particular epistemologies can turn the *opinion* of one subject into the *truth* imposed on others. The notion of the assemblage challenges this Kantian problem and proposes to engage in the understanding and learning processes of the world *outside* our mind. This is a call to open up to the idea of bringing senses, feelings, and thoughts into our research; a challenge to current scientific methods and paradigms that are based on appearances and measurement as the main source and method of acquiring information and knowledge.

The Purity of the *Fold* and the Heterogeneity of *Assemblages*

The fold is an abstract idea, a metaphor. However, it can be materialised if we breach its conceptual purity and turn the abstract idea of the fold into the concrete notion of the assemblage. The difference between the fold and the assemblage is the fact that the assemblage is made, composed, and constituted by component parts. It is a *heterogeneous* entity. This fact enables assemblages to *be* and therefore to *interact* and *change.* After elaborating on the idea of the fold and how it helps to frame an anti-essentialist approach, now the focus is on its material conception, with the idea of the assemblage.

In order to develop the notion of assemblages for the social sciences in an organised fashion, some aspects related to the inside, outside, exterior, interior, and appearance are addressed. First, the *part-to-whole* relation present in assemblage theory; second, assemblage qualities of *interiority* and *exteriority*; third, the explanation of the *material* and *expressive* components found in assemblages; and lastly, the processes of identity stabilisation within the *territorialisation* and *deterritorialisation* experienced by assemblages. The explanation of these elements of assemblage theory will lead to a proper understanding of the basic propositions posed by de Landa, enabling a theoretical application of an anti-essentialist ontology in the social sciences that may complement more conventional approaches in the field. Assemblage theory centres not only on the multiplicity of objects in the world but on the ways these objects and things *interact*, *mutate*, and *shift function* to bring change and reproduce in permanent and necessary ways the human realm. Whether these assemblages are social, organic, or inorganic, the focus is on the dynamics of permanent *interaction* among them.

Organic, Inorganic, and Social Assemblages

Until this point we may differentiate three types of assemblages: organic assemblages, inorganic assemblages, and social assemblages. The first type of assemblages relates to the biological world of genes and life, the second type refers to geological materials, while the last type refers to those assemblages produced by human knowledge and action. This distinction between these differentiated types of assemblages, however, does not prevent them from being mutually articulated and in permanent interaction due to the process of world formation. Following de Landa, "Strata may be geological, biological or social, but in all cases they represent a way of constraining the spontaneous creativity of matter-energy, of linking it to stable, durable, stratified forms. (rocks, plants or animal bodies, social institutions)" (4). This being a sociological work, attention is directed towards social assemblages over organic (biology and nature) assemblages and inorganic (geology and materials) assemblages. The basic concern in this research is to identify the social assemblages that constitute contemporary globalisation. The relation that these social assemblages have with other organic and inorganic assemblages is considered to be secondary in comparison to the analysis made of the social assemblages that, for example, interpersonal networks and organisations, technology, markets, and language can constitute.

Part-to-Whole Relations

An example common to all assemblages and to the concept of part-to-whole relations is a bicycle. A bicycle is an assemblage of different component parts – tires (rubber), seat (leather), chain (iron), pedals (plastic), etc. – that are pieces/parts that work together in a synthetic way in order to form a more complex whole that is called a 'bicycle.' The synthesis of its parts allows a bicycle to develop external capacities, different from those of its component parts. The bicycle-*vehicle* itself – even if composed of different parts with their own identity (e.g. seat, chain, pedals) – also has a full identity as a *vehicle* assemblage. The bicycle is constituted as an assemblage, and as a machine that effectively exposes its own capacities only when attached to another machine (e.g. a person) that with his or her force makes the two work together, thus becoming a different assemblage. There is an important point to make here: the relations between parts of a whole are different than the relations between assemblages.

> A seamless whole is inconceivable except as a synthesis of the very parts, that is, the linkages between its components from logically necessary relations, which make the whole what it is. But in an assemblage the relations may be only contingently obligatory. While logically necessary relations may be investigated by thought alone,

contingently obligatory ones involve a consideration of empirical questions, such as the coevolutionary history of two species. (de Landa: 2006: 11)

Between the parts of a whole, as de Landa points out, the relations are *necessary*. For assemblages, relations are *contingently obligatory*. A bike without tires is not properly a bike or a vehicle. However, a bike can be ridden by children, students, a robot, and not only by professional cyclists. Social assemblages and their part-to-whole relations follow this same rule: whether a social assemblage is a minimal unit (e.g. individual, citizen, subject, a family of three) or a nation state, the analysis of social assemblages shares a similar logic. It is crucial to properly identify what is a necessary relation (a hand needs to be attached to an arm to fulfil its natural function) or a contingent one (like a hand utilising *any* tool) in order to properly specify the composition of wholes and therefore their potential exterior capacities as social assemblages.

Exteriority and Interiority Assemblage Relations

Deleuze provides an example of a possible interaction of two or more assemblages sharing the same space-scale dimension so that they can become intertwined in relations of exteriority:

> The wasp and the orchid provide the example. The orchid seems to form a wasp image, but in fact there is a wasp-becoming of the orchid, an orchid-becoming of the wasp, a double capture since 'what' each becomes changes no less than 'that which' it becomes. The wasp becomes part of the orchid's reproductive apparatus at the same time as the orchid becomes the sexual organ of the wasp. One and the same becoming, a single bloc of becoming, or, as Rémy Chavin says, an 'a-parallel evolution of two beings who have nothing whatsoever to do with one another'. (Deleuze: 2006: 2)

At this point, a more philosophical distinction is needed to frame assemblage theory for the social sciences and humanities. Several accounts of society are based on understanding objects and concepts as totalities existing within a fixed categorisation – the orchid (a plant) or the wasp (an insect) – often missing the 'becoming process' altogether. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish two different qualities in assemblages and entities in order to avoid totalisation or fall into essentialist organic accounts that focus on internal necessary relations composing constituted wholes. Within a philosophical frame, all assemblages and entities can be understood as having interiority and exteriority qualities.

While those favouring the interiority of relations tend to use organisms as their prime example, Deleuze gravitates towards other kinds of biological illustrations, such as the symbiosis of plants and pollinating insects. In this case we have relations of exteriority between self-subsistent components [such as the wasp and the orchid] relations which may become obligatory in the course of evolution. This illustrates another difference between assemblages and totalities. (de Landa: 2006: 11)

Assemblage theory endows the idea of assemblages with a dynamic nature, contrary to other approaches that stimulate totalising conceptions of things composing the environment (e.g. categorisation).

Taking the baseball game as an example, we find that as any other social assemblage, it exhibits qualities of interiority and exteriority. The necessary relations that form the game are partly constituted by the teams, players, and stadiums that make up the baseball leagues. However, this is not a complete account of what the baseball game *actually* is. Baseball as a *social assemblage*, and hence in terms of its exteriority quality, can also be seen as the relation between baseball and children, baseball and the fans, or baseball and the market.

In my opinion, social scientific research tends to engage in studying organic totalities: the interiority quality, the parts of wholes, logical relations. This implies that the social sciences should study and try to decode the nature of teams and baseball players and from there try to establish a hypothesis, a generalisation about the game (for example, all baseball teams have nine players), or in de Landa's thinking, a totalisation of the game (if it has more or less players than nine, then it is not baseball). This analytic focus erodes the possibility of accounting for the process of becoming of the game in relation to its outside environment. For instance, children may play with as many available players as possible, regardless of the official number of nine in professional baseball leagues. In the ontology offered in de Landa's theory, the option is to focus analytical effort on the exteriority quality of baseball as a *whole*.

This approach is interested in the actual capabilities, and therefore in the effects or *change assemblages*, stimulated in other constituted social assemblages sharing the same space-scale dimension: the relation between baseball-children, baseball-fans, baseball-the market, and so on. This is the focus where the analytic and rational thinking of de Landa's proposed ontology rests. This differentiation in focus (exteriority instead of interiority, contingently obligatory instead of necessary relations) can help the social sciences understand any given *phenomena* from this ontology – in this context, assemblage theory. Here is where the idea of the *whole* and its parts

takes its importance. The baseball teams and players are a part of the game, but it is different than the idea of the game as a *whole* or an *assemblage*. In this respect, relations of interiority among component parts are necessary, and relations of exteriority are contingently obligatory due to the uncertainty that is naturally embedded in the outside environment of assemblages (the playground of the subject and children). The forms in which these contingently obligatory relations between assemblages take place are means of exchanging material as well as expressive components. De Landa explains,

> In addition to the exteriority of relations, the concept of assemblage is defined along two dimensions. One dimension or axis defines the variable roles which an assemblage's components may play, from a purely *material* role at one extreme of the axis, to a purely *expressive* role at the other extreme. These roles are variable and may occur in mixtures, that is, a given component may play a mixture of material and expressive roles by exercising different sets of capacities. (de Landa: 2006: 12, emphasis in original)

Identity: Exchange of Material and Expressive Components

The mutating nature of assemblages and the changes in identity they experience after enduring contingently obligatory relations can be better understood in the way de Landa references this type of process: territorialisation and deterritorialisation. Assemblages forming the global process can migrate from one condition to another, playing with different materials and expressive components depending on different processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, "processes which stabilize or destabilize the identity of the assemblage" (de Landa: 2006: 18-19). The idea of change and identity in assemblages is significant.

> One and the same assemblage can have components working to stabilize its identity as well as components forcing it to change or even transforming it into a different assemblage. In fact, one and the same component may participate in both processes by exercising different sets of capacities. (de Landa: 2006: 12)

For example,

> In nature there are also, destratifying processes, which detach a particular structure from its fixed function, and open it up to a new one, like the mouth of a bird which is

detached from a flow of food, a purely digestive function, to become linked to a flow of song, a more expressive function, used to mark a territory and seduce mates. (de Landa, Interview in *Art and the Military*)

All social assemblages are subject to processes of deterritorialisation and destratification, which affect their identity. There is no fixed identity in assemblage theory, hence it avoids social essentialism or totalisations. Assemblages are notions that cannot be unequivocally categorised; in this theory entities are considered assemblages in a perpetual state of becoming, contrary to other sociological approaches that favour fixed categories and identities to work with as variables. De Landa explains,

Today, the main theoretical alternative to organic totalities is what the philosopher Gilles Deleuze calls *assemblages*, wholes characterized by *relations of exteriority*. These relations imply, first of all, that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different. In other words, the exteriority of relations implies certain autonomy for the terms they relate, or as Deleuze puts it, it implies that 'a relation may change without the terms changing'. (de Landa: 2006: 10-11, emphasis in original)

The complexity behind the idea of change without the terms changing can be explained with an example. For more than seventy years the Mexican national congress was a one-party majority. In the late 1980s and 1990s the congress became more plural in terms of the composition of political parties forming it. This means that the Mexican congress changed its exterior relations with political parties, and exchanged material and expressive components, thus changing in appearance the identity of the Mexican congress from a one-party congress to a more plural and democratic assemblage. In this process, the identity of political parties also changed due to the exchange with the national congress. It is also possible to question, however, whether the national congress as a whole changed its exterior relations with other social assemblages in Mexican territories aside from the constituted political parties. The exterior relations the congress has with civil society or marginalised groups in society are telling: while party plurality lends a democratic appearance to the national congress, its relations to other social assemblages are considerably anti-democratic. This in principle is not a contradiction. It is a sign of the complex identity performed by the Mexican congress and its simultaneous capabilities. This is a possible example of how to understand the idea of change happening without a change of terms.

The novelty in assemblage theory in relation to more conventional sociological approaches towards society is the dynamic nature of social assemblages analysis. Often, conventional approaches towards society ignore that given social categories are transitory. This dynamic nature in analysis is provided in this work by the idea of destratification. Destratification can be understood as multifunctional while the notion of deterritorialisation equals that of *change*. These two exterior capabilities of assemblages are understood as multifunction-destratification (knowledge) and change-deterritorialisation (power). Therefore, this theoretical approach conveys in mutability and the multifunctional character found in *things* or *wholes* the central concern that the instrumentation of the principles of assemblage theory make possible. I want to attach myself to a social science ontology that focuses principally on the exteriority quality or nature of assemblages, instead of focusing on their interiority qualities and internal logic of necessary relations as found in wholes.

Let me summarize the main features of assemblage theory. First of all, unlike wholes in which parts are linked by relations of interiority (that is, relations which constitute the very identity of the parts) assemblages are made up of parts which are self-subsistent and articulated by relations of exteriority, so that a part may be detached and made a component of another assemblage. (de Landa: 2006: 18)

Following the above descriptions of wholes and assemblages, it can be said that the parts constituting them also define wholes. The analysis made on entities assumed as whole primarily entails processes of understanding (e.g. measurement, categorisation). However, the analysis made on entities assumed as assemblages focuses on the exteriority of relations and entails a process of learning (e.g. realisation, formation of memory). This is the main perceptual difference between wholes and assemblages for social science and humanities research. If we want to *understand* social objects of study, then we engage in the analysis of the necessary relations that make things what they are. However, if we engage in processes of *learning*, the viewpoint needs to be different and the focus instead on the analysis of the exterior relations performed by assemblages.

In summary, it can be said that we gain *understanding* throughout the analysis of wholes, while we *learn* from the observation of assemblages. Both processes are necessary and complement each other in every realm of social action. Nevertheless, in current scientific paradigms the analytical tools and the position of the observer has been set under a premise which privileges understandings, often *radical subjective understandings*, while neglecting learning processes about the social world. In this regard, the desire to implement assemblage theory, within a scientific

framework that balances understanding and learning processes, comes out of the shortcomings in the methodology of social science and humanities research to analyse the social realm with greater complexity. The present research aims to provide one form to experiment with a different approach towards the social realm and global processes. It is also an attempt to lay down the basic notions to build the necessary analytical tools to engage in social research based on assemblage theory and power relations.

The How's and When's of Social Assemblages

Social assemblages are the product of human knowledge and action. In this section I elaborate on what constitutes *knowledge* and how *action* can be described as an analytical tool to be applied within assemblage theory principles in an organised and reasonably sociological way. In what follows I explain the process of assemblage formation as *knowledge-stratification* and the way in which assemblages are coupled to *power diagrams-forces* and to human action.

In order to match the relationship between knowledge and power, and partially explain the process of world formation, Deleuze, Guattari, and Foucault built up a philosophical framework, a theoretical *'dispositif'* that enables a complex, yet not total, way to approach human nature in general, and society and its parts in particular. These authors build on the ideas of assemblages and diagrams to underline a model of human nature. Away from an organicist-evolutionist paradigm, this *machinistic* framework to power and knowledge enables the relation between social assemblages – knowledge – and power diagrams – forces. However, in order to make possible the relations between power and knowledge, it is important to account for the *finitude* natural in assemblages. The main characteristic of an assemblage besides its *heterogeneous* nature is in fact the actual *finitude* of its components parts; a condition that makes it subject to unique and individuated power diagrams or forces. The finitude and limited nature of assemblages is an action that separates and differentiates them from one another, rendering them as singular and unique, visible and identifiable, and therefore subject to power relations and action.

Strata and the Spatiality of Knowledge and Thought

To elaborate on knowledge and its process of assemblage stratification and actualisation, we need to answer the question of what constitutes knowledge. Knowledge can be thought of as the combination of understanding and learning processes, but it can also be understood as the combination of the acquisition and transmission of knowledge and information (e.g. culture). However, following Foucault and Deleuze, and for the purposes of the heuristic device proposed here, knowledge shall be defined as composed of the *visible* and the *articulable*. The visible is made

of *visibilities* and the articulable of *statements*. The former may be thought of as the world of appearances; it is the phenomenological world that stimulates the senses, the pre-logic *outside* whereby nature is *uncertain inter-subjective space*, which we read by means of specific epistemology and rationality. *Statements* primarily refer to stratified language, words, sentences, and actions that somehow institutionalise and thus make political certain ideas and practices through grammatical compositions in the social realm.

Knowledge, however, is not pre-logic visibilities and logic statements alone. In order to produce knowledge and enable social assemblages formation out of visibilities and statements, the *thinking subject* needs to take part in the process. The subject contributes to the formation of knowledge with the thinking process, which is the product of the perceptions of *visibilities* and the *statements* of language. The role of the subject, whatever its positionality and its thinking capabilities, is constitutive of knowledge, and therefore it plays a role in assemblages' formation and change. Without thinking processes, an *action* that correlates *visibilities* and *statements*, knowledge cannot be stratified, and therefore social assemblages cannot be constituted, limited, named, or created in space (e.g. organisations, institutions). The importance then is how we *think* about what we *see* (visibilities) and what we *say* (statements). Assemblages are not 'actors' enmeshed in a network of communication (as is commonly advanced in ANT: Actor-Network Theory), but rather entities interacting with an outside environment, "in a meadow" so to speak, where the *how's* of social assemblages are determined by knowledge and the *when's* are determined by power relations and force diagrams.

Actions upon Others' Actions: Power Relations/ Forces/ Diagrams

The relations between social assemblages, which are the product of what we *see*, *say*, and *think*, and power diagrams may be approached and explained by an exploration of the forms taken by power relations among constituted assemblages. Furthermore, by exploring the characteristics of power relations in contemporary social assemblages, we might also touch upon another interesting notion, namely that of *force* (5). The way to approach the permanent interplay between forces applied among assemblages is based on the idea of power relations. In the context of social assemblages in particular, we could understand power relations as "an action upon and action on possible or actual future or present actions," as Foucault advances in his essay *The Subject and Power* (1994). The importance of studying power relations rests in the fact that, as Foucault reminds us, "[t]o live in society is, in any event, to live in such a way that some can act on the actions of others. A society without power relations can only be an abstraction" (Foucault: 1994: 343).

Power relations are relations of struggle, and *not* relations of communication or production.

They are relations between subjects that are tied by power diagrams and forces, which each subject or *whole* struggles to maintain or change depending on its particular expectation, future perspective, or teleology. Hence, power relations can be understood as,

> … a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult, it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions. (Foucault: 1994: 341)

Actually, "…the relationship of power may be an effect of a prior or permanent consent, but it is not by nature the manifestation of a consensus" (Foucault: 1994: 341).

The Virtual and the Actual: The Natural Playground of the Subject

In this section I elaborate on how different social assemblages undergo their process of *actualisation*. In the previous section the notions of power (action upon action) and knowledge (what we see, say, and think) were explained. At this point, and to follow up on the idea of globalisation in relation to power diagrams and knowledge stratifications or social assemblages, I present the main characteristics of the *virtual* plane, the plane of *immanence*, and the *actual* plane. Two questions may aid this explanation: What is the relevance of the idea of *actualisation* for the social sciences and humanities in general? How may we instrument the idea of actualisation as a research tool for the social problem, or in this case for the global problematic? In this regard, Deleuze explains the opposition between the *virtual* plane and the *actual* plane, their mutual dependency, and the permanent relation that exists between them, the so-called process of *actualisation*. He understands the *actual* as something related to the *real* – the *outside* of constituted assemblages, the 'playground' of the subject. In his early work *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze explains,

> We oppose the virtual and real: although it could not have been more precise before now, this terminology must be corrected. The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual. Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract; and symbolic without being fictional. (Deleuze: 2001: 208-209)

Despite the fact that the virtual remains with its ultimate characteristic to engulf much of the potency projected into the *actual* plane, this potency has a certain order that promotes in different moments certain *actualisations* instead of others from the *virtual* over the *actual*. This means that there is a timeline; the infinity of the virtual real has a disposition towards the actual world to be revealed, but keeping a limited outlet, a temporary permanence, which enters a process of becoming in the *actual* plane. Therefore, the actual plane is, according to Deleuze,

> … the complement or the product, the object of actualization, which has nothing but the virtual as its subject. Actualizations belong to the virtual [forces diagrams]. The actualization of the virtual is singularity whereas the actual itself is individuality constituted [assemblages]. The actual falls from the plane like a fruit, whilst the actualization relates it back to the planes as if to that which turns the object back into a subject. (Deleuze & Parnet: 2006: 113)

In a way, the virtual plane impacts the actual plane inhabited by individuated assemblages, where processes of deterritorialisation and power relations take place. However, if our main interest is to gain some understanding of the actual plane and our conceived outside, Deleuze alerts us that it is the plane of *immanence* where the exchange between the virtual and the actual plane takes place. In these terms, to make some sense of the implication of the virtual plane in our own world of sensibility – the 'actual' plane – we might think of the plane of immanence as the point at which the infinity of the virtual gains one degree of certainty and predictability towards the future that manifests in the actual plane or its actualisation.

> The plane of immanence contains both actualisations as the relationship of the virtual with other terms, and even the actual as a term with which the virtual is exchanged. In any case, the relationship between the actual and the virtual is not the same as that established between two actuals. Actuals imply already constituted individuals [assemblages], and are ordinarily determined, whereas the relationship of the actual and the virtual forms an acting individuation or a highly specific and remarkable singularisation, which needs to be determined case by case [diagrams and assemblages in a particular relation]. (Deleuze & Parnet: 2006: 115)

It is paramount to include the plane of immanence in the complex relationship between the virtual

and the actual, and their permanent exchange and mutual feedback. It is the plane of immanence where the actualisation of the world is definitely accomplished. The plane of immanence is the point where the potency of the virtual turns itself into a renewed entelechy (Abbagnano: 1994: 408) assumed by the actual plane. It is the field of pure power or power diagrams, to use Deleuze's expression.

What are the elements or forces from the actual plane that effectively evoke or somehow recall this specific memory of the virtual plane, that ultimately formalises itself in a necessary component of the world? Why do certain events occur instead of others? Why does a specific entelechy take precedence over another? What determines the 'virtual' in the 'actual' plane? What is the human subject position and power in all this? In theory, there is no hierarchy that leads the passing from the virtual to the immanent that reaches the plane of consistency and permanence, but instead there are 'promotions' that allow certain actualisations over others. Four elements or conceptual ideas can be approached to dig into the process and mutual affects of the virtual and the actual having the plane of immanence as a sector for effective exchange. Stratified knowledge (social assemblages) and power diagrams (forces) may be considered constitutive entities in terms of how the actual defines the virtual and the other way round. However, *language* and *technology* play a more concrete role in the virtual and actual transactions affecting humanly controlled spaces, structures, and assemblages.

Language and Technology in a Particular Relation or the Technolinguistic Social Assemblage

It may be argued that in contemporary society, language and technology are two fundamentally necessary elements defining the entelechy of the human subject or object of actualisation. Deleuze and Guattari (1997) maintain that language and technology are fundamental characteristics of human existence; that what marks human existence (e.g. the physical world, human geography) is both language and technology placed in a particular relationship. The dichotomy of language-technology may be seen as a core element in two different dimensions. The relation between language and technology in the actual plane is a relevant determinant of the relation between the virtual plane and the actual plane. The proximity of the virtual to the actual is arranged, promoted, or predisposed to a certain extent by the particular relation that exists in any given moment between language and technology (e.g. events of war and peace).

Here it needs to be stressed that the relation between language and technology, and the technolinguistic social assemblages formed from these relations, are always underscored – or relatively pre-determined – by the more abstract forces and limits set by knowledge (what we see, say, and think) and power (actions upon other actions) in a broad sense. We may, however,

understand language and technology as part of the plane of immanence in terms of the capacity of these particular permanent relations to help define the outlet of the actualisation processes of the virtual over the actual plane. The relation established by language and technology participates in the arrangement of the virtual to the actual plane. Therefore, language and technology underscored by knowledge and power relations are crucial in the process of assemblage formation.

Together, power, knowledge, language, and technology lend forms and stimulate the exchange proper of the virtual (potency) and the actual (material) planes. These four elements may be considered fundamental in consolidating the different instances of the process of actualisation of the virtual, and the process of immanence in relation to human existence. It is upon the actual plane where language, technology, knowledge, and power overlap and interact, shaping human existence and predisposing the order that the virtual plane of potency maintains in relation to the generation of the entelechy of the world, and the *real* for human existence in its *actual* plane.

