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SUSANNE MEISCH

Remembering Rebellion

The Teachers' Movement of the Sección 22
in Oaxaca (Mexico)

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Remembering Rebellion

The Teachers' Movement of the Sección 22 in Oaxaca (Mexico)

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*To all who have accompanied me on this journey,
to the ones lighting the way,
to the ones that have pushed me forwards,
and to the ones that continue to make me believe in myself.*

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1 Introduction

“¡El maestro luchando también está enseñando!”¹

In 2018, Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Morena party was elected president of the United States of Mexico. For the political left, his election promised the long-awaited change from the corruption, self-enrichment, and neoliberal tendencies that had supposedly characterized the governments over various decades towards a more equal society. In fact, López Obrador himself advertised his presidency and his plan of action as the ‘Fourth Transformation’ of Mexico—the prior three being the Independence, the Reform Period, and the Revolution—and hence equates his presidency with events in Mexican history that had a lasting effect on society. One of the social movements supporting López Obrador in the election process—cautious to not get hopes up too high or be disappointed in the aftermath—was the Sección 22, the union section of the National Syndicate of Educational Workers (Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación; *el SNTE*)² in the state of Oaxaca in the south of Mexico.

Teachers have a tradition-laden position within Mexican society: They have historically been the leaders of their community, the guides, the messengers, and interpreters to the people of politics and the government’s decisions. This role has provided them with quite an amount of power, reputation, as well as recognition within the community, and has, to some extent, acquired a mythical connotation over time.

In the modern context of globalization, going hand in hand with the spreading of capitalist and neoliberal ideology, this position needed to be modified and the socialist elements of the teachers’ ideology changed along the lines of modern capitalism the government was adopting. In the completion of this task, a deep rift occurred that cut the teachers’ union into two parties: one, the SNTE, affiliated with the most powerful

1 “The fighting teacher is also teaching!” Chant of the Sección 22. All translations in this work will have been undertaken by the author if not stated otherwise.

2 For an improved reading flow: Both SNTE and CNTE are usually pronounced ‘sente.’

political party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional; PRI), and the other struggling against the first in the attempt to attain more benefits and democratic representation, and to defend their political self-conception. The latter party, made up of union sections of the SNTE displaying a leftist tendency, eventually united under the umbrella organization National Coordination of Educational Workers (Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación; *la CNTE*)³ and became a very vocal and prominent social movement within the teachers' union SNTE as well as on the national scale.

In Oaxaca, one of the economically worst-off states of Mexico, the seemingly constant battle between the government and the Sección 22⁴ has provided the capital Oaxaca City with the reputation of apparently 'always being drunk', because it is 'always captured' (by the dissident teachers).⁵ As a tourist, it is indeed not uncommon to hear that 'the teachers' have blocked a certain road or a supermarket, or have damaged private property. In fact, their struggle seems to have become a phenomenon that characterizes the state of Oaxaca.

The particular circumstances in Oaxaca strengthen the Sección 22 and its social movement. Geographically, Oaxaca is the fifth largest state in Mexico,⁶ displaying a great diversity of climate zones and parts of the Sierra Madre del Sur, the Llanura Costera del Golfo Sur, and the Cordillera Centroamericana, among others.⁷ With 570, Oaxaca encompasses almost one fifth of the overall 2,469 municipalities in Mexico—418 of the 570 are still ruled by *usos y costumbres*, the traditional manner of

3 In order to not get confused as to which was the overarching teachers' union and which the organization of the leftist currents, the following *Eselbrücke* might help the reader: The letter 'C' can be placed in the upper half of the letter 'S'. The CNTE is hence a part of the SNTE.

4 The section refers to itself as "Sección 22" as well as "Sección XXII." It appears that the latter is the official way of writing, while the former is used above all on the internet and in acronyms, such as CENCOS22 or CEPOS22. For an improved readability, I will refer to the section as "Sección 22."

5 In Spanish, the joke is as follows: "¿Por qué a Oaxaca la llaman la ciudad eternamente borracha? Porque siempre está tomada."

6 After Chihuahua, Sonora, Coahuila de Zaragoza, y Durango.

7 "Relieve. Oaxaca," Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, accessed October 19, 2018.

policing.⁸ Apart from the number of municipalities, Oaxaca is also the state with the most indigenous languages still actively practiced: About one third of the Oaxacan population speaks at least one indigenous language,⁹ the most common indigenous tongues are Mixtec languages, Zapotec languages, Mazateco, and Mixe.¹⁰ The traditional notion of land ownership is also reflected in the statistics: In 2007, about three times as much land was owned by an *ejido* or the community compared to private property.¹¹ Oaxaca was also the first state to have a recognized indigenous committee.¹²

As already mentioned, the state ranks among the poorest in Mexico. In 2016, it was accountable for only 1.4% of the national GDP with 69% derived from the tertiary sector, a fact that immediately raises a big question mark as to causes and development.¹³ Oaxaca also demonstrates profound disparity. Many regions are characterized by a very high marginalization index, while the areas around big cities, such as Oaxaca City or Salina Cruz, show a low to very low marginalization index.¹⁴ The development index in 2008 lay at 0.66 for the indigenous and 0.74 for the non-indigenous population.¹⁵ Furthermore, Oaxaca is a state with a high emigration rate—a big community of Oaxacans lives in the Portland area—: In 2010, Oaxaca registered 98 emigrants per 1,000 persons.¹⁶

8 Diego Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada: La Primera Insurrección Del Siglo XXI* (Mexico, D.F.: Almadía, 2016), 54.

9 For a detailed map of the languages see map “Most spoken language by municipality” on “Rights Histories in Oaxaca,” University of Oregon; Duke University Press, accessed June 11, 2021.

10 “Diversidad. Oaxaca,” Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, accessed May 25, 2021; “División Territorial De México,” Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, accessed May 25, 2021.

11 Marco Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya La Revolución: La APPO Y El Sistema De Dominación Oaxaqueño* (Mexico, D.F.: Colegio de México, A.C., 2016), 484.

12 Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 68–69.

13 “Actividades Económicas. Oaxaca,” Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, accessed May 25, 2021; “Aportación Al Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) Nacional,” Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, accessed June 11, 2021.

14 “Map of Economic Marginalization in Oaxaca” on “We Are the Face of Oaxaca / Somos La Cara De Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements / Testimonio Y Movimientos Sociales,” University of Oregon; Duke University Press, accessed June 10, 2021.

15 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 485.

16 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 485.

These factors are further aggravated by an apparently always tense political situation, combining and interplaying with the complex social texture of the Oaxacan population. As Luis Hernández Navarro states, “in Oaxaca, death is allowed. Assassinations, ‘suicides,’ and road accidents by social leaders and public officials happen one after the other.”¹⁷ Particularly on the local level, democracy is difficult to enforce, and politics appears to predominantly be considered as a manner of enriching oneself and providing benefits, e.g., for friends and family.

This political disposition is confronted with a highly complex society. Particularly in the cities, people threatened by poverty and starvation live in close proximity to the richest of society. Urbanization in itself is chaotic. On top of these tangible factors, this smoldering conflict is exacerbated by the character ascribed to Oaxacans: They are supposedly particularly prone to rebellion and protest, and are highly organized—the economic factors of course increasing the readiness to join a protest movement.¹⁸ Much like the Zapatistas, protesters in Oaxaca are looking back on “500 years of resistance.”¹⁹ As Diego Osorno states: “In Oaxaca, protesting is a tradition rather than a demonstration.”²⁰ The first reaction to new measures hence always appears to be resistance.²¹

The economic factors, combined with an allegedly genetic disposition to organized rebellion, hence provide a rich ground for social movements, such as that of the Sección 22, in the defense of the people.

Research Questions

For an outsider, however, the reasons for the mobilizations are not always understandable—even when clearly stated—or apparently con-

17 “en Oaxaca la muerte tenía permiso. Asesinatos, ‘suicidios’ y accidentes carreteros de dirigentes sociales y funcionarios públicos se suceden uno tras otro” (Luis Hernández Navarro, *Cero En Conducta: Crónicas De La Resistencia Magisterial* (Mexico, D.F.: Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo; Para Leer en Libertad A.C., 2011), 323).

18 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 331–32.

19 Diana Denham and C.A.S.A. Collective, eds., *Teaching Rebellion: Stories from the Grassroots Mobilization in Oaxaca* (Oakland, California: PM Press, 2008), 39.

20 “En Oaxaca plantarse es una tradición antes que una manifestación” (Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 28).

21 Another example is the introduction of new infrastructure: When Oaxaca City was to receive a train connecting the outer parts to the inner city, the taxi drivers blocked the construction.

trary to the greater common good, leading to the question of what exactly motivates the teachers of the Sección 22 and their sympathizers to leave the classrooms and take to the streets. Upon closer observation, this tendency appears to always revolve around the same issue: The government has (not) done something it was (not) supposed to do or wants to introduce something leading to changes for society. While this appears to be normal politics in any country, government action in Mexico seems to usually nurture the struggle of the teachers' social movement. In this sense, the dissident teachers see their cause far beyond the limits of issues that only concern those of their profession: They often interpret their social movement in the context of all Mexican people—its sovereignty, their freedom, or, and this is a very powerful motif, the rights fought for by their ancestors. Furthermore, in their struggle, the teachers of the Sección 22 display a propensity to key words such as resistance, rebellion, and revolution, which shows in their rhetoric as well as in their use of symbols, e.g., the heroic and legendary figure of Emiliano Zapata.

As a consequence, the following analysis will examine the dynamic between the Sección 22 as a social movement and the government as its perceived enemy, and attempt to find a reason for the juxtaposition of the two parties. Drawing from this central observation are various other questions that arise as the investigation continues: How do the teachers of the Sección 22 perceive and define their position in Mexican history and what image of history do they have? Does it influence the contemporary movement and how? Is there another and maybe more profound reason to fight the government that is not exclusively based on laws passed? How do the teachers justify their leaving the classrooms to 'fight' on the streets? How can a section of a teachers' union interpret itself to not only fight for issues concerning themselves but the entirety of the Mexican people? And how do the latter react?

The statement that 'the teachers' are on strike also raises questions in a different direction: Does being a teacher in Oaxaca automatically translate into being rebellious and routinely taking to the streets? Does the latter notion constitute a part of the identity as a teacher in Oaxaca? Of what significance is ideology in this context? How does the Sección 22 teach the rebellious character to posterity?

Theory

The theories used in this investigation are a composite of theories from a variety of fields, most prominently cultural history, sociology, and political psychology—not representing the order of their importance. This theory complex draws on narrative theory as its foundation, according to which individuals form themselves and their activism, more specifically playing a part in the construction of identity, ideology, and even emotions on the basis of stories, which themselves are intertwined with collective and cultural memory. This approach holds a great benefit for this investigation. The claims of the dissident teachers—especially considered against the background of the apparently ever tense political situation in Mexico—cry for an analysis regarding their ‘truth’ and ‘accuracy.’ The narrative approach, however, allows the researcher to disregard these factors and, instead, focus on the content and the intention of the narrative in question, its power, and how it translates into the individual’s behavior and actions.²²

The first part will analyze the function and characteristics of the ‘master narrative,’ specifically when encompassing historical elements. To this end, we will take a look at theories regarding memory and myth and their role in the reconstruction of history. Of great interest here are various pieces written on collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs in the first half of the 20th century. One of his principal assertions is that an individual cannot remember as an individual since memory is always interpreted by a set of rules determined by the group (or society) the individual currently lives in: “[E]ven at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu.”²³ Collective memory then is the memory constructed by the group and its frameworks. These frameworks are not arbitrarily chosen but set in a way to serve the common norms of this group or society.²⁴ As such, “the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the

22 Cf. Phillip L. Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society: The Political Psychology of Narrative,” in *Warring with Words: Narrative and Metaphor in Politics*, ed. Michael Hanne, William D. Crano and Jeffery S. Mio (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 53 and 64.

23 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 49.

24 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

basis of the present.”²⁵ Furthermore, “[s]ociety from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them,”²⁶ eliminating memory’s claim on historical correctness.

As the Sección 22 places much emphasis on rituals and commemorations of events, Assmann’s understanding of cultural memory is of particular interest to my investigation. He claims that cultural memory “focuses on fixed points in the past [...]. This tends to be condensed into symbolic figures to which memory attaches itself [...] and that are celebrated in festivals and are used to explain current situations.”²⁷ Associated symbols that are praised in special events thus become mnemonics, an aid for society to reaffirm identity. It is irrelevant whether the memory is factual history, as it is remembered history that is transformed to become myth through cultural memory, making it “a lasting, normative, and formative power.”²⁸ In this sense, cultural memory displays various attributes: Among others, it provides society with a “kind of identificatory determination in a positive (‘We are this’) or in a negative (‘That’s our opposite’) sense.”²⁹ Furthermore, cultural memory, in congruence with Halbwachs’ theory, constantly reconstructs the meaning of memories and puts them in the contemporary context to provide it with meaning for society at that moment. Additionally, cultural memory provides an obligatory frame of reference of norms and values, which again ties in with its function of creating identity.³⁰

The master narrative has a considerable influence on the story the individual creates for themselves in their surroundings—the ‘personal narrative’—and through which the individual creates and adjusts their

25 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

26 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 51.

27 Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 37.

28 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 38.

29 Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 130.

30 Assmann and Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 130–32.

identity and makes meaning of their surroundings.³¹ As a result, the stories in the proximity of an individual will unquestionably in some way influence their perception of the world.

One central aspect of this perception—and a prominent component for social movements in general—is the individual’s emotions. In his investigations on social movements, James M. Jasper studies the effect of emotions on protest and political action, differentiating between reflex emotions, urges, moods, affective commitments, and moral emotions, as well as short-term, medium-term, and long-term emotions. According to Jasper, “we have many stable convictions [...] that form the background to emotional reactions, urges, and moods,” and symbols, artifacts, and ideologies elaborate, amplify, and stabilize our temporary feelings.³² Particularly due to his combination of emotions and thoughts into ‘feeling-thinking processes,’ contrasting the traditional methods of analyzing emotions in social movements, Jasper’s research is valuable for my dissertation. Jasper also emphasizes the cultural element of emotions, which ties in with Halbwachs’ and Assmann’s theories on emotions. He states that “[t]he emotion labels that we use to make sense of—and to organize—our feeling-thinking processes are cultural. And our displays of emotions are cultural.”³³ It is thus cultural memory that influences (or determines) the way a group feels in a certain situation and that influences emotions, for the individual as well as for a movement.

A master narrative in the interplay with the personal narrative not only affects emotions, but, together with the latter, also influences the individual’s identity—another central aspect of this analysis. Phillip L. Hammack emphasizes that the individual creates their identity by engaging in cultural practice.³⁴ He further makes out three basic identities relevant for social movements, merging as well as influencing each

31 Phillip L. Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, no. 3 (2008): 233; Phillip L. Hammack and Andrew Pilecki, “Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology,” *Political Psychology*, no. 1 (2012): 77.

32 James M. Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 2.

33 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 13.

34 Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 235.

other: personal identity, collective identity, and movement identity. The idea of ‘us vs. them’ as a central element of cultural memory also plays a decisive role here.³⁵

Methodology

The methodology employed to analyze the role of narrative and the nature of the narrative created and employed by the Sección 22 is twofold. On the one hand, it is of an empirical nature: Research trips allowed a close observation of the section—its members, activities, and reputation—during events as well as regular schooldays. In the context of the analysis of narrative, this included interviews conducted in Mexico.

On the other hand, the investigation is based on discourse analysis. The sources for this analysis are, in turn, also divided into two categories. The first consists of interviews conducted on site. The interview partners above all constitute teachers of various generations and in different positions in the Sección 22, a representative of the Institute for Public Education in Oaxaca (Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca; IEEPO) in Puerto Escondido, a guard in Nochixtlán, and a delegate from the APPO, as well as those affected by the section’s protests, above all parents, but also taxi-drivers and a tourist. In light of security reasons, it was difficult to find interview partners from the rival Sección 59. In the end, however, an interview with the secretary general herself provided inside information on the section. This selection of interview partners displays the discrepancy of opinion between enthusiasts and their opponents, as well as the ideology they experienced and observed at the time.