It can be argued that language and technology are of a material nature and hence society produces, consciously or not, the *distinctions* between language and technology depending on subject positions. This statement carries deep implications if we consider that it is not language and technology as entities or social assemblages that determine the plane of immanence, and hence partially determine the transit from the virtual to the actual plane. Instead, it is the way in which society, the human subject, differentiates language and technology, and creates technolinguistic social assemblages in a specific way and with specific purposes, which promotes certain *actualisations* or particular technolinguistic relations over others. In fact, understanding language and technology as material elements and individuated assemblages evidences the relevance for society in the way it interacts, thinks, and creates distinctions between language and technology. It is not language and technology that define the exchange proper to the plane of immanence and its outcome over the actual plane, but instead it is the *differentiation* and the use made by social assemblages, human subjects that can determine and enact the final influence or forms of evocation from the actual plane over the virtual one.

This plane of potential exchange – the immanent – where the subject *thinks* and differentiates language and technology in a particular relation, can be explored to study contemporary globalisation by looking at the way in which governments, the private sector, and society at large make this differentiation and relational process between language and technology. Different rationalities, intentions, perspectives, and practices might bring different forms of relations and differentiations of language and technology, forming diverse technolinguistic social assemblages interesting for analysis. The aim then is to learn about the formation of the infinite particular, possible relations between language and technology under the bases of particular

perspectives set by constituted social assemblages. Nevertheless, knowledge and power are the elements that set the conditions on language and technology for the formation of these infinite particular relations, and the specific marks produced on human existence or 'our actual' plane.

Finally, the particular relation between language and technology – the technolinguistic social assemblage – may be pinpointed as one possible source of the global problematic and its actualisation. The subject and its thinking power, as an individual or as an interpersonal network, however, are what precede the formation of particular relationships between language, technology, and other assemblages. Ultimately, subjects are responsible for the technolinguistic social assemblages produced.

Synthetic Power: Money and Language

Here, a note on the theoretical dimension of synthetic power and assemblages. Assemblage theory and a more pluralistic understanding of the social realm will address the characteristic attraction to leaders and leadership as a process of synthetic power. The differences between leadership and synthetic power are mainly theoretical. Synthetic power is, to use Spinoza's terminology, a process that *composes relations* (6), instead of decomposing relations between assemblages. Synthetic power processes are not constrained to the figure of an individual or group of individuals because it can be the case that other types of entities or forces induce these processes, which compose relations in order to achieve certain aims.

One example are natural catastrophic events like an earthquake or tsunami, where the material objective conditions in certain moments enable specific synthetic figures, human or otherwise, as engines to compose relations in a synthetic fashion, thus creating actions proper to synthesised forces. Nevertheless, synthetic power entails plenty of social capabilities, and this also means that the synthetic power effort of society at large and civil society are quite limited if compared to the synthetic power of government assemblages and private sector assemblages, which use the control of money and the manipulation of language and meaning as the main elements for synthesis, or in turn to achieve synthesis (e.g. the use of propaganda, corruption).

The premise here is that the main synthetic forces at the personal scale in contemporary global territories are money and language. Money and language need not be confused with the common notions of capital and discourse. These two forces, money and language assemblages, predispose particular relations between language and technology; as previously mentioned, these form technolinguistic social assemblages that actually *mark* human existence. Money and language are forces that shape the limit, edge, and form of assemblages, and in one way or another determine among many other relations that of the communication setting in Mexico.

Chapter Two

GLOBALISATION AND SOCIETY

> It is more congruent with the facts to think that there is no guaranteed progress or
> evolution without the threat of involution and retrogress. (Ortega y Gasset: 1993:
> 102, Translation mine)

Contemporary Global Context

Disperse and complex as the analysis of contemporary globalisation and the manifestations of the global problematic is, it nevertheless remains a human endeavour. This accounts for the importance of gaining understanding of a process which is entirely within the human domain and intellect. In the interstice between the global and local scales a conventional concept rests: the modern nation state. Its definition in social sciences makes reference to four of the main component parts of any nation state or national assemblage: territory, population, government, and the ability to enter into relations with other nation states. Without one of these components, a nation state fails to be constituted properly within the context of contemporary globalisation and the international arena (like a bike without tires). Under the context of contemporary globalisation, these are the main component parts that make the nation state social assemblage *what it is*.

Different arrangements among territorial, government, and other social assemblages exist depending on the particular geographical, political, or international situation that these assemblages are subjected to during a certain time in history. The singular conditions experienced in differentiated social territories are at the same time what shape the identity and capabilities of a nation state as a more complex social assemblage. The possibility of serious disruptions – deterritorialisation – in the proper adjustment between the social assemblages composing a nation state is a condition that changes depending on social territories and their specificity of events.

In the case of Tibet, we see a government in exile aspiring to become nation state, struggling against its conflicting counterpart, in this case China. This conflict also affects the nature of the Tibetan nation state at the international level. In this situation, the *government social assemblage* is necessary in the constitution of any modern nation state, and without it nations fail to become fully functional. This condition forces the Tibetan government to interact, with overwhelming asymmetries or disadvantages, with other nation states. If the example of contemporary Tibet works to exemplify the problems related to the lack of consolidation of a government assemblage (interpersonal networks and institutional organisations), territorial disputes that bring violent

conflict also generate deep disruptions to nation state formation and consolidation. This is visible in the former Yugoslavia between Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The capabilities of these countries to interact without overwhelming asymmetries with other nation states in the international arena were restricted by unstable territorial and political conditions.

Beyond a poor constitution of government, disrupted social territories, and borders that affect the actual capabilities of a nation state on an international scale, there are also disruptions of the social assemblage composed of population. Partial or complete displacement can be the consequence of violent conflict, as evidenced by the more than four million displaced people in Colombia. Similar conditions of instability can be found in Palestine, Sudan, and in many other examples of such conditions suffered and replicated in differentiated social territories around the world. All disruptions mentioned here destabilise or deterritorialise the identity of a nation state and its social territories, and affect the international capabilities of these assemblages in their natural field of interaction – the international arena – a field where national sovereignty plays a fundamental role. In the case of Mexico, these types of disruption are present to a certain degree. First, the government lacks legitimacy among a significant part of the population. Second, massive Mexican transnational migration is an expression of disruption in terms of the national population. The increasing number of internally displaced people due to violence also adds to the crisis. Third, Mexico currently endures two difficult and violent boarders, to the north with the US and to the south with Central American countries. To set a determinate scope on the idea of globalisation and the international community, the following section will elaborate on economic, political, and social theories used to describe contemporary global societies.

Contemporary Globalisation Social Assemblages

It can be suggested that contemporary globalisation contains numerous populations of social assemblages shaping the global process. Labour unions, governments, civil associations, NGOs, political parties, the military, social classes, (etc.), share the fact of being social assemblages with component parts, but also of having their own capacities as wholes in determinate space-scale dimensions (1). Social assemblages have limited component parts that are linked by necessary relations to make whole what they are (e.g. a labour union without workers is not a labour union). However, the relations as assemblages between constituted labour unions and state bureaucracy or other organisations is contingently obligatory and needs the consideration of empirical questions. It is with these uncertain exteriority relations between constituted assemblages that this dissertation research focuses on how to approach the issue of the global problematic and its intensification in Mexico.

The Cold War and New World Order Assemblages

I consider *contemporary* globalisation as a period covering approximately three decades from 1980 to 2010. Within this period two historical events can be thought of as having been highly influential in contemporary global society and its historical transformation. First, the end of the Cold War, which affected the international geopolitical balance and discourse, and opened the door to different language reductions (e.g. the use of the word *terrorist* instead of *communist* as appointed enemies of US hegemony). Secondly, the inception of new communication technologies in society, which affected social, economic, and political assemblages worldwide.

The end of the Cold War reached its maximum manifestation with the emotive 'fall' of the Berlin Wall in 1989. However, the restructuring policy known as *Perestroika* was the component that provoked the Soviet Union to crumble. The communist political systems of organisation de facto 'collapsed,' confronting the world with the need for a *new* international and geopolitical order capable of adjusting to these international historical events. The weakness of the international multipolar model that temporally emerged after the breakdown of the Soviet Union advanced another international process: contemporary global society migrated from a bipolar (US versus USSR) geostrategic political world system, based on nuclear balance and deterrence, to a unipolar world system guided solely by the US and its military and economic power (Jalife-Rahme: 2007). The unipolar model or 'new world order' led by the US and its allies in the international arena (including Israel and Great Britain) is materially fed and ideologically propelled by a form of capitalism that has come to be regarded as neoliberalism.

Radical libertarian US economist Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of Economics are known for being prominent ideologues and articulators of the economic and social model of neoliberalism, adopted by US national and foreign policy during contemporary globalisation. During the 1980s, Friedman functioned as the advisor to Reagan's republican administration, while in the UK Frederic von Hayek served a similar role to Thatcher's government. One of the central aims posed by radical libertarian ideology is to dismantle and reduce the control of the nation state apparatus over economic policies and assets, resources and means of production, which at the same time give way to private property and investment while displacing other types of ownership (e.g. public or collective, communitarian property). The neoliberal project is underscored by a political democratic background, which is based on the idea of *freedom* (2).

Radical libertarianism departs from a type of utopia. Behind the principle that *man* needs to be free without causing harm to others, the private individual, the true entrepreneur, does not need ethical principles or state regulation to conduct his activities – since the market is perfect – but

instead relies on a legal system that prevents abuses and sorts out conflict (Hinkelammert: 1995). Friedman claims that the state figure is an onerous activity for society at large, and that public administration performs inefficiently, expensively, and corruptly. The main problem with contemporary libertarianism, however, is similar to the one of the model that preceded it, and which has been amply criticised, namely the absence of accountability and transparency in non-government/private enterprise activities.

Unfortunately, libertarian thinkers do not resolve the fact that political corruption turns into industrial corruption when private hands manage the resources, wealth, and profit produced by society at large (e.g. corporations). The radical libertarian model applied since the 1970s (e.g. in Chile since 1973) shows a lack of fundamental ethical principles and swaps too easily to exclusively pragmatic, materialistic intentions and desires. The product of this monetised and materialistic political and economic system derived from radical libertarian ideology and rationality is a dehumanised state and a society obsessed with accumulation and security. Johan Galtug explains the result of implementing radical libertarian economic systems on a global scale after the end of the Cold War in the following terms,

… there is structural violence brought about by the rapid expansion of the market system all over the world. A basic aspect of that system is monetization, meaning that what is required for basic needs satisfaction is available only against money, not labor, for instance. With less than one dollar per day the basic needs for food, clothes, shelter and health care cannot be met. As a result people die, probably now to the tune of 100,000 per day, of under/mal-nutrition, -clothing and housing and the lack of health services for the diseases that follow, because they are also monetarized and unsubsidized. At the same time wealth accumulates at the top. Many people hate this. (Galtung: 2002)

Radical libertarian rationality can turn the individual blind to fundamental aspects of life; ideas such as uninterested sharing (not only through inheritance or philanthropy), reciprocity (not only focusing on gain and profit), and respect for life and difference can sometimes be considered revolutionary and against progress, capitalism, and civilisation. Radical libertarianism is a totalising ideology that imagines the police and military institutions as the only way to maintain the advances of capitalism and liberty against any perceived anti-modern backwardness, tradition, fundamentalisms, or for that matter, lack of agreement. It is an ideology that stops negotiating and starts imposing specific values behind the facade of moral superiority and human progress

(Hinkelammert: 1995).

The Marxist view of the process of the destructive creation of capitalism seems to have been inserted into the equation that permits the destruction of whatever resembles the *public*, and moves towards the creation of a libertarian society based on commodity exchange in a monetised and privately owned world. This model has been challenged in political, economic, and social realms around the world. Strategic social resistance and active struggles against the imposition of radical libertarianism and neoliberal social systems of organisation is a historical characteristic in contemporary globalisation, as seen with mobilisations alternative to economic globalisation (e.g. EZLN- *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, Occupy Wall Street, *Movimiento de los Indignados*).

Parallel to the political and economic ideological processes, another historical event of high signification for contemporary global society was the advent of new communication technologies, with the Internet placed securely at the top of the agenda. The Internet's association with an information revolution in the 1990s is often explained by its innovative capacities (interactivity) that contrasts with conventional media (i.e. radio, television); noteworthy is the relative easiness and speed with which society, governments, and businesses on a global scale have adopted these interactive technologies. The inception and adoption of new communication technologies in society increase the speed, mobility, and quality of communication, amounting to an authentic revolution at a global scale. The optimistic view of technological developments in specific communications, however, is obscured by diverse problems associated with issues such as the widening of digital divides and other secondary negative effects. For example, a 'new' form of polarisation occurs when society, or rather asymmetrical global societies, which had already been historically divided by wealth, are suddenly polarised further by unequal access to technological and informational resources; whereby these resources cannot be used for economic and human development.

The optimism brought about by the end of the Cold War and the communication revolution contrasts with the historical facts and collective memory accumulated in recent decades. The end of the Cold War and the impressive technological evolutions since have not been able to abate the harsh experience of poverty and violence in societies and national territories. On the contrary, within contemporary society the possibility to live in dignity and security remains rather unstable. Economic polarisation has intensified throughout world regions and within rich and poor nation states, regardless of any technological advances or economic growth. Beyond social problems associated with poverty alone, international and national conflicts have raised concerns in contemporary world societies due to their intensity and brutal violence. The tragedy in the former Yugoslavia, genocides in Rwanda, the invasion of Iraq, and the conflict in Colombia are all

unfortunate examples that have been witnessed during contemporary globalisation.

Tracing some early warning signs of the new problematic after the end of the Cold War, in 1993 the German economist Franz Hinkelammert identified the new ways and forms adopted by those groups-assemblages and forces that resulted from the new geopolitical arrangement after the 'victory' of capitalism over communism. Following Hinkelammert, one of the problems brought about by the 'new world order' global paradigm is the increase in *exclusion* (3) among social groups and nations, triggered by the enactment of neoliberal policies worldwide. He continues by saying that this exclusion, mainly of Third World populations, directly affects the First World. One of the effects is migration, which forces the construction of walls to make enclaves in economically *privileged* regions: 'Fortress Europe,' 'Fortress US.' The Berlin wall did not let people *out*; the new walls will not let people *in*. Hinkelammert indicates that the walls will rise between Europe and North Africa, between Western Europe and the ex-communist countries, and between Mexico, the Caribbean, and the US (Hinkelammert: 1995).

Fifteen years after Hinkelammert's formulations there is a wall being built between Mexico and the US. There is a wall located between Spain (Europe) and Morocco (North Africa), advanced during the José Maria Aznar conservative administration in Spain (1996-2004). However, Hinkelammert mistakes the location of the third wall, which he places within European territory between Western and ex-communist countries. Instead, this wall can be seen in Israel between the Jewish state and the Arab world. Despite the end of the Cold War and technological advances, the contradiction and lack of agreement in contemporary globalisation is evident in the example of the *walls*. A global world that was reunited in 1989 is to be split again, now under different paradigms and contradictions. The contemporary social and international divide is mainly at an economic level instead of being set by different political and ideological positions and beliefs.

In theoretical terms, we can see how social assemblages change and mutate, and therefore shift the place where 'walls' dividing territorial assemblages are localised. A new geopolitical composition also brings about a new spatial distribution of the main social assemblages participating in the process of contemporary globalisation. The walls can be seen as the strategy to constitute differentiated territorial social assemblages; the walls are a material component that keep the *appearance* of difference between the exterior and interior of separated territories.

After Contemporary Globalisation

The Cold War global assemblage was characterised by a bipolar system and the post-Cold War period is characterised by a unipolar world model. After the period I have labelled as contemporary globalisation (1980-2010), the world system may be forming a multipolar model. In the last thirty

years, the countries leading the newly formed world system or 'new world order' have been constantly reproducing social and political contradictions on a global scale in order to impose specific and often biased market conditions in different times and territories, something paralleled only to authentic imperialist policies (e.g. Hardt and Negri: 2000). The retrogression produced by neoliberal globalisation processes and the homogenisation this entails has made room for counter processes. For instance, multipolarity in the process of *deglobalisation* (Jalife-Rahme: 2007) is one form that the process of mutation of economic globalisation has taken during the last three decades.

The prime example of deglobalisation is the case of oil and gas. During the 'new world order' period oil resources were highly concentrated in the hands of a few transnational firms (e.g. Texaco, Exxon, Shell, Chevron). However, towards the end of the first decade of the current millennium, ninety-five per cent of the global reserves of oil and gas were under the control of state companies from countries such as Russia, China, Iran, and Venezuela. This transition left private corporations with a meagre five to ten per cent of the oil and gas reserves and resources to use for speculation (Jalife-Rahme: 2007). In this context, if contemporary economic globalisation has been characterised by financial *alchemy* performed by the Anglo-American banking system, Jalife-Rahme tells us that *after* contemporary globalisation and the process of deglobalisation is triggered, we will see the return of political oil and gas *chemistry* as the ruling asset in the international arena. This benefits emergent nation states like Brazil, Russia, India, and China (the co-called BRIC grouping) in particular.

The period after contemporary globalisation will probably be characterised by multipolarities in the international political and geostrategic arenas, while ideally on the economic front the international community will increase the power of anti-imperialist politics. Contemporary globalisation has been problematised by different scholars and thinkers. In recent times, experts such as Giddens (1991), Klein (2008), Harvey (1990, 2006), and many others, have offered useful descriptions and understandings of global social processes.

Risk Society

In the early 1990s Giddens elaborated on the notion of *risk* – or *manufactured risk* – in post-traditional societies to frame the characteristic mindset of contemporary modern society. Giddens traced the obsession with the notion of *risk* typical of modernity as it hatched during the seventeenth century, and studied its effects in a highly technological modern society. Within the post-Cold War international political environment, many round tables and debates addressed the intensification and emergence of new forms of violent conflict and the effects of the global problematic (violence and poverty) worldwide, highlighting the notion of risk (Beck: 1992).

What are the consequences of managing society under the premises of manufactured risk? In this regard, it can be said that the idea of risk is connected to a modern entrepreneurial mind where gain and loss (gambling) regulate decision making. The norm within a *risk society* schema is not moral or ethical, but pragmatic, similar to what libertarian philosophy proposes. This pragmatism based on the idea of risk is harmonious with modern capitalist practices. That is why Giddens regards our contemporary global period as the intensification of the *modern* instead of a radical change in the social paradigm triggered by new technology, or as some other authors suggest when speaking of *post-modernity*, another term profusely debated in the 1990s.

In Giddens' account, the contemporary global period is not different from the modern reflexive one that can be traced to Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Smith, and Kant. The way to understand the value of goods/commodities and the rules of exchange and socialisation does not vary under the perspective of risk; on the contrary, it intensifies the modern principle of competition and gains found in capitalism and post-traditional societies. Hence, the idea of manufactured risk in contemporary society reinforces the status quo set by the 'new world order' imposed after 1989, and which is based on the modern principles elaborated before and during the European Enlightenment (Giddens: 1991).

The Rise of Disaster Capitalism

For Naomi Klein, the practical utility of manufactured risk and the uncertainty associated with it have been taken as opportunities to profit from tragedy. In her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Klein: 2008), disaster capitalism is outlined as the way in which natural and human disasters are dealt with by certain interest groups in order to make economic gain and profit and to dismantle public property in favour of private ownership. In addition to the monetary and economic aspects of this strategy there are ideological components. In order to transfer public wealth to private corporations, the idea behind disaster capitalism is to enable shock tactics or to benefit from shocking events (e.g. tsunami, military coup) in order to actually appropriate the process deceptively called 'reconstruction' of a destroyed area or society, thus finishing the job of the original disaster by obliterating what is left of the public sphere. Sassen's formulations (2006) come close to this view of globalisation when she asserts that the global process is mainly one that reinforces the denationalisation of the modern nation state by losing control of strategic domains and privatising its public assets. However, Sassen does not single out disasters as the core element in the functioning of economic power groups, something central to Klein's argument.

Klein and Giddens offer two practices – *disaster* and *risk* respectively – found in contemporary society for accumulating wealth, practices which have been articulated continually in

economic and political realms to materialise the migration from public to private property schemas in society. Nonetheless, there are other ideas that explain the current situation experienced in contemporary society.

Flexible Accumulation by Dispossession

Two years before Klein's publication of the *Shock Doctrine*, Harvey published *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (2006). In this book, Harvey proposes a similar formulation about the unethical and excessively pragmatic economic approach to development sustained by diverse power groups, interpersonal networks, and organisations in the control of wealth. In particular, he elaborates on the notion of *flexible accumulation by dispossession*. Different from Klein's hypothesis of disaster capitalism, Harvey points to *debt* as the main strategy for achieving an international capitalistic accumulation of wealth.

This focus on debt draws on the figure of Milton Friedman and his followers. Several economists linked to Friedman's political and economic agendas were in charge of the international financial institutions forming the 'Washington Consensus,' and other important US based and international organisations, responsible for managing massive financial debt in many developing countries during the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Mexico, Argentina, Indonesia). Debt can be used at the international level to manipulate national wealth by controlling interest rates, while domestically borrowing generates debt by credit that is given to certain groups of the population, encouraging national corruption. The negative effects of flexible accumulation by dispossession, as Harvey explains, are poverty and a weakening of social and collective apparatuses aimed at controlling and accounting for the activities of economic forces. Following Harvey, this system of accumulation by dispossession produces severe disparities and asymmetries in the social realm, with dire consequences for the population, which is dispossessed of vital and monetary resources.

Harvey's contribution to the global debate was first proposed in his earlier work *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990), where he presented the notion of time/space compression: the world appears to be 'shrinking' due to rapid developments of new communication technologies (e.g. satellites) and the increment in speed in transportation achieved during the twentieth century. Harvey explored the *new* global paradigm but from a different perspective: he identified the increase of speed in human activity and transportation capabilities as a social factor that shaped the contemporary global assemblage, the terms of the condition of post-modernity. The modern space composition under the pressure of intensified speed brings *change* and adaptation at all levels of social organisation and therefore interaction. Harvey, from a Marxist understanding of the social, highlights several material consequences of the prevalent ways of life and politics during the early

1990s, hinting at the possible changes in the processes of dispossession and accumulation. Harvey's work helps us think about globalisation and post-modernity as a new device for cartographers, geographers, and thinkers due to deep reconfigurations in the material world.

Global Scapes

The prevalence of an understanding of globalisation as a process related to international economic integration, and as an intensification of human activity, communication, and interaction, is widespread in academic and economic realms. However, there are other approaches to understanding globalisation that are different from the eminent economic and socio-political accounts. Other approaches beyond the idea of risk, disasters, speed, and processes of denationalisation are visible in Arjun Appadurai's abstract assessment of globalisation (1990). Appadurai interprets and describes the process of globalisation as global *scapes* where human imagination plays a crucial role in linking and interconnecting them. Dissecting the idea of globalisation into its important components, he identifies five such scapes: *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *finanscapes*, and *ideoscapes*. In this way Appadurai relates all these spheres of human existence in a more coherent ensemble. People, information, technology, economy, and ideology encompass what Appadurai reads as globalisation.

Different from the pragmatic approach proposed by Giddens and the Marxist account made by Harvey, the idea of using a multidimensional, abstract analysis to approach globalisation, such as that offered by Appadurai, poses a specific problem. By adopting a more complex understanding of the global process, the question remains of how to find a suitable *unit of analysis* other than the nation state that allows for a multidimensional and abstract understanding of contemporary globalisation. This concern is not minimal and it rests at the core of the possibility of properly defining the idea of globalisation for future social science and humanities research.

Global Crises

Looking further at the problem of identifying a suitable unit of analysis for approaching globalisation, we might cite Martin Shaw (1994) who, from an internationalist point of view, presents a possible alternative. Shaw emphasises the importance of the concept of global crises (natural or human made) in order to better understand the development of globalisation and global societies. He points out that, "the emergence of global society is, however, beset by contradictions. Indeed one of the principal ways in which we can identify a global society is by the development of global crises" (Shaw: 1994: 2). He continues,

Global crises matter not merely because of their widespread harmful effects to human beings – poverty and unemployment, pollution and drought, disposition and genocide. They are important too because it is through such crises that we can increasingly identify global society and the development of its institutions. Through an understanding of crises we can begin to grasp the forms which global society is taking and the processes transforming it in the present historical period. (Shaw: 1994: 2)

Shaw's views on globalisation are valuable for this research because they form part of the general argumentation that the development and management of global crises is a fundamental approach to global processes as a whole. In this regard, but with some fundamental differences to Shaw's approach, I advocate in this work that the concept of the *global problematic*, set over and against the notion of *global crises*, is a suitable unit of analysis to address contemporary global processes. The main difference between global crises and the global problematic is that the global problematic may be thought of as a matter of intensification, contrary to the idea of an outbreak that can be associated and is implied in the notion of crises. Crises may be regarded as extraordinary events in society, while the global problematic is actually a permanent condition experienced in different intensities, sometimes in the intensity of a crisis.

Before going into the properties and characteristics of the so-called global problematic in detail, I will briefly touch upon one additional view of globalisation as a means to reach a resolution of how to define and set a unit of analysis for our contemporary global process, suitable to be used under the analytical tools provided by assemblage theory principles.

Mechanics of Globalisation

Majid Tehranian's definition offers a more mechanistic and maybe more analytical understanding of globalisation. Tehranian (1998) describes the global process as a process with elements and engines, focusing on the parts and material-organisational components that help globalisation realise its permanent entelechy. He states,

Globalization is a process that has been going on for the past 5000 years, but it has significantly accelerated since the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. Elements of globalization include transborder capital, labour, management, news, images, and data flows. The main engines of globalization are the transnational corporations (TNCs), transnational media organizations (TMCs), intergovernmental organizations

(IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and alternative government organizations (AGOs). From a humanist perspective, globalization entails both positive and negative consequences: it is both narrowing and widening the income gaps among and within nations, intensifying and diminishing political domination, and homogenizing and pluralizing cultural identities. (Tehranian in Riggs 1998: 1)

This view of globalisation provides a practical understanding of the process without ignoring its complexity. It points at specific institutions and elements (social assemblages) that can be traced and studied to understand the global process. It looks at the *parts* that constitute the global process as a *whole*. In this context, the present dissertation research is aimed at observing the *exterior* of some of the social assemblages mentioned by Tehranian, which are component parts of the more complex whole constituted by society at large.

Chapter Three

THE GLOBAL PROBLEMATIC: VIOLENCE AND POVERTY

Introduction

The ideas on globalisation expressed in Chapter Two seem to have two common, fundamental aspects. First, they study the particular social, political, and economic *organisation* of society and the effects it produces upon itself (e.g. Harvey: 1990). Secondly, most of the theories of globalisation deal with the problem of *distribution*, of either objects or materials of a different nature. From ideas, medicines, education, security, risk, disasters, goods, wealth, natural resources, and all sorts of things, the main concerns in global analysis are the asymmetries in distribution outcomes. The search for balance and sustainable ways of achieving symmetrical distribution, ideally without homogenising societies, is at the core of the sociological debate, and is encroaching other realms and fields (academic circles, environmentalism, etc.).

Following this line of thought, I propose that globalisation can be understood as a *process that organises and distributes **change** upon society*. And further, that the study of contemporary globalisation and its effects – *what it does* – could also refer to the analysis of the main *assemblages* and power *diagrams* – the actual *forces* – that organise societies and distribute objects, things, and change in the world. Therefore, this study analyses contemporary globalisation, its *social assemblages*, and its *forces*.

What is the Global Problematic?

The global problematic is defined as a *social assemblage* subject to processes of *actualisation* – the actualisation of poverty and violence in society. The global problematic and its intensification are supported by particular technolinguistic social assemblages which promote power diagrams, three of which deserve special attention: 1) economic and political instability; 2) socio-economic polarisation; and 3) the shift in relations between the state and civil society that leads to violence (e.g. civil wars, dictatorships). It can be assumed that the global problematic assemblage is knowledge that is actualised and perpetuated in human experience by subjects, statements, and forces that attach this problematic assemblage to virtual diagrams, guaranteeing its permanency in the actual plane. By setting particular relations between linguistic and technological means, persons and groups keep the global problematic *visible* and apparent within the *actual* social realm.

What Does the Global Problematic Do?

The aim here is to build a unit of analysis suitable for a globalisation research agenda that goes beyond its economic nature. In this regard, and considering that globalisation is quite an ambiguous concept, we may think of a unit of analysis that is flexible, variable, and dynamic, and which may approach the complexities of globalisation processes, in particular those which are related to the experience of poverty, violence, or uneven distribution at the human scale. The reconceptualisation of the *social problem* into the *global problematic* can be briefly summarised by the idea that the mission of the global problematic is to collapse all social problems into one single problematic or set of interrelated problems – a whole. The global problematic, as part of its reconceptualisation, is also considered a *stable structure* within processes of destratification-becoming and deterritorialisation-change; as Latour's famous statement goes, a 'matter of fact' and not only a 'matter of concern' in society (Latour: 2007).

In short, the reconceptualisation of the social problem understands the global problematic as a *stable structure* or social assemblage subject to processes of *actualisation-reproduction*. This reconceptualisation unifies the undesired social outcomes into one unit of analysis instead of being a dispersed field of sociological inquiry where poverty, violence, and other social problems are approached independently and not as a human condition regardless of historical and cultural specificities.

The Global Problematic Explained

The main question here is how does the global problematic *actualise* and *intensify* in contemporary societies? What are the technolinguistic social assemblages that promote the stabilisation of the social assemblage and diagrams of the global problematic? To elaborate on this idea, it can be said that the *exterior* – and appearance – of the global problematic is both poverty, seen as lack of dignity for human existence, and the *physical experience* of material constraint or humiliation. If poverty and violence constitute part of the appearance of the global problematic, the *interiority* quality of the global problematic is constituted mainly by two components that form this social assemblage. First, there are the victims who experience violence, humiliation, poverty, despair, and lack of dignity in everyday life conditions (e.g. Palestinians). Secondly, there are the groups controlling significant power diagrams (e.g. weapons, police), such as interest groups, leaders, and sections of society, all of whom are working as *wholes*, and which at certain times generate processes or diagrams of instability, polarisation, and shifts in relations that lead to violent events, thus reproducing and actualising the global problematic social assemblage in determinate places. The victims and those responsible for the actualisation of the global problematic are two sides of

the same coin.

In this regard, the first and most important clarification that needs to be made in relation to the social assemblage of the global problematic is to stress that it is not constituted only by those social groups or interpersonal networks experiencing material deprivation and lack of dignity, or those persons suffering from cultural oppression and violence (Marcuse: 2009). In fact, the social assemblage of the global problematic *includes* the social components that reproduce poverty and violence, even if they have no direct experience of it themselves.

The intensification of the global problematic can have internal causes (e.g. suicide as violence), but it is primarily stimulated by exterior causes (e.g. scarcity). Social assemblages other than those that directly experience the effects of the global problematic can participate in the intensification of poverty and violence by stimulating instability and polarisation processes throughout particular technolinguistic differentiations and relations. Therefore, the global problematic is not constituted exclusively by the poor or the victims of violence but also by the interpersonal networks and organisations that aid certain conditions that perpetuate violence and poverty in determined territories.

Ethics and Desire

Even if it is the poor or the vulnerable who experience the undignified conditions imposed by material constraint and humiliation, this does not determine that the poor are the source or exclusive agent when thinking of the *actualisation* of the global problematic. Poverty and violence are not (necessarily) self-inflicted. Quite on the contrary: while it is possible that the causes of poverty are to be found inside specific assemblages, the conditions and causes of the global problematic might very well come from the *outside*. This is, perhaps, one of the most important hypotheses of this dissertation.

I argue, therefore, that it is crucial to develop and analyse the role of *ethics* in relation to the intensification of the global problematic, and not to follow exclusively scientific technical data about subjects suffering material deprivation in different countries or regions. In order to clarify this point, the Deleuzian notion of *desire* needs to be introduced into the discussion. The way in which poverty and violence may be defined or expressed is by means of the *desire* experienced by those involved in these processes. Deleuze explains that,

> … desire is the real agent, merging each time with the variables of an assemblage. It
> is not lack or privation which leads to desire: one only feels lack in relation to an
> assemblage from which one is excluded, but one only desires as a result of an

assemblage from which one is included. (Deleuze: 2006: 77)

The notion of *desire* and the *ethical* dimension are important, because desire is the *force* that evokes the relation between constituted assemblages and power diagrams in the form of our *thinking process* and *actions*. The machine of desires represented by subjects and social assemblages can institutionalise certain diagrams of power and forms of knowledge (visibilities and statements) that perpetually resolve the entelechy of the world, sometimes with contradictory consequences. In this respect, we might ask: what form of *desire* is behind the production and reproduction of the social assemblage of the global problematic? Which individual and collective desires (immanent thought and action) stimulate diagrams of instability, polarisation, and violence in contemporary global society?

Poverty and violence are not the result, nor are they the side effects, of social development and progress. Rather than being the result of Darwinist notions of natural superiority of one group over another, they are conditions subject to change or avoidance, the product of certain purposes and interests. The manifestations of the global problematic are the result of established power relations. The global problematic attached to certain power diagrams of instability, polarisation, and violence is an *ethical* matter. It is related to *purpose* and *desire* that individuals and interpersonal networks, as well as collectives, use to frame their actions and desires over and against other actions.

It is not exclusively social assemblages suffering from the *lack* associated with the effects of the global problematic – poverty (dignity) and violence (security) – that we should be focusing on, but also the social assemblages that promote and perpetuate certain technolinguistic social assemblages that enable the intensification of the global problematic in a determined territory. This means that with violence and poverty, those who suffer from and cause them are inseparable, and to separate them would be more of a theoretical manoeuvre than the elaboration of two entirely differentiated notions. Poverty, it may be said, is a social practice, which is the product of certain interactions between differentiated social assemblages that hold violence as one of its diagrams. In this, instability and polarisation are two categories or diagrams that bear quite clear manifestations. Violence, however, requires further explanation.

Violence

In regard to the existence of violence, Deleuze (2000) explains that violence *can* constitute a part of a power relation. However, it is also evident that violence is not constitutive of *all* power relations. Life without extreme inter-human violence is also possible and natural. This last scenario, however,

is often substituted by the idea of permanent global and uncertain states of war and violence as something inevitable, natural, and necessary. In this dissertation I challenge and dispute this notion of violence, furthering the idea that violence is not a necessary state.

Violence may be defined in three different ways: as forces that destroy other assemblages; as forces that radically deterritorialise other assemblages; and as forces that 'chaoticise' other assemblages. More particularly, the process of chaoticisation is understood as the 'ingestion' ('engulfing') of one assemblage by another; as a radical form of an action upon an action, if we think in power relations as posed by Foucault in *The Subject and Power*. This chaoticisation is comparable to processes of transformation of one assemblage into an unrecognised different assemblage or *thing*. The transformation of an assemblage on such a degree where it is impossible to reconstruct the original nature of the chaoticised assemblage is visible, for example, in the act of eating. The work of synthesised components of the interior of an animal assemblage can chaoticise other assemblages. Food (e.g. plants and vegetables) inside the body loses its last faculty in terms of exteriority (e.g. photosynthesis in the case of plants), therefore becoming a non-assemblage, a *thing*. In a strict sense, processes of chaoticisation are considered violent acts in terms of the disruption of nature they entail. Violence is literally the disruption of nature of the chaoticised object.

The discussion about the necessary status of violence in society reappears here. It is not the argument in the present work to call for the inexistence or disappearance of violence, but to identify it as a disruption of nature in terms of its power to radically deterritorialise, destroy, and chaoticise social or organic assemblages, so questioning the teleology and desires behind the enactment of violence in society and upon nature. From this perspective, and to understand the causes and nature of poverty and violence, we have to approach these problems simultaneously (assemblages-knowledge and diagrams-power). Trying to abate poverty without addressing violence, instability, and polarisation all together would be pointless, since the intensification of all those problems is in fact one single problem: poverty *is* a form of violence.

To recapitulate, in order to address and approach the social problem as a *whole*, a new viewpoint or subject position is required, one that aids learning processes instead of subjective understandings. The positioning of such a subject capable of seeing the intensification and variation of the global problematic, from the angle of ethics as the product of human desire and action, and not only as a technical affair randomly spread over a territory, is essential to this work. However, more than being a viewpoint matter or the elaboration of a new type of subjectivity, it is a question of building or devising instruments for social research that respond to the demands posed by contemporary globalisation and the urgent ethical debates that need to spring from it in order to generate a more balanced, less unjust human realm. From this proposed viewpoint and ontology

(exterior instead of interior relations), this heuristic device approaches in this study the social problem in general (the global problematic) and the relations it keeps with the technolinguistic social assemblage in contemporary Mexico.

Chapter Four

COMMUNICATION AND THE TECHNOLINGUISTIC SOCIAL ASSEMBLAGE

Introduction

Having elaborated above on two concepts important for this research – power relations and knowledge – here I turn to the third component of this analysis, namely that of communication. In what follows I elaborate upon four relevant social assemblages constituting global society: communication technologies, language, the market, and interpersonal networks and organisations. These assemblages are some of the necessary components that contemporary communication settings present and are important objects of study when approaching the broader notion of the technolinguistic social assemblage.

Communication Technology: Infrastructure and Space

The infrastructure deployed by the contemporary technolinguistic social assemblage mainly consists of communication machines and technologies such as mobile phones, computers, cables, satellites, antennas, televisions, and radios. However, plenty of organisations and institutions pursuing different aims work around these technologies. Here, I present a few examples of organisations that are representative of the sort of institutions participating in the constitution of a part of the technolinguistic social assemblage associated to communication practices. The main organisation in this arena with an active role on the international scale is the International Communication Union (ITU). This organisation depends on the United Nations, and it gathers allies in governments and the private sector to boost communication and information for the world. The absence of the social sector in the form of civil society reveals the entrepreneurial profile of the ITU, which is mainly concerned with three aspects of the international technolinguistic social assemblage. First, the ITU focuses on the administration and management of the radio electric spectrum and the orbit of satellites, so that this resource can be used in an organised way. Secondly, it works with processes of standardisation, so that communication and information can be shared easily between regions. Lastly, the ITU tries to develop communication and information worldwide by providing people with related services and technological provisions. The importance of the ITU in shaping the international technolinguistic social assemblage for communication is indisputable.

There are other organisations at the international level that contribute to the shaping of the technolinguistic social assemblage, but which are non-governmental and non-profit. One of the best examples of this type of organisation is the Association for Progressive Communication (APC).

This organisation focuses on the best social use of new communication technologies worldwide. The APC is an international organisation that was founded in 1990, and is now active in more than twenty-five countries. The main objective of the APC is to support organisations, social movements, and individuals in the use of communication technologies as a means towards more balanced development, social justice, and ecological sustainability.

A similar organisation, which also includes radio transmission, is the World Association of Communitarian Radios Broadcasters (AMARC), one of the most important international organisations dealing with such issues. AMARC began in 1983, and after more than twenty-five years of operating, supporting, and coordinating this collective effort, the results are impressive. Globally it has almost three thousand members and associates in more than one hundred countries, including Mexico. The main objectives of the organisation, and of those radio stations around the world that are linked to it, are geared towards community radio as non-profit organisations, where community ownership, control, and participation are crucial. Community radio focuses on the exercise of the right to communicate and in particular the right to information. Moreover, these radio stations aim to improve social conditions and the cultural life of their audiences.

The *space* utilised by technologically mediated communication can be found primarily in the form of the radio electric spectrum (RES). The RES is the space where voice, sounds, radio waves, rays, and transmissions travel to be captured by antennas, receptors, or other devices. The frequency used to fulfil these communication aims range from 3 KHz to 300 GHz. The RES is legislated and administered in different ways depending on the legal framework adopted in every nation state. It can be said that in capitalist economies, the exploitation and therefore the economic revenue product of the use of the RES is primarily cashed by private organisations.

Interpersonal Networks and Organisations

Other components of the technolinguistic social assemblage are interpersonal networks and organisations (e.g. institutions). According to de Landa (2006), the human conglomerate – the human global assemblage – made up of persons does not form a *society*. Instead, persons as the human conglomerate constitute a part of complex social assemblages. In assemblage theory, interpersonal networks and institutional organisations may be considered two social assemblages directly related to the activity performed by the collective of persons. For instance, social classes can be viewed as examples of contemporary social assemblages. As de Landa points out,

> [W]e may conceptualize social classes as assemblages of interpersonal networks and
> institutional organizations. Both the networked community and the organization in

which their common interest crystallize must be thought as having differential access to resources, some playing a material some an expressive role, as well as processing a distinctive life-style composed of both material and expressive elements. (de Landa: 2006: 66)

It is not only social classes as social assemblages that deserve attention. The interpersonal networks and organisation of three different social assemblages visible in contemporary global society are comparable to de Landa's assessment of social classes: those of government (local, national, international, diplomatic); the private sector and commerce; and civil society, which also includes the activity of society at large. These assemblages are in a constant state of change, as they stabilise and destabilise their identity. In the present dissertation research, government, the private sector, and society at large are conceptualised at the national scale as three social assemblages that can be analysed and differentiated accordingly. This operation aims for the identification and observation of the different purposes and teleologies found in constituted social assemblages in Mexico.

The main difference between an interpersonal network and an institutional organisation is the notion of *position*. While within the logic of interpersonal networks the means of communication and interaction is given by the familiarity and recognition of *persons* within the network, in the case of institutional organisations the logic, means of communication, and interaction is given by *positions* within hierarchies (e.g. General, Chief of Staff, President). In the case of institutional organisations, the subject – a public servant, for example – is recognised as a functional component of the particular organisation, who displays certain expected attributes. In theory, familiarity and recognition do not play a role in identification and interaction with these actors. However, in reality these relations often overlap, and the interaction between what can be considered an interpersonal network and an institutional organisation constitutes a mixture of the two, in particular in nations and governments where the level of professionalism of bureaucracy is low. Here, I will not focus on the prevalence of one interactional logic over the other, because it is recognised that *official* interactions can have the same influence and impact as an interaction framed primarily under the context of interpersonal *informal* interaction with a defined purpose (e.g. corruption).

Opaque networks and institutional organisations prevent the recognition of the component parts which make up these assemblages. In these cases, the possibility to read the necessary logical relations taking place in the network or organisation decreases or becomes problematic and difficult. Contrary to this, networks and organisations that are *transparent* allow for the

identification of the component parts of the assemblage, enabling a proper *understanding* of its activity and purposes.

The Market and Anti-Markets

We may understand the market as an assemblage consisting of a multiplicity of money and exchange products. Within the context of contemporary globalisation, money may be understood as the 'fuel,' or the 'bloodstream' that fundamentally participates in the process of the distribution and redistribution of *things*, goods, and commodities in the world. Money is the timeline of the market, representing the possibility of circulation. However, the logic followed in contemporary society when exchanging products maintains the characteristic of a monetised-capitalist society, where accumulation and gains play a fundamental role. The consequences and practicality of monetised societies obviously furthers a myriad of heated debates, without the possibility of arriving at a final resolution. In spite of this, there have been a substantial number of accounts critical of the effects of monetisation in society.

Seen as a historical period, contemporary globalisation and its monetised system accounts for the great accumulation of capitalist wealth concentrated in few hands (Harvey: 2006). This wealth does not reduce social asymmetries, nor does it fulfil aspirations of reaching a state of equal distribution in contemporary global society. Invisible financial entities only hold significance for experts; however, the notion of the market under the scope of assemblage theory is worthy of analysis because it presents the advantage of allowing,

> … the replacement of vaguely defined general entities (like 'the market' or 'the state') with concrete assemblages. What would replace, for example, 'the market' in an assemblage approach? Markets should be viewed, first of all, as concrete organizations (that is, concrete market-places or bazaars) and this fact makes them assemblages made out of people and the material and expressive goods people exchange. (de Landa: 2006: 17)

The idea of capitalism as an ideology that orders and organises the modes of money and the conditions for exchanging products is extremely relevant; this idea agglutinates most of the market assemblages and forces in contemporary global societies and territories. There are three levels regarding market assemblages in contemporary globalisation: the global market (e.g. oil, gas, petrodollars, global finance), national markets (e.g. currency), and local markets (personal exchange of material and expressive components and goods). All three levels are made up of different

component parts that make them individual wholes; however, they may interact and eventually form a more complex assemblage (e.g. national economy), given that they are synthesised with or pitted against other self-subsistent assemblages.

These different crystallisations of the market's identity have different characteristics and affect the lives of persons in different ways and space scales. In the case of financial crises triggered by the global market, the well-being of people is affected by the collapse or slowdown of industrial productivity, the closing of factories, unemployment, etc. When local economic actors corner basic products, or when corruption practices manifest in dealing with the power relations found in the local markets, the everyday life of persons, interpersonal networks, and global societies in general are greatly affected.

Looking at these types of situations, Joseph Galbraith pointed out the mistake of considering what he calls *economic oligopolies* as being the same thing as the regular players in the market, where products are exchanged by similar entities. Fernand Braudel (1979) complemented this concern by explaining that economic oligopolies or monopolies deserve to be called *anti-markets*, since they do not depend on the regular market to engage in their operations; they no longer depend on the market's self-regulation of consumption and demand. On the contrary, anti-markets (e.g. corporations, state monopolies) have the capacity to plan their activities in advance regardless of market fluctuations. Anti-markets operate more like a small country, and less like a market scale enterprise. Therefore, if we locate both anti-markets and normal market players in the same condition and scale as national and local economies, we will discover an intrinsic asymmetry. In this asymmetrical power relation, oligopolies and monopolies – the *monsters* of the market, – ultimately concentrate economic power, while simultaneously denying smaller entrepreneurs participation.

Language

Language is a critical component in the formation and development of human communities and knowledge construction in the form of culture. Language is what we *say*, one constituting part of the process of knowledge stratification. Here, I consider that the language social assemblage is independent of human agency. In this sense, language plays an important role as a social assemblage, mainly seen as the power of voice and speech, the sequence of words and *statements*, and the power they have by themselves.

In this respect, Foucault explains that while language is a human technique that encompasses meaning and signification ('interiority' quality in persons), it also has the ability to produce material effects at a distance (Foucault: 1994). The importance and power found in

language in relation to other social assemblages is represented by de Landa in the following quote.

> Given that prior to a conflict a particular social group may have already been classified by government organizations under a religious, ethnic, racial or other category, one of the goals of social movements is to change that classification. But the reason such a change is important for the members of a given movement is not because categories directly shape perception (as social constructivists would have it) but because of the *unequal legal rights and obligations* which are attached by government organizations to a given classification, as well as the practices of exclusion, segregation and hording of opportunities which sort people out into ranked groups. Thus, activists trying to change a given category are not negotiating over meanings, as if changing the semantic content of a word automatically meant a real change in the opportunities and risks faced by a given social group, but over access to resources (income, education, health services) and relief from constraints. In short, struggles over categories are more about their legal and economic significance than their linguistic signification. (de Landa: 2006: 62)

Separating language as an autonomous assemblage allows us to analyse the effects of communication in society from a different perspective. Once language has been detached from human agency it is possible to see the actual capacities of language as a differentiated social assemblage. In this respect, de Landa points out that, "assuming that we have a linguistic theory that meets all the requirements, the main effects of language at the personal scale is the shaping of beliefs" (de Landa, 2006: 51). Language has the power of reduction of reality, to put it one way (1). In contemporary globalisation, the social assemblage based on language has experienced dramatic transformations, especially with the arrival of new communication technologies. Language, *statements*, and the form of reduction and products can travel faster and be stored as information. At this point it becomes evident that the role of language as an assemblage in contemporary globalisation cannot be explained without approaching one of its most important component parts: the media.