For the protection of these partners, pseudonyms are used instead of their real names. A “Maestra” or “Maestro” will be put in front of their first name if they are a teacher or in a similar position, or their function given if they did not provide any name. If they are politicians and can easily be identified with the information given, their real names are used. Similarly, as is often the case with politicians, the latter will, after

³⁵ James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 87–88; Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 204.

their first mention, be called by the names they are usually referred to—e.g., Enrique Peña Nieto will be Peña Nieto, while Ulises Ruiz Ortiz will be called Ulises Ruiz. Furthermore, by writing ‘teacher,’ I also refer to the supporting staff working in the section structure.

The second category is information provided by the Sección 22 to members and society in general. This information can be obtained in their buildings on site in the form of memoranda or documentation from events during the various research trips, or in pamphlets the children receive at school to bring home to their parents. Furthermore, the Sección 22 is very active on its Facebook page as well as its website, where information is uploaded in regular intervals—this information is predominantly comprised of convocations, memoranda from the various congresses, announcements about activities and how these transpired, and other communication, such as the standpoint on political occurrences.

Occasionally, information needed was difficult to find. This circumstance was aggravated by the fact that the information provided by the Sección 22 and its supporters was not always congruent—in various instances, different numbers are provided by different sources. In the case of some acronyms—in themselves apparently a hobby in Latin America as everything is converted into an acronym, no matter the length or pronounceability³⁶—the teachers themselves did not even seem to know what the letters stood for exactly.

As with other polarized political topics, it is necessary in this investigation to inquire into the political standpoint of the person writing or speaking. In the same manner, it is important to consider the ideological alignment of the different newspapers. The ideological alignment and position of the interview partners will be presented in a footnote on their first mention.

While this analysis will touch upon all decades of the existence of the social movement of the Sección 22, the focus for the analysis of the narrative and the identity will lay on events during the first two decades

36 Among my favorites: CONCANACOSERVYTUR, the Confederación de Cámaras Nacionales de Comercio, Servicios y Turismo, and FSTSGEM, the Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio de los Gobiernos de los Estados, Municipios e Instituciones Descentralizadas de los Gobiernos Estatales y Municipales de la República Mexicana.

of the 21st century, as this period required the teachers to reflect upon their role and their political orientation in light of the increased implementation and challenges of globalization and a globalized economic system. This period furthermore writes major confrontations between the government and the teachers' movement—in general, when referring to 'the government,' I will be speaking about the PRI as well as the PAN administrations, as, for the dissidents, the change of parties for two terms was not tangible despite the hopes the change had caused. Since his government truly constitutes a change of politics, the investigation will end with the election of López Obrador in 2018.

State of Research

Apart from the interviews and other primary sources mentioned above, this investigation also draws on already existing research. Needless to say, the Sección 22, although of great importance in Oaxaca, is rather a niche topic within the greater academic fields, severely limiting the scope of research available. The SNTE itself has been subject to many investigations in a great variety of areas since it is the largest union in Latin America.³⁷ Due to its size and position in Mexico, studies on its influence in national politics, for example, as well as the role of unionism for the educational system are popular. The narrowing in on the teachers' movement also reduces the research and increases the overall percentage of Spanish studies in comparison to English ones, also leading to greater access difficulties. Further confining the area of investigation on the Sección 22 as part of the dissident movement leads to even less available and easily accessible research.

Two prominent analyses of the dissident movement include the Sección 22 as a prominent example. The first is Joe Foweraker's *Popular Mobilization in Mexico: The Teachers' Movement 1977-87*. It is one of the first investigations providing an overview over the most important regional movements and how they cooperated—his work is based on multiple studies on regional developments. The thoroughness of his research brings to light the 25 years he had spent with the topic

37 Maria Lorena Cook, *Organizing Dissent: Unions, the State, and the Democratic Teachers' Movement in Mexico* (Philadelphia: Penn State University Press, 1996), 2.

before continuing with another standard reference on social movements in Latin America. The second standard volume on the movement is Maria Lorena Cook's *Organizing Dissent: Unions, the State, and the Democratic Teachers' Movement in Mexico*, published in 1996. Cook builds on Foweraker's research, writing an extensive introduction on the CNTE and its establishment in the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Morelos, Valle de México, and Hidalgo. While she mainly provides a well-founded answer to how rebellions can arise in 'stable' authoritarian environments, she also presents a very detailed description of the emergence and a standard reference of the movement from its inception to the early 1990s. She especially carves out the fragile relationship between the state, the 'official' union, and the dissident movement, offering a comprehensive insight into the manipulative and calculating game played by the three. Luis Hernández Navarro's two reports *Cero en Conducta: Crónicas de la Resistencia Magisterial* and *La Novena Ola Magisterial* further complement the research done on the dissident movement. In the employment of information from these pieces, however, it is necessary to keep in mind that Hernández Navarro was himself part of the movement and his accounts can hence be rather subjective.

The Mexican Revolution, despite already being thoroughly investigated, still draws in new research due to its complexity and its many facets. The foundation for my analysis of the Revolution will mainly be provided by the works on the period by Alan Knight, professor of Latin American history at Oxford University, chiefly his two-volume *The Mexican Revolution*. His decade-long research on the Revolution is certainly a well-balanced standard reference that presents a sensible middle ground between the revisionists focusing mainly on the role of the elites and the scholars he calls baby-boomers that principally focus on the regional feuds. Furthermore, in the context of the Revolution, Joseph U. Lenti's *Redeeming the Revolution: The State and Organized Labor in Post-Tlatelolco Mexico* is a valuable contribution to my work. The author researched the significance of the Revolution for the Mexican state and big workers' unions, predominantly the image the state needed to uphold after the 1968 student massacre. The idea of the state

having to ‘redeem’ the Revolution strikes me as particularly interesting and worthwhile and can be readily applied to the teachers’ union.

A comprehensive overview over neoliberalism—on which there is, without a doubt, much research—is provided by Thomas Biebricher’s publication in German *Neoliberalismus: Zur Einführung*. Complemented by Steger and Roy’s *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* and Gerardo Otero’s “Mexico’s Double Movement: Neoliberal Globalism, the State and Civil Society,” a solid foundation can be set to investigate the entrance of neoliberalism in Mexico and how the Sección 22 reacts to it.

Events in Oaxaca in 2006 have incited much documentation. One of the primary sources in this context is the video documentary *Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad – A Little Bit of so Much Truth*, produced by Jill Freidberg. *Teaching Rebellion: Stories from the Grassroots Mobilization in Oaxaca* is a collection of first-hand accounts, yet also serves as a study guide and includes a call to rise against neoliberalism in favor of the class struggle. Studies of the events, usually also based on interviews, are not so much concerned only with the pictorial depiction of events but also with putting them into a wider political context. These include *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución.: La APPO y el Sistema de Dominación Oaxaqueño* by Marco Estrada Saavedra or *Oaxaca sitiada: La Primera Insurrección del Siglo XXI* by Diego Osorno. Lynn Stephen’s *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* encompasses an entire documentary project that includes a website.³⁸

The subsequent battles of the Sección 22 are not yet documented to the same extent, perhaps also because they are considered less tangible and dramatic. Hernández Navarro’s *La Novena Ola Magisterial* provides an account of the CNTE’s protest against the Educational Reform of 2013 as well as a brief general history of the organization. Accounts of the events in Nochixtlán in 2016 are documented in Emma Landeros Martínez’ *Nochixtlán: Un Domingo Negro*.

The novelty of my analysis combines various dimensions. First, it is the focus specifically on the teachers’ movement in Oaxaca. Second, my

38 University of Oregon and Duke University Press, “We are the Face of Oaxaca / Somos la Cara de Oaxaca.”

extensive research in the field over a period of years provides unique insights that complement already existing analyses. Third, the history of the movement has not been set into the theoretical framework of the use and the overall role of narrative. Fourth, my investigation is, of course, rather contemporary, and hence encompasses a timeframe that has not been researched extensively yet, providing an overview over the entire course of the section's movement history. And fifth—and of great interest in the international context—: There is very little research published in the English language, severely limiting available resources for scholars not proficient in Spanish. My investigation hence combines political history and narrative with contemporary debates, providing a comprehensive analysis of the Sección 22 in English, and a peek into the peculiarities of Oaxacan life and the specific mindset of the state's population.

Structure

The first chapter of this project will acquaint the reader with the theories already mentioned above: Halbwachs and Assmann will guide us into the depths of collective and cultural memory and their possible function for master narratives—as understood by Hammack. Jasper's research on emotions and identity will provide us with an understanding of these two aspects that are vital for the creation and modification of a personal narrative, which then again influences the master narratives of the social movement the individual participates in. The second chapter concerns the history and the structure of the Sección 22 that constitute part of the basis for as well as uphold the social movement and its narratives.

The following two chapters will analyze the two most prominent narrative strands in the dissident teachers' movement. Chapter four will introduce the Mexican Revolution as one of the founding incidents for the rebellious and partly socialist narrative the Sección 22 employs. After the introduction to the Revolution, we will take a look into the employment of elements of the Revolution in the cultural memory of the Sección 22 in the form of myth and narrative components: the Revolution by itself as a symbol connotated with the people's struggle and the eventual victory of the lower classes, as well as the necessity to redeem the Revolution; the political party that has risen from the Rev-

olution, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional; PRI) and has, by now, grown into a type of archenemy of the Sección 22; the memory figures that have been created in the aftermath of the Revolution; and the *escuelas normales* and, in particular, the *escuelas normales rurales*, which were founded after the Revolution and have since their inception displayed a rather socialist ideology with a readiness to take to the streets, earning themselves the reputation of being ‘breeding-grounds of *guerrilleros*.’

The second prominent narrative strand, which will be treated in chapter five, is in reference to neoliberalism. I will first provide a short overview of the most prominent neoliberal currents and how the policies were implemented in other countries and in Mexico in particular. In the second part of the chapter, we will examine the narrative of the Sección 22 in regards to neoliberalism and its implementation in Mexico. First, as a basis for this analysis, the theory of the ‘double movement’ by Karl Polanyi and the concept of ‘moral economy’ will be explained, so as to apply them to the movement of the Sección 22. In a second step, the general assessments and demands of the union section regarding neoliberalism will be examined: Within the immediate realm of their influence—the classrooms—, the teachers attempt to raise awareness of the neoliberal capitalist dynamic and create their own countermovement by developing and teaching ‘alternative education,’ based on the concept of critical pedagogy and considerations regarding the class system and education in Mexico and the position of the worker. The alternative education the Sección 22 draws from these considerations manifests concretely in the Plan for the Transformation of Education in Oaxaca (Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca; PTEO), based on the desire to emancipate Oaxacan (and, in the end, Mexican) society by drawing on the people’s indigenous heritage, customs, and values.

Chapter six will treat the challenges the movement was confronted with from the outside in roughly the first two decades of the 21st century. The first incident was the strike and blockade in Oaxaca in 2006: What began as the traditional protests of the Sección 22 in Oaxaca in May, ended in a full-out battle between the dissidents and their supporters, who eventually founded the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of

Oaxaca (Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca; APPO) and controlled the center of Oaxaca City for about six months, until the federal forces managed to regain control. The second major challenge posed was the Educational Reform, passed by President Enrique Peña Nieto in 2013 as part of the Pacto por México. The teachers saw the Reform as a neoliberal attack on the public education system and their profession in order to subdue the people and facilitate the introduction of further neoliberal measures. The dissidents' refusal to accept the implementation of the Reform and the active boycott of it eventually led to a rupture in the relationship with the state government in Oaxaca in 2015: A decree was passed that reformed the influence of the Sección 22 over the educational system, resulting in a considerable cut of the section's power and serious damage to its position. Tensions peaked in 2016 when during a blockade the federal police was dispatched to the town of Asunción Nochixtlán to lift the blockade the teachers of the Sección 22 had erected on the highway. The massacre that ensued left various dead, wounded, or missing—not just teachers but also people from the town and the surroundings that had joined the protests in solidarity.

However, the Sección 22 also experiences opposition and challenges not posed by the government as the primary 'enemy'—these will be treated in chapter seven. The first of these is posed by society: While the Sección 22 claims that they also represent the will of the Mexican people and fight for their rights, especially parents and other groups affected by the teachers' protest measures are withdrawing the support they had originally shown for the struggle. Furthermore, the Sección 22 is experiencing problems from within, which particularly shows in a lack of ideology, leading to diminished participation as well as 'misbehavior' (according to the guidelines provided by the section). One of the biggest consequences of this dynamic was the splitting off of a group of teachers in 2006, which went on to found a new section in Oaxaca that renounces participation in the CNTE and adheres directly to the SNTE. These problems are so fundamental that, to this day, the Sección 22 has not been able to recover the power it has once enjoyed.

2 Theory: Constructing an Identity

“The ‘strength’ of an identity, even a cognitively vague one, comes from its emotional side.”¹

My research examines the identity and significance of being a teacher in the Sección 22 in Oaxaca, or simply ‘a teacher,’ as they are commonly referred to since the teachers of the Sección 22 and its social movement contrive the great majority of teachers in Oaxaca. In the context of identities in a social movement, two factors are of great importance: first, the nature of the cultural influences of society affecting the individual, and, second, the exact effects of these influences on the individual, and the expression of these effects in the movement.

The theoretical foundation I derive from this supposition is a composite of a number of theories from a variety of fields, most prominently, albeit not in order of importance, cultural history, sociology, and political psychology. The basis for this complex is the concept of narrative, provided mostly by Phillip L. Hammack, professor of psychology at the University of California. First, I will focus on narrative as the “empirical umbrella for a host of phenomena”² and the idea of cultural influence—stories, in the far-reaching sense of the word, as well as in the form of collective and cultural memory—on the mind in the form of a master narrative. I will then continue with the impact and role of master narratives in the creation and adjustment of identity and ideology in a personal narrative, leading to emotions and social movements.

The basis of narrative research is the relationship between language and thought, society and the individual. Narrative is considered “the sensible organization of thought through language, internalized or externalized, which serves to create a sense of personal coherence and collective solidarity and to legitimize collective beliefs, emotions,

1 Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, “Introduction: Why Emotions Matter,” in *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*, ed. Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2001), 9.

2 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 58.

and actions.”³ Within this premise, Hammack determines three basic psycho-political functions in mental experiences and the structure of power of a society.

The first function is that, in order to make sense of events and surroundings, the individual employs narrative as a tool with which to fit the occurrences into a storyline so as to create coherence, generate meaning, and remember.⁴ In other words, the first function of narrative is to “provide individuals with a vocabulary to interpret the sensory world [...] [and] confer meaning, sensibility, and order to an otherwise chaotic and often troubling series of events.”⁵ Events not arranged in this manner are more likely to be forgotten.⁶

The second function of narrative is “to motivate coordinated activity,”⁷ since “narrative, by constructing subjectivity, motivates particular sets of actions on the world that we perceive as compulsory if we are to be ‘faithful’ to our identities.”⁸ Narrative, then, serves to construct or maintain the structure of power within a society and its members.⁹ The third psycho-political function of narrative is a consequence of the second: Since power structures provoke some kind of activity, narrative plays a decisive role in politics and the connection to the individual, and is frequently used “as a form of motivation, domination, and liberation—as tools in the universal competition for status and power.”¹⁰

In earlier works, Hammack, jointly with Andrew Pilecki, established four basic principles of narratives that parallel the above-mentioned functions. The first—language, politics, and thought—ascertains on a very structural level and drawing, among others, on the works of Bakhtin, that words and their meanings affect the individual and their perception of the world, even the ideal order within it, and vice versa.

3 Hammack and Pilecki, “Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology,” 78.

4 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 53 and 61; Phillip L. Hammack, “Narrative and the Politics of Meaning,” *Narrative Inquiry*, no. 2 (2011): 313.

5 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 61.

6 Jean Mandler, *Stories, Scripts, and Scenes: Aspects of Schema Theory* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1984).

7 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 62.

8 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 62.

9 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 62.

10 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 63.

The second principle refers to narrative's function of personal coherence, indicating the individual's necessity to place events in storylines to make sense of them. The third is the creation of collective solidarity through common storylines, and the fourth they term 'mind in action,' suggesting that narrative serves to conciliate between us and social practice, and is constructed by our engagement with the latter.¹¹

Jerome Bruner, a prominent figure in the cognitive turn of psychology, emphasized a particularly cultural characteristic of narrative and the role of narrative in what he termed 'folk' or 'cultural psychology.' The function of cultural psychology, he notes, is "to show how human minds and lives are reflections of culture and history as well as of biology and physical resources."¹² The role of narrative in this context is to "deal with the stuff of human action and human intentionality. It mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires, and hopes. [...] It reiterates the norms of the society without being didactic. And [...] it provides a basis for rhetoric without confrontation. It can even teach, conserve memory, or alter the past."¹³

It is also possible to understand narrative as two strands connecting the individual and society: The one strand leads from society to the individual—this would be the master narrative—and the other runs from the individual back to society—the personal narrative. Therefore, "[l]anguage [...] both conveys and constructs a cultural reality."¹⁴ In the following, we will take a closer look at these two strands, their functions, and their effects on both players.

11 Hammack and Pilecki, "Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology," 78–79.

12 Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990), 138.

13 Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 52.

14 Phillip L. Hammack and Andrew Pilecki, "Methodological Approaches in Political Psychology: Discourse and Narrative," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Political Psychology*, ed. Paul Nesbitt-Larking et al. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 74.

2.1 The Master Narrative: From the Outside in

We cannot live in a given society without making some kind of use of the frameworks provided by this society. As Molly Andrews notes: “The cultural context in which a life story is rendered cannot be separated from the way in which that process occurs.”¹⁵ Hence, the premise for master narratives is the notion that we not only “think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures”¹⁶ and “frame events and sentences in larger structures,”¹⁷ but that these are provided by the society surrounding us.

This kind of “interpretive system”¹⁸ can make its appearance in a variety of forms, which we are exposed to in daily life. They are the conduits that convey the cultural meaning attached to events, people, and places in our surroundings, most prominently media, entertainment, advertisement, and political discourse and rhetoric. In this way, they remind us of and reinforce the supposed storyline and attached messages, which, in turn, then convey a particular significance we can place circumstances of our lives into to generate meaning and create coherence.¹⁹ We are hence constantly surrounded by narratives influencing us, consciously or subconsciously.

A further characteristic of the master narrative concerns the nature of the message and its intention. Since the master narrative is as a “cultural script about the meaning of social categories,”²⁰ it cannot be neutral but is “always deployed to serve some interest for the maintenance or attainment of status, power, and dominance.”²¹ This fact is a very

15 Molly Andrews, *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 54.

16 Theodore R. Sarbin, “The Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Psychology,” in *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, ed. Theodore R. Sarbin (New York: Praeger, 1986), 8.

17 Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 64.

18 Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 34.

19 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 52–53.

20 Hammack and Pilecki, “Methodological Approaches in Political Psychology: Discourse and Narrative,” 82.

21 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 53.

deliberate tool in politics, where it is utilized to reinforce particular messages and “compel individuals to appropriate a particular ‘mentality’ or worldview”²² in order to “promote negotiation and avoid confrontational disruption and strife.”²³ Apart from various functions or principles that are universal, narrative then also has a notion that is distinct in the respective cultural context. Hammack’s research on youth and their construction of narrative in Palestine and Israel poses a valuable example in this context: The master narrative in Palestine revolves around tragic notions, such as loss, while the Israeli master narrative depicts persecution and eventual redemption.²⁴ The political message in these narratives thus reinforce the dominant storyline of the respective people in their historic struggle.

In fact, stories that play a prominent role in a given society often involve historic events and an interpretation thereof. As Mexico is a country rich in these stories, I will now take a closer look at collective and cultural memory.

2.1.1 Collective Memory

A vital figure in the field of collective memory is the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945). Although only rediscovered rather recently, his studies and theories, especially on the societal component in the process of remembering, are of great importance and provide the foundation for contemporary research beyond the field of sociology.

Halbwachs was greatly influenced by a pioneer of sociology, Émile Durkheim, and the philosopher Henri Bergson, both of whom were described as father figures to the young scholar. Yet the dichotomy between the ideas of the two—Durkheim’s emphasis on collective and social origins, Bergson’s on subjectivism and intuition as guiding elements—caused Halbwachs to follow in the footsteps of one (in this case Durkheim) while seeing in the other (Bergson) a confirmation of his own, Durkheim-influenced, theories. Halbwachs, nevertheless, was less

22 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 58–59.

23 Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 67.

24 Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 238–39.

dogmatic than Durkheim in his defense of the young field of sociology, which allowed him to also recognize the importance of other areas of study and to explore them.²⁵

It is the Durkheimian notion of collective and social influences that marked Halbwachs' greatest legacy, his theory of collective memory. His fundamental assertion is that what an individual remembers is not an exact preservation of the past but a reconstruction "on the basis of the present,"²⁶ guided by the rules of each group or society. As expected, when he speaks of 'remembering,' the term carries with it the notion of 'reconstructing'—in our context: according to the present master narratives.

The two instances of remembering—individual and collective memory—are closely connected and behave in a similar fashion as personal and master narrative, as we will see later: The individual needs the collective to interpret and recollect the memory, while the collective "realizes and manifests itself in individual memories."²⁷ To this end, the collective memory establishes frameworks for the group to use in the process of recollection that help understand and interpret the memory.²⁸ Again, remembering without group frameworks is hardly possible since only a very small number of humans—if any at all—lives alone, outside societies that provide these frameworks, and thinking outside of them is impossible, according to Halbwachs.²⁹

As can be imagined now, this provides the collective—society or group surrounding the individual—with a significant degree of power, since it decides the background against which to place the memory. The frameworks are formed in the specific manner to "reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society,"³⁰ setting a past memory in relation to the present. In other words, memories are adapted "to the mental habits and the type of representation of the past common among contempo-

25 Dietmar J. Wetzel, Maurice Halbwachs (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2009), 40, 49–50.

26 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

27 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

28 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 171.

29 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 43.

30 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

raries”³¹ with the goal to produce coherence among a group’s members.³² To this end, the frameworks and recollections are continuously readjusted, “[obligating] people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them.”³³ On the one hand, this leads to a permanent readjustment of memories sometimes already previously modified,³⁴ while, on the other, recollections that are not in harmony with the present-day framework are simply eliminated.³⁵

Although this appears to be quite an extensive and vital mechanism, we are, according to Halbwachs, usually not aware of it, as long as we agree with the group’s basic premises: “[I]nsofar as we yield without struggle to an external suggestion, we believe we are free in our thought and feelings. Therefore most social influences we obey usually remain unperceived.”³⁶ However, as soon as we leave a group we have previously shared a collective memory with, we may notice our differences in collective frameworks and thus the mechanisms that are applied to reproduce memory.³⁷

This accrued collective memory also has an effect on the institutions installed by this society. Halbwachs states that, in general, “society can live only if its institutions rest on potent collective beliefs,”³⁸ which already implies that as soon as society interferes with collective memory, it needs to adjust institutions to these changes. However, institutions can only be modified gradually and need to have an obvious relation to the old to be accepted by society: “We might say that the new ideas became salient only after having for a long time behaved as if they were the old ones. It is upon a foundation of remembrances that contemporary institutions were constructed.”³⁹

31 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 75.

32 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 183.

33 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 51.

34 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books, 1980), 69.

35 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 189.

36 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 45.

37 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 26.

38 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 187.

39 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 125.

Again, according to Halbwachs, this process is usually not a conscious endeavor: “A society does not proceed from one organizational structure to another through the conscious effort of its members, as if they build [sic] new institutions in order to reap actual advantages from their efforts.”⁴⁰ Here, I cannot quite agree. While small changes within an existing institution might have to undergo this process of resembling the existing structure, a break with the political system, for instance by way of a coup d’état leading to a revolution, intends to do exactly this—(consciously) change the existing political system and install new institutions. Halbwachs still insists that in the case of a revolution, “[e]ven when institutions are radically transformed, and especially then, the best means of making them take root is to buttress them with everything transferable from tradition.”⁴¹ From which period the traditions stem—from the period before the one causing the revolution and or exactly that one—he leaves open. As we will see later, Assmann further elaborated on the idea of memory in revolution.

Halbwachs makes a strong distinction between memory and history. While he sees memory as lived, he considers history dead and, one might say, without a soul: “General history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up.”⁴² The justification for this reasoning is the missing necessity of writing something down or “otherwise [fixing] it in memory”⁴³ if it is still existing in everyday life. As a consequence, the collective memory usually has the duration of less than a human lifetime,⁴⁴ which is when history takes over and versions of events are brought to paper—something that can be observed today in scholars trying to gather the memories of Second World War contemporaries before they pass away. In this definition, however, Halbwachs disregards the changeability of history, as well as the possibility that the collective memory might position itself against the supposedly ‘true’ history.

40 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 121.

41 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 82.

42 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 78.

43 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 78.

44 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 86.

Halbwachs further intensifies this notion of a soulless history, explaining that it is indeed just “a record of changes,”⁴⁵ of “whatever distinguishes one period from all others.”⁴⁶ In the process of writing this sequence of changes, two fatal errors are committed: The first is the detachment of the group’s background while fitting occurrences into a neutral sequence of events, and the second is the reduction of the various versions of events to a single one that cannot include all the different notions of individual memory.⁴⁷

In fact, while Halbwachs concedes that “one purpose of history might just be to bridge the gap between past and present, restoring this ruptured continuity”⁴⁸ between history and memory, he insists on it being impossible because of the nature of memory itself. He states that “[i]f a memory exists only when the remembering subject [...] feels that it goes back to its remembrances in a continuous movement, how could history ever be a memory,”⁴⁹ if the person or group reading the history is not the person or group having experienced it. In other words, the key characteristic of collective memory is continuity, while history divides the past into different eras apparently separated and entirely different from the previous⁵⁰ and is in itself “selected, combined, and evaluated in accord with necessities and rules not imposed on the groups that had through time guarded [the events] as a living trust.”⁵¹

On the national scale—which is of great importance in the Mexican context—Halbwachs concedes that “[t]here are events of national import that simultaneously alter the lives of all citizens [...] [which] could [...] offer everyone a few temporal landmarks,”⁵² despite obviously seeing these as the rare exception. More often than not, the nation’s history is “a very large framework with which [the individual’s] own history makes contact at only a few points.”⁵³ While allow-

45 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 86.

46 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 57.

47 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 83, 86.

48 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 79.

49 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 79.

50 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 80–81.

51 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 78.

52 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 77.

53 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 77.

ing the possibility, he decidedly asserts that history can be increased through reading and conversation, yet remains a borrowed memory since he can imagine the events but not remember them.⁵⁴ Halbwachs thus understands general history as a remote and artificial manner of remembering one version of events, entirely detached from any connection to the present.

2.1.2 Cultural Memory

Halbwachs' approaches often serve as a foundation for further research in the various academic fields, as is the case with Jan Assmann. Assmann, honorary professor at the University of Konstanz, contributed considerably to the revival of Halbwachs' works and analyses—in his case in the field of cultural history—and used them as a foundation for his own concepts on the mechanisms of individual memory in society.

Assmann agrees with Halbwachs in the socially constructed character that surrounds group memory and the supposedly accurate past: “The past is not a natural growth but a cultural creation,”⁵⁵ and “the result of a cultural process of construction and representation [...] guided by particular motives, expectations, hopes, and aims, each of which takes its form from the referential frame of the present.”⁵⁶ Assmann further consents that groups and societies utilize this past “while developing, producing, and constructing a future,”⁵⁷ which simultaneously leads to the individuals forgetting those events in the past that do not fit into this “referential framework of their own present”⁵⁸—as we have already established in the context of meaning-making through narrative.

However, Assmann rejects Halbwachs' rigid separation of memory and history. Instead, he includes both under the umbrella term ‘collective memory,’ within which he differentiates between the ‘com-

54 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 51–52.

55 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 33.

56 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 71–72.

57 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 18.

58 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 22–23.

municative' and the 'cultural' as two of the four areas⁵⁹ of the external dimension of memory.⁶⁰ The former consists of recent experiences the individual made and shares with their contemporaries—communication taking place on a daily basis—which is why he also refers to it as 'biographical memory.'⁶¹ It is informal and grows naturally, without a gardener keeping it in a desired shape.⁶²

Far more complex is the second: cultural memory, memory culture, or foundational memory. As the latter name suggests, this type of memory is the foundation of a society or culture and as such commemorates events in the history of this group that appear to be vital to the present. To this point, the memory often utilizes "symbolic figures [...] that are celebrated in festivals and are used to explain current situations,"⁶³ and "fixed objectifications both linguistic and nonlinguistic, such as rituals, dances, myths, patterns, dress, jewelry, tattoos, paintings, landscapes, and so on."⁶⁴ According to Assmann, all these symbols, ceremonies, and customs can be united under the umbrella term 'memoria,' or "figures of memory"⁶⁵ because of their mnemotechnical function⁶⁶—their purpose and task of remembering (a version of) the past—which is imperative for the continuity of meaning through the generations in a given society.⁶⁷

As can be imagined, the reconstruction of the past by the help of figures and symbols of memory frequently leads to the creation of myths: "Myths are also figures of memory, and here any distinction

59 The third and fourth are 'mimetic memory' and 'the memory of things' (Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 5–6).

60 With the distinction between the two he also frames what J. Vansina established as the 'floating gap' in memory: Communicative memory refers to the recent past, while cultural memory remembers the distant past. The events in between constitute the floating gap in memory (Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 34).

61 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 36–37; Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 126 and 128–129.

62 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 41.

63 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 37.

64 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 37.

65 Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 129.

66 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 37.

67 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 72; Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 130.

between myth and history is eliminated.”⁶⁸ In fact, Assmann asserts that since societies do not ‘remember’ factual history, “cultural memory transforms factual into remembered history, thus turning it into myth.” Going one step further still, he states that “[m]yth is foundational history that is narrated in order to illuminate the present from the standpoint of its origins,”⁶⁹ which hints at Halbwachs’ understanding of the reconstruction of memory, yet includes history—a step that Halbwachs’ rigid separation between memory and history did not allow.

Assmann thus provides history with a lived character. He states that “this [history becoming myth through memory] is what makes it real, in the sense that it becomes a lasting, normative, and formative power.”⁷⁰ What is lived then is the myth of the past, the foundational stories, while history is the basis of this myth, reality and pure objectivity,⁷¹ and thus continues in today’s cultural memory: “Myth is the past condensed into foundational narrative.”⁷² What Assmann disregards in this context, however, is that myth can also be invented and reinvented to serve as tools to interpret history in a convenient manner.

The foundational character is especially visible in the most vital of the effects of cultural memory—the creation of a collective identity. The individual is bound to a collective through “the connective structure of common knowledge and characteristics—first through adherence to the same laws and values, and second through the memory of a shared past”⁷³—in other words: through narrative. From this stock of memories, “a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity”⁷⁴ and the sense of what ‘we’ are, and what ‘we’ are not—us versus them—through the meaning ascribed to these memories. Myth in this context—and as an aspect of cultural memory—also plays into the creation of identity since “[m]yth and identity are linked by the fact that they both answer

68 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 37.

69 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 38.

70 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 38.

71 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 59.

72 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 61.

73 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 3.