The enormous power endowed on the media – the power of shaping beliefs and the distribution of *statements*; the *reduction of open possibilities*, to put it in Luhmann's (1995) terms – has created the idea that media conglomerates are one of the most significant political, economic, and social powers in contemporary society, and which often challenge governmental, religious, and other powerful organisations or historic social assemblages. Hakim Bey's formulations on the

notion of the Internet, for instance, and the diverse forms which mass communication take in contemporary society, may help us to relate this to the negative aspects of media influence and its forms of reduction in contemporary society. For Bey, the Internet has "become a perfect mirror of Global Capital: borderless, triumphalist, evanescent, aesthetically bankrupt, monocultural, violent – a force for atomization and isolation, for the disappearance of knowledge, of sexuality, and of all the subtle senses" (Bey: 2003: xi). It must be said, of course, that there are exceptions to this formulation in every case where the 'media' is concerned. It is also necessary, however, to keep in mind that media entities with profiles differing from Bey's assessment are often dispersed and lack the power of the mass media monopolies to shape beliefs, which is the main function of language at the personal scale.

These four complex social assemblages – communication technologies, interpersonal networks and organisations, the market, and language – participate in the actualisation of contemporary society. In what follows I present some characteristics of these complex social assemblages, as they are visible in the case of Mexico. The expectation is to understand and learn about the nature of political and social communication practices in Mexico and their influence in processes associated with the intensification of the global problematic. To meet this end, information about the state of communication technologies in Mexico is provided. The recent history of the government, the private sector, and civil society organisations is organised to clarify the role and power diagrams to which they are attached. Language and the market are also addressed and described to the extent necessary to provide a fair picture of the way in which contemporary Mexican individuals and groups configure their strategies and interact.

Chapter Five

MEXICAN SOCIAL ASSEMBLAGES

Territory, Population, and Government

The Mexican nation state is a social assemblage constituted by extensive territories and diverse populations that interact with a political system based on the articles of the 1917 Constitution (1). This document foresees a nation formed by states joined in a federation: the Mexican Republic, or the United States of Mexico. The Mexican territory accounts for one of the largest countries in the world: of more than three million square kilometres, it is roughly comparable to the total area of Argentina, surpassing the size countries such as Mongolia and Iran. Its long coastlines are mostly underdeveloped, with only two large scale ocean ports: *Lázaro Cárdenas* on the Pacific coast and *Altamira* on the Gulf of Mexico. It has one of the longest and most conflictive borders in the world to the North with the US. It was estimated by the Mexican National Institute of Population and Geography and other civil society organisations that approximately half a million Mexicans crossed the border illegally to live and work in the US in 2005. In 2009 there was an average of one death per day at the border of individuals trying to cross to the US illegally. In addition to this, plenty of legal border crossings take place every day, mostly for commercial purposes. The situation on the southern border with Guatemala also has various problems (2).

Mexico is also a very populous country. In 1980, at the beginning of the period I have termed *contemporary globalisation* in previous chapters, the official population census of the Mexican government revealed a total population of 66.8 million Mexicans. In 1990 (one year after the fall of the Berlin Wall), the census count had grown to 81.2 million Mexicans. In 2000 there were 97.4 million, and in 2010 the total was set at 112.3 million. The distribution of the population in Mexico is uneven and moves from highly concentrated urban areas to low population density in other territories. For instance, some Mexican states have less than 3 million inhabitants, despite the fact that their territorial areas surpass the size of European countries such as Greece and Austria. The state of Chihuahua, for instance, with an area of approximately 245,000 square kilometres (about the size of the United Kingdom), accounts for less than five million Mexicans. On the other side, there were over 20 million people living in Mexico City's metropolitan area in 2010.

From the 1950s to the 1990s, the Mexican population registered extraordinary growth, and this explosion was felt most poignantly in urban areas. This was fuelled by rural to urban migration flows, among other factors. Intensified rural to urban migration deterritorialised the identity of the traditional countryside, and territorialised a stronger urban identity at the national and local levels.

The demographic and spatial expansion of the cities also marked an identity shift to a more modern-global Mexico. Greatly influenced by this shift in the physical distribution of human populations (the 'human geography') in Mexico today are the grave levels of economic and social polarisation. In spite of a relative *cultural* homogeneity across social groups and regions (e.g. language), official calculations about the levels of poverty in the country expose over half of the total population to be living below the poverty line, in many cases in extreme poverty (3).

During the *contemporary globalisation* period between 1980 and 2010, the intensification of the experience of the global problematic on the personal scale in Mexico saw an absolute increment. The historical divide between the wealthy and the poor – a 'fifty-fifty' ratio – was not overcome in this period, in spite of technological advances and economic growth. Thus in 1980, when the total population was just over 66 million, half of the population living below the poverty line amounted to roughly 33 million people; but in 2010 we see how, following the almost doubling of the total population to 112.3 million, the official estimates of half the population living in poverty amounts to a corresponding doubling of the total number of poor to approximately 50 to 60 million people.

This assessment of the *absolute* increase in the experience of poverty in Mexico reveals an often overlooked issue: every decade the total number of people who are subjected to the conditions and power diagrams of poverty and violence increases. The fact remains that even if poverty has been reduced or kept within the fifty per cent proportion, the *absolute* experience and the *feelings* of lack associated with poverty keep on rising. This also means that statistical analysis, while demonstrating the stability of the *proportion* in the distribution of poverty, may not show the absolute *intensification* of the global problematic. A 'real' intensification of the global problematic, however, is clearly taking place at the personal scale – the scale of feeling – with millions of Mexicans subjected to the experience of poverty and violence. This situation is characterised by a lack of opportunities, education, and good health, insecurity, and general feelings of a lack of dignity.

In Mexico, there are a variety of human groups that, following a history of colonisation, have blended, resulting in the Mestizo phenotype. A new human group emerged from the mixture of American, African, and European 'biological materials' during the colonial period, what José Vasconcelos refers to in his book *The Cosmic Race* (1997) as the 'fifth race' (4). There is, however, one specific group in Mexico that deserves particular attention today: the indigenous populations. These indigenous populations are spread across Mexican territory and maintain fundamental similarities and differences between them. In 2010 the native populations represented six to fifteen per cent of the total population in Mexico. It is also in this social group that the most extreme cases of poverty and neglect can be found. In this respect, there are two declared *autonomous zones* in

Mexico that can be explained as the response to such state neglect and abuse. One is in the southern state of Chiapas in the *Zapatista* territory, while the other is located in the state of Oaxaca, where a faction of the *Triqui* community have declared autonomous social, political, and territorial status since 2006. For this *Triqui* community attacks and aggression are a constant fact of life.

On other fronts the situation is no more encouraging, and telecommunications is a good example. In 2005, 18.4 per cent of households owned a PC, amounting to roughly 3.8 million homes. Nevertheless, only 9 per cent, approximately 2.3 million households, had an Internet connection. Also in 2005, 64 per cent of the population had telephone access; 22 per cent with a fixed landline, 15 per cent with a mobile connection, and 26 per cent with both types. There is a very different picture regarding television 'ownership,' with 92.7 per cent of the population having access to TV.

These numbers have evidently changed since 2005. There is, however, a consideration that needs to be exposed. The polarisation in social capacity to acquire and use new communication technology at home (as revealed by the very low percentage of households with Internet connections) is staggering. The disparities in distribution have not, however, prevented specific sectors of the population from finding the means and access to use 'new' technologies, in particular the younger population. The fifteen to twenty-five years age group accounts for more than 35 per cent of the Internet users in Mexico. This group counters the difficulties of not having home access to the Internet and other communication technologies by finding access in alternative venues: at school, at work, with friends and relatives, or in Internet cafes.

Mexican Neoliberal Social Assemblages

The general situation in Mexico may be better understood if we think about the actual structures, assemblages, and conditions that rule the logic of power relations. In what follows I will describe and briefly analyse the main social assemblages constituting contemporary Mexico, namely the government, the private sector, and civil society and society at large.

It can be suggested that since the 1980s Mexico has become a neoliberal regime. The assemblages described below are the structures, the organisations where policies and laws are planned and enforced. In this regard it can be assumed that for many organisations neoliberal practices are a necessary component of the system. The most powerful assemblages in Mexico share the neoliberal conviction that economic growth, in particular macroeconomic growth, is needed to address problems of poverty, as it is the only way to produce wealth which can be invested in development. The Mexican government, like many other countries' governments, has followed the suggestions of international financial institutions like the World Bank and the

International Monetary Fund. The results of such actions are discussed below. I also include a general description of the private sector in Mexico and its most powerful assemblages. This will help to understand the great power which the broadcast industries exercise in Mexico. Finally, a description of civil society completes the general picture of the main social assemblages in contemporary Mexico.

Mexican Government Social Assemblage

Those component parts that constitute the more complex assemblage known as the Mexican government include, but are not limited to: political parties, political elites, bureaucracy, the army, the members of the executive, legislative and judicial powers, official buildings, and government patrimony (e.g. state owned companies). The three main components of the Mexican government are the executive, the legislative, and the judicial institutional organisations. These three social assemblages are constituted by bureaucracy but are also fed by the activity of political parties, for example, the president or other positions subject to electoral processes.

Beyond political parties and government institutions, the military and the police force are also considered component parts constitutive of the Mexican nation state and government. Furthermore, the military and police assemblages in Mexico play a role in setting the intensity of the violence experienced in the country. It can be suggested that in the case of Mexico, the Army and the Navy actually enjoy some respect and recognition from the general population, in contrast to the police forces, who suffer from a low rate of acceptance. The police system in Mexico may be regarded as one of the best examples of a corrupt institution with a poor performance regarding the duties assigned to it by the Mexican political system.

The military and police assemblages are not, however, the main assemblages triggering violent processes and events at the personal scale. For example, organised crime has become so powerful that it can compete for the monopoly over violence held by federal and local governments in Mexican territories, and gives to the violence experience a particular form and consequences different to the violence engaged in by military and police forces. Other types of violence, like domestic violence exacerbated by negative social and personal conditions, can also be considered a factor that support processes of actualisation of the global problematic and its diagrams of violence.

Executive and Legislative Power

The presidential office is the expression of the executive power branch in the Mexican government. It is the social assemblage with the greatest authority in the territory. It relates to other assemblages at the highest space scale of social dimensions: the international and the national scales. In the

political power structure of Mexico there is no Prime Minister or Vice President. This aspect of the Mexican government assemblage means that the Presidential figure carries a great deal of political power. *Presidentialism* is the term coined to describe this aspect of contemporary Mexican politics, and major changes in Mexican politics cannot be explained without considering it (5).

In this regard, 2000 marked a historical shift in Mexican modern politics. Since the conclusion of the Social Revolution of 1921, Mexico had been ruled by one political party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) (Institutional Revolutionary Party), a political system that might be comparable on some levels with the one party in China or the politburo in the Soviet Union, but with regular elections and a capitalist, non-communist international outlook. The PRI ruled for almost eighty years, making it a political power structure with one of the longest runs in the twentieth century. The elites forming the main interpersonal networks constituting the *revolutionary family* lost political power in 2000, when the conservative *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) (National Action Party) won the elections. Despite the feeling of general disappointment that has accompanied more recent political developments, the democratic alternation from the formerly hegemonic PRI to an allegedly more democratic PAN has historical proportions.

The Chamber of Senators (*Cámara de Senadores*) and the Chamber of Deputies (*Cámara de Diputados*) are two social assemblages working in a synthetic way to constitute what can be understood as the Mexican Congress. They hold the legislative power. This system of political social assemblages is replicated in every Mexican state (Republic), and has the same functions (legislation) as, but in a different space scale than, the national congress. In terms of the constitution of the Mexican government assemblage, it can be said that political parties are the unit of assemblage formation.

Judicial Power

The Mexican Supreme Court is in charge of enforcing the laws provided by the legislative power, as well as administering justice at national, regional, and local scales. Within the judicial power branch rests one of the most important social assemblages suffered and 'enjoyed' by society: the police. The bodily and material nature of the exteriority capacity of the police assemblage makes it of special interest for social assemblage theory.

The police force is one of the most effective social assemblages in destroying, deterritorialising, or chaoticising other constituted social assemblages. In a dangerous multifaceted way, this social assemblage can destroy assemblages of organised crime, as well as unarmed, peaceful organisations and groups of society, similar to a dictatorship. The exteriority capacity of the social assemblage of the police force is the same – whether acting against organised crime or

peaceful social assemblages – in terms of its capacity to deterritorialise, destroy, and chaoticise. What defines the 'target' is instead the inner logic and purpose – the teleology – set up within the confines of the police force itself. Here, the role of *ethics* is important to explain the function and the validity of a social assemblage with the capabilities of the police. In the particular case of Mexico, the police assemblage deserves attention because of its effects of creating a rather negative appearance and projection onto Mexican society.

In terms of its exteriority relations with other social assemblages within Mexican territories, the activity of the Mexican government should provide them with legitimacy within the Mexican social context. This may well be the most important effect, since the judicial, legislative, and executive assemblages may act as 'government' within national territory: providing legitimacy to identified social assemblages and enforcing certain prerogatives and rights associated with this recognition. In theory, the Mexican government aims at enforcing the state of law with justice.

The Mexican government also has the authority to administer the wealth of the country and organise the different markets and public finances in the territory. This endorses great power to the government assemblage considering that money – and the economic power invested in it – is itself a powerful assemblage, thus enabling certain actions instead of others, influencing the nature of power relations in Mexican territories. Money can make things more difficult or easier depending on the terms of the relations which a social assemblage maintains with the government invested with authority at the national and local scales, and therefore with the economic power to *move things on*.

The Private Sector Social Assemblage

In Mexico, the private sector enjoys a great deal of power. This social assemblage is of great relevance in neoliberal Mexico because of its links to, and dependency on, money and the production of goods and services. The private sector can be regarded as the engine of the modern capitalist nation state, to use Tehranian and Tehranian's (1995) idea. The units of assemblage formation of the complex private sector social assemblage are the factory, company, business, bank, and entrepreneur. This sector is constituted by a variety of forms to make business. However, all of these forms share the logic of exchange and production dictated by capitalist ideologies and aims (competition and gains).

Similar to the government social assemblage, the private sector controls important amounts of national wealth and money. Regardless of the dispersed character of the private sector, it involves organisations that agglutinate their interests in common grounds, thus enabling the private sector to form more complex synthetic wholes. One of the most prominent social assemblages

representing the joint interests and desires portrayed by the private sector in Mexico is the *Consejo Coordinador Empresarial* (CCE) (Entrepreneurial Coordinating Council). This social assemblage has great influence and close ties with the government assemblage. In particular, this organisation had significant influence during the neoliberal shift in the 1980s and 1990s. The influence of the CCE continues to be crucial for Mexican political, economic, and social development, as well as in (dis-)agreements.

The CCE is made up of many different organisations. There are, however, seven organisations or component parts that enjoy a voice and a vote within the overall structure.

1. *Confederación de Cámaras Industriales de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* (CONCAMIN). In this chamber some of the most important sectors linked to the private sector social assemblage can be found. For example, the chamber of cement, the chamber of beer producers, the chamber of paper, the chamber of the construction industry, the chamber of editorial companies, the chamber of pharmaceuticals, and so on. When all these relatively minor social assemblages come together and synthesise their aims under the CONCAMIN, they gather the strength to affect power relations in the Mexican context.

2. National Confederation of Chambers of Commerce, Services, and Tourism (CONCANACO-SERVYTUR).

3. Employers Confederation of the Mexican Republic (COPARMEX).

4. Banks Association of Mexico (ABM). This organisation controls the institutions in charge of providing credit to business and private entities in Mexico. Its importance should not be ignored in terms of the relevance it has to influence the national and international economic profile of Mexico.

5. Mexican Council of Businessmen (CMHN). This organisation gathers the most powerful individuals of the private sector in Mexico. The influence of this organisation in Mexican development is undisputed; however, it is also unclear because of the nature of secrecy and closure in which this organisation conducts its activity (6).

6. Mexican Association of Insurance Companies (AMIS).

7. National Council of Agro-industry (CAN).

There are, of course, other organisations associated to the CCE, but which do not enjoy power in the council's decision making. There are also many other assemblages that congregate the interests of the private sector in Mexico, but the aforementioned ones may be the most powerful in challenging or maintaining the status quo of power relations that the private sector holds with

government assemblages and society at large. This means that the private sector is able to synthesise its organisations to form a more complex and powerful assemblage to deal with government and other social assemblages. The relations between these three differentiated social assemblages (government, private sector, and the social sector) will be explained in the following sections, where specific practices and actions between and among these assemblages will be highlighted and analysed.

Organised Civil Society and Society at Large

Organised civil society in Mexico is a social assemblage of a more recent creation; however, the focus on social organisation has been around for a much longer period, and takes relevance for the present research during the mid-1980s, when social organisation in a more contemporary form gained importance within the context of other social assemblages. The 1980s were marked by two specific events which triggered initiatives that emerged solely from civil society. First, the continuous and poignant economic and social crises experienced in Mexico since the external debt crisis of 1982, and second, the 1985 earthquakes coupled with the incapacity of the government to properly handle the crisis unleashed by this catastrophe.

I will return to these two events later on, but at this point it is necessary to draw a distinction, when referring to civil society as a social assemblage, between what I refer to as *rich* civil society and *regular* civil society. The notion of civil society organisation has been articulated by different groups and therefore has been mobilised for different aims and with distinct intentions. There are fundamental differences between *rich* civil society with clear philanthropic intentions, as is the case of large companies or corporations such as *Fundación Televisa*, *Fundación Telmex*, or *Vamos Mexico*, and *regular* civil society organisations that need private, public, or community subsidies in order to engage in their activities, such as *El Barzón*, *LaNeta*, and *Fundación Renacimiento*.

If political parties are the unit of assemblage formation of the Mexican government assemblage, the unit of assemblage formation in society at large is a civil network or organisation. The power relations established among the social assemblages mentioned above (government, private sector, social sector) characterise and shape the identity of the Mexican nation state. In this regard, it should be recalled that during the last three decades the institutions and organisations of the Mexican government have shifted from a nationalist system of organisation towards a consolidated neoliberal system. Mexican administrations transitioned from a nationalistic model based on market regulation and protection towards one of neoliberal privatisation, a move towards free market economy led by a group of technocrats that have been in the government since the

1980s.

The technocratic change in the government assemblage inevitably produced and forced change in the assemblages of the private sector and civil society organisation. In Mexico the rules of the game and the social contract changed under the paradigm of globalisation and neoliberalism. For example, important post revolutionary achievements, products of the revolution of 1910, were transformed in order to fit neoliberal conditions. One case in point is Carlos Salinas de Gortari's decision to reform article 27 of the constitution regarding land rights and property. This reform was one of the reasons used by the EZLN revolutionary movement in Chiapas to justify their cause.

Instability, Polarisation, and Communication

The shape and *identity* of the Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage has been changing over the last three decades. Recurrent political and economic crises have played an important role in this process. Several 'episodes' in recent Mexican history account for processes of political and economic instability and socio-economic polarisation that have revolved or convoluted the order and the established organisation among social assemblages. Furthermore, for each crisis and event of instability and polarisation there is also the possibility of the intensification of the experience of the global problematic. Chronic crises are characteristic of the modern Mexican nation state, and this has shaped the capabilities of the national technolinguistic social assemblage during contemporary globalisation.

The following section provides a brief background on the social, political, and economic situation in Mexico, starting with the economic crisis of 1982. The aim is to overlap the processes of instability and polarisation generated by these crises with the public, private, and social communication conditions that have shaped the Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage. There are four particular political and economic crises that are crucial in the analysis of the relationships between communication technologies and the global problematic, manifested as political and economic instability and social polarisation. The first is the economic crisis of Mexican external debt and the nationalisation of the banking system, unleashed in 1982. The second is the political and economic crisis of 1988, after Carlos Salinas de Gortari took the presidential office following alleged electoral fraud. The third is the economic crisis of 1994 that triggered the internationally known *Efecto Tequila*, more locally known as *Error de Diciembre*. The last is the political crisis suffered in Mexico during the electoral process of 2006.

Despite the fact that these crises resulted from different causes and are rather specific in nature, they are, unfortunately, recurrent phenomena in Mexican national politics and economics. Such phenomena usually result from the personal or group interests linked to acts of political and

industrial corruption, lack of planning, or the sum of these elements added with disadvantageous international conditions. For instance, high international interest rates or instability in the international oil market usually have serious consequences in Mexican politics and economics. These crises have shaped Mexico's recent history and do not respond to isolated actions. Nevertheless, it is possible to describe some of the conditions in determinate space scales, and how these processes have enforced the vulnerability of national sovereignty and, to a certain extent, society at large.

Chapter Six

NEOLIBERAL MEXICO: POLITICS OF COMMUNICATION

This chapter presents the main political, economic, and cultural developments of the last three decades in Mexico, and demonstrates how individuals, organisations, and institutions have participated in these processes. Special emphasis is placed on communication technologies. The intention is to describe the strategies employed by different social assemblages to reach their aims in contemporary Mexico. This information will be useful to correlate processes and assemblages, and in this form allow important understanding about the current state of affairs in Mexico. The chapter is divided into four sections: 1) The End of Nationalism; 2) The Lost Decade; 3) Rampant Neoliberalism; and 4) New Millennium: Lost Decade II.

The End of Nationalism

During the 1970s the political turmoil in the Middle East and the use of oil as a weapon in the Israeli-Arab conflict affected the international price of oil (1). This situation translated into great benefits for the Mexican oil industry and the national economy until 1980, when oil prices began to drop dramatically. To understand this properly, it is worthwhile to explain the period preceding this shift.

Luis Echeverría, a president known for his populist politics, had increased both public and private national debt during the final years of his administration, taking the external debt of the country from a rather manageable 6,000 million dollars in 1970 to a crushing 20,000 million dollars at the end of his presidential period in 1976. Moreover, unemployment and other circumstances such as social and political repression also took place, which put Mexico in a fragile economic and political situation before the arrival of José López Portillo to the Mexican presidency in 1976.

López Portillo 'inherited' a country which was not in its best financial and political shape. Nevertheless, he took over the presidential office when the possibility to apply different economic policies to stabilise the Mexican economy were increasing, especially propelled by the economic potential of high international oil prices and a recently discovered oil source in the Gulf of Mexico in 1976 (the Cantarell Field). During most of López Portillo's presidency (1976 and 1982) Mexico enjoyed great economic growth propelled by beneficial conditions in the international oil market and the international political disputes around it. López Portillo decided to rely on these circumstances to sustain his administration and its expenses with the expectation that the wealth created by oil exports would continue indefinitely. At some point, his discourse became inflamed

by a political rhetoric and demagoguery notorious for its exaggerated tone. Sentences such as "prepare to manage abundance" became commonplace in his annual State of the Nation address, while oil prices maintained high rates to the end of the 1970s.

In this political context of the 1970s, the commercial radio and television industry grew in importance and notoriety. In 1973, *Telesistema Mexicano*, the Mexican media company in charge of three channels for open national television, purchased Channel 8, a state owned television channel dedicated to cultural communication. The merger formed the powerful media group *Televisión Vía Satélite* (*Televisa*) (Satellite Television). This media group was important in Mexico for its social reach and content distribution, but also for its capacity for program production. This rendered it superior to public television and radio, producing the internationally acknowledged Mexican soap operas. In comparison to a rather underdeveloped public media with its inconspicuous programming, *Televisa* managed to grow steadily, also providing the iconographic popular idols that shaped the identity of Mexican popular culture in the second part of the twentieth century. Furthermore, in 1974 *Televisa* was granted the definitive concession to operate the first cable network television system in Mexico: *Cablevisión*. This concession only operated in Mexico City, but increased the amount of television channels owned and managed by *Televisa*.