74 Assmann and Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 130.

questions about who we are, where we come from, and what our place in the cosmos is.”⁷⁵

On the one hand, this provides a group with security, while, on the other hand, it also entails a socially binding character for the people in the particular group. The foundation for this assumption is the fact that, according to Assmann, “[t]here is no such thing as an identity that grows naturally”⁷⁶ and “[i]dentity, including that of the ‘I,’ is always a social construct, and as such it is always cultural.”⁷⁷ It is here that myth gives “direction to oneself and the world—a reality of a higher order, which not only rings true but also sets normative standards and possesses a formative power.”⁷⁸ The formative power concerns the education of the group’s individuals, while the normative character provides “rules of conduct”⁷⁹ and a sense of what the individual in the group must not forget.⁸⁰ As a result, people become conscious of common conditions, whereby “the mass can be transformed into a collectively acting ‘subject’ whose capacity for action will be tied to its identity.”⁸¹ However, Assmann’s theory does not address that, in addition to identity being a social construct, it is also a political one

When these factors align, cultural memory, and thus collective identity in Assmann’s sense, behaves similar to Halbwachs’ collective memory: “The collective identity needs ceremony—something to take it out of the daily routine. To a degree, it is larger than life.”⁸² Just as much, the collective identity itself depends on the “reproduction of shared memories”⁸³ to ensure further existence and the “communication and continuance of the knowledge that gives the group its identity”⁸⁴ in the form of rituals, festivals, and commemorations. This leads to a mythical and larger-than-life character of cultural memory, and Assmann states that

75 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 123.

76 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 113.

77 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 113.

78 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 59–60.

79 Assmann and Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 132.

80 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 15–16.

81 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 115.

82 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 38.

83 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 72.

84 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 42.

“[rituals] and myths capture the sense of reality, and it is through their scrupulous observation, preservation, and transmission—together with the identity of the group—that the world continues to function,”⁸⁵ and that this cultural memory “compensates for the deficiencies of normal life.”⁸⁶ Figures of memory thus become vital for the survival of cultural memory and collective identity.

A prominent current in cultural memory is the ‘canon.’ Assmann defines it as “the kind of tradition in which the content and form are as fixed and binding as they can possibly be,”⁸⁷ while also creating a “principle of sanctification”⁸⁸ that joins the sense of sacredness with behavioral guidelines. It can then serve as “a secure point of reference, providing uniformity, precision, and coherence, and at the same time excluding arbitrariness, chance, and disunity.”⁸⁹ As such, it is a vital element in the creation of collective and, as a consequence, individual identity. According to Assmann, they are generated in “[t]imes of cultural polarization, when traditions are broken and people must decide which order to follow.”⁹⁰ In this sense, it also happens that only one current will be seen as the correct one that is then “sacralized, that is, given the status of binding obligation and unchangeability,”⁹¹ while the other is “regarded as alien or irrelevant”⁹² and dismissed.

For the role of the state for society, Assmann sees memory in general as a tool. He asserts that rulers can use this tool both retrospectively—legitimizing their reign by way of the past—and prospectively—by taking measures to place themselves in the cultural memory.⁹³ He detects a correlation between a tendency towards rebellion and cultures with a strong state, asserting that “state-organized cultures lean toward cultural heat.”⁹⁴ This fact he considers to be quite logical, since oppressed

85 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 42.

86 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 42.

87 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 87.

88 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 102.

89 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 103.

90 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 106.

91 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 140.

92 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 140.

93 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 54.

94 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 55.

underclasses tend to want change. As a consequence, “memory can become a form of resistance”⁹⁵ in a battle against an oppressive ruler. As we will see later on, this is an especially prevalent phenomenon in the social protest of the Sección 22.

‘Hot memory,’ as Assmann calls it, can also propel society to act in a certain manner by way of the ‘mythomotor’—the driving force behind it. Hot memory in general typically functions in one of two opposing ways: It is either foundational—perceiving the present as perfect because it developed from past events—or contrapresent—explaining the shortcomings of the present in comparison to a heroic past and revealing the apparent ruptures between the past and the present. Although only being able to operate as one of the two in any given moment, memory does not have to decidedly be either—its use depends on the context and the society. The mythomotor, or driving force, can be found behind both foundational and contrapresent memory: Assmann gives the examples of nationalistic movements that invoke the memory of a glorious past standing in contrast to the present, and revolutions, where the mythomotor turns from foundational to contrapresent.⁹⁶ This dynamic demonstrates that narratives of the past can affect the individual to rest and perceive the past as a foundation of a glorious present, or propel the individual to change the present in light of a glorious past.

On occasion, memory is consciously constructed to serve a purpose: Andrews, Hammack and Pilecki analyzed truth commissions and their role in establishing one story of events out of the many from a population. This narrative is to reconcile a people and their past and provide it with one collective memory regarding events.⁹⁷ As Andrews shows using the example of South Africa, due to the small number of people questioned for these purposes and the usually rather selective collection of voices, the goal of a truth commission has to be exactly that—uniting them under one umbrella story—since ‘the truth’ cannot be framed in a single narrative.⁹⁸

95 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 56.

96 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 62, 63, 65, 66.

97 Andrews, *Shaping History*, 171; Hammack and Pilecki, “Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology,” 91.

98 Andrews, *Shaping History*, 171–72.

Collective and cultural memory are thus very prominent forms of master narratives that surround us in our daily lives and affect us in our (political) actions. We will now turn to the personal narrative and its expression in social movements, creating new master narratives.

2.2 The Personal Narrative: From the Inside out

Hammack and Pilecki explain that the individual deals with master narratives through the process of (master) narrative engagement—“a process of dialogic encounter with some cultural setting—some community of shared practice”⁹⁹—, as well as storylines depicting “what it means to inhabit a particular political entity, be it a nation-state, a resistance movement, or a political party.”¹⁰⁰ In this process of narrative engagement, the individual is aided by “a community’s stored narrative resources” as well as a culturally fashioned “tool kit of interpretive techniques: Its myths, its typology of human plights, but also its traditions for locating and resolving divergent narratives.”¹⁰¹

The individual decides what to make of the information the storyline contains: accept, appropriate, and reproduce the narrative, or reject it partially or in its entirety.¹⁰² The parameters of this decision are provided by ideology, which is the interpreter between a narrative and what eventually constitutes identity. Ideology, as defined by Hammack, is “a cognition of self in relation to discourse,”¹⁰³ and as such manages the “internalization of shared representations, be they in the form of abstract beliefs or historical narratives that are imbued with imagery.”¹⁰⁴ It contains the values and beliefs we hold and contrasts them against the narrative at hand. As a consequence, it is an integral part—a tool—in the formation of identity.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Hammack and Pilecki, “Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology,” 93.

¹⁰⁰ Hammack and Pilecki, “Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology,” 77.

¹⁰¹ Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 68.

¹⁰² Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 63; Hammack and Pilecki, “Methodological Approaches in Political Psychology: Discourse and Narrative,” 73.

¹⁰³ Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 232.

¹⁰⁴ Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 231.

¹⁰⁵ Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 230–32.

The individual employs the parts they appropriated from the master narrative to create their own individual framework in line with ideology, with beliefs and values, as well as their emotions.¹⁰⁶ This storyline, the personal narrative, serves as the guideline with which the individual can measure events and circumstances in their lives to make meaning of them and, as a result, achieve personal coherence, which is Hammack's first function of narrative.¹⁰⁷ This narrative then connects them ever more to their cultural surroundings, and their daily events to a collective's story.¹⁰⁸

However, the personal narrative not only aids the individual in the creation of meaning, but also provides a sense of purpose for the individual within their cultural framework. Personal narratives are based on beliefs defended by or upheld in the fight against master narratives.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, they serve as motivational forces for the individual since "*thinking, feeling, and doing* are inextricably reciprocal."¹¹⁰ As Hammack notes: "Just as my personal narrative of identity leads me to act a certain way in the political world because of the social category I inhabit, my mentality about the world and how it 'ought' to be provides further narrative content that guides my political action."¹¹¹

The engagement of the individual in political action then demonstrates the co-constructive character of master and personal narrative, as well as of culture: If the personal narrative of an individual and the acts resulting from it resonate with others who make similar meaning of a master narrative, a collective is formed. This collective then, just as an individual, behaves in a specific way, repudiating or reinforcing a particular narrative, and acts accordingly. The result of this collective

106 Hammack and Pilecki, "Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology," 89.

107 Hammack bases this statement, at least in part, on Bruner's research on narrative and the cultural psychology (Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 67).

108 Andrews, *Shaping History*, 205; Hammack, "Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity," 233; Hammack and Pilecki, "Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology," 77.

109 Hammack, "Mind, Story, and Society," 58; Hammack, "Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity," 233.

110 Hammack and Pilecki, "Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology," 89.

111 Hammack, "Mind, Story, and Society," 57–58.

creating a common narrative is yet another master narrative that constitutes culture and that individuals can engage with.¹¹²

2.2.1 Emotions

Within the interpretation of the individual's surroundings and the creation of a personal narrative, emotions play a fundamental role. As we have already established before, we justify our emotions by way of personal narratives and we create personal narratives by way of emotions. In the realm of social movements as a prominent tool of political action, our emotions and their effect in the creation of a personal narrative provide meaning for our actions and involvement in protest, as well as create coherence with others.

Until recently, social movements have usually been analyzed with traditional methods: crowd theory, resource mobilization, rational choice, or political process. James M. Jasper, renowned sociologist and author of multiple publications on social protest, is a vital protagonist in the transformation of this analysis pattern, introducing the term feeling-thinking processes—eliminating the idea of feeling and thinking as two separate categories—, and emphasizing, above all, the impact of culture on them. With his findings, he provides a new model of analysis while at the same time rejecting the over-use of collective identity to explain the gaps that could not be answered by the typical theories, such as people's motivations to act and the timing and strategic choices of movements.¹¹³ His work ties in with Hammack's idea that "the evaluative and prescriptive dimension of narrative is anchored in affect, and response to narratives is not always rational,"¹¹⁴ emphasizing emotions in the construction of a personal narrative.

Jasper sees social movements as an aid to "articulate intuitions of which we are barely aware, bringing them into the light of day so that

112 Hammack, "Mind, Story, and Society," 52 and 58; Hammack, "Narrative and the Politics of Meaning," 313; Hammack and Pilecki, "Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology," 80, 93.

113 Cf. Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 283–305.

114 Hammack, "Mind, Story, and Society," 59.

we can consider them and sometimes act upon them.”¹¹⁵ Jasper differentiates between citizenship and post-citizenship movements, the former being made up primarily of people excluded from full participation in society and without the protection of basic rights, the latter of people mainly fighting other people’s rights or all of humanity. These include movements such as the feminist and the environmentalist movement. Post-citizenship movements are also called ‘new social movements’ because of their ‘new’ characteristics of being able to interweave and cooperate, while ‘old’ social movements had a set group in mind and could thus easily engage in competition with each other.¹¹⁶

By introducing the term ‘feeling-thinking processes,’ Jasper connects the two formerly separate ideas of emotions and rationality in one mechanism that influences our decisions—through our personal narrative, if you will—and not, as previously believed, as two poles that make a decision either well thought-through or unreasonable (the former being the desired and respectable one). The basis for all these processes, however, he sees in culture and thus uses the latter as the framework. To all intents and purposes, he defines culture as “shared mental worlds and their physical embodiments, [...] [providing] a collection of discrete beliefs, images, feelings, values, and categories, as well as bundles of these components. It gives us patterns of acting as well as thinking, judging, and feeling”¹¹⁷—a definition that ties in with the above-mentioned concept of narrative.

As the three subcomponents of culture, he defines “cognitive beliefs, emotional responses, and moral evaluations of the world,”¹¹⁸ including all constituents that influence our feeling-thinking processes. As a result, he explains, “[o]ur expectations, our understandings of situations, and other things that trigger emotions are all cultural. The emotion labels that we use to make sense of—and to organize—our feeling-thinking processes are cultural. And our displays of emotions

115 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 13.

116 The research on new social movements is vast. See, among others, Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 7 and Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 28–29.

117 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 12.

118 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 12.

are cultural.”¹¹⁹ The meaning we attribute to institutionalized symbols is also cultural.¹²⁰ This is especially interesting in the comparison of different cultures since he states that countries with a key revolution in history have a different perception concerning the possibility of change and thus the probability of a protest movement’s success.¹²¹ Everything surrounding our emotional world—including its organization—is, then, determined by culture, which is made up of narrative.

According to Jasper, our feelings range from short-term to long-term. Short-term feelings include reflex emotions, such as short-term fear or anger, thrills, or violence, usually rather sudden. Urges and moods follow reflex emotions in the direction of long-term feelings, depending on the depth of the emotions perceived. On the other end of the scale are long-term feelings, made up of affective commitments—still slightly more short-term—and long-term moral commitments, constituting rather the cognitive and more stable side of the feeling-thinking process. The long-term feelings affective and moral commitments shape and influence the shorter-term feelings. Affective commitments resemble our values and goals in life, love and belonging in relation to a group, loyalty, trust, or our relating symbols to a specific interpretation. The mistrust movements exhibit towards information provided by supposed experts, media, or the government also falls into this category. Moral commitments are part of a still deeper layer in our unconscious.¹²²

In regard to the apparent dichotomy between rationality and emotions, Jasper explains that “[o]nce we appreciate feelings as forms of thinking, we can see morality as consisting of emotional processes.”¹²³ He states that “[m]any of our moral emotions develop out of our reactions to and beliefs about the social systems in which we live, especially outrage, indignation, and other feelings tied to our sense of justice.”¹²⁴ And as moral commitments are not tangible, we usually see morality as “[sensing] that something is right or wrong without being able to

119 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 13.

120 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 50.

121 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 50, 95.

122 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 4–5, 102, 103, 110, 116, 126, 128–129.

123 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 129.

124 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 129.

say why exactly. We feel angry or disgusted by certain actions; we feel our disapproval. We think through our feelings. And a great deal of that thinking involves following the conventions of the groups with which we identify,¹²⁵ which leads us back to the importance of cultural influence.

Moral commitment—or morality—provides the framework of our interpretation of the world. We are not usually aware of it until we perceive a ‘moral shock’—the basis of much social protest. A moral shock “originates in reflex emotions that arise when we discover that the world is not as it seemed, and we are startled, stunned, sad, angry, disgusted, and/or disappointed.”¹²⁶ As a result, we “enter a disoriented mood, which may eventuate in our rethinking or reasserting our basic moral commitments, in action to set things right, or alternatively in depressed withdrawal.”¹²⁷ According to Jasper, the bigger the difference is between what we thought the world was like and what the world has just shown us that it is like—the “indignation gap”¹²⁸—should then lie in direct relation to the person’s willingness to join or create a social movement in order to draw attention to the situation and (usually) affect change, since indignation “as a moral form of anger [...] encourages action.”¹²⁹

Inside the movement, Jasper identifies two main types of emotions: reciprocal and shared emotions. The former are vital in the basic construction and cohesion of the group—something that might be called team spirit. These include the positively connoted affection, loyalty, love, as well the negatively connoted jealousy or competition. Shared emotions, on the other hand, are a basic component in the construction of movement identity—it is the emotion that the group as a collective has towards the outside. Furthermore, movements appear to be stronger when they express the same reflex emotions and when they experience affective loyalty.¹³⁰ Here, movement tactics begin to a certain extent.

125 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 131.

126 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 87.

127 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 87.

128 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 158.

129 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 149.

130 James M. Jasper, “Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2011, 294; Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 187; Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 160.

According to Jasper, movements differ in the initial definition of the necessity to protest: While some “try to establish victims first, in order to demonstrate injustice, [...] others first make claims about villains in order to arouse fears and a sense of urgency.”¹³¹ On the one hand, feeling victimized strengthens us “as we transform ourselves into heroes,”¹³² while, on the other hand, movements allocate blame for their society’s social problems.¹³³ Both tactics, however, lead to the same implication: We need to act so as to appease our moral commitment to justice.

The tactics that are usually employed involve the use of frames and frameworks. In order to attract as many people as possible—also those apparently not directly affected by the injustice (Jasper calls this “grievance extension”¹³⁴)—the frames and the resulting rhetoric, symbols, and medial presentation need to be as much in accordance as possible with the general beliefs and experiences—personal narratives—of the people the movement organizers want to recruit. As can already be guessed, these core beliefs are of course related to culture, yet the frames can also be a force in their construction and transformation¹³⁵—hinting at the co-constitution of personal and master narrative in the modification of society. Building on the existing concept of frames provided by David Snow and Robert Benford, Jasper defines framing as “the conscious efforts by groups or recruiters to craft their rhetoric and issues in such a way that they appeal to potential recruits.”¹³⁶ Hence, it is necessary for successful recruiting to align these frames with the personal narratives of the people that are to be recruited. “Narrative commands emotional identification.”¹³⁷ Techniques such as “bridging, amplification, extension, and, ultimately, transformation”¹³⁸ connect the ideas of the movement to those of society.

A very popular recruiting tool, according to William Gamson, Bruce Fireman, and Steven Rytina, who further researched the cultural impli-

131 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 152.

132 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 23.

133 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 151.

134 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 273.

135 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 287.

136 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 77.

137 Hammack and Pilecki, “Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology,” 94.

138 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 75.

cations in recruitment, is the ‘injustice frame.’ They define it as “an interpretation of what is happening that supports the conclusion that an authority system is violating the shared moral principles of the participants.”¹³⁹ Undoubtedly, the injustice frame provides the base level for many modern social movements.

An additional tool Gamson names in his research is themes and counterthemes—for example “progress through technology” vs. “harmony with nature.”¹⁴⁰ These notions refer to concepts people are familiar with and in this manner serve as a foundation for a movement’s frame to either resonate or repulse.¹⁴¹ In this category, Jasper also includes the concept of instrumentalism—the idea of ‘the common people’ being utilized and reduced in their value, while tools (e.g. of the economy) are lifted in their significance. As most people’s moral commitments rebel at the thought of being utilized, employing notions of instrumentalism in a movement’s rhetoric and applying images can be a decisive tool in the recruitment of new supporters.¹⁴²

Needless to say, emotions can also be consciously used and manipulated to achieve a certain end. Movement leaders work continuously on the movement’s narratives to achieve coherence, and usually intend to cause moral shocks and anger to provide the movement with more energy, as well as hint at possible offenders. Furthermore, leaders often need to point out small victories along the way to the end goal in order to avoid disaffection with the movement and its eventual downfall.¹⁴³ A more prominent example of conscious manipulation are public rituals: In a large number of countries, these are used to “induce strong feelings of national belonging.”¹⁴⁴ This draws on the idea of Eric Hobsbawm that “invented traditions, so far as possible, use history as a legitimator

139 William A. Gamson, Bruce Fireman and Steven Rytina, *Encounters with Unjust Authority* (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1982), 123.

140 William A. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 136–37.

141 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 78.

142 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 170.

143 Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper, “Emotions and Social Movements,” in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, ed. Jan E. Stets and Jonathan H. Turner (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, 2006), 620; Jasper, “Emotions and Social Movements,” 297.

144 Goodwin and Jasper, “Emotions and Social Movements,” 622.

of action and cement of group cohesion”¹⁴⁵ of action with “emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership,”¹⁴⁶ such as the flag or the national anthem. This is also a strategy of social movements, drawing on narratives stemming from collective memory that are often employed in the call for mobilization and to unite a group in light of a common memory and the interpretation of history and events.¹⁴⁷ Either way, Jasper emphasizes that the basis of all components of social movement theory, as well as our actions outside of movements, are made up of emotions.¹⁴⁸

2.2.2 Identity

As was already established, master narratives, e.g., in the form of cultural memory, have a decided influence on identity.¹⁴⁹ Identity is created and modified by an individual’s engagement with the master narratives in their surroundings. What is adopted and what is rejected is decided by ideology—beliefs, values, and emotions, “the basic cognitive content of identity”¹⁵⁰—and converted into the individual’s personal narrative that is conversely likewise modified as the individual walks through life.¹⁵¹ Moral shocks, for example, can thus reshape an individual’s identity as a core value, or a belief is shaken and the personal narrative adjusted accordingly.

Moreover, identities are “scripted in and through social interaction and social practice,”¹⁵² once again hinting at the correlation between the individual’s surroundings and inner processes. Hammack emphasizes that “the process of identity development is fundamentally social and

145 Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 2.

146 Hobsbawm, “Introduction,” 11.

147 Andrews, *Shaping History*, 58; Hammack and Pilecki, “Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology,” 89 and 94.

148 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 166.

149 Hammack researched the influence of narrative on youth in Palestine and Israel and found a strong correlation between the stories and the development of identity (Hammack, “Narrative and the Politics of Meaning,” 312).

150 Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 232.

151 Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 222, 230.

152 Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 222.

relies on the individual's participation in cultural practice, mediated in and through language."¹⁵³ As such, identity is "realized in and through social experience."¹⁵⁴ Our need to adjust our personal narrative to a collective in one way or another derives from an inherent need of a feeling of collective solidarity, "to see oneself as engaged in a cognitive process that is *the same as others* within a particular time and place."¹⁵⁵

Identity is hence a decisive element of social movements, yet it is important to distinguish between the different types of identity that co-exist, cooperate, merge, develop, and redefine themselves in the protest environment. Jasper discerns three basic categories of identity: personal, collective, and movement identity. The first constitutes the idea of the person one is, combining attributes, activities, as well as belonging to a category, for instance "I'm a welder, jogger, [...] American, or a member of the V.F.W."¹⁵⁶

The second, collective identity, refers rather to the sense of belonging to a community, such as the middle-class, the Evangelicals, or the Hispanic community, and requires a sense of love for this group.¹⁵⁷ However, collective and personal identity often interact: "the sharper a collective identity, the more likely I am to identify with that group as part of my individual identity; and the more individuals who identify with a group, the stronger the group's collective identity."¹⁵⁸ The narrative of the collective in this case resonates strongly with that of the individual, allowing the latter to appropriate a lot of the master narrative in their personal narrative. A vital part of collective identity is its dependence on non-members that have and show a particular idea about the identity of this community. Benedict Anderson's idea of an 'imagined community' also falls into this category.¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, collective identity—what Hammack refers to as social identity—is also the fundamental determinant of intergroup relations due to the dynamic of

153 Hammack, "Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity," 235.

154 Hammack, "Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity," 230.

155 Hammack and Pilecki, "Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology," 84.

156 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 86.

157 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 104.

158 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 86.

159 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 85–86.

identification on the basis of similar currents in personal narratives.¹⁶⁰ However, Jasper emphasizes that collective identities, when created for a purpose, cannot be upheld any longer than it takes to fulfil this purpose, as the individuals in the collective cannot possibly all share the same values.¹⁶¹ Concerning its emotional aspect, Jasper writes that, “[a]s a deeply satisfying form of reputation and connection, collective identity is a goal as much as a means [...]. Even negative shared emotions can strengthen positive reciprocal emotions.”¹⁶²

Jasper’s third category is movement identity, which in itself can be split into various smaller components. It principally surfaces when “a collection of groups and individuals perceive themselves (and are perceived by others) as a force in explicit pursuit of social change.”¹⁶³ As in the example before, a movement identity is not necessarily detached from the others but might coincide with collective and personal identity, e.g., in the case of the women’s movement. Its essence is “a sense of that movement as a coherent actor with shared goals and strategies.”¹⁶⁴ Within movement identity, there are three further categories that might be experienced: organization identity (the sense of belonging to a particular organization that supports the larger movement), tactical identity (preferring a specific tactic, such as radicalism), and activist identity—the “broader activist subculture that might nourish several distinct movements.”¹⁶⁵ Especially in post-citizenship movements, Jasper sees predominantly the tactical and activist identities, while he ascribes citizenship movements with a more pronounced dependence on collective identities. However, a movement identity is usually prominent and transmitted in a determined fashion, possibly leading to the alienation of non-members.¹⁶⁶

One might already enter a movement with a predisposition for a strong activist identity, yet in the process of activism, identities are con-

160 Hammack, “Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity,” 228.

161 Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 105.

162 Jasper, “Emotions and Social Movements,” 294.

163 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 86.

164 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 89.

165 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 87.

166 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 87–88.

tinually constructed and recreated—“[m]ovements help participants craft identities.”¹⁶⁷ Jasper also talks about ‘identity workers’ that keep identity flexible, making the boundaries of an identity more inclusive or exclusive, and altering the exact content of the identity (which would happen by way of modifying the master narrative). Members themselves also readjust their personal narrative to fit the identity and provide the movement with more vigor. On the other hand, the adjustment of the narrative and the corresponding identity might lead to intra-group conflicts, e.g., in the form of ‘generational cleavages’ that occur when new recruits—usually younger ones—enter the movement.¹⁶⁸

Personal narrative and identity hence shape our political action, and here we, once more, find the correlation between the outer and the inner world, as “[w]e embody narratives through our own set of practices, and these practices themselves make our identities.”¹⁶⁹ It is therefore possible to decipher a political identity through the nature of an individual’s actions when faced with political events.¹⁷⁰

To conclude then, we can say that master narratives, e.g., in the form of collective and cultural memory, influence our identities—upheld and constituted by emotions and our personal narrative—which, in turn, affect society and its master narrative, e.g., through the individual’s participation in a social movement. This insight shall, in the following, aid in the analysis of the Sección 22 and the narratives it creates to support its movement.

167 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 84.

168 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 82, 241; Jasper, *The Emotions of Protest*, 107–8.

169 Hammack, “Mind, Story, and Society,” 61.

170 Andrews, *Shaping History*, 205.

3 A Movement from Below: Organizing Resistance

“Muchos sindicatos como agrupaciones se movilizan para negociar. Una vez que negocien se acaba el movimiento. Nosotros no. Seguimos buscando nuevas demandas. Siempre habrá demandas, siempre habrá movimiento.”¹

The Sección 22 is a prominent political player in the state of Oaxaca and, as part of the CNTE, a significant social movement on the national level. Its power is derived from the history of the teachers’ struggle, as well as the structure that was built in the subsequent years to maintain and support the movement. We will now examine this foundation in more detail.

3.1 The Origins

The position of the teacher within Mexican society is laden with historical significance: In the aftermath of the violent decade of the Revolution—which we will treat in greater detail shortly—the Secretary of Education, José Vasconcelos, was determined to make education accessible for all Mexicans, and to promote it throughout the country.² As Foweraker put it: “The promise of the Revolution was universal education, and the legacy is a special relationship between teachers and people. In Mexico, the teachers’ struggle is necessarily and intrinsically

1 “Many unions and groups mobilize to negotiate. Once they negotiate, the movement ends. We not. We keep searching for new demands. There will always be demands, there will always be a movement” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca).

2 In this endeavor, Vasconcelos was profoundly influenced by Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre, his secretary, a vital figure in the Latin American student reform movement in the 1920s who founded the Peruvian party Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (while in Mexico) in 1924 (Silvana G. Ferreyra, “La Interpretación De José Carlos Mariátegui Sobre La Revolución Mexicana,” in *Ensayos Sobre Letras, Historia Y Sociedad. Notas. Reseñas Iberoamericanas*, ed. Iberoamericana. América Latina – España – Portugal 43 (Berlin: Instituto Ibero-Americano, 2011), 45).

[sic] a popular struggle.”³ Thus the historic position of the teachers as a mouthpiece and translator for national politics to the people, while at the same time being part of it, was consolidated over the following decades.

3.1.1 Setting the Stage for Rebellion

During the Mexican Economic Miracle—lasting roughly from 1940 to 1970—, the Mexican political system, grounded in the experiences of the Revolution, was institutionalized, creating a stable political environment facilitating great economic growth. Still, the period was also coined by social discontent and its expression, with teachers constituting a part of the protesters. The uprising in the 1970s that eventually resulted in the foundation of the CNTE was not the first teachers’ rebellion. Strikes in the demand of better conditions at schools—organized by teachers in cooperation with students—had already begun in the 1940s,⁴ and gained momentum in the 1950s and 1960s. Various of these movements and particularly their leaders have had a tangible effect on the dissident teachers of the CNTE.

In 1957, the protests of the Sección 9—primary school teachers in the Federal District and historically a prominent part in the teachers’ rebellion—culminated in the founding of the Revolutionary Movement of Teachers (Movimiento Revolucionario del Magisterio; MRM), organizing demonstrations and blockades, and providing an escape valve for popular discontent for teachers nationwide. The general political situation in the country at this time, however, made success impossible and led to severe and thorough repression.⁵ The most prominent figure of the movement was Othón Salazar, who is of great importance as a memory figure for the dissident teachers and will be treated in more detail later on, as well as the other rebel teachers of this period that led movements against the system and eventually became the ‘founding

3 Joe Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico: The Teachers’ Movement, 1977–87* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 19.

4 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 384.

5 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 67; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 47; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 65–66.

fathers' of the democratic movement of the teachers: Arturo Gámiz, Genaro Vázquez, Lucio Cabañas, and Misael Núñez Acosta.

The period of the 1960s and 1970s also witnessed the spreading of education and a continuous reform, leading to an increase of about 60% in the overall size of the teaching and administrative positions. This also facilitated increased mobility—on the career ladder as well as from the countryside to urban areas.⁶ Between 1970 and 1980, the positions more than doubled, from 400,000 to 900,000.⁷ This growth, however, did not transpire smoothly, providing the foundation for the first of the reasons eventually causing the teachers' movement: economic problems.

As the roots of the movement, which eventually created the CNTE, lie in Chiapas, we will examine this first issue on the example of this particular state. Rich in agriculture and indigenous culture, the south of Mexico is still the poorest region of the country, characterized by a lack of infrastructure and high dependence on tourism. In the second half of the 1970s, the pressure of a threatening economic crisis was temporarily softened when large natural resources were encountered, mainly oil, yet the teachers in Chiapas, particularly in the north of the state, did not feel such relief and continued to struggle with the rising inflation and price-instability that characterized the decade.⁸ The exploration of oil and the hydroelectric construction even aggravated this situation as it caused the general cost of living to triple in the years from 1977 to 1979. This circumstance was intensified by structural issues: In the higher regions of the state, teachers—who Foweraker also calls 'hispanifiers' due to their mission to teach Spanish to the indigenous⁹—were paid minuscule wages, and many schools lacked the resources that were necessary to successfully implement the expansion. Many teachers also experienced irregular—if at all—payment of salary.¹⁰ As Fausto Rivera¹¹ stated: The rising sale of oil on the one hand was matched on the other

6 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 72–76; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 21.

7 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 49.

8 The exact economic circumstances will be described in further detail in chapter five.

9 Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 32.

10 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 105; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 54; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 32–33.

11 Fausto Rivera is a member of the Sección 22 and the director of a primary school in San Pedro Mixtepec. He became a teacher in the early days of the movement, and his participation is ideologically driven.

with *tortuguismo*—administrative slowness that caused the retention of teachers' salaries for up to one year.¹² This discrepancy eventually led to the teachers chanting: "Oil country, teacher without money!"¹³

The contradiction was caused by the predicament the Mexican government found itself in: While on the one hand expanding the educational system, the advent of the economic crisis, on the other, called for austerity measures and cuts in public spending, which manifested in the working conditions for the personnel as well as in the administration of new schools built. The Agricultural Technical School (Escuelas Técnicas Agropecuarias; ETAs) are a case in point for this predicament: Their number was increased greatly after 1974 so as to create positions for new workers that could find an answer to the crisis. However, because of the crisis, the government could not fund them appropriately and, in consequence, the teachers' wages suffered.¹⁴

The high inflation in the face of economic crisis and the rise of the cost of living caused the affected teachers to call for flexible bonuses that were to compensate for the above-average cost of living and that had not been adapted in Chiapas in two decades. Furthermore, they pressed for fair wages, as well as more job security. Since the schools—especially in the higher regions—usually lay rather remote, the teachers had difficulties in bringing their issues directly to their union, so they first reached out to the teachers in the proximity. If the teachers managed to bring their demands to their union representative, the latter usually did not forward these concerns, further aggravating the teachers and denoting the second reason for their movement: corruption and *caciquismo* (despotism) inside their union.¹⁵

The SNTE was created by the government in 1943 to unite all teachers under one syndicate, facilitating a centralized education management.¹⁶ According to Luis Hernández Navarro, the principal narrator of the

12 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

13 "¡País petrolero, maestro sin dinero!" (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 20).

14 Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 33, 42–43; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 80.

15 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 113; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 32–33, 42–43.