The relations between *Televisa* and the Mexican government, however, were not unproblematic. In 1969 the government of President Díaz Ordaz had set a twenty-five per cent tax over the profits made by *Telesistema Mexicano*. In this regard, it is important to mention that the radio electric spectrum (RES) is part of the public domain and therefore must be administrated by the state, which expects economic reciprocity when the RES is economically exploited by private entities. During the period of President Díaz Ordaz, however, it was believed that technological developments should be stimulated without being hindered by taxation, therefore the regulation was not fully enforced. The chairs of *Televisa* approached the government with the expectation of formulating a more convenient tax law, which would ultimately represent the economic interests of both parties. *Televisa* and the government reached an agreement and renegotiated the proposed taxation: the government agreed to suspend *Televisa*'s economic payments on the condition that *Televisa* gave up 12.5 per cent of the total broadcast time for government purposes. This 12.5 per cent of 'government owned' broadcast time, also known as *fiscal time*, sealed the merger of interests between private media and government. Looking carefully, this was a strategy to dispossess the public from the economic profit made by the use of the RES. This resulted in the control of media in Mexico, and represents the creation of a mass media broadcast and infrastructure in the interests of the government.

This fiscal time became an essential part of Luis Echeverría's project for the *Subsecretaria*

de Radio Disfusión (Sub-Ministry for Radio Broadcasting) created in 1970. This organisation, a sub-secretariat of the Ministry of Communications, was in charge of the production of radio and television programs broadcasted during the so-called fiscal time, as well as in other governmental 'spaces' in government owned radio and television. In 1977, with López Portillo as president, this entity changed into *Dirección General de Radio, Televisión y Cinematografía* (RTC) (General Directorate of Radio, Television and Cinematography), and became an organ under the supervision of the *Secretaria de Gobernación* (Ministry of the Interior). The RTC, no longer responsible for programs production, became the organ in charge of censoring the contents in radio, cinema, and television, both public and private.

In the long run, one could say that these developments resulted in rather negative management and poor administration during López Portillo's presidency over communication technologies' potential. López Portillo's formulation of the role of the government in regard to communication showed a true involution when compared to former administrations. In spite of their own problems, some public concerns about mass media had been placed 'on the table,' and politically worked out. One example is the *fiscal time* agreement, understood as a means of reciprocity with the public domain by the private television broadcasters for their use of the RES and the economic benefits gained. A clear sign of the decomposition in the government's orientation towards the potential of communication technologies was the appointment of López Portillo's sister, Margarita López Portillo, as the RTC's director in 1977. Margarita López Portillo's mission was very much focused on protecting her brother, the president, from any negative treatment or opinion via private or public broadcast stations. However, after decades of an authoritarian regime, the most common practice with regard to journalism in Mexico was and still is self-censorship.

The distinction made by the government between language and technology (the technolinguistic social assemblage) and the changes it reveals during the period between 1976 and 1982, opened a heated debate around media uses and utility, which eventually would produce a bifurcation of opinions into two opposite positions with regard to the public media apparatuses, in particular concerning the situation of public (state owned) television. There was the position advocated by the establishment of a system of national television, which was expected to compete with the private media, namely with the growing *Televisa* group. The opposition to this was based on a proposal that aspired to set public (state owned) media as entirely independent from private media. The American media model inspired the former position, while the latter came close to the British model embodied by the BBC (2).

The positions were rather clear-cut. Luis de Llano Palmer supported the private oriented

model, expounding the importance of advertisements and commercialisation, not only for private television, but also for channels belonging to state television. Not surprisingly, the model that de Llano was endorsing at the time also seemed to represent some sort of competition to *Televisa*. One of the major advantages in this model rested on the proposal to establish a state owned channel which would be self-sufficient, and would not have to rely on federal budgets and subsidies.

On the other side was Pablo Marantes, currently a professor of Political Sciences at the National University in Mexico, who supported the position of a state owned public television network. The aims of such a model and the objectives of a state owned television network diverged significantly from the views of commercial broadcasting. The conviction was that a state owned medium of communication had to be supported financially by the state as a mechanism to avoid dependency on commercial forces, and thus was a means to self-regulate the intellectual, ideological, social, and cultural contents of public television. Contrary to the views of Luis de Llano, Pablo Marantes fostered the conviction that since state media had a different aim than that of commercial media, its system of administration and operability needed to fulfil very specific aims beyond mere entertainment. As a criticism to *Televisa*, Marantes claimed that an agenda with overt entertainment purposes and dependent on advertising would compromise the integrity of public media by filling its transmission spaces with programming that nevertheless effectively attracted large audiences.

This debate is best exemplified by the way in which Channel 13, a public (state owned) channel, was managed. During that same time period, Carmen Millán was the Director of Channel 13, Luis de Llano Palmer was Sub-Director of Production, and Marantes Sub-Director of Administration. This line up of divergent positions inflamed a dispute over the proper orientation for Channel 13, which was not definitively resolved. Later on, Marantes and de Llano Palmer were removed from their charges. De Llano Palmer was sent to another parallel government office appointed to develop a television and radio production facility the so-called *Pronarte*, while Marantes became director of Channel 11, another state owned channel. The situation of Channel 13 remained vague until 1982, when Marantes briefly returned as Director just before he took charge of *Corporación Mexicana de Radio y Televisión S.A.* (Mexican Corporation for Radio and Television), a position granted by president Miguel de la Madrid. In 1983 it became evident that the many changes within Channel 13 had an underlying motive: to commercialise the orientation of the channel as a way to make it self-sufficient. This effort was undermined by widespread corruption and ambiguity in its administration, something that ultimately led to its failure, forcing a deep restructuring of state owned media.

The relation between Mexican society at large and the technolinguistic social assemblage

reveals some meaningful interactions and technology and language differentiations during this time. The first example of this type of relation, made by interpersonal networks other than those pertaining to the private sector or governments, was *Radio Huayacocotla*, a radio station concentrated on education, in particular for primary schools in impoverished areas of the state of Veracruz. This initiative was sponsored and organised by a group of Jesuit educators under the association *Fomento Cultural y Educativo A.C.* (Cultural and Educational Foundation). Nonetheless, the first project for a communitarian radio was *Radio Teocelo*. First launched in 1965, this station initially transmitted its programs in the coffee plantations in the central region of Veracruz for two to four hours on a daily basis. The initiative originated when a small group of inhabitants from the rural town of Teocelo became interested in the use of radio for local communication and information. Together they created a civil association known as *Centro de Promoción Social y Cultural A.C.* (CEPROSOC – Centre for Social and Cultural Promotion), creating the project known as *Radio Cultural* (Cultural Radio), later renamed *Radio Teocelo*, aired on the radio station XEYT. During the early 1970s, CEPROSOC encountered difficulties in keeping up transmission; in particular, lack of money and proper equipment prevented the XEYT station from remaining on air. This caused the Ministry of Communication to issue a 'warning' that forced the station to either normalise its situation or face extinction. Antonio Homero Jiménez, one of the founders of CEPROSOC, was determined to avoid the disappearance of XEYT.

Homero Jiménez eventually contacted *Fomento Cultural y Educativo A.C.*, the organisation affiliated with *Radio Huayacocotla*, which had relevant contacts with the government. Jiménez used this contact as a way to avoid cancellation of the permission of XEYT. At this time, XEYT changed its name to *Radio Cultural Campesina* (Peasant Cultural Radio), a name that reflected an audience composed primarily of the peasantry population in the region. This change, together with the donation of upgraded equipment, enabled the station to increase its transmission potential from two to fourteen hours per day. The situation facilitated the station to exert greater impact on the local population while guaranteeing its survival by integrating the population that benefited from the program, who began to actively participate and cooperate with the project.

The success of the merger, the *synthesis* between CEPROSOC and *Fomento Cultural y Educativo*, materialised in the formation of an assemblage known as *Asociación Veracruzana de Comunicadores Populares A.C.* (AVERCOP – Association of Popular Communication of Veracruz). Despite the importance and novelty of the AVERCOP project in Mexico, and considering the urgent need for this type of communication provision and forums, AVERCOP was a small oasis in a desert of commercial and officially co-opted mediums of communication, while *Radio Teocelo* reached just a small audience. It took considerable time for this type of initiative to

influence other community radio broadcasters in other regions of the country, and multiply the population of social assemblages in the form of communitarian radio stations.

The Lost Decade

At this point we have to make a detour and return to the administration of López Portillo. As said previously, prior to the economic and financial crack up, the income from oil revenue and international credit certainly translated into substantial advancements in some fields. One of these fields was employment – between 1977 and 1982 approximately two million jobs were created – while electricity supplies doubled. This echoed a vigorous annual increase in the industrial gross domestic product (GDP) of nine per cent. But this 'bright side' of López Portillo's nationalist project was overshadowed by what would become the worst economic crisis that Mexico had so far experienced.

The problems for his administration began in 1980, when the errors of economic strategies based on oil revenues started to become evident. But it was not until 1982, at the end of his presidential period, that the crisis became unavoidable. Staggering inflation, which made the Mexican peso plummet from twelve pesos per dollar to more than one hundred pesos per dollar, sent the Mexican state into severe economic crisis. The weakening of the Mexican state due to this crisis is considered the legacy of López Portillo's corrupt administration (3), which is also known as the last of the 'nationalist' presidential administrations of Mexico.

When the price of oil began to drop in 1980, the enormous debt acquired by the Mexican government revealed its true proportions. During the years of oil abundance Mexico was considered a credit subject for the US and other international financial institutions, with millions of dollars injected via investment into Mexico, the famous *petrodollars*. However, productive investments were neglected and unplanned, something that led to a political vacuum, and to the industrial and political corruption so akin to López Portillo's administration. To give a clear idea about the cost and dimension of the problem, in 1977 the external national debt added up to 22,000 million dollars, which rose to 76,000 million dollars in 1982. The 'lost decade' of the 1980s in Mexico is marked by the external debt crisis promoted from both inside and outside Mexico (the latter associated in particular to the Volker Shock of 1981, where the US raised interest on all its foreign loans to a crushing 21 per cent). Mexican politics and the shape of the exterior relations of Mexico as a country in the international arena were largely determined by this debt (Harvey: 2007).

On 1 September 1982, President José López Portillo presented his last annual State of the Nation address (*Informe de Gobierno*) to the Mexican Congress. That day, López Portillo publicly announced the nationalisation of the banking system in Mexico. This economic-political decision

was an interlude to one of the most poignant economic crises in Mexico's modern history. The underlying economic condition that led up to this was the bankruptcy of the Mexican economy. The instability of international oil prices, in combination with the inefficient political administration prevalent in Mexico at the time, contributed to a chain of events that left the country in a precarious situation. The bank nationalisation in 1982 was a palliative solution to the crisis, and an attempt to prevent the so-called *saca dolares* (4) ('dollar smugglers') from transferring much of the national (and private) wealth out of the country and 'disappearing' it into foreign bank accounts.

Miguel de la Madrid, López Portillo's secretary of budget and planning and successor as president, faced a country immersed in an extremely delicate social, political, and economic environment when he took office in December 1982. The economic crisis that struck Mexico at the end of López Portillo's administration in the early 1980s, which is commonly attributed to widespread corruption, negligent policies, and generalised profligacy, presented extremely high demands for the incoming president. With enormous external debt, oil prices dropping dramatically, and the PRI experiencing its lowest rates of acceptance, it seemed to herald imminent social crisis. This crisis would ultimately result in a cycle of social upheavals and political violence that intensified the experience of the global problematic in Mexico.

In order to control the economic crisis of 1982, de la Madrid shifted from the nationalist model of development and administration towards neoliberal policies characterised by cuts in public expenses, the reduction of the state apparatus, and the opening up of the internal market to international competition, much to the dismay of nationalist counterparts accustomed to state protection. Miguel de la Madrid implemented some of the first political and economic systems to endorse a decrease in state influence over political and industrial agendas. As part of these policies, state companies and assets began to be dismantled, privatised, or restructured. At the same time Mexico entered the GATT (5).

For de la Madrid's administration, economic change reflected drastic reductions in public investments and other expenses as a measure to repay the already exorbitant external debt. In a tragic chain of events that only made matters worse, on the morning of September 19, 1985, a powerful earthquake struck Mexico City, devastating large areas of the city, especially the historical city centre, and leaving the capital and the entire country facing an aftermath of tremendous proportions. After the disaster unleashed by the earthquake, the local and federal governments were unable to provide the necessary relief to the affected population. The government's notorious incapacity to act in coherence with the tragedy pushed society at large to realise urgent aid by itself. Unpaid, untrained, and unorganised, Mexican society did what the government could not: dealing with the emergency and starting the reconstruction (Wolfgang Sachs: 1999).

On the economic front, in 1986 Mexican oil prices dropped a dramatic 50 per cent, leaving de la Madrid's government unable to engage in any serious programs for recovery. Forced by these extreme conditions, de la Madrid decided to give in to the international interests of Washington: the IMF, the World Bank, and the US treasury. In order to renegotiate the external debt, de la Madrid's administration fell under the control of international financial institutions. The implications of this went beyond mere compromised budget assignations for internal expenditure to initiate what has come to be known as the first *technocratic* administration in Mexico. Not surprisingly, the dire straits undergone by Mexican populations during the 1980s produced what has been termed *the lost decade*; a decade characterised by virtually no economic growth and paralysed markets with rampant unemployment rates. This would lead to the uneasy 1990s with all its violent social uprisings, increasing crime rates, notorious political assassinations and all sorts of national scandals.

As a result of the dire crisis in 1982, the population began to develop a growing resistance to the political system it had inherited from the Revolution of 1910, namely the PRI. During the late 1970s the revolutionary model began to show signs of exhaustion, and the particular socio-political conditions of the decade made it clear that it had to change, reform its precepts, or disappear. As mentioned before, during de la Madrid's term – or as it is known in Mexico, *sexenio* (6) – economic growth came to a halt, real income dropped by 40 per cent, annual inflation rose to a staggering 160 per cent, and a great deal of government jobs were lost without the private sector replacing them. Unsurprisingly, signs of the national crisis began to show their effects inside the PRI. One of these signs was the creation of a new political party *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* or PRD (Democratic Revolution Party) in 1987. This party represented an internal division within the monolithic party system born in 1910.

The candidates in the presidential election in 1988 were Carlos Salinas de Gortari for the PRI, Cuahutémoc Cárdenas for the PRD, and Manuel Clouthier for *Partido Acción Nacional* or PAN (National Action Party). Salinas was assigned as candidate for the presidential election by President de la Madrid by the *dedazo* (7), a known practice in Mexican politics and particularly within the PRI party system, where the outgoing president selects his successor. Contrary to previous presidential elections, when public sentiments had been relatively peaceful, public discontent rose, producing strong political opposition against the government and in particular against the PRI. The stronger contender was Cuahutémoc Cárdenas, the political and moral leader of the new PRD, while Manuel Clouthier, the representative of the conservative PAN, also enjoyed support. Despite the fact that the final result of the 1988 presidential election reflected a meagre triumph for the PRI party, the population and the opposition became aware, and acknowledged, that this triumph had been the result of a cynical electoral fraud conducted by the PRI state system. In

the end, Salinas took office in December 1988.

With Carlos Salinas in office, one of the main aims of his interpersonal networks of economic *experts* working for government institutions became the reinforcement of very specific policies supposed to make government industries and assets more efficient, while attempting to diminish the 'size' and the importance of the state within the national economy. This new political agenda represented great challenges for Mexico, including, of course, the state owned public communication infrastructure. The first signs of the impact of this turn in economic orientation within the Mexican government were formulated by Miguel de la Madrid in 1985, and it impacted the identity of the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico.

Rampant Neoliberalism

Salinas' first political and economic 'moves,' in addition to the negotiations with the PAN and PRD to cover up the electoral fraud, were sophisticated, allowing him to enforce his economic program and state reforms, many of them with a neoliberal profile. An example of his policies is the case of privatisation. In 1988, at the end of de la Madrid's administration, the Mexican state owned more than 1,000 companies. This number declined to only 70 companies in 1993, at the end of Salinas' presidency. The rationale behind Salinas' privatisation program was to make profits from selling off expensive or inefficient state owned companies in order to acquire the necessary resources to finance and subsidise poignant economic and social needs that had risen after decades of economic stagnation (e.g. *Solidaridad,* a government program to support impoverished areas).

At the beginning of Salinas' administration, the situation appeared to be pointing towards rapid and much needed progress; annual inflation was reduced from more than 100 per cent to less than 3 per cent in 1993, growth increased from less than 1 per cent between 1985 and 1988, to 3 per cent between 1989 and 1993. The message behind these facts and figures was clear: Salinas was handling the political and economic crisis that emerged in the late 1980s, in particular during the 1988 electoral fraud, in relatively effective ways. His administrations proclaimed a complete success both nationally and internationally. The external debt was renegotiated to manageable levels; agreement over NAFTA (8) was ratified and set on track, and an apparently successful privatisation program created economic revenue that stabilised the Mexican economy and attracted foreign investors and international financial capital. Mexico returned to the international scenario with a renewed sense of stability.

Nevertheless, and with the advantage of hindsight, this apparent success was nothing more than an illusion. As had happened before with López Portillo's presidency, this illusionary path towards rapid development came to a bitter end during the last year of Salinas' presidency. The first

sign of the emerging process of instability was the uprising of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN – National Liberation Zapatista Army) on December 31, 1993, hours before NAFTA came into effect. The uprising was an open protest against the neoliberal system endorsed by Salinas and the technocratic revolution behind him. The reforms made by the Salinas administration in the Mexican political Constitution, in articles 27 about land property and 123 about labour rights, to accommodate the requirements of the new NAFTA agreements, justified the unrest.

Furthermore, a few weeks before Salinas left office in January 1994, economic crisis once again became unavoidable and undeniable. This crisis, which grew to global proportions, was at least as serious as the one of 1982, receiving the appellative *el error de Diciembre* (the December mistake) (9). The crisis was propelled by national as well as international events. Internal turmoil and instability were complemented by internationally high interest rates and the taking away of immense financial resources from Mexican institutions due to the uncertain conditions, all in a matter of weeks. This financial phenomenon was similar in its effect to the one produced by *saca dolares* during the 1982 economic crisis.

The characteristic feeling of optimism that reigned during Salinas' administration turned into disappointment and distress. On January 1, 1994, the armed forces of the EZLN took over military bases and government offices in the southern state of Chiapas. The apparent peace and development portrayed by Salinas' discourse was exposed as fallacious and chimerical. Mexico was not 'at peace,' and the whole neoliberal project was scrutinised, especially as the *Zapatistas'* claim for social justice resonated greatly within society at large.

The EZLN uprising was not, however, the only political problem to destabilise Mexico in Salinas' last year in office. Two political assassinations contributed to real crisis inside the Mexican political assemblage that was apparently renewed and consolidated with the PRD as political opposition. On March 23, 1994, Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta (the presidential candidate for the PRI) was assassinated in Tijuana during his presidential campaign. Colosio Murrieta had been appointed (or rather chosen by the traditional *dedazo presidencial*, which, despite some democratic evolution within the party during the 1990s, was still exercised by Salinas) to become Salinas' successor. Without a clear motive and without a clearly identified culprit for this murder, many theories have pointed in the direction of particular powerful PRI political groups or interpersonal networks within the PRI party assemblage.

The signs of instability were compounded months later with a series of political assassinations that only worsened an already unstable political environment. On September 28, 1994, a second political assassination shocked Mexico again; this time the victim was Salinas'

brother in law José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, who was serving as the Secretary General of the PRI party. Ruiz Massieu's assassination was also never fully clarified, but was attributed to Salinas' brother Raul Salinas de Gortari. Latter he was sentenced to prison by Salinas' successor Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León.

The investigations of the assassinations were contaminated with irregularities and oddities. After the assassination of Ruiz Massieu, Carlos Salinas de Gortari ordered the attorney general of Mexico and brother of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, Mario Ruiz Massieu, to command the investigation of the assassination. Soon after, Mario Ruiz Massieu began to accuse those high up in the hierarchy of the PRI party of organising the killing of his brother. Eventually, a fierce legal persecution against Mario Ruiz Massieu began to accuse him of money laundering related to the drug mafias in Mexico; subsequently he left the country, initially for Spain, though he was detained in New Jersey by US authorities and put under domiciliary arrest. Months later he committed suicide.

The demise of the Ruiz Massieu brothers and the murder of Luis Donaldo Colosio are two of the darkest episodes in Mexican political history, principally because it made visible the struggle at the top of the political power chain in Mexico. One of the issues is that the government (as a social assemblage) systematically reproduces or generates instability in other Mexican assemblages. This uncertainty affects differentiated social assemblages in various ways, but in particular those in its proximity, for example the police and the military (10), are strongly implicated.

During Salinas' privatisation spree, two of the most important state owned companies were sold: the *Instituto Mexicano de la Televisión* (IMEVISION) and the telephone monopoly *Teléfonos de México* (Telmex). The privatisation of these two important state owned companies was surrounded by unclear negotiations and a lack of transparency. Furthermore, as we will see further in this chapter, the privatisation of IMEVISION, renamed *TV Azteca*, together with *Televisa*, formed a *duopoly* of giant privately owned media companies in Mexico, constituting an authentic anti-market environment in terms of mass media management.

This brings us back to 1985, when Miguel de la Madrid created the *Instituto Mexicano de la Television* (IMEVISION) or Mexican Institute for Television, which included Channels 13, 7, and 22, as well as three additional channels in the northern states of Chihuahua and Nuevo León. Here it is important to mention that Channel 11 (a public channel) was not integrated into this program, but instead remained within the *Instituto Politécnico Nacional* (IPN – National Polytechnic Institute) for its non-commercial operation.

Ricardo Salinas Pliego, a relatively unknown figure at that time and the heir to Salinas y Rocha's fortune, took a central role in the privatisation of IMEVISION. In 1993, the year that

Carlos Salinas de Gortari announced its privatisation, Ricardo Salinas Pliego with *Radio Televisora del Centro* (Central Radio Television) offered 645 million dollars for IMEVISION. This transaction, which apparently had been a publicly announced commission, was allegedly fraught with corruption, an allegation not uncommon for many other privatisations. Nevertheless, the privatisation of IMEVISION was completed in 1993. Channels 7 and 13 became part of *TV Azteca*. As a result of its incursion in the Mexican media market, in 2006 *TV Azteca* was managing 179 television stations broadcasting in Mexico, USA, and Central and South America, becoming one of the influential poles in the Mexican television duopoly. This strategy produced a great deal of economic revenue that remained under the control of private interests.

Civil society was not inactive while the privatisation of state television took place. *LaNeta* is a civil organisation created in 1991 as an electronic communication service for non-government, non-profit organisations. *LaNeta* became the first Internet server in Mexico that was not administered by the state or by universities. Since 1993, *LaNeta* has been a member of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). *LaNeta* is APC's representative in Mexico, linking Mexican NGOs to similar international organisations abroad. *LaNeta* began to work with very simple equipment and was fuelled by the enthusiasm of a small group of experts in communication technologies and a few civil society organisations. It was not until 1994 that *LaNeta* became an Internet provider for civil society, an event that coincided with the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas.

In an interview with Olinca Marino, the general manager of *LaNeta*, some significant details of *LaNeta*'s historical development shed light onto its consolidation and significance during the 1990s (11). Following Marino's argument, *LaNeta* is the product of a combination of technical expertise and the need that civil society had for more efficient coordination, organisation, and communication. In the early 1990s *LaNeta* offered a group of civil organisations the possibility of connection to the Internet, which at that point in time was still in an embryonic phase. This technical capacity allowed civil society and its organisations to improve their planning skills and strengthen their intercommunication. In 1993 *LaNeta* became a member of the APC, something that enabled activities with a global profile to take place within a program that had the possibility of participating in virtual conferences where organisations around the world could discuss topics simultaneously.

The importance and potential of *LaNeta* as a server became evident in 1994, at the onset of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. In spite of its sympathy for the movement, *LaNeta* nevertheless did not claim its support in an overt manner. Paraphrasing Olinca Marino in this regard, it is noteworthy that civil society at the time already had the basic structures in place to mobilise its

resources and support for certain social movements. The role of *LaNeta* centred on the facilitation, distribution, and exchange of information among these civil organisations. It was not directly supportive of any of the social movements in particular, but instead provided the technical means to enable the exchange of information among them.