16 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 47; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 45.

history of the CNTE, it was “the syndical subordination to the government, the revolutionary nationalism, and the classist collaborationism that gave origin to and embody the SNTE’s Declaration of Principles and the daily practice.”¹⁷ Due to its size, it plays a vital role in the Union Federation of Workers in the State Sector (Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado; FSTSE) and the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares; CNOP) of the PRI party. This proximity caused the relationship between the SNTE and the PRI to adopt a unique flavor: The former would, first, quiet any dissidence or discontent with the government and, second, would rally support behind the latter. In return, SNTE leaders could expect rewards in the form of political appointments—many were also members of the PRI—as well as more power over the careers of their fellow teachers.¹⁸

The necessity of firm control over a union of this size on the one hand and the political possibilities on the other facilitated the succession of strong leaders that showed little reservation when utilizing the position’s power. While in the first couple of years the SNTE was still plagued by open differences in opinion, the year 1949 saw the rise of the first of these strong individuals in Jesús Robles Martínez. By centralizing decision-making, Robles Martínez consolidated the different sections that had been joined in 1943 to create the SNTE, thus creating a strong and apparently united union, blatantly associated with the ruling party.¹⁹

Despite the official term of the SNTE’s secretary general only lasting three years, Robles Martínez, after officially stepping back, continued to pull the threads behind the scene and influenced the future secretary generals—this dynamic lives until today, causing members of the

17 “La subordinación sindical al gobierno, el nacionalismo revolucionario y el colaboracionismo de clase fueron los principios que le dieron origen y encarnaron en su Declaración de Principios y su práctica diaria” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 38).

18 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 2, 60; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 45–46; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

19 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 64; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 49; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 46; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 45.

CNTE to state that there have only truly been five rulers of the SNTE.²⁰ However, as Cook puts it, “[t]he very characteristics of ‘official’ unionism—especially union leaders’ ties to government officials and limited accountability to rank-and-file members—also produced strong tensions *within* the union”²¹ and in 1972, a coup—endorsed by President Echeverría—removed the secretary general Carlos Olmos Sánchez, ending Robles Martínez’ influence in the union and ringing in a new era of leadership. Two years later, Carlos Jonguitud Barrios was elected secretary general of the SNTE, and he quickly established the Vanguardia Revolucionaria as a tool to maintain his influence and control over the union beyond his term as secretary general of the SNTE. In his position as president of Vanguardia, he would de facto lead the SNTE for the remainder of his life. While the Vanguardia was technically an organization within the syndicate, the leadership was soon identified with the sub-group, and control over the SNTE as well as repression of dissidence reached unprecedented levels.²² According to one leader of the Vanguardia, “Vanguardia Revolucionaria is not a declaration, it is an excited sentiment of perfection that is born in the true teacher, that permanently materializes and that makes us better teachers.”²³

Vanguardia soon came to symbolize everything that, according to dissident voices in the ranks of the teachers, was wrong with their union and needed to be changed. The mere existence of the Vanguardia as an interest group within the union already justified the fight for democratization in the eyes of the dissidents. Vanguardia’s propensity to violence as a means to achieve its goals—demonstrated in the armed assault of the union building in 1972— and its pronounced affiliation with the PRI party only reinforced this impression.²⁴

20 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca.

21 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 60.

22 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 64, 70–75; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 49–50; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 46–47.

23 “Vanguardia Revolucionaria no es una declaración, es un sentimiento emocionado de perfección que nace con el verdadero maestro, que se realiza permanentemente y nos hace ser mejores maestros” (in Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 52–53).

24 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 51; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

Above all the ‘hispanifiers’ in the mountainous regions of Chiapas suffered under *caciquismo*, yet this phenomenon—as well as its brother: corruption—was by no means restricted to these areas and hints at larger structures within the SNTE. Much as in the relationship between the PRI and the SNTE, favors and a desired behavior—including sexual acts—were also rewarded inside the teachers’ union, the prizes being an administrative position in the union-dominated Secretariat of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública; SEP), the climbing of the career ladder inside the union, a school transfer, loans, subsidized housing, or similar benefits. In the same way, the SNTE maintained tight control over local activities by installing administrative hurdles, for example for meetings and assemblies. Considering the amount of control the union administration—Vanguardia Revolucionaria—thus had not only over their base but also within the SEP, it seems less surprising that the creation of new positions in the 1970s did not result in a corresponding increase of personnel: Indeed, close to half of the new positions created were taken on as a second position for the already existing teachers, creating the infamous concept of the *doble plaza*—positions that are only filled on paper, providing the teacher in question with an additional salary—, next to the practice of selling positions and rewarding loyal teachers.²⁵

While these factors—economic problems, lacking representation, and corruption—caused the teachers to rebel in the first place, according to Cook, the organizing of the teachers to eventually become the CNTE was facilitated by the rift that had slowly developed between the SNTE and the state. However, when the government was forced to introduce austerity measures and to slim down public spending, the union refused to acquiesce and boycotted policies, obstructed their implementation, or expanded its power by making friends with high-ranking government employees or filling influential positions with union officials.²⁶

25 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 75–76, 78–80, 105, 113; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 32, 51–52.

26 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 60, 85, 105; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 53.

To regain and maintain control, the government followed three major guidelines. The first was the founding of the National Pedagogical University, which the SNTE had asked for since 1974. Due to differences of opinion, however, the compromise regarding the University was, in the end, disappointing for both sides. The second was a reform of education policy. Similar to the one passed in 2013, the SNTE accused the government of devising educational plans without having consulted the union—representing the professionals— and that, furthermore, lacked the inclusion of the particular Mexican background, culture and history, as well as the implementability in the pedagogical context. The government's response—again: comparable to 2013—concluded that the teachers stood in the way of modernization.²⁷

The third policy aimed at reconquering the state institutions to regain control over the educational administration. A decree by President López Portillo in March 1978 ordered the restructuring of the SEP in the states in a rather neoliberal fashion: Technical criteria were to substitute the personalist and patrimonialist criteria that had been decisive in the allotment of funds and the filling of positions, aiming also at the elimination of *doble plazas* and *aviadores*—those being paid although they are not working and maybe even already dead. Needless to say, the union saw its hold over education infringed—although in some states the decree even made the union stronger, albeit on the local level—and relations between the state and the SNTE deteriorated, providing an opportunity for the dissident teachers to make their own arrangements with the Mexican government.²⁸

Yet another factor aiding in the emergence of the dissident teachers' movement was the general national sentiment of rebellion, coupled with the democratic opening in the shape of the political reform in 1977–78. While this reform lowered the prerequisites for participation of opposition parties, it also led the political left to mobilize not in political parties but in independent organizations. Multiple movements in the left political spectrum emerged in this period, such as the National

27 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 87–88.

28 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 89–90, 92–93, 95; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 49, 51; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 52.

Coordinating Committee Plan of Ayala (Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala), the National Coordinating Committee of the Urban Popular Movement (Coordinadora Nacional del Movimiento Urbano Popular; CONAMUP) or the National Popular Action Front (Frente Nacional de Acción Popular; FNAP), while others, such as that of the electricians' union, thrived in the national spirit of social movements. Toward the end of the decade, most movements had already been thwarted by the government; the teachers in Chiapas were just starting to organize.²⁹

3.1.2 Chiapas: Founding of the CNTE

I have already shortly mentioned the ETAs—the Agricultural Technical Schools—and the poor working conditions the teachers were facing. In fact, these schools can be seen as the actual beginning of the smaller teachers' movements in the individual states that eventually merged to become a national movement. The seclusion of the schools aggravated the discontent of the teachers further and, as previously mentioned, they soon started to call on each other in light of the lack of support by the SNTE. As Foweraker states, their organizing was so thorough that by 1977 they had established their own “syndical ‘current’ that was separate from the SNTE’s sectional committee.”³⁰

In Chiapas, commissions were sent from the north across the state to rally for support in the demonstration in the state’s capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, on October 7, and to bring the sectional committee’s attention to their needs. The demonstration proved a success, providing the movement with momentum. As no satisfying solution was offered—neither by the Ministry of Education nor the Director General of the ETAs—the teachers felt compelled to take further measures. They decided to call for a strike on April 3, 1978, and organized a Central Struggle Committee (Comité Central de Lucha; CCL) with representatives from all union delegations, building a horizontal hierarchy that managed to stay in touch with the base at all times—one of the main points of critique regarding their own union. Despite the latent fear of

29 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 84; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 33, 53.

30 Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 33.

consequences stirred up by acting against the *Vanguardia*, as well as the latter's attempts of repression and infiltration, the teachers remained firm with their economic demands. After seventeen days, they lifted the strike and the movement won its first fight with satisfactory results on all of its demands.³¹

The CCL of the ETAs continued to celebrate victories. In October of the same year, the teachers again demonstrated in Tuxtla Gutiérrez as their late wages still had not been paid and various leaders had been dismissed, and they managed to, again, push through a great number of their demands. The greater achievement, however, was the message their victory sent to the rest of the teachers in Chiapas—and throughout Mexico. One of Foweraker's interview partners states that it was "a time of 'oxygenation,' [...] when the teachers began 'to breathe differently'"³² and the CCL started to expand its reach to other schools. The ETAs even managed to form a National Struggle Committee in May 1979, in which they created a list of common demands that eventually led them to a nation-wide strike in September.³³

Exasperated by the high inflation and encouraged by the success of the ETAs' movement, primary teachers in the north of Chiapas—associated with the Sección 7—met and drew up the *Declaración de Yalalón* in November 1978, demanding an increase in the bonus that was to adjust the overall wage to the cost of living in the region. Teachers across the state expressed their sympathy and eventually, after the SNTE went back on the promises they had made, a strike was organized. While there was only one delegation on strike when it began on May 23, 1979, the economic pressures, the inability of the union to represent its base, the rejection of the latter's strike, and the quick relating of messages to other regions via the 'brigades' caused another 41 delegations to close their schools and join the strike.³⁴

Faced with such a number of teachers protesting, the SNTE was forced to react and called an assembly in early June 1979. The commit-

31 Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 34–35.

32 Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 35.

33 Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 35–36.

34 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 115; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 36–37; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 116.

tee's proposal that was to quiet down the teachers for the moment was rejected by the assembly, the majority of it now supporting the rebels. In light of the committee's refusal to solve the teachers' economic demands, the strikers founded a Central Strike Committee (Comité Central de Huelga) that consolidated the movement and brought about a more official organizational tool. Alarmed by the situation in Chiapas, the national executive committee sent a representative to the south to negotiate. In a move that was to seal the SNTE's fate, the representative managed to commit the local as well as the national committee on an agreement: If the SEP did not install a cost-of-living bonus of 100% by September 15, the teachers would commence a strike. It is possible that the representative had expected either the protests to die down or for the president to announce a wage increase that would calm the dissidents; however, in light of the absence of either and additionally inspired by the historic date—Mexican Independence Day—, the teachers felt confirmed in their intentions to strike again.³⁵

The strike started the following day, and the experience of the ETAs the year before served as a blueprint. A CCL in permanent assembly was formed that included representatives from all regions, brigades were constantly passing information throughout the state, and local struggle committees (*comités de lucha*) were created for an even more thorough organization of the base. Apart from the task of organizing the teachers in the strike and marches—the final march of teachers and parents in Tuxtla on October 2 counted about 40,000 heads—, the CCL and the smaller groupings also had their hands full combating uncooperative or opposing teachers in power as well as other attempts of repression, bulking, or infiltration from the SNTE. This resistance also included the dissolving of delegations in favor of the *comités de lucha* or the parallel existence of both.³⁶

Their organizing and distribution efforts paid off, and soon not only almost all teachers of the Sección 7 were on strike, but also those

35 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 115–16; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 38–39; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 116.

36 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 116; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 39; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 117.

of the Sección 40.³⁷ After only one week of strike action, the Organization of State Workers (FSTSE) expressed its unconditional support. By the beginning of October, both SNTE and SEP were ready to start negotiations and even though their proposal—a wage increase in the oil-producing regions—was not perceived as even close to the original demand, the CCL in the end decided to take the offer. Additionally, they negotiated the end of repressive administrative measures and, by signing an agreement with the national executive committee, achieved *de facto* recognition as the official representative of the teachers in Chiapas. So while the economic demands—the base of their strike—had only achieved a small solution, the syndical gains were groundbreaking. The strike was lifted on October 13.³⁸

The effort of the brigades in the distribution of information about the demands and reasons of dissidence of the Chiapas teachers also went beyond the state into other Mexican states where teachers expressed solidarity and found similarities with their own working conditions. Riding the wave of and encouraged by the dissidents' success, movements in other states broke out. In a historic meeting hosted by the rebel teachers from Chiapas and Tabasco on December 17–19, 1979, teachers from various Mexican states and independent political organizations met in Tuxtla and founded the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (Coordinadora Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación; CNTE)—a nation-wide umbrella organization for dissident teachers of different states.³⁹ They further drew up a list of common (economic) demands on the basis of their shared experiences, making this new organization a powerful tool in the representation of teachers' needs, that spread with ease to reach other discontent teachers across

37 Chiapas counts two union sections, one comprised of teachers paid by the state (Sección 40) and the others with teachers paid by the federation (Sección 7).

38 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 116–17; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 39–40.

39 It was decided not to found a new union but to create the CNTE inside the SNTE, as Mexican law dictates that there be only one union of government workers per ministry or agency (and the chances of the CNTE winning a majority over SNTE supporters were equally slim as the probability of the government recognizing an independent union) (Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 148). It thus came that the regional group in Oaxaca today presents itself as Sección 22 – CNTE – SNTE.

the country.⁴⁰ Distinctly different from the form of organization the SNTE portrayed, within the CNTE “there are no traditional leaders, nor *caudillos*. There are no great figures. There are representatives of mass movements.”⁴¹ As Hernández Navarro states: “Its birth showed a change of consciousness in the teachers.”⁴²

3.1.3 Oaxaca: The Beginning of a Tradition of Militancy

The similarities—social, economic, and geographical—between Oaxaca and Chiapas and the states’ close proximity facilitated the exchange of information and helped to draw in the Sección 22 as part of the core of the dissident movement.

The teachers in Oaxaca’s Sección 22 have always had a special kind of militancy and rebellion to them. Already in 1978 they had organized a strike to display their discontent with the SEP delegate to Oaxaca, and succeeded in having him removed. A similar coup was planned in 1980 as a reaction to President Echeverría’s deconcentration and reform policy. However, the teachers were not as unified as might be guessed: The base was growing suspicious of the SNTE but of its own leadership as well. In January 1980, a new secretary general had been elected, yet the credibility of the results was doubted heavily, and a short time later, to make matters worse, the candidate became head of the PRI party in Oaxaca. Furthermore, the issues of delayed payment had gotten worse with the restructuring of the SEP, and the teachers were organizing meetings to discuss the matter. Instead of supporting its base, however, the newly elected sectional committee took to repressive methods to silence the disgruntled teachers and refused to include the issue in their list of demands for the work stoppage that was planned to begin on May 6.

⁴⁰ Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 117–18; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 41.

⁴¹ “Dentro de la Coordinadora no hay dirigentes tradicionales, ni caudillos. No hay grandes figuras. Hay representantes de movimientos de masas” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 99).

⁴² “Su nacimiento mostró un cambio de conciencia en el magisterio” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 19).