The Zapatistas took advantage of these new communication technologies, in particular the Internet, to highlight the situation and publicly announce their claims. At a later stage, civil organisations that sympathised with the movement distributed the information among other organisations and to the public via *LaNeta*. The results obtained were substantial, impressive, and relatively effective, at least in political terms. The success of the Zapatistas in using new communication technologies and the support and active involvement of civil society assisted by *LaNeta*'s technical infrastructure is considered a success for organised civil society in Mexico.

The effects of this communicative mobilisation were characterised by Manuel Castells as the first electronic revolution in history (Castells: 2000). After the experience of the Zapatista movement, and the entry of commercial use of Internet technologies in Mexico, *LaNeta* faced a moment of change, shifting from its sole aim of enabling connectivity to providing a variety of services and utilities. Under the increasingly commercialised panorama of the Internet, *LaNeta* was determined to remain a non-profit and non-commercial Internet server. It became known for its rather particular profile as a connector among organisations, that made it stand out from other Internet services available in Mexico, in particular those commercial services provided by Carlos Slim Helú with *Telmex* and the Vargas family with MVS (*Multivision*). Furthermore, in 1996 *LaNeta* manifested its interest in actively supporting peasants and indigenous organisations with insufficient knowledge or technical resources to generate electronic contents. Training and the creation of websites are among the most important activities of *LaNeta* and its contribution to the strengthening of Mexican civil society.

Despite the national turmoil triggered by the Zapatistas and the political and economic instability that Mexico was in at the time, the PRI won the 1994 presidential elections in an electoral process that, strangely enough, was considered rather 'clean.' Under Zedillo's presidency, economic discipline was at the top of the agenda; his administration worked closely with international financial institutions, in particular with what is known as the Washington Consensus: the IMF, World Bank, and the US Treasury. Not without difficulties, the crisis raging after Salinas left office was nevertheless stabilised, but at the cost of larger economic polarisation. Not surprisingly, society at large was again the main bearer of the political and economic instability.

One example of this is the FOBAPROA or *Fondo Bancario de Protección al Ahorro* (Bank Fund to Protect Savings), later on renamed IPAB or *Instituto de Proteccion de Ahorro Bancario*

(Institution for the Protection of Banking Savings). This economic arrangement transferred the debts of private companies, accumulated by credit, to taxpayers; a similar solution to the one adopted by the Obama administration in the US during the 2008 economic crisis. Despite this, it is more generally admitted that Zedillo's presidency was the first in several decades to manage the state administration in such a way that no major problems or renewed economic crises developed during the next six years, and especially during the presidential transition of 2000. Despite these apparent achievements, which earned Zedillo's administration recognition as a 'plateau of stability' and a period of decreased corruption, there remained several unanswered questions. For instance, the social unrest that had appeared during Salinas' last months in office remained entrenched and unresolved. This provoked various social and political movements and groups to harshly criticise Zedillo's neoliberal policies and pernicious omissions. The criticism was targeted against the support of macro-economic figures instead of concentrating on the regional and local economies and problems. A variety of social organisations launched stark critiques against Zedillo's administration for its disregard of the micro-economic realm.

Moreover, dubious episodes during Zedillo's administration include the investigations against Raul Salinas de Gortari (as mentioned above), and the massacres at *Aguas Blancas* on 28 June 1995 (12) and *Acteal* on 22 December 1997 (13). While Zedillo has never officially been considered directly responsible for these events, he is nonetheless criticised for a lack of political determination and will to persecute and prosecute the groups responsible for these massacres. Furthermore, his administration has also been accused of carrying out 'low intensity warfare' against specific sectors of Mexican society. Such lack of justice was not new in Mexico, but the fact that Zedillo was not able to improve this situation cost him a significant amount of credibility. Nevertheless, and contrary to his predecessors, Zedillo managed to deliver the country in relatively stable condition to Vicente Fox, his successor in the presidential office. In doing so, he also made possible the so-called *alternacia democrática* in Mexico.

It was in this decade (the 1990s) of rampant neoliberalism, characterised by the privatisation of revenue and the socialisation of loss and debt (Jalife-Rahme: 2007), that the private sector increased its power and influence in the communicational and social fields. *Televisa* and *TV Azteca* consolidated their duopoly regarding television broadcasting and programming production, while the state owned media showed slow development and poor protection of its minimum possessions in the field. For example, even though Channel 11 was the most productive in social and cultural terms of the state owned media assets, it still did not have national coverage. The 1990s was also a decade where civil society showed very important changes, with the Internet and a more intensive use of community radio marking great advancements and important effects, as seen with the *LaNeta*

Internet server. The participation of society throughout mass media and new communication technologies increased and enabled sectors of society at large to become a more important protagonist in the political and social development of the country.

It was in this period that civil society consolidated and found alternative ways, such as participatory democracy, to manifest and channel its voice. In certain ways, Mexico began to fulfil democratic needs that were impossible to reach in the past. Despite the fact that this democratic change was not the result of the desires present in the government or private sector, civil society found its way amidst a neoliberal political environment thanks to the enthusiasm and interest of people who were acting to make a more democratic system at the personal scale in Mexico.

The communicative panorama in Mexico has certainly become much more complex after the inception of new communication technologies in the social realm. If radio and television accounted for most of the communicative infrastructure and the possibilities for communication at large during the 1970s and 1980s, the 1990s were characterised by the consistent implementation of Internet technologies, something that also triggered new attitudes, a variety of possibilities, and new forms of communication with heightened interactive features. It was not until the turn of the millennium, however, that the communicative panorama really diversified and evolved enormously, opening up more alternative and creative ways of communication for all sectors of society. The state and the private sectors greatly benefited from these technological developments, but it can be argued that it was civil society that really improved its capacities and possibilities for communication.

New Millennium: The Lost Decade II

In the year 2000 a new paradigm appeared within Mexican history. For the first time in over seventy years, Mexicans elected a candidate who did not belong to the PRI party. As we know, Vicente Fox, the presidential candidate for the conservative *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN), won the 2000 presidential election. Zedillo, allegedly not without a certain degree of pressure, accepted his party's defeat publicly on national television. The general sentiment in Mexico during the turn of the millennium was one of great expectancy and hope. Citizens were prepared and ready to participate in the 'evolution' of the country towards new and improved prospects for development after Zedillo managed to hand over a country in relative stability, something that differed from the last presidential transitions marked by crises and tensions.

The political situation in Mexico in the year 2000 was thus apparently *changed* with the arrival of fresh politics incarnated in Fox's electoral campaign. However, later it was realised that the neoliberal practices within the Mexican government begun by the PRI were in fact only

radicalised and strengthened under Fox and the PAN. The political project that prioritised the market and economy as the means to achieve Mexican development was further enforced, regardless of the social cost. The idea that a neoliberal agenda would halt political and economic instability and socio-economic polarisation was, however, not always shared by important sectors of the Mexican population. The general disappointment started to manifest rather soon in Fox's administration and, similar to other presidencies, the initial optimism and faith rapidly turned into disappointment and recrimination until he left office enmeshed in scandals of corruption and negligence in 2006.

Vicente Fox fulfilled the expected profile of the presidential candidate that represents the entrepreneurs and conservative sectors of the Mexican population. As a former CEO for the Coca-Cola Company in Mexico, and as a landowner and agricultural producer, Fox appeared to have the necessary ingredients to thrust Mexico into a period of economic growth and development. Fox's project was based on a successful democratic transition for neoliberal Mexico. In order to achieve this goal he relied on a stable economy that would protect family patrimony and invest a great deal of effort in generating *human capital* (14). For Vicente Fox, a stable economy would ideally lead to development, and the focus on human capital would bring equality, which would be translated into more and better opportunities, especially for those who had less. He also stressed the issue of human rights, something that would eventually lead to diplomatic problems and disputes, as was the case with the Mexican vote against Cuba at the United Nations 2004.

In spite of all the 'good intentions' and high aspirations of Fox's administration, his term was also fraught with failure. His democratic commitment, as well as the status of human rights in Mexico, remained either unfulfilled or limited. Additionally, Fox's attitudes and actions against the leftist candidate during the 2006 presidential campaign, PRD's Andrés Manuel López Obrador, exemplified the downside in the democratic front. Furthermore, despite his talk of human rights elsewhere, the deterioration of human rights in Mexico itself may be exemplified by rather tragic events, particularly during the last years of his administration, among them the case of *Atenco* (15) and *Oaxaca* (16).

The first disappointment in Fox's administration was his political inability to pursue and achieve the necessary and urgent structural reforms required by the Mexican state; reform of the fiscal system, the pension system, and energy reform, among several others, were all necessary to achieve the most important objectives for Mexico at the beginning of the millennium. He also displayed a political incapacity to deal with an opposing congress. Vicente Fox was criticised for his lack of vision to exercise power. In Mexico, the power structure – the presidential institutional organisation – was designed to centre political power on the presidential figure. Despite the fact that

Vicente Fox was able to exercise this power, in the long run it appeared as though he was using this prerogative for the wrong causes. He engaged in the 2006 electoral process while he was still president in a way that triggered significant criticism and suspicion, and applied his presidential power in the passing of several laws that have been considered if not corrupt at least polemic. The signature in Waco, Texas of ASPAN (*Alianza para la Seguridad y la Prosperidad de América del Norte* or Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America) in 2004 and the new law for radio and television, the so-called *Ley Televisa*, approved by the Senate in 2006, are such cases.

As far as political and electoral processes go, Fox has been criticised for his overt efforts to debunk and discredit his political opponent Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The debate over these efforts, which were not 'legal' in all instances, can be traced back to the attempted 'legal' application of the *desafuero* of López Obrador during his term as the governor of Mexico City. The idea of *desafuero* is the reversal of the constitutional *fuero* enjoyed by popular elected politicians in Mexico, which limits and sometimes paralyses the normal course of law. It can only be disabled by the Mexican Congress, in particular the Deputies or Low Chamber. In this context, it is important to remark that any politician that is subjected to this *desafuero* procedure may face legal prosecution, as any other citizen. Under such circumstances, any politician awaiting sentence cannot practice his/her political rights, for instance to participate in any popular vote, including the presidential election.

Who is López Obrador?

In December 2000, López Obrador was elected as Mexico City's major, or governor. His administration focused on the most vulnerable sector of the population: the young, the elderly, and the urban poor. His popularity increased rapidly because of the success of some of the social programs he proposed, but also because of a series of construction projects he initiated within Mexico City, in particular new urban and traffic infrastructure. The popular support that he was gaining, however, also produced parallel suspicion and unrest among some of the more powerful interpersonal networks of Mexican political society, especially those associated with the conservative groups of the PAN, power groups such as media tycoons, and other influential entrepreneurs, all of whom disregarded López Obrador because of his leftist affiliations.

The moment that López Obrador announced his candidacy for the presidential election in 2006, attacks against him began, promoted by the abovementioned interest groups and backed up by the executive power of Vicente Fox. This confrontation became the root of a political crisis that started with the *desafuero* procedure and ended up in one of the most dubious and disappointing presidential elections Mexico has ever had. The main outcome of this process was the further

polarisation of Mexican society, not in economic but in political terms, a degree of political polarisation that had not been seen in Mexico since the time of revolutionary conflict.

Desafuero and Political Polarisation

In June 2003, López Obrador began his defence against the so-called *juicio de procedencia*, a type of trial that eventually lead to his *desafuero* later that same year. Rafael Macedo de la Concha, Mexico's attorney general, solicited the *juicio de procedencia*. The attorney general succeeded in prosecuting López Obrador's *desafuero* after the PRI and PAN politically negotiated his destitution. The effective removal of López Obrador generated a huge reaction from diverse sectors of Mexican society at large, in part because of the obviously illegitimate political aim behind the judicial process. The resistance and popular nonconformity expressed in massive social mobilisations against this political manoeuvre forced Vicente Fox to publicly announce the suspension of the *desafuero* against López Obrador in April 2005 (17). This allowed López Obrador to compete in the presidential election the following year, much to the dismay of the powerful conservative interpersonal networks, organisations, and groups participating in the attacks.

Unfortunately, the conflict and polarisation between these political and economic groups did not cease, and was in fact worsened during the electoral campaign of 2006, a campaign that was characterised by exaggerated statements against López Obrador's policies and 'style.' The mass media also played an important role in this campaign to undermine his public image by shaping the collective beliefs of the Mexican audience against him. So-called 'video scandals' (18) against the city government, the *desafuero*, and an intensive mass media campaign leading up to the election certainly diminished the popularity of López Obrador. This did not lead him to waver in his position, and on the dawn of the elections he still felt certain to win despite the interpersonal networks and organisations entrenched in the Mexican executive, legislative, judicial, and industrial power structures.

The final result of the electoral campaign spurred heated debate and conflict, and only days later the presidential 'race' was still 'too close to call.' The deadlock ended when the highest tribunal in Mexico recognised that Felipe Calderón, the candidate for the PAN, had officially won the election with the minimal difference of 0.5 per cent of the votes. The presidential election was allegedly tainted by irregularities, and serious claims of electoral fraud were made across the country. The dim memories of past electoral fraud emerged, reminding the population of the notorious 1988 election that cost Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas the presidency. Eventually, amidst a chaotic Low Chamber, on 1 December 2006 Felipe Calderón took position as the Mexican president. Members of the PRD threatened to obstruct Calderón's presidential inauguration, a

situation that was as scandalous as it was embarrassing.

López Obrador engaged in massive public protests and refused to recognise the new government as legitimate. In fact, after the tribunal announced its verdict, López Obrador and those supporting him organised the *Convención Nacional Democrática* (National Democratic Convention), one of the most important organisations created early in López Obrador's national social movement. In November 2006, this *Convención* declared him as the 'legitimate' president of Mexico. Despite the difficulties on both sides of the electoral struggle, both López Obrador and Calderón held their own share of public support, a division that has not been settled to date, and which renders the political future of Mexico as rather uncertain and polarised.

Decretazo

After this interlude of political disparities, we must return to the administration of Vicente Fox. The Fox administration, despite its notorious political discrepancies, was even more polemic in terms of communication. The suspicion that President Vicente Fox was in 'complicity' with the mass media tycoons and other power groups in Mexico emerged from the sudden passing of a presidential decree on October 10, 2002. In this legal change to the law, Vicente Fox almost completely exonerated the private media groups from their *fiscal time* obligations. As explained earlier, *fiscal time* was the product of the negotiation between *Televisa* and the government of Díaz Ordaz in relation to the reciprocity that the Mexican state expected from the commercial exploitation of the RES. After the presidential decree – termed the *decretazo* (19) – however, no other type of compensation or reposition was implemented. *Televisa*, *TV Azteca*, and private radio broadcasters were exempted from all payments.

The decree of 2002 reduced fiscal time by 90 per cent in the case of television and by 80 per cent in the case of radio. The space available for the Mexican government was reduced from the agreed upon 12.5 per cent in 1969 to the minimal amount of 1.2 per cent in 2002. Between 1969 and 2002 the Mexican state had had approximately 180 minutes per day on television, until it was suddenly reduced to a meagre 18 minutes per day. The fiscal time was used for, among other purposes, political campaigning or public advertisements of national programs of education, health, etc. From 2002 onwards, the private television companies in Mexico, mainly *Televisa* and *TV Azteca*, received millions of dollars from the government, who paid for political propaganda, especially during the highly expensive electoral process (20). Not surprisingly, this situation angered many experts in communication, an infuriation that only worsened with the passing of the so-called *Ley Televisa* in 2006.

Ley Televisa

The next step to dispossess the public of the possibility to interact with and benefit from the technolinguistic social assemblage came in mid-December 2005. Shortly before the holidays, the Low Chamber approved a new law for radio and television. At first, this was considered normal procedure, especially if we consider that the legal framework for radio and television had not been updated since 1960. The technological advancements and the implementation of new communication technologies in general certainly called for reform. However, there were some suspicious aspects of this reform, in particular the fact that the new law was approved in the Low Chamber without the careful consideration and analysis of the deputies; at the time the proposal was sent to the Senate, politics and opaque arrangements made corrections to such a law impossible.

Before the reform of 2006, later renamed *Ley Televisa*, other proposals favourable to the interests of private mass media had started to appear that were, however, neglected in congress. In particular, the efforts made by Senator Javier Corral Jurado deserve some attention. He had been working on a proposal to reform the legal framework for radio and television in coordination with diverse civil society actors. This proposal was disappointingly denied even consideration or voting. Contrary to that initiative, at the end of 2005 a proposal presented by the deputy Manuel Lucero Palma from the PRI passed in less than 10 minutes. Questions on the disparities and contradictions between both proposals were unavoidable. How was it possible that such a contradiction was allowed, and furthermore what would the consequences be?

By early 2006, an even more serious debate headed by Corral Jurado took place before some of the senators for the PRI and PAN parties, however, had apparently negotiated the reform beforehand and managed to pass it by majority. Both sides of the conflict presented their reasoning. Those who agreed with the reform declared the necessity of changing such an obsolete legal framework, arguing that even though the new law could be improved, it was better than the old one in two basic points. First, they argued that it was simply necessary to update and to keep up with the technological changes in telecommunications, and secondly, they argued that it could be used as a mechanism to reduce the sometimes obscure concessions and permissions of the RES.

In opposition to this view, some senators from the PRD, PAN, and PRI signalled three important aspects. Firstly, they noted that important issues to accomplish the collective benefit and fair competition around media uses and commercial exploitation were missing. In this regard, it is important to remark that it is the responsibility of the state to meet these conditions of equality among possible competitors. Secondly, they claimed that the reform presented an unjustified benefit to the duopoly of *Televisa* and *TV Azteca*, while costing the state millions of dollars annually

because there was no economic compensation for the exploitation of the RES. Thirdly, the new framework presented certain structural problems that accounted for legal ambiguity in the collective and public use of communication technologies and media production. This last issue affected community radio broadcasters in particular, but also other state owned media.

The new legal framework opened the road for the major concentration of mass media broadcasting and production while reducing competition, affecting alternative and social uses of communication technologies but not commercial media. This situation produced a high pitched debate, and for those supporting the reform it almost became an unsustainable claim. The clear connection between certain politicians and the private media groups *Televisa* and *TV Azteca* was undeniable. However, Vicente Fox, who in this particular case had the power to either cancel the proposition or to simply sentence it to further revision, instead decided to put the dispute to rest. In one disappointing action that revealed Fox's political views and interests, he approved the law without marking out one single change, correction, or revision. Colloquially, he has been criticised for passing a law that was sprinkled – literally – with spelling and grammar mistakes of the most brutish kind.

In brief terms, there are at least four aspects that reflect the implications of the passing of this neoliberal reform of the communicative realm. Firstly, the aim of this reform was to 'catch up' with the technological convergence that accompanied the advancement of communication technologies over the last two decades. The migration from analogue to digital signals presents not only complex technical problems, but is also a substantially expensive process. Federal governments around the world, including in Mexico, were eager to support private and public media enterprises to mirror their analogue signals to digital. In Mexico, however, both *Televisa* and *TV Azteca* received the support of the state, but failed to return the analogue channels after the process of migration had been completed. Furthermore, they also failed to pay for the continuous use of digital and analogue channels alike; an operation that practically quadrupled their broadcast capacities, since one digital channel has the capacity to accommodate four analogue ones. This over-accumulation of broadcasting capacity not only guarantees the capacity of television and radio broadcasting for these enterprises, securing the position they already enjoyed before the technological convergence, but most significantly it ensured that these channels were exempt from compensating the Mexican state for the commercial exploitation of the RES, digital or analogue. In the Mexico City area alone, this represents an exorbitant annual expense of 100 million dollars for the state (21).

Secondly, public media were also significantly affected. Community radio and state owned broadcasting stations have felt the consequences of this reform, which deliberately omits the clause

that would specify the implications of this law reform for community and public use of telecommunications. The legal framework provides only for a reduced space in which it suggests that public media may attract sufficient financial means exclusively through commercial advertisement. This practice is not commonplace within public or community media, which conventionally fund their foundations through donations, subsidies, and national or international economic support.

In short, this reform doomed radio and television stations that depend on sources other than commercial advertisement for their economic operability to a form of 'illegality.' This rather unclear and ambiguous situation makes them susceptible to all sorts of consequences: from disappearance, to the suspension of permissions and concessions, without which these stations are virtually inoperative. This, unsurprisingly, is one of the aspects that indirectly benefit the duopoly of *Televisa* and *TV Azteca*; not only does it reduce competition to zero, but it also reinforces the disappearance of alternative and non-profit forms and uses of media technologies.

Thirdly, in spite of the political discussion that surged around the *Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones* (COFETEL – Federal Commission of Telecommunications), the institute in charge of monitoring the permissions and concessions within telecommunications created by President Zedillo in 1995, the regulatory office of the Ministry of Communications (of which COFETEL is a part) is rather weak in legal terms. It does not have the legal capacities to penalise or even limit abuse and misuse of permits and concessions by private or public media. Hence, COFETEL is an office that handles these issues in nothing more than 'cosmetic' ways, and is incapable of effectively regulating the use and contents of the state owned RES. Thus one of the main claims made by the defenders of the reform – that it would lead to the reduction of corruption in the giving of permissions and concessions by the executive power – is in fact irrelevant and insubstantial. At the end of the day, it is only the Ministry of Communications, an institution that directly depends on the executive power, which can decide over permissions and concessions. Despite the weakness of this institution, the appointed chairs of COFETEL reflected the real proportion of the opaqueness within the process. The list of names, all of whom had direct ties to Fox's own political group or to *Televisa*, and the dubious nature of this entire affair, pointed towards the rather grim future for Mexican media.

Fourth, the new reform has ignored or neglected the issue of electoral expenditure. This is an important aspect if we consider that 90 per cent of the electoral expenses made by political parties is invested in radio and television, especially private television. This last omission within the reform represents a substantial 'business' easily rising to a multimillion dollar benefit for both *Televisa* and *TV Azteca*, as was the case during the presidential electoral campaign in 2006. The federal budget

for the political parties during this electoral procedure amounts to approximately 1,200 million dollars, ultimately shared mainly between *Televisa* and *TV Azteca*. At the end of Fox's administration it had become quite evident that Mexico was witnessing yet another 'lost decade,' one that combined both economic and democratic losses.

Chapter Seven

COMMUNICATION AND THE GLOBAL PROBLEMATIC

> Whatever moral philosophers may say and whatever warnings they may hand out, 'progress' just goes on. Usually, the technological decisions are taken first and ethics may reflect on them after the event. Thus ethics becomes the agreeable topics of interesting seminars about norms and values.
>
> (Hamelink: 2000: 6)

Introduction

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

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

General Remarks

Communication possibilities in Mexico during the 1980s were controlled by three organisations: the public media managed by the state, the media represented by the private sector (e.g. *Televisa*), and the collective or truly public and social use of frequencies in the form of communitarian projects (e.g. *Radio Campesina*). A closer look at each of these forms of organisation offers us the following insight: in the case of the state, the role of communication technologies in the early and mid-1980s was reduced due to the restructuring of its infrastructures, wavering from a state-public vision to a failed commercial one. During that same period, the private media group *Televisa* registered a great expansion, and even though it was subjected to some degree of state control, it nevertheless gained significant power within the political and social arena. Finally, by the end of the 1980s, the social and collective use and implementation of communication technologies was reduced and

marginalised, as revealed in the case of Radio XEYT or Radio *Cultural Campesina*, later renamed *Radio Teocelo* in 1998. Civil society was not yet an actor in the communication arena during this decade.

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

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

The 1990s was a decade in which the state lost most of its ground in communication terms. State television was represented by Channel 11, its best and most serious asset, and other minor

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

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

The explosive growth of communitarian radio stations in Mexico, aided by the Internet, may be considered the result of efforts within the social sector to counterbalance the private sector and its relation to the state, and as a way of countering the strategies exercised by the private sector to reduce the possibilities to use communication technologies, in particular radio and television. Sadly, this has not been enough to achieve the necessary balance within the communication panorama in Mexico. However, alternatives to this otherwise bleak trend of communication in Mexico appear to be emerging. Together with community radio, the Internet, as part of the new communication technologies, offers alternatives for the social sector to counteract monopoly practices and other commercial regulations in the field. During the late 1990s and throughout the first half of the

present decade, Internet related communications have peaked astoundingly, contributing to a sense of optimism. Civil society is creating electronic content in the form of websites and blogs, creating a platform for political and social debate with unrestricted political content that the state and the private sector are not willing to create or stimulate, even though it is necessary to keep society informed and to enable positive collective participation in the future of the nation.

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

Mexico Actual

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

As mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the government's main functions as the national authority is to assign rights and legitimacy to those social assemblages which are sufficiently differentiated and constituted. This makes social assemblages liable to insertion into power relations and to being named, identified, and recognised. In other words, governments and figures of

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

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

The Intensification of the Global Problematic in Mexico: Poverty and Violence

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

This rather small seeming discursive shift has unfolded into quite the expected outcomes, and has produced tremendous change within the social assemblages of power relations. Unfortunately, it has notably increased and intensified the violence perpetrated by organised crime and the government. Needless to say, the most affected by this violent situation is society at large. This is an appropriate example of the effects and implications of discourse: the impact of what we

say on the material and social world. The implications are especially dramatic when the statements are uttered from within power positions: leaders, presidents, etc. Mexicans are now dealing with high insecurity levels, violence related to organised crime, the military, and the police, which the government (via Calderón's political discourses) has set in an *apparent* state of *war*.

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

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

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

The repercussions are severe. Mexico has reached the top five in several global lists of crime rates, attacks against journalists and independent information organisations (e.g. local newspapers, communication radio stations), and the like. Unfortunately, the government assemblages are unable

to prevent and counter this situation, reflecting the lack of resources to manage and control the totality of Mexican geography and territories. So while Calderón is fighting his drug wars, organised crime is only profiting and increasing its wealth and power. Similarly to the private sector assemblages and the civil society assemblages, the organised crime assemblage has also synthesised sufficient components (money, recruits, weapons, knowledge, information, etc.) to sustain and enforce its status within its power relations with the government and other assemblages such as the military or the police, thus effectively shaping an identity of Mexico based on the rule of crime, which is as uncertain as it is unsustainable.

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

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

This type of public communication is a part of what I refer to as the more complex technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the beliefs of society. And it certainly leaves its marks on what Mexican society *sees* and *says* about the government and its failure to deal with violence and crime. This type of communication also plays

an important role in determining power relations. As the government focuses on triumphant discourses, the messages of beheaded folk bearing cardboard posters with openly offensive attacks on the government and other opponents speak louder than political demagogy. They bring back to *reality* the experience of the global problematic at home, challenging even further the government's credibility, legitimacy, and authority.

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

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

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

The control of drug traffic and its cartels has been rather unsuccessful to date. However, drug traffic is not the only expression of violence in neoliberal Mexico. Repression of public and

social protest is another form of violence against the general population or society at large. One regrettable and as yet unresolved expression of violence, which is simultaneously another example of the incapability of the Mexican government at its different levels of administration to tackle violence, is the mass murder of young women. Though this problem is most acute in *Cuidad Juárez* and other border cities with the US, these killings occur everywhere in Mexico, in rural environments as well as in cities (e.g. *Iztapalapa* in Mexico City), and the victims, predominantly female, are usually low wage workers. In these cases, which deserve a much more detailed account than is provided here, we can *see* once again the convoluted double-bind between crime and impunity. For decades these horrible crimes have been perpetrated against young women, but impunity has been the common denominator in all of them.

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

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

In spite of there being many more problems afflicting Mexican society today – permanent or chronic struggle for economic recovery, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and instability, to name just a few – the struggle (not *war*) against organised crime, violence, and the lack of safety

are perhaps the most urgent tasks which have to be tackled and solved in the next few years. Without this, any attempt towards a true process of social well-being, peaceful societal coexistence, and political consolidation will most certainly be fruitless. The quest for sovereignty, and the control over violence, insecurity, and crime, will blatantly fail if the ongoing chaos and turbulence is not only carefully but also effectively countered. Today, however, these problematic forces are determining the destiny and the co-evolution of Mexico's social assemblages.

Media and the Global Problematic

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

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

Regardless of the type of differentiation (e.g. capitalist, socialist, communist, fascist), communication technology, and in particular mass media outlets, do not *cause* the experience of the global problematic in Mexican territories or elsewhere. Nevertheless, mass media are a *component*

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

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

To clarify the role of mass media in relation to the global problematic, there are plenty of examples of advanced research that have dealt with the effects of mass media on disparate issues such as physical obesity, violence, and antisocial behaviour, to name only a few. However, no conclusive results can be drawn to establish a direct relation between mass media consumption and the social problem. Under this scope, and if the causal relation between media and the social problem cannot be drawn, what are the options? Is making mass media's content – or those who are in charge of communication technologies – responsible for the failure to achieve social balance,

justice, and development by means of technology a limited vision of the problem? This would make mass media something comparable to 'the bullet that killed the boy' (see Introduction); media are not the only institutions responsible when the global problematic intensifies or finds new modes, of course, and the situation is far more complex. Hence, a more appropriate way of putting it is to say that the communicational setting in Mexico supports the actualisation of the experience of the global problematic, a situation in which mass media outlets play a predominant role by *decomposing* social relations rather than synthesising and *composing* them, in order to achieve higher aims or desires that resonate with social concerns.

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

One Problem: Four Scales

The communication social assemblage has broad connotations and could be approached at many scales and levels, as has been suggested earlier. In this regard, there are four space-scales to be considered: the *global*, the *national*, the *local*, and the *personal* (individual). At the global scale, the Mexican communication social assemblage has been attached and somehow synthesised with other similar assemblages: big mass media groups in Mexico have joined the global scale of anti-market mass media organisations, becoming the giants of the Spanish speaking world (the equivalent of News Corp, Time Warner, or Disney in the Anglophone world). At the national scale, the observable conditions reveal that communication practices are performed under the notion of *exclusion*. The monopolisation of mass media production and broadcasting added to the alliances set at the highest levels of government (e.g. *Ley Televisa*) have led to the *excommunication* of

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society at large across the country. In Mexico, uneven competition and uneven access to resources for communication is a persistent condition at the national scale. At the local scale, the current observable conditions enhance processes of *consumption*, triggering a double consumption bind. There is consumption of information and entertainment, as well as consumption of infrastructure and services associated with having *access* to the technolinguistic social assemblage and the benefits derived from it (e.g. Internet). Processes of exclusion, excommunication, and consumption at different space scales are also experienced at the personal scale.

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

Society at Large and its Discontents

The research carried out in Mexico for this study included conducting interviews with individuals relevant to the topic of social and political communication in Mexico. Politicians, state employees, entrepreneurs in the communication industry, and members of civil society organisations offered their views on the general situation of present day Mexico, and on the political and social trends in communication. The information gathered was used to frame the basic principles that established the differentiations made between language and technology among the identified social actors or assemblages in Mexico. In addition, this information allowed me to speculate on how *the*

economies of power and *the economies of knowledge* are managed in order to prevent the possibility of achieving *fundamental change* in the organisation of power in Mexican territories. Thus, it exposed the general conditions upon which *economies of power* (action upon others' actions) and *economies of knowledge* (what we see, say, and think) are based in neoliberal Mexico.

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

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

Arguably, the intention or even the teleology behind the actions taken by mass media

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

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

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

Concentrations of Discourse
The temporal discourse concentrations (language as an assemblage) in mass media outlets can be enforced due to the enormous power that mass media have, and can be used to leverage interest at any time when power groups feel the need to settle or spark public debate. Discourse concentrations

at particular times are understood as critical moments of influence performed by mass media and other synthesised particular interests. Concentrations of discourse are not a permanent practice; nor was Joseph Goebbels' Nazi practice of repeating a lie a million times to make it true. Instead, this type of concentration of discourse comes to the fore every time powerful interests are at stake (e.g. 'dirty campaigns' before or during elections, as López Obrador's case shows). These tactics (of defamation, for example) are closely related to the aforementioned formulation of *units of confusion*, and are not necessarily related to a consistent practice of bias in mass media outlets.

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

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

Generalised feelings and desires about the aforementioned situation can be collected in forums and chat rooms that have been enabled by mass media communication outlets for these purposes (e.g. online newspapers). In spite of the limitations of these types of interactions, it is interesting to see the consistency in public opinions in this part of the discourse available in the mass media. Three positions are visible with respect to the general opinion about the performance of politicians and government in Mexico. First, there are the optimistic government supporters,

second are the opposition and the fierce critics of the establishment, while a third group can be identified by their disenchantment over Mexican reality and politics. All three groups and opinions, however, revolve around one single fact: the perception that the manifestations of the global problematic in Mexico are intensifying, maybe to irreversible levels. In other words, what has become evident to every group is that processes of instability, polarisation, and violence supersede the current Mexican structure and logic of power relations and the government establishment which is meant to harmonise it. Animosity and disbelief in politics and politicians mark the relations between government and society at large, regardless of whether these are right, centre, or left political orientations.

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

Populations and governments need a territory (space) to be sovereign and to maintain specific social practices that respond to the tradition, history, and desires of determinate populations. The loss of sovereignty, which is a lost opportunity to control national social territories and their possibility of becoming coherent with the practices and interests of local populations, is furthered when social assemblages constituting the nation state create deep disruptions. A state of perplexity is an expected outcome of this lack of sovereignty. In Mexico the economic crises that struck the country after the inception and advance of neoliberal policies enforced the process of the erosion of sovereignty. Failed or faulty economic management, however, is not the only source of this erosion, and other factors have played a large role. Drug dealing and its embedded illegal economic revenue, *remesas* (remittances, wages earned in the US and sent to Mexico), and commercial informality, a practice that is often accompanied by other forms of illegality, account for approximately 50 per cent of the total *real* economy of Mexico. On the one hand, the

government is tied by international organisations to control its formal resources, while on the other hand, it has no control as it cannot tax around half of the economic resources 'produced' in (or sent in as remittances to) Mexican territory.

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

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

Regaining national sovereignty may be the greatest challenge faced by the Mexican government social assemblage if it wishes to recover its function and position within society at large. To achieve this, it becomes crucial to look for the conditions that allow the stratification of those power relations that reproduce this 'apparent' failed political system. The fact is that this double spiral of violence and precarious economic conditions sustains the intensification of the manifestations of the global problematic. In this regard, Mexico is considered to be a rather even country at the personal scale; violence and uncertainty are suffered and endured more or less evenly across Mexican geography. They are felt most intensively by impoverished people without the resources to push themselves out of conditions of vulnerability, but among the better off and more affluent classes it translates into intense feelings of *insecurity*, motivated by the recent dramas in the kidnapping industry in Mexico. In a sense, the feeling or experience of insecurity and the lack of safety brought about by violence and deprivation is a generalised one, with different intensities and motivations across different socio-economic strata.

In creating this social environment, there are many identifications or omissions made by Mexican authorities towards a variety of social assemblages. Many of the identifications made by the government, despite the mass media bias, lack the support of society at large, which has become reluctant to believe in the potentials of the government. This has produced distrust and a lack of credibility, something which is very much related to the state of perplexity that I referred to earlier. The criminalisation of social and public protest serves as an example to *see* the actual setting of power relations in Mexico, and therefore highlights some points of immanence of the global problematic.

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

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

Naming assemblages that 'are not' and omitting others that express themselves but which, for the most part, remain ignored is a common trend in Mexico. The state of social and political relations and the type of communication between the government and other social assemblages produces a great deal of disbelief, which is persistently expressed in Mexican newspapers and other oppositional outlets (e.g. street protests, strikes, the Internet). Nevertheless, a general feeling of frustration does not lead to social change. Those groups and social assemblages constituted in Mexico which experience frustration about the future of the country have not been strong enough to trigger the chain of events (the feedback) necessary to irreversibly alter the power relations and the organisation of power relations *visible* in Mexico. The incapacity to effectively challenge the

prevailing economies of power and knowledge prevent the necessary *fundamental change* desired and expected in Mexico. One explanation for this is that a large sector of the population is *materially deprived*, while another segment, a much smaller one, is *culturally oppressed* (Marcuse: 2009).

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

One Particular Relation: Political Simulation

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

The current Mexican situation and the 'state monsters' it has created lead to undesirable actions, in particular, but not exclusively, regarding *political simulation*. Within an ill-informed society, these simulations and the motives behind them – corruption and impunity – push society at large towards an uncanny form of tolerance, turning it into a witness to the poor quality of public politics, and rendering it incapable of challenging persistent political simulation. In order to analyse political simulation it is necessary to understand the context in which it takes place.

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

Other Particular Relations: Units of Confusion

It is visible that the weakness in authority and lack of credibility of the Mexican government assemblage has enabled mass media groups, and in particular private mass media outlets, to seize the position of the government in the form of a specific assemblage: the assemblage endowed with *symbolic* authority and credibility to identify and recognise differentiated assemblages in society. In light of the lack of legitimacy of the executive, judicial, and legislative systems, mass media has turned into the public authorities, the collective 'judges' determining who is who in neoliberal Mexico. This is not a small detail if we remember that *language* and the control over it is a social component which plays a crucial role in the social shaping of beliefs. Whether these work to intensify our affinities or radicalise our positions, it produces statements and visibilities that engage in conscious or unconscious ways the thinking processes of the Mexican population, and hence the social recognition that springs from the proposed identifications. In this regard, the challenge to change the actual form of bias in journalism, for instance, is a difficult struggle that concerns not only Mexican media but also international media outlets.

At this point it is crucial to question the quality of content that the private mass media provide to Mexican audiences. It has been said earlier that a causal relation between media consumption and the social problem cannot be drawn. The discussion around the quality of content in mass media, however, remains highly important. Is the content coherent with the feelings found in society at large? People have no access to or even the knowledge (visibilities and statements) of a variety of sources of information, at least not in a massive fashion. Alternative sources of information in Mexico do not enjoy the power that characterises private mass media, namely that of *mass audiences*. On the contrary, and in spite of the Internet, alternative sources of information enjoy a relatively limited audience compared to the mass media. The limited audience of the alternative communication outlets prevent the possibilities of synthesis with other similar social assemblages with which to share intentions and aims.

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

A common example of this last situation is the manipulation of numbers when dealing with public manifestations around certain problematic or controversial issues – such as abortion, for instance – but also around other political concerns. The magnification and minimisation by mass media of the numbers of persons assisting these events always depend on the orientation of the event itself. Broadcast groups tend to explain this inaccuracy by suggesting the impossibility of precision in such matters. In Mexico, popular concentrations and social protests have taken on a real massive nature, uniting over a million people under one event of this type. The media naturally dismisses these numbers, and systematically lowers them to 'manageable' quantities. This form of

manipulation is not exclusive to Mexico; mass media conglomerates worldwide have been manipulating information systematically depending on their interest and expectations in a particular instance. A Mexican example is the so-called *desafuero* brought against Andrés López Obrador, which resulted in a massive public manifestation against then President Vicente Fox in 2005. Mass media outlets 'play' with the distribution of units of confusion at their will and without the control of any authority to regulate or prevent them from doing so.

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

After Perplexity: The Normalisation of Chaos

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

Mexican society is confronted regularly with a *chaotic* reality that nevertheless is *normalised* by society at large. Executions, beheadings, kidnappings, corruption, impunity, abuses of authority, open state repression, and so on are *visible* in the mass media and are normalised in Mexican society due to an uncritical but democratic consumption of broadcast information. The effective simulation and distribution of *units of confusion* denies society at large the possibility to

act – and think – effectively from informed political positions. Instead, when faced with political simulation, wrongly posed questions, and confusing remarks or opinions, Mexican society tends to polarise.

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

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

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

It is important to mention that most of the direct confrontations between the government and society at large are associated with economic matters; in particular, constitutional reforms that further liberate and enforce the exploitation of markets and natural resources in the region are without exception a point of conflict. In this, and as has been elaborated earlier, political simulation

may be understood as the active effort of politicians, and in some instances of public and private power, to protect private interests and groups and not the public interest of society at large. At the same time, those who protest and challenge the primacy of private interests can become the object (and subject) of more aggression. Such aggression is usually found at the point where private interests and politics converge.

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

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

Chapter Eight

VIRTUAL SCENARIOS PLAUSIBLE FOR MEXICO

Introduction

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

One problem faced by society at large to effectively challenge the communicational configuration in Mexico and the *excommunication* of society is the monological behaviour of certain social assemblages, in particular government assemblages. This monological type of encounter produces a kind of *nomadic* interaction. In this nomadic interaction, contact is tangential and does not produce substantial knowledge due to the reduced scope of the *visible* and the *articulable* taking part in the relation (e.g. lack of transparency). Contrary to nomadic encounters, proper communication (dialogue) consists of those encounters that compose the relations and synthesised social forces seeking conditions of justice. Dialogue triggers processes in which knowledge production is ratified among parts, generating the possibility to build up an *event* that ties together the parts of assemblages. Although reaching consensus is a highly important aim, in these types of relations it is not the only desirable outcome. In social assemblages theory, this action – dialogue – translates into the possibility to build a *shared destiny*, a *co-evolution* among those assemblages involved in these processes of communication and interaction. The tension between capitalist-individualising processes of differentiation on the one hand, and processes that build a shared destiny and social co-evolution on the other, dominate the field of forces shaping the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico. How can the tension between *modes* of differentiation be released in order to open up the opportunity for a more desirable performance of communication technologies?

To effectively change or challenge the status quo of mass media management means a 'declaration of war,' an economic war. The desire to challenge hegemonic groups is shown by many (e.g. alternative globalisation organisations), though these groups are still not synthetic enough to engage in processes of irreversible change or plain justice against those who monopolise the benefits of administering the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico. Furthermore, it is difficult to assert that the situation will improve even if irreversible change takes place in the modes of differentiation between language and technology. The material objective conditions visible in 2011 make it difficult to think that the intensification of the global problematic will decrease or halt any time soon. Associated to this, it can be suggested that the process of *excommunication* from parts of the technolinguistic social assemblage takes place by means of commercial-democratic practices of communication. Is it possible to challenge this capitalistic form of organisation, or is it possible to attain capitalist practices that enhance better distributive capacities that would invert processes associated with the global problematic?

Final Scenario: Neoliberalism by Militarisation

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

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

In 2011, the case of LyFC is still on the table of discussions, and entails a much broader

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

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

The Corruption of Language and Government

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

institutions are democratic and fair.

Plausible Alternatives to Neoliberalism: Seek to Recover Sovereignty

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

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

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

Searching for Lost Justice

To counter social paradigms based on individualising capitalist desires and attitudes, society at large needs to fight for the space of linguistic reduction that shapes in meaningful ways the visibilities, statements, and thinking process of Mexican social assemblages. However, to achieve

significant change in the nature and forms taken by the economies of knowledge and power, the government assemblage still needs to play a determinant role. In terms of communication the government needs to set the conditions to provide broader sectors of society with transparent access to, use of, and revenue derived from the existence of the technolinguistic social assemblage. Improving the distribution of communication capacities among social assemblages is a crucial input expected from the government. A simple proposal to open up access to the means of communication, however, would mean political and economic *war* for the entrenched interests in the private sector and government networks and organisations. This is one reason why there are no signs that may point towards a decrease of the global problematic in Mexican territories. On the contrary, it seems to be intensifying.

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

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

From Anarchism to Anarchism: Survival of the Fittest to Cooperation

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

The Recovery of the Usufruct of Work

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

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

This thesis has been critical of radical libertarians and the monetisation of society it produces. Nevertheless, libertarianism and anarchism share many similitudes. Both ideas avoid government bureaucracies and controls. Both approaches centre on the idea of freedom. There are,

however, also significant differences between them (3). It seems now that some dimension of anarchism can be proposed to hinder uncontrollable processes of homogenisation brought about by capitalism and monetisation. However, there are two extremes of the anarchist axis: the libertarian-Darwinian perspective and the anarchist-cooperativist perspective.

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

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

The transition from competition to cooperation desires and attitudes seems difficult to achieve from inside Mexico because the anarchic arrangement actually visible (neoliberal capitalistic relations) seems to prevent these changes. It may be the case again in Mexican destiny and history that what defines Mexicans' future is not the country's own assemblages, but those forces outside Mexico (e.g. international conflicts, oil prices, high international interest rates, global financial crises, pandemics, natural disasters); something that reflects the lack of sovereignty and the uncertain situation that characterises Mexico at the end of the first decade of the third millennium, and evidences a country without a legitimate national project.

To conclude this analysis about Mexico and its systems of communication I want to mention the work of Mexican sociologist Andrés Molina Enríquez. In his book *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales* (published in 1909), he pointed to the concentration of land *latifundios* (4) and the marginalisation of the indigenous populations as the greatest problems facing Mexico at the time, just months before the Mexican Revolution started. The greatest national problems of contemporary Mexico are similar to those pointed to a century ago by Molina Enriquez. Today it is not the concentration of land supported by the Porfirio Díaz regime but the concentration of capital and resources supported by the post-revolutionary and neoliberal government in power in Mexico. The indigenous claim for justice is still unfulfilled. In 1909, as in 2011, the incapacity of the government to deal with social justice in Mexican territories leads to systems of concentration of wealth and the exploitation of the most vulnerable parts of society, particularly indigenous populations. Today, as in 1909, there are reasons and conditions for Mexico to fall into violent anarchy under the precept of seeking justice. The author Octavio Paz describes the 1910 Mexican revolution as the *bloody hug among brothers*, but it is my hope that the desire for justice that exists within Mexico today is possible to achieve peacefully, and that fundamental change can occur without unnecessary violence.

CONCLUSIONS

During the last three decades, social and political conditions have unfolded and placed Mexican society in a difficult situation. Voices describing Mexico as a country on the verge of becoming a failed state resonate with increasing turmoil and instability registered everywhere in the country. In 2011 the expectation to reduce the intensities of the global problematic *feels* improbable. In fact, these negative prognoses are shared by diverse groups both inside and outside Mexico. Erosion of sovereignty, events of violence, instability, polarisation, unnecessary material deprivation, and cultural oppression are persistent in Mexican territories and populations. Therefore, turmoil and confusion determine important dimensions of social action. In a more theoretical dimension this study investigated the apparent decomposing nature of social action and desires by looking at the forms of differentiation between language and technology made by social assemblages in contemporary Mexico. The focus on the modes of differentiation between language and technology help establish certain referents to approach the question of how communication practices participate in the intensification of poverty and violence in Mexico. The main findings are:

1) The Mexican technolinguistic social assemblage is characterised by commercial and democratic forms of production and consumption.

2) The commercial-democratic logic behind the utilisation of communication capabilities is sustained by capitalist attitudes and desires.

3) This particular form of utilising communication creates a realm of uncritical consumption of information and knowledge, which ultimately *excommunicates* society at large from the possibility to use communication technologies and achieve aims different from commercial or democratic ones.

4) The visible results of the technolinguistic social assemblage in Mexico are the normalisation of *chaos* and the creation of a state of *perplexity* in the social realm; a general state of *confusion* that prevents the possibility to act upon the social problem and avoid the intensification of the global problematic.

To approach this thematic I formulated two new notions: *the global problematic* and what I have named the *technolinguistic social assemblage*. In order to articulate my argument around these two notions, in Chapter One, 'Theory and Society,' I exposed the basic tenets of assemblage theory with the objective of setting a theoretical framework that moved from the mere scientific ground to a more ethical endeavour and perspective. This approach is complemented by an elaboration of a

specific theory of knowledge and power relations. In Chapter Two, 'Globalisation and Society,' I presented a definition of globalisation based on the idea of social change and processes of distribution. In Chapter Three, I explained the concept of the *global problematic* in contrast to that of the social problem. In Chapter Four, I addressed what I understand by the notion of the communication setting as a part of the technolinguistic social assemblage. The objectives set out for the first four chapters are: 1) to reach a definition of the idea of contemporary globalisation; 2) to propose the sociological concept of the *global problematic* as a unit of analysis suitable for contemporary processes; 3) to present the principles of assemblage theory; and 4) to determine how processes of *actualisation* of the so-called global problematic take place.