As a result, teachers detached from their sectional committee and started to build *comités de lucha*.⁴³

As in most states that nursed more or less successful teacher uprisings, there was one core event that eventually brought the temperament of the section to boil—in the case of the Sección 22 it was the parade on Workers' Day, May 1, 1980. The teachers prohibited PRI banners or trucks from joining their section of the march and were consequently themselves blocked from entering the Zócalo.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the section leaders had closed the doors of the union building, afraid of the militancy the teachers might develop over the course of the march, while the secretary general stood on the balcony of the Palacio de Gobierno in his function as head of the PRI. According to Cook, “[f]or many teachers present at the march the police action, the cowardice of their leaders, and the latter’s ties to the PRI made evident during the march were radicalizing events that helped to crystallize rank-and-file opinion against local union officials.”⁴⁵ Maestro Daniel⁴⁶ recounted the story slightly differently: He emphasized rather the latter point, that the secretary general demonstrated his affiliation with the PRI while the teachers themselves had not been paid for one year, leading them to take the union building, since it is “of the workers.”⁴⁷

The following day, more than 20,000 dissident teachers in Oaxaca went on strike, with the primary demands being of an economic nature—they had not yet figured out the state of politics inside the union and agreed to adopt a more moderate approach to avoid repulsing the rank-and-file. Similar to the CCL that was formed in Chiapas, the dissidents in Oaxaca formed a permanent assembly to coordinate the strike action and the growing number of participants. The decision to form a permanent assembly also displays one of the features that make the Sección 22 exemplary within the CNTE: a decided emphasis on the participation of the base. The composition of people in Oaxaca

43 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 118–19.

44 In many cities in Mexico, Zócalo is the name for main square.

45 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 106, 119, 169.

46 Maestro Daniel is a very active member of the Sección 22. He worked as an assistant in the CEPOS and co-founded the section’s radio station.

47 “de los trabajadores” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

made such a medium necessary so as to properly represent the different regional and ethnic identities, as well as the various organizations and parties within the movement. Furthermore, an assembly resembled the statutes of the SNTE, facilitating recognition and not openly defying the union in general, while a CCL was clearly not envisaged by the union. Additionally, the creation of an assembly reflected the influence of older activists within the movement that had union experience, while younger ones would push for more confrontational methods.⁴⁸

On May 5, they founded a coordinating committee for the *comités de lucha* that had joined their cause. The following day, they repudiated both the secretary general and the union leader pulling the strings in the background, which further aggravated the situation. Neither their own union's orders to lift the strike nor the newly appointed—by the government, not the union—SEP delegate were able to convince the dissidents to lift the strike. Instead, the dissidents added a salary increase to the demands regarding late payments.⁴⁹

On May 10, 1980, a third of the state's teachers—10,000 out of 30,000—participated in a silent march in the state's capital—a measure that allowed all those disagreeing with their sectional committee to express their feelings without inviting repression. While caution continued to prevail, the dissidents' momentum grew and again three days later, 230 of 238 state delegations repudiated the entire Sectional Executive Committee (Comité Ejecutivo Seccional; CES), naming another one in its place and turning to the national leaders for recognition. Not surprisingly, the latter refused to cooperate, requiring the teachers to further increase their militancy.⁵⁰

On May 29, thousands of dissidents from Oaxaca, joined by those from other states, travelled to the nation's capital to protest in front of the union's national headquarters and to insist on a solution to their economic demands and on recognition for their commission. Confronted with the great number of protesters, the SNTE was pressured to act and promised new local elections as well as a salary increase.

48 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 119, 160; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 94; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

49 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 120; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 141.

50 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 120–21.

However, when the protesters returned home, the national leaders went back on their word and the commission that was to examine the economic circumstances of the teachers did not deliver any results by the promised deadline.⁵¹

Utilizing the organizational advantages of the newly created CNTE, the teachers arranged a march in Mexico City on June 9, accompanied by a one-day nation-wide work stoppage. With 70,000 to 100,000 teachers participating in the march and 20,000 setting up camp in front of the offices of the SEP and the SNTE, the Ministry of the Interior got involved, forcing the SNTE's national executive committee into negotiations since the SEP refused to negotiate with the dissidents without their official representation. At first, the executive committee proposed to split Oaxaca's sectional executive commission with six of the positions appointed by the teachers and seven appointed by the national executive committee. This offer was rejected by the Interior Ministry's under-secretary, who instead proposed that the national executive committee only install the presidency with the other twelve positions elected by the teachers. The delegates of the general assembly agreed to the proposal and the twelve selected stayed to negotiate.⁵²

On June 15, 1980, the SEP announced a wage increase of over 20% and additional supplements for teachers in the poorest regions, setting an end to the strike. Despite the times of crisis, the concession broke the wage ceiling that President López Portillo had imposed, and the victory confirmed the Oaxacan teachers in their cause as well as in their form of protest, providing them with a sizable amount of self-confidence. It was also one of many instances in which the dissidents achieved an improvement for all Mexican teachers, dissident or not.⁵³

The spirit of mobilization was not only tangible in Chiapas and Oaxaca—teachers in multiple other states joined the movement, most notably Michoacán, Puebla, Morelos, Valle de México, Tabasco, Sinaloa, Hidalgo and Guerrero. Many attempted to gain official recognition, yet

51 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 121; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 95, 140–141.

52 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 121–22; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 54; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 95, 118.

53 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 122–23; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 41; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 95–96.

by the beginning of 1981, after yet another year of intensive mobilization, only Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Morelos had reached this goal. In most cases, the *Vanguardia* was too well-organized to allow for a dissident uprising, and only smaller concessions were made to quiet the protests. In other cases, local *caciquismo* managed to repress the uprisings.⁵⁴

For both Morelos and Chiapas, dates for the electoral congress were set for the beginning of March 1981, if, in return, mobilization was stopped—in fact, mobilization had picked up again and had acquired a more political turn after the assassination of one of the leaders in the movement in Valle de México by *Vanguardistas* in late January. Chiapas agreed and, in light of possible manipulation by the *Vanguardia*, held a pre-congress before the actual congress to speed up the process and to present a united front in presence of the national union delegates.⁵⁵ The actual event then only served “to sanction [...] prior agreements and to avoid provocation by the *charros*.”⁵⁶ Their procedure proved successful and the first officially recognized congress of the dissident teachers’ movement was held on March 9, 1981. Morelos did not agree to the conditions and their congress was postponed to the end of March. As the *Vanguardia* in Morelos was also better organized, participation of the dissidents at the congress was boycotted and, in the end, the dissidents’ only concessions, negotiated by the Interior Ministry, were committee positions.⁵⁷

Oaxaca, again, is the exception. The *Vanguardia* did not have a strong stance in the state, making it easier for the dissidents to enforce their demands. The executive commission that was to establish the conditions to hold an electoral congress was composed of twelve democratically elected teachers—all of them dissidents—and a president named by the SNTE. The latter’s attempts to organize the rest of the *Vanguardia*

54 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 25, 131; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 40–41, 54–55.

55 Pre-congresses are still customary in Oaxaca today and are held over a period of various days. The actual congress then takes only about one hour and contains the statutory questions of the SNTE and the official (and usually after the pre-congress) unanimous election of those that had already been elected to their positions in the prior days.

56 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 136.

57 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 132, 137–138; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 67; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 106.

into an opposition failed and so he was forced to cooperate with the rebel teachers. The recognition of this commission and the continued support by the government authorities facilitated the solving of the teachers' demands and, as Cook states, "much was accomplished in the period prior to the electoral congress."⁵⁸ Nonetheless, mobilization to pressure authorities and especially in support for movements in other states continued to be frequent—a legacy that is still maintained in Oaxaca today, as the Sección 22 is one of the most mobile and mobilized. After pressure from the governor and even the archbishop, permission for a congress was finally given by the National Executive Commission of the SNTE to be held in February 1982. Oaxacan teachers followed the successful example of Chiapas and held a pre-congress to determine their candidates. Without much interference, their candidates were elected and confirmed in the ordinary congress. In 1983, the Sección 22 formally joined the CNTE.⁵⁹

3.1.4 Finding a Strong Footing: Institutionalization of the Movement

However, the year 1982 and the election of Miguel de la Madrid rang in an era with new challenges for the recently legalized movement. The first was the onset of the economic crisis: The austerity measures implemented by the de la Madrid administration targeted state employees to a great degree and resulted not only in layoffs, but also in the decline of the average minimum real wage by 62% in the years between 1982 and 1989. Above all, primary school teachers were affected as their real wages dropped by about 63%.⁶⁰

A further consequence of the economic crisis was a change in attitude towards labor protests. While these were likely to increase in light of salary reductions, workers also found themselves to have less impact than usual. The government refused to modify the austerity plans and

58 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 138.

59 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 138–139, 140–142; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 56; Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 54; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 145; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

60 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 185.

increase payments and this reaction dampened the prospect of success in negotiations with this administration. Workers were compelled to change their tactics and the necessity to make a living obligated many teachers to seek alternative sources of income. Consequently, Oaxaca, which has traditionally been a state with high emigration rates, saw many teachers flee its boundaries in the northerly direction.⁶¹

Apart from the economic difficulties, the term of Miguel de la Madrid also began with a more decisive stance towards the SNTE. The new education minister, Jesús Reyes Heróles, was more tenacious and he proposed major changes, which he was eager to push through. The first was to continue the administrative decentralization in order to end Vanguardia's hold over the nation's education. The second was the 'education revolution'—a plan that was to modify the contents of education as well as graduation requirements for teachers and the overall duration of basic education. For the CNTE in particular, this resolute stance also showed in the government's decision to decentralize the Escuela Normal Superior in Mexico City, which served as a training center for CNTE teachers, and to close its main campus.⁶²

The decision to modify education and the administrative apparatus accompanying it without consulting the teachers' union caused much hostility in the relationship between the new government and the SNTE/CNTE—in this case, both acted in concert. The decision to oppose these measures was, above all, based on historical circumstances, as the union's general concern had always been to unite the country's education system, the content, and the working conditions in it under one power. Consequently, and since the government did not make details public, they feared a transferal of too much power to the individual states, which would, on the one hand, injure the union's role, while, on the other, allow for the influence of state government's political ends—and therefore corruption—to modify education plans.⁶³

61 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 184–85.

62 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 184–187; Luz E. Galván Lafarga, "La Formación De Maestros En México: Entre La Tradición Y La Modernidad," *Revista Educación y Pedagogía*, no. 9 (2013): 60; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 112–13.

63 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 186–87.

The resistance of both SNTE and CNTE had the desired effect and, as the year 1983 came towards the end, a more moderate and flexible version of the decentralization plans was agreed upon that left the central education with the federal SEP, while recognizing the union as the representative of the teachers in the SEP structure. The death of Reyes Heróles in March of 1985 further deescalated the situation as the new education minister—also because of his intent to participate in the presidential elections—took a more appeasing stance with the union.⁶⁴ This showed, first, in his readiness to negotiate positions in the SEP, and, second, in the return to mixed commissions for the planning of education where the Education Ministry before had intended to make unilateral modifications.⁶⁵

Regarding decentralization, the changes in the Ministry in 1985 led to an even more accommodating position with the SNTE, above all in the context of positions—the *doble plaza* continued very much in place. As to the fear that decentralization would rid the union of its power in the states: The power of the SEP mirrored the strength of the union in the individual states and while the SNTE managed to keep the SEP's power in check, the latter was capable to tiptoe around the conflict between SNTE and CNTE. In Chiapas and Oaxaca, for example, the cooperation between CNTE and SEP was successful to the extent that the former advanced proposals in line with decentralization to the benefit of the teachers—the paycheck system was overhauled, and the dissidents managed to add seniority and syndical participation as criteria in the promotion process, complementing professional record and substituting personal connections.⁶⁶

In 1983, after the disagreements about decentralization with the government were sorted out and the major uprising of the dissident teachers had passed, the SNTE entered a period of recovery, leading, above all, to an increased effort to 'take back the union'—as had already been successful in the case of Morelos. On the one hand, this manifested in

64 However, it would be misleading to deduce less mobilization by the teachers in light of these developments. The movement still resorted to mobilization and strikes to pressure authorities (Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 193).

65 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 187, 190.

66 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 191, 194–195.

a type of counter-revolution by teachers of the *Vanguardia* with support of the national executive committee, in order to regain important positions. Further, in Oaxaca, in October 1983, they occupied the union building, yet their endeavors proved futile as the dissidents far outnumbered them and even counted with the assistance of the governor and the state police. Dissidents reacted by expelling SNTE-supporters, ‘opportunists,’ and teachers that were not 100% committed to the movement—ironically, these then tended to join the *Vanguardia* ranks and work against the CNTE from SEP offices.⁶⁷

On the other hand, the SNTE complicated the CNTE’s survival with statutory tools, which surfaced specifically in the context of the committee’s pending re-elections: As Cook notes, by 1984, the sections in Chiapas and Oaxaca “were practically all that was left of the CNTE,”⁶⁸ also due to the fact that only these states managed to secure congresses to elect the sectional committee. The electoral congresses, according to the statutes of the union, were to be held every three years, thus for Chiapas in March 1984 and for Oaxaca in February 1985. In 1984, the elections could be held without many complications, however, when the dissidents requested the congress with the authorities of the national union in 1987, their petition was denied and their committee decertified due to the strong and different ideological currents within the movement.⁶⁹

In the case of Oaxaca, the national union heads held the dissidents at arm’s length for multiple years, leading to an extension of the term of the first dissident committee from three to seven years. At first, the SNTE leadership linked authorization to the condition of being represented on the committee. The governor intervened on behalf of the dissidents, and was, in turn, accused of being the CNTE’s accomplice in their fight against the *Vanguardistas*. The union’s decision in February 1985 to deny authorization due to a “lack of appropriate conditions”⁷⁰ aggravated the dissidents, who then began mobilizing. A first march to the capital was prematurely aborted when negotiations apparently

67 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 188, 189–190, 196, 197.

68 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 200.

69 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 197, and 201–202; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 146.

70 In Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 205.

reached a conclusion—SNTE officials repeatedly requested more union presence in the state in various forms—and a date for the congress was set for April, then again postponed until June. On the grounds of radicalism and missing possibilities for Vanguardistas to participate, the authorization was again withdrawn.⁷¹

This proved to be a tryout for the leadership of the Sección 22. It had already been difficult to maintain the movement and its power while appropriately representing the teachers' necessities and wishes. In light of this power play, the sectional committee was criticized even within its own ranks, for example for having agreed to the terms negotiated for the congress in April. However, to not cause a loss of trust and play in the hands of the SNTE, the committee changed tactics: It refused to remove the secretary general as this would only prove their disunion to the national union and, instead, reached out to the base to include it to an even greater extent, seeking support and spreading horizontally throughout the state and even the nation via brigades to teachers as well as parents—yet another feature specific to the movement of the Sección 22—and thus making its call for a democratically elected congress public.⁷²

With a strong supporting base, the Sección 22 moved into the next congress, authorized to be held at the end of January 1986. It had already been made clear that election results would only be accepted if Vanguardistas were represented, and since this was not the case in the selection of delegates presented at the congress, the latter was again canceled. This time, mobilizations in the form of a march to Mexico City, encampments, and hunger strikes were much more impressive due to the success of the previous outreach, despite the sole goal, union democracy, being political. However, the SNTE had by then rekindled its friendship with the government and so the dissidents were forced to lift the strike. Protests continued and measures undertaken by the SNTE—violence, intimidation, and harassment, and, on a smaller scale, cutting the section off from financing—further aggravated the mobilizations and

71 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 199, 205; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 57; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 146.

72 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 192, 206.

provoked sympathy with the people.⁷³ According to Maestro Daniel, it was during these mobilizations and the solidarity demonstrated by the people and, again, even the archbishop, that the dissidents decided that every form of direct action was acceptable, be it a blockade of airports or highway tollhouses, or even a hunger strike.⁷⁴

The year 1986 also saw a change of governor in Oaxaca and hopes were high that he would bring a positive turn to events. The hopes, however, were disappointed. The Sección 22 was again forced to turn inwards and regroup, keeping mobilizations at a minimum. Some called for mass mobilizations, including other sectors of society, while others argued for the inclusion of Vanguardia members in the new sectional committee, as this would facilitate control over them. Instead, the movement decided to focus its campaign on its inability to process labor problems, in which they were blocked by the authorities. In 1988, disillusioned by the decertification of the Chiapas committee and thus still with the perceived necessity to tread lightly, Oaxaca's dissidents again mobilized in Mexico City, yet once more in vain.⁷⁵

The SNTE managed to keep the upper hand in the power struggle until its own foundations were shaken to the core in 1989. As mentioned before, the SNTE is an important tool for the PRI and its election campaign. However, in the presidential elections of 1988, the leaders of two of the most powerful unions—the teachers' and the oil union workers—as well as the bases of the latter did not support the PRI candidate, Salinas de Gortari, as they had the years before. The oil workers threw their weight behind the opposition candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and while the Vanguardia pledged to support Salinas, large parts of the teachers actually voted for the opponent.⁷⁶

These incongruences as well as the deteriorating economic conditions resulting, above all, in decreasing salaries showed in the preparations for the SNTE's national congress and culminated in the actual event: The Vanguardia began its usual proceedings of manipulations to ensure a large base of supporters and the absence of dissidents in the

73 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 207–9; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 146–47.