In Chapter Five, 'Mexican Neoliberal Assemblages,' I framed the object of study – Mexico – within the scope of assemblage theory. In Chapter Six, 'Neoliberal Mexico: Politics of Communication,' I presented some of the most representative events of social instability, polarisation, and violence experienced in Mexico during the last three decades. In Chapter Seven, 'Neoliberal Mexico and the Global Problematic,' I defined the following notions: 1) public political simulation; 2) units of confusion in mass media; 3) normalisation of chaos; and 4) excommunication of society at large. In explaining these four aspects there is an *indication* of some of the ways in which certain communication practices – and more generally the technolinguistic social assemblage – contribute to and form part of the process of intensification of the global problematic in Mexico.

In Chapter Eight, the structural and theoretical framework proposed in this thesis engages in an analysis based on power relations and assemblage theory. This heuristic device leads to ethical debates around the topic of social and political communication in Mexico, and reveals different aspects of the economies of power and knowledge prevalent in Mexican territories. This methodology allows the determination of important elements of the *virtual diagram* that enables the *actualisation* of the global problematic in Mexico. The *virtual diagram of actualisation* of the global problematic reflects the attitudes behind the use and implementation of the possibilities offered by the technolinguistic social assemblage. This virtual diagram of actualisation can be understood as the predominant *mode* of differentiation between language and technology in neoliberal Mexico.

Capitalist Logic of Accumulation: A Social System Based on Competition and Profit

The logic of accumulation, competition, and profit is visible in Mexican social assemblages. The form of legislation and enforcement of rights towards communication is consistent with these criteria of differentiation. The so-called *Ley Televisa* reform is an expression of this type of desire

and attitude as the technolinguistic social assemblage takes this capitalist mode of differentiation in Mexico. This mode of differentiation is sustained in its more abstract dimension by discourse; political simulation and units of confusion being two elements found in this research that play a role in sustaining capitalist interests. On a more material dimension, this position – the neoliberal perspective – is sustained by increasing use of force. Military and police forces have been disposed to protect private interest and capital 'at gunpoint.'

David Harvey identifies this type of project as *military neoliberalism*. This strategy has been adopted by the Mexican government assemblage and is supported by private and conservative sectors of society. Military neoliberalism provokes, among other effects, the criminalisation of social and protest movements that interfere with the advancement of investment and economic profit. This marks the process of differentiation between language and technology in its broader sense. Competition, gain, profit, innovation, and productivity mark the guidelines that government and private sector assemblages follow to create the differentiation between language and technology. The consequences of capitalist attitudes are a communicational setting prone to propagandist monologues. It is a type of *nomadic* encounter, a form of communication that prevents dialogue. This becomes visible when looking at the result that these types of capitalist-neoliberal modes of differentiation bring about – a monological commercial-democratic communication social assemblage – which distributes a substantial part of the *visible* and the *articulable* to society at large.

The Commercial-Democratic Technolinguistic Social Assemblage Promotes the Actualisation of the Global Problematic

The conclusions are related to the idea that the normalisation of chaos, and the processes of instability, polarisation, and violence that it stimulates, are connected with the material objective conditions present in the Mexican commercial-democratic technolinguistic social assemblage. Even more important is to note that the characteristic of the communications setting in Mexico is produced by content and communication capacities that are the result of specific attitudes and desires. The commercial-democratic nature of the communicational setting in Mexico provides particular forms of visibilities and statements, which foster the *excommunication* of society at large and the negative effects that I explain in Chapter Six. These processes are partially sustained by the corruption of language in Mexican politics.

Historically, social forces had acted in such a way that they produced the *actual* excommunication of society at large in Mexico. Actual excommunication from important components of the technolinguistic social assemblage, and the simultaneous productive alliance –

the *benevolent* relation – between the private sector and government assemblages, enable three processes that may hinder the identification and control of the manifestation of the global problematic in Mexico: 1) public political simulation; 2) distribution of units of confusion instead of units of information in mass media; and 3) the former two are effects of the excommunication process, which also enables the normalisation of chaos at the personal scale.

At this point, it is important to establish the relations within the communicational setting in Mexico – the political simulation, the distribution of units of confusion, and the normalisation of chaos. The normalisation of chaos prevents a coherent relationship between territories and populations, stimulating the intensification of the global problematic and the loss of sovereignty in Mexico. It can generally be concluded that a capitalist system based on competition and profit (social Darwinism) produces a system of differentiation between language and technology that stimulates and promotes the stratification of the global problematic, primarily by means of exclusion. In order to sustain this system, or as a natural reflex of it, the capitalist system tends to progressively corrupt language. As this corruption saturates communication, chaos and its normalisation kick in. Extreme social conditions then force the population to confront the necessity to redefine social assemblages, or to create new terminology and 'naming' that can articulate a different logic of associations (e.g. justice) than those drawn by neoliberal practices and desires (e.g. production) towards the social realm.

In creating new forms of association that balance social forces in order to reduce the intensity of the global problematic in Mexico, many theoreticians have expressed their hope in the power of the Internet to improve social and political communication. However, it is the control over the RES and public space that still plays a preponderant role in social and political communication practices and outcomes. We need to *rethink* the communication conditions around the use and administration of the RES before expecting that new communication technologies will resolve the global problematic. Most importantly, it requires the transformation of government assemblages into a new *machine* (see Chapter One), one that will engage in a perspective based upon *cooperation* (responsible reciprocity), in order to regain much needed sovereignty and certainty in Mexico. The demand for a shift from competition to cooperation in government assemblages is a demand for *fundamental change* in Mexico, which may affect established norms of status, hierarchy, and power. A possible transformation associated with a change in perspective is what I believe the majority of Mexicans expect – a perspective that brings a type of justice that one can *feel* at the personal scale, the most important scale of all.

Concluding Comments

This work avoids searching for explanations to the global problematic in Mexico by means of tracing long distance, global relations between Mexico and other nation states. Of course there are global or international processes that favour the perpetuation of violence and poverty in Mexico (e.g. US arms and weapons traffic). However, the main interest here when referring to the global problematic is poverty and violence, regardless of whether these events are promoted or stimulated by distant global forces. The experience of the global problematic is an ethical problem and it can be addressed at the local personal scale. The global problematic, as mentioned before, manifests regardless of cultural or geographic specificities; I would add that regardless of whether these negative effects are produced by local events or by distant global forces, the effects are identical on the ground. So to trace the causes of the global problematic exclusively from a conventional globalization power relations perspective is insufficient if an ethical dimension of the problematic – explored using assemblage theory – is to be incorporated.

Regarding the heuristic device deployed in this research, I believe that assemblage theory in general, and in particular the elaboration on assemblage theory made in this research, can contribute towards finding frameworks to explore questions from an innovative perspective, bringing fresh points of view to address and learn about social problems. It can be said that the idea of assemblages still requires further formulation in order to become a practical tool in more general social sciences research. This is particularly so in global studies, as the assemblage framework contradicts some of its fundamentals, such as the use of the nation state as the centre of analysis. By experimenting with the use of this theoretical framework through case studies (as this research has done), new research can, I believe, deliver results that could become more consistent, while delivering concrete and organised indications, illustrations, abstractions and descriptions about the case studies.

The final conclusion of this research points towards the necessity of transforming the democratic government assemblage, as it currently functions in Mexico, into different *machinery*. From inside Mexico, the government machinery needs to become balanced in such a way that harmonises social forces and interests, populations and territories, while addressing the development of benevolent relations with vulnerable groups in society and not only with powerful money and language assemblages that pursue capitalistic and self-interested aims. Answers to the question of which component parts of the current Mexican government need to be replaced in order to alter its capacities, and which *actions upon other actions* among Mexican social assemblages may help decrease the social unrest embedded in Mexican society today, remain open for discussion and analysis. Without claiming to know all of the specific characteristic components that a different

government machinery may have, it is nevertheless crucial to state that this new assemblage should be able to recover and strengthen national sovereignty, in particular in relation to outside forces, namely other nation states and transnational interests.

Producing and justifying a challenging conclusion about the necessity to fundamentally modify the nature of Mexican government in order for it to become different *machinery* is of importance, and it was possible to reach with a comprehensive argument because of the use of assemblage theory. This framework, I believe, enables interesting and challenging debates and raises issues that, following conventional frameworks, would be difficult to reach. The flexibility and the refreshing possibilities brought about by assemblage theory are of great value and deserving of further experimentation. Finally, regardless of whether the conclusion of this particular research and its validly can be empirically challenged, I maintain that the research is academically valuable and has the potential for further specification and explanation, while simultaneously appealing to common sense in order to find ways to harmonise destructive social forces.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

7) Here it is important to mention that *complex theoretical approaches* do not necessarily provide *better* information. The point being that complexity entails a different position of the observer; in this case, a position necessary to approach the social problem from the analysis of *attitudes*, *desires*, and *feelings*, meaning the *personal scale*. Complexity also does not mean *more complicated* or *more difficult*; it is a position of the observer that allows for an ampler spectrum of elements to be *seen* and contextualised (critical distance).

8) For more detail on this use of the idea of assemblages, see Saskia Sassen's *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (2006).

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

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

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

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

Chapter One

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

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

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

4) See SWITCH Interview with Manuel de Landa in *Art and the Military*, available at http://switch.sjsu.edu

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

6) To get a fair understanding of the idea of *composing relations*, see Spinoza's *Ethics*. Of particular interest is Part IV entitled *Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions*. Available as an eBook at http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3800/3800-h/3800-h.htm. For further elaboration on the topic see also Gilles Deleuze's *Spinoza, Filosofía Práctica* (2009).

Chapter Two

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

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

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

Chapter Four

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

Chapter Five

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter Six

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

2) In 1948 under Miguel Alemán's administration, Guillermo González Camarena and Salvador Novo were put in charge of assessing the possibilities for state television in Mexico. González Camarena was the inventor of colour TV. For such a reason, he was

granted the concession of Channel 5 in collaboration with *Televisa*, during a time when *Telesistema Mexicano* was still in charge of Channels 2, 4, and 5; channel 2 belonged to the Azcarraga family, Channel 4 to the O'Farril family, and Channel 5 to Gonzáles Camarena. Gonzáles Camarena always worried and had great affection for the children of Mexico, which is why Channel 5 focuses now on programming for children's audiences. Salvador Novo, the other personality put together with Gonzáles Camarena to make this international analysis about television, is considered one of the most important Mexican intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century. He was an important personality of the Mexican intellectual group called *Los Contemporaneos*, together with Javier Villaurrutia, José Gorostiza, and Miguel Covarrubias, among others.

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

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

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

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

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

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

9) *El error de Diciembre* is mainly attributed to an artificially overvalued peso against the dollar, kept by Salinas in order to sustain the fragile success of his administration. After he left office, Zedillo replaced the entire Salinas economic group headed by Pedro Aspe Armella with people from his own team. Some opinions point out Zedillo's impatience as the source of the mistake that generated the *error de Diciembre*. The chaos and uncertainty

in this political circumstance was fuelled by the volatility of international financial capital, provoking the financial crash of the Mexican stock market and later the global economic crisis that was internationally known as the *tequila effect*.

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

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

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

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

14) Vicente Fox interview at the 'Conversation in the Council on Foreign Relations with Peter G. Peterson' on September 15 2005. Available at: http://www.cfr.org/publication/8876/conversation_with_vicente_fox_quesada_audio.html

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

and reveals the propensity to repress social unrest instead of engage in dialogue with these groups.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter Seven

1) The idea of the *excommunication* of society within globalisation processes has been approached by Armand Mattelart. In an interview conducted by Costas Constantinou published in the *Review of International Studies*, Mattelart explains excommunication as "any man excluded from a society or a body, and with whom the members of that body no longer have communication, may be said to be excommunicated." (p. 34) He continues, stating that "excommunicated is today the status of three-quarters of the world population."

(p. 34) Different groups of society suffer the consequences of excommunication. Mattelart points out that "Those who are 'excommunicated' are the new 'dangerous classes' and their movements that the established powers criminalise. 'Excommunicated' are the cultures and cultural areas that the theologisation of the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil have inscribed in the new code of the enemies of empire since 11th September 2001." (p. 34) For the complete interview see: Communications/excommunications: An interview with Armand Mattelart (Constantinou 2008)

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter Eight

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

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

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

what Darwin suggests as the engine for evolution (survival of the fittest and natural selection), there is a need for *cooperation* in successful species. In fact, species that show little cooperation are prone to decay.

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

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Mexico and the Global Problematic

Power Relations, Knowledge and Communication in Neoliberal Mexico

(Summary)

This research investigated the social structures and forces that enabled the intensification of the so called global problematic. The global problematic is understood as the experience of poverty and the advance of violent events in society under neoliberal governments and policies. Of importance for this analysis is the sector of communications in Mexico during the period of time proposed for this research. From approximately 1980 to 2010, I studied the relation between communication practices and the intensification of poverty and violence in Mexican society. In order to approach this topic, a theoretical framework based on power relations as formulated by Michel Foucault and assemblage theory as proposed by Manuel de Landa was implemented to analyse the power relations existing between the government, the private sector and civil society assemblages.

The outcome of the analysis around the notion of the global problematic and the role of communications is a picture of Mexican society suffering from the marginalisation of the majority of its' population that were kept from the benefits of communication technologies and the potential they hold for human development. There is a commercial/ democratic communicational setting in a neoliberal Mexico that aids and supports the intensification of the so called global problematic. The results also showed that this marginalisation and the ex-communication of the most vulnerable groups in Mexico eliminate the possibility to communicate with other individuals and groups that may enrich the public debate. This obstructs the possibility of an informed political participation by society at large and exposes the imbalances of power between different sectors of Mexican society and its regrettable consequences.

The aim of this research was to clarify the role and responsibility mass media and other communication practices have in relation to the intensification of the global problematic in Mexico. A final conclusion points out the government and the political parties that are located in the government organisation as the main factor that prevents the possibility of improving the living and communication conditions most Mexicans faced at the end of the first decade of the new millennium. Two practices in communication were identified in neoliberal Mexico that contributed to this problematic state of affairs. First, a consistent practice that corrupts the use of language, a corruption of meaning that leads to the establishment of political simulation as a natural form to fill the content characterising public debates. Second, the propagation of what I denominate in this research as units of confusion. Political simulation and units of confusion, in combination, stimulated the propagation of a general state of perplexity and confusion in Mexican society – an

action that prevents constructive social and political debates that may help to decrease the intensification of the experience of the global problematic in Mexican territories and populations.

To approach this thematic I formulated two notions: *the global problematic* and what I have named the Mexican *technolinguistic social assemblage*. In order to articulate my argument around these two notions, in Chapter One, 'Theory and Society,' I exposed the basic tenets of assemblage theory with the objective of setting a theoretical framework that moved from the mere scientific ground to a more ethical endeavour and perspective. This approach is complemented by an elaboration of a specific theory of knowledge and power relations. In Chapter Two, 'Globalisation and Society,' I presented a definition of globalisation based on the idea of social change and processes of distribution. In Chapter Three, I explained the concept of the *global problematic* in contrast to that of the social problem. In Chapter Four, I addressed what I understand by the notion of the technolinguistic social assemblage. The objectives set out for the first four chapters are: 1) to reach a definition of the idea of contemporary globalisation; 2) to propose the sociological concept of the *global problematic* as a unit of analysis suitable for contemporary globalisation processes; 3) to present the principles of assemblage theory; and 4) to determine how processes of *actualisation* of the so-called global problematic take place.

In Chapter Five, 'Mexican Neoliberal Assemblages,' I framed the object of study – Mexico – within the scope of assemblage theory. In Chapter Six, 'Neoliberal Mexico: Politics of Communication,' I presented some of the most representative events of social instability, polarisation, and violence experienced in Mexico during the last three decades. In Chapter Seven, 'Neoliberal Mexico and the Global Problematic,' I defined the following notions: 1) public political simulation; 2) units of confusion in mass media; 3) normalisation of chaos; and 4) excommunication of society at large. In explaining these four aspects there is an *indication* of some of the ways in which mass media – and more generally the technolinguistic social assemblage – contributes and forms part of the process of actualization and intensification of the global problematic in Mexico.

In Chapter Eight, the structural and theoretical framework proposed in this thesis engages in an analysis based on power relations and assemblage theory. This heuristic device leads to ethical debates around the topic of social and political communication in Mexico, and reveals different aspects of the economies of power and knowledge prevalent in Mexican territories.

The final conclusion of this research points towards the necessity of transforming the democratic government assemblage, as it currently functions in Mexico, into different *machinery*. From inside Mexico, the government machinery needs to become balanced in such a way that harmonises social forces and interests, populations and territories, while addressing the

development of benevolent relations with vulnerable groups in society and not only with powerful money and language assemblages that pursue capitalistic and self-interested aims. Answers to the questions of which component parts of the current Mexican government need to be replaced in order to alter its capacities, and which *actions upon other actions* among Mexican social assemblages may help decrease the social unrest embedded in Mexican society today, remain open for discussion and analysis. Without claiming to know all of the specific characteristic components that a different government machinery may have, it is nevertheless crucial to state that this new assemblage should be able to recover and strengthen national sovereignty, particularly in relation to outside forces, namely other nation states and transnational interests.

Producing and justifying a challenging conclusion about the necessity to fundamentally modify the nature of Mexican government in order for it to become different *machinery* is of importance, and it was possible to reach with a comprehensive argument because of the use of assemblage theory. This framework, I believe, enables interesting and challenging debates and raises issues that, following conventional frameworks, would be difficult to reach. The flexibility and the refreshing possibilities brought about by assemblage theory are of great value and deserving of further experimentation.

México y la Problemática Global

Relaciones de poder, el conocimiento y la comunicación en el México neoliberal

(Resumen en Español)

El presente trabajo investigó las estructuras y fuerzas sociales qué estimulan que la denominada problemática global se intensifique. La problemática global se puede comprender como la experiencia de la pobreza y el avance de eventos violentos en sociedades bajo regímenes neoliberales. De particular importancia para este proyecto es el sector de las comunicaciones en México. Con este fin analice la relación entre las practicas comunicacionales y la intensificación de la pobreza y la violencia en México entre los años 1980 y 2010. Para aproximar este tema de investigación, un marco teórico basado en las relaciones de poder como lo formula Michel Foucault y la teoría del ensamble como la propone Manuel de Landa se implementaron para analizar las relaciones existentes entre el gobierno, el sector privado y la sociedad civil.

El resultado del análisis sobre la noción de la problemática global y la relación con las comunicaciones es la representación de una sociedad mexicana padeciendo de la marginalización de la mayoría de la población, misma que es prevenida de los beneficios que las tecnologías de la comunicación atrae y el potencial que deriva de ellas para el desarrollo humano. Existe un emplazamiento comercial y democrático en el México neoliberal que asiste y promueve la intensificación de la denominada problemática global. Los resultados también muestran que esta marginalización y la ex comunicación de los grupos sociales más vulnerables de México no permite la comunicación entre grupos para poder enriquecer el debate público, obstruyendo la posibilidad de una participación política informada de la sociedad en general y exponiendo de esa forma los desequilibrios del poder entre diferentes sectores de la sociedad mexicana.

El objetivo de esta investigación fue clarificar la responsabilidad que los medios de comunicación masiva y otras prácticas comunicacionales en general guardan en relación a la intensificación de la problemática global. La conclusión final apunta a los gobiernos y los partidos políticos que los componen como el factor principal que previene la posibilidad de mejorar las condiciones de vida y comunicación que la mayoría de los mexicanos disfrutan al final de la primera década del primer milenio. Dos practicas en comunicaciones fueron inidentificadas en el México neoliberal que contribuyen a este problemático estado de las cosas. Primero, una continua práctica que corrompe el uso del lenguaje, la corrupción del significado que lleva al establecimiento de la simulación política como la forma natural de conformar el contenido del debate público. Segundo, la propagación de lo que en esta investigación denomino como unidades de confusión. La combinación de la simulación política y las unidades de confusión estimulan la propagación de un

estado general de perplejidad y confusión en la sociedad mexicana – una acción que previene debates sociales y políticos constructivos que eventualmente pudieran ayudar a disminuir la intensificación de la experiencia de la problemática global en territorio y poblaciones mexicanas.

Para aproximar esta temática, formulé dos nociones: la problemática global y lo que denominé en está investigación como el ensamble tecno-lingüístico. Para construir el argumento alrededor de estas dos nociones, en el capítulo uno Teoría y Sociedad, expongo los conceptos básicos de la teoría del ensamble con el objetivo de establecer un marco teórico que transite de la mera base científica hacia una perspectiva y entorno ético. Esta parte es complementada con la elaboración de una teoría del conocimiento y de las relaciones de poder. En el capítulo dos, Globalización y Sociedad, presento una definición de globalización basada en la idea de cambio social y procesos de distribución. En el capítulo tres, explico el concepto de la problemática global en contraste con la noción de problema social. En el capítulo cuatro, elaboro sobre lo que entiendo como la noción de ensamble tecno-lingüístico. El objetivo de los cuatro capítulos es 1) alcanzar una definición sobre la globalización contemporánea, 2) proponer el concepto de la problemática global como unidad de análisis adecuada para los procesos contemporáneos de la globalización, 3) presentar los elementos básicos de la teoría del ensamble y 4) y determinar como los procesos de actualización de la denominada problemática global se llevan acabo.

En el capítulo cinco, Ensambles Neoliberales Mexicanos, describí el objeto de estudio – México- empleando la teoría del ensamble. En el capítulo seis, México Neoliberal: Políticas de comunicación, presente algunos del los eventos más representativos de la inestabilidad social, polarización y violencia en México durante las últimas tres décadas. En el capítulo siete, México neoliberal y la problemática global, definí las siguientes nociones: 1) simulación en la política pública, 2) unidades de confusión en medios de comunicación masiva, 3) la normalización del caos, y 4) la ex comunicación de la sociedad en general. Explicando estos cuatro aspectos, se presentan indicaciones de algunas de las formas en las que los medios de comunicación masiva, y de forma más general el ensamble tecno-lingüístico, contribuye y forma parte de los procesos de actualización e intensificación de la problemática global en México.

En el capítulo ocho, la estructura y marco teórico de esta investigación se enfoca en el análisis usando la teoría del ensamble y de las relaciones de poder. Este aparato heurístico facilita debates éticos alrededor de la comunicación política y social en México y revela aspectos diferentes de las economías de poder y conocimiento que prevalecen en el país.

La conclusión final de este trabajo apunta hacia la necesidad de transformar el ensamble democrático gubernamental en una maquinaría distinta de la actual. Desde dentro de México, la maquinaría gubernamental necesita un balance que permita la armonización de las fuerzas e

intereses sociales, mientras desarrolla relaciones benévolas con los grupos más vulnerables de la sociedad y no sólo con poderosos ensambles económicos y lingüísticos que persiguen objetivos capitalistas en propio beneficio. Las respuestas a la pregunta de que componentes del actual gobierno mexicano deben ser substituidos para modificar sus capacidades, y que acciones sobre que otras acciones entre ensambles sociales en México ayudarían a reducir el descontento de la sociedad mexicana, permanecen abiertas para su discusión y análisis. Sin pretender conocer todas las características específicas de los componentes que un gobierno diferente debería tener, es de gran relevancia entender que este nuevo ensamble debe de ser capaz de recobrar y fortalecer la soberanía nacional, en particular en relación a las fuerzas que se encuentran fuera de México, por ejemplo, otros gobiernos o intereses transnacionales.

Producir y justificar un conclusión compleja sobre la necesidad de modificar de forma fundamental la naturaleza del gobierno mexicano para llegar a ser una máquina diferente, es de importancia y fue posible llegar a ella con un argumento comprensible gracias al uso de la teoría del ensamble. Este marco teórico, en mi opinión, facilita debates de importancia e interés, mismos que siguiendo marcos teóricos más convencionales sería difícil concretar. La flexibilidad y las nuevas posibilidades que la teoría del ensamble provee tiene gran valor y merecen ser experimentadas en la ciencias sociales y humanidades.