74 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

75 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 210–11.

76 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 267.

congress to an extent that voices of discontent were heard even from inside the SNTE. Demonstrations of dissatisfaction started with the new year, which turned out to resemble a “*primavera magisterial*”⁷⁷—a teachers’ spring. Eventually, the combination of events climaxed in work stoppages with about 500,000 SNTE members—including the CNTE—in April 1989, which was more than half of the union members. The strikers ranged from traditional dissidents to former supporters of the *Vanguardia* and called for economic issues, as well as union democracy. On April 23, 1989, Carlos Jonguitud Barrios resigned, ringing a new era of the SNTE. Two days later, the government agreed to a 25% salary increase, effectively setting an end to the mobilization.⁷⁸

In his place, Elba Esther Gordillo took the reins of Mexico’s largest union, but the base was torn: While welcoming the resignation of the long-term mastermind behind the scenes, they perceived her appointment by Salinas de Gortari as undemocratic, providing her with a shaky start in her new position.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, she soon gained ground as she negotiated favorably with the dissidents, effectively disintegrating the *Vanguardia Revolucionaria* and the faction of supporters of Jonguitud Barrios, and creating her own fortress of devotees. For the states that had struggled to receive authorization for their congresses, this change led to the long-awaited relief of the power struggle. The Sección 22 had already elected a new executive committee in early 1989 without the union’s approval, and yet the change in leadership did not kindle the fire, but instead, Gordillo herself supervised the electoral congress that was finally held on May 12, 1989, to ratify the committee elected earlier that year.⁸⁰

In September 1990, the CNTE held its first Ordinary Congress. The guidelines as well as the general plan of action and petitions were elaborated, and the CNTE and its causes defined:

77 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 153, 182.

78 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 268–269, 271; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 188, 192–193.

79 This shaky start was enhanced by accusations that Gordillo was responsible for the death of Misael Núñez Acosta, the figurehead of the protests in Valle de México (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 170).

80 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 272–73; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 27–28, 153, 194.

The congress defines the CNTE as a mass organization confirmed by the democratic workers in education of the country, independent of the bourgeoisie and its State, the syndical *charrismo*, and any other political organism. It [the congress] defines it [the CNTE] as a class front, in which workers in education that accept the universal principle of class struggle participate, independent of color, sex, religious creed, or political ideology. It specifies being anti-partisan and respecting the free affiliation of its members in any political organism, provided that it is of an individual nature.⁸¹

The congress further defined its three core objectives:

to democratize the SNTE; to democratize education, starting with a change in the professional attitude of the teachers; and to democratize the nation, participating in the most ample convergence with the other workers' unions in the country and the daily struggle against the damages of exploitation.⁸²

These objectives are, of course, slightly vague, leaving leeway for further additions and interpretation. In the 10th Pre-Congress in 2012, for example, the Sección 22 declared their objectives to be “1. – The defense of the labor law. 2. – The democratization of the National Executive Committee of the SNTE. 3. – The defense of public education. 4. – The defense of social security. 5. – The democratization of the country.”⁸³

81 “El Congreso define a la CNTE como la organización de masas conformada por los trabajadores de la educación democráticos del país, independientemente de la burguesía y su Estado, del charrismo sindical y de cualquier organismo político. La identifica como un frente de clase, en el que participan trabajadores de la educación que aceptan el principio universal de lucha de clases, independientemente del color, sexo, credo religioso e ideología política. Precisa no ser anti-partido y respetar la libre militancia de sus miembros en cualquier organismo político, siempre y cuando ésta sea de carácter individual” (Hernández Navarro, Cero en Conducta, 236).

82 “democratizar al SNTE; democratizar la enseñanza, comenzando con el cambio de actitud profesional del magisterio; y democratizar a la nación, participando en la más amplia convergencia con los demás sectores de trabajadores del país y en la lucha cotidiana contra los estragos de la explotación” (Hernández Navarro, Cero en Conducta, 236–37).

83 “1. - La defensa de la ley laboral. 2. - La democratización del CEN del SNTE. 3. - La defensa de la educación pública. 4. - La defensa de la seguridad social. 5. - La democratización del país” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático” (2012), 109).

The CNTE sees the “bourgeoisie and its State as the principal enemy.”⁸⁴ To democratize the SNTE in this logic does not seek the “destruction of the union, but the recovery of its revolutionary content,”⁸⁵ in other words, to disconnect the SNTE from partisan control or influence. Consequently, it also acknowledges the necessity to “raise the class consciousness and educate politically.”⁸⁶ Congress also agreed to a basic program guiding all action, containing “the fight against imperialism and solidarity with the people in its struggle for freedom.”⁸⁷

Meanwhile, the SNTE’s more conceding attitude with the dissidents was only apparent on the outside. Gordillo officially abolished the *Vanguardia Revolucionaria*, yet in its place installed the *Frente Amplio*. While she was disposed to negotiate with all sectors inside the union, she made sure to have the government on her side, making it difficult for the CNTE to use differences in opinion to its favor, and remained firm with her conditions in negotiations. This new stance fractured the CNTE, creating factions with varying degrees of adherence to Gordillo and her administration. Union was more difficult to maintain as “the common enemy was less clearly defined, the exclusion more selective and in some ways more subtle.”⁸⁸ All the same, the inclusion of the CNTE in the national union accomplished several major changes facilitating a turn towards democracy, such as the introduction of secret ballots in elections and the cancellation of the statutory clause officially affiliating the teachers’ union to the PRI.⁸⁹

In 2004, Elba Esther Gordillo created the position of President of the SNTE for herself in violation of Art. 41, which prohibits the political affiliation of its directors. In 2013, she was placed under arrest and

84 “burguesía y su Estado como el enemigo principal” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 237).

85 “no la destrucción del sindicato sino la recuperación de su contenido revolucionario” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 237).

86 “elevar la conciencia de clase y educar políticamente” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 237).

87 “combate contra el imperialismo y la solidaridad con los pueblos en su lucha por la liberación” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 238).

88 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 281.

89 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 275, 278–279, 281; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 209; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

charged with illicit enrichment and money laundering, apparently including union funds and a house and yacht in San Diego. She was replaced as head of the SNTE by Juan Díaz de la Torre. The dissidents suspect that the accusation and the subsequent removal were caused by a dispute between Gordillo and Peña Nieto: Traditionally, the leader of the SNTE rallied the teachers behind the PRI party. However, Gordillo had founded the Party of the New Alliance (Partido de Nueva Alianza; PANAL) in 2005 as a party explicitly for Mexican teachers⁹⁰ and started to criticize Peña Nieto's Educational Reform in the attempt, as the dissidents conjecture, to regain control in the government as she had had in the previous two administrations. Peña Nieto, having no further need of her after the elections, liberated himself from her with a judicial procedure. Nevertheless, with his Pacto por México highly contested, he again sought her out for her power and managed to move her arrest from a prison cell to her home. Yet she, feeling the power she had over the president, was not easy to manipulate and in the 2018 elections, she threw her weight behind the Morena candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador.⁹¹

3.2 Organizing a Movement

Since May 1982, when the electoral congress voted for a sectional executive committee comprised entirely of dissidents, the Sección 22 also calls itself the Democratic Movement of Workers in Education in Oaxaca (Movimiento Democrático de Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca; MDTEO), formally establishing its character as a social movement as well as providing a name parallel to the official 'Sección 22' provided by the SNTE.⁹² In documents and interviews, members of the dissident

⁹⁰ Gordillo already used her new party in the presidential elections in 2006 to diverge her followers' votes away from the PRI and to the PAN and PANAL (Graciela Bensusán, Kevin J. Middlebrook, and Gonzalo Celorio Morayta, "El Sindicalismo Y La Democratización En México," *Foto Internacional*, no. 4 (2012): 81).

⁹¹ Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 314–315, 405; Luis Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial* (Mexico, D.F.: Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo; Para Leer en Libertad A.C., 2016), 40; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

⁹² Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

movement hence often refer to their structure as the MDTEO (pronounced “*medeteo*”)—the body of the teachers’ insurgence.⁹³

Adherence to the SNTE occurs automatically with the teachers’ assuming a position as an employee of the state or federation, and the 1%-fee is deducted from the salary.⁹⁴ The national administration of the SNTE collects the fees and dispatches subsidies to the individual sections to cover expenditures. The Sección 22 further finances itself through voluntary contributions in the shape of 5 pesos in biweekly intervals, mainly used for the costs arising in the head office.⁹⁵ According to Maestro Daniel, the SNTE on the national level receives about 12 million pesos in membership fees. However, for the maintenance of its structure in Oaxaca, the Sección 22 only receives a little more than one million pesos, which nurtures suspicions about the real use of the money on the national level, as well as the possibilities of money laundering and other illicit utilization of these funds.⁹⁶

3.2.1 Structure

One of the main goals of the teachers’ movement, as already mentioned, is to democratize the SNTE and the syndical life, which is reflected in the structure of the Sección 22 and the position and significance of the *base*⁹⁷ in it. The understanding of democracy and how it should be instated within the state section translates into a “dialectic duality:”⁹⁸ a movement structure (non-statutory) that runs parallel to the official structure

93 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

94 Unfortunately, no number could be found documenting the percentage of teachers in the service of the state or federation and the percentage of those going into service of private schools.

95 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

96 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

97 The word *base* can be translated in various ways: It can be the ‘foundation’ as well as the ‘core’ or the ‘bedrock,’ in every translation representing something that is on the ground level of a structure. In the case of the dissident teachers, *base* refers to the entire group of teachers of the Sección 22 or, in the case of the CNTE, of the sections comprising the latter. Due to the endeavor to be as democratic as possible, the *base* is of great importance to the Sección 22.

98 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

(statutory) with democratically elected representatives, guaranteeing the reliable representation of the teachers' wishes through "multilateralism and multidirectionality"⁹⁹ as well as the continued recognition by the SNTE due to the compliance with the statutes.¹⁰⁰ Elections determine the delegates on all levels.

Every pre- and primary school is an *escuela*; schools beyond this level are called *centros de trabajo*—workplaces.¹⁰¹ *Escuelas* and *centros* are joined, in the next higher instance, with others in a school zone—a *zona escolar*—to form a delegation. Delegations usually encompass a number of schools in the proximity and of the same level and type—e.g., *primarias*, *secundarias técnicas*, *telesecundarias*, etc. Representatives of the schools and CTs elect a Delegation Executive Committee (Comité Ejecutivo Delegacional), which has a variety of secretaries, similar to the executive committee on the state level.¹⁰²

In the example of the Delegación 025 of the *secundarias generales* in Puerto Escondido, the delegation is made up of 18 schools—hence 18 delegates stand in the elections. The 297 *compañeros* in the delegation vote for the Delegation Executive Committee, made up of the seven representatives with the highest votes, who then get distributed in the different *secretarías* (general, finance, organization, etc.), communicating directly with the *centros de trabajo*.¹⁰³ The primary schools in Puerto Escondido are distributed in two delegations, and other delegations encompass the *secundarias técnicas* and the preschools.¹⁰⁴

Delegations—a total of 870 in 2018, about 14,000 individual schools¹⁰⁵—are joined in 37 sectors¹⁰⁶ without official syndical function.

99 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

100 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

101 The distinction, while on paper, is seldom observed in communication.

102 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático," 44–45; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 73, 75; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

103 Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

104 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

105 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

106 Cañada: Huautla, Teotitlán, Cuicatlán; Costa: Putla, Pinotepa, Puerto Escondido, Pochutla; Istmo: Matías Romero, Juchitán, Ixtepec, Tehuantepec, Salina Cruz, Reforma de Pineda; Mixteca: Juxtlahuaca, Chalcatongo, Tlaxiaco, Huajuapán, Tamazulapam, Nochixtlán; Sierra: Villa Alta, Ixtlán, Ayutla; Tuxtepec: Acatlán, Temascal, Ojitlán, Centro, Valle Nacional, Loma

These further make up seven *regiones*—the instance directly below the state level: Cañada, Costa, Istmo, Mixteca, Sierra, Tuxtepec, and Valles Centrales.¹⁰⁷ The Regional Assembly (Asamblea Regional) is made up of the Representatives of the Delegations and schools, electing the Regional Committee (Comité Regional). The Plenary of the Region is constituted by the Regional Committee, the Secretaries General of Delegations, and the Representatives of the schools.¹⁰⁸

The ‘top’ of these representations is the Sectional Executive Committee (Comité Ejecutivo Seccional; CES), made up of the Secretariats of General Order, one Secretariat for Work and Conflict for each educational level,¹⁰⁹ the seven Regional Representatives, and the 37 Sectoral Representatives. The CES is elected for a four-year term.¹¹⁰

Bonita, Lombardo; Valles Centrales: Etna, Periferia, Estatales, Ciudad, Miahuatlán, Tlaco-lula, Zimatlán, Ocotlán (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 44–45; CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas” (2012), 23).

107 To take an example: The region Costa is comprised of the four sectors Puerto Escondido, Pinotepa, Putla, and Pochutla. On the next smaller lever, the sector Puerto Escondido is made up of 21 delegations (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018).

108 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 73, 75; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

109 Sources vary on the number and designation of the levels. Those coinciding are: *Educación Inicial, Preescolar, Primaria, Secundarias Generales, Telesecundarias, Secundarias Técnicas, Educación Indígena, Educación Media Superior y Superior*, and *Niveles Especiales*. According to the CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas,” 22–23, there are eleven levels, including the above mentioned plus *Personal de Apoyo y Asistencia a la Educación (PAAE)*, and *Formadores de Docentes*. Fausto Rivera, the CEDES 22, “TEEA 2015–2016: Formación Profesional y Evaluación en el Proceso de Transformación Educativa de Oaxaca” (2015), 4 and the CEDES 22, “TEEA 2017–2018: La Cotidianidad de la Práctica Educativa en la Resistencia Pedagógica de Oaxaca” (2017), 2 confirm the number, yet do not elaborate on its composition. Maestro Daniel refers to 13 levels, yet, like Fausto Rivera, is not sure about the setup. In the CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 45–63, there appear to even be 14 educational levels, including all the above mentioned plus *Educación de Adultos, Educación Física*, and *Educación Especial*. The collection of documents CEPOS 22, “Elementos para la consulta a las bases (mayo 2018)” (2018), 2 and the SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018: Por la vigencia del MDTEO y la caída de las Reformas Educativas” (2018), 18 also speak of 13, do, however, not define them further. Since these and the interview with Maestro Daniel are the most recent sources, this number seems most probable.

110 CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas,” 21; Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 218.

The official sectional structure dictated by the SNTE statutes is complemented by the *estructura no estatutaria* (non-statutory structure), permitting the Sección 22 to integrate the organization of the movement and tend to the needs of the increasing number of teachers. This structure incorporates the State Coordination of Educational Workers in Oaxaca (Coordinadora Estatal de los Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca; CETEO), the Regional, Sectorial, and Delegation Coordinations, and the auxiliary organisms.¹¹¹ The latter comprise the Center for Studies and Educational Development (Centro de Estudios y Desarrollo Educativo de la Sección 22; CEDES 22), the Magisterial Commission of Human Rights (Comisión Magisterial de los Derechos Humanos; COMADH), the District Attorney of Magisterial Matters (Fiscalía Especial Para Asuntos del Magisterio; FEPAM), the Authority of National Coordination (Instancia de Coordinación Nacional; ICN), the Center for Syndicate Political Studies (Centro de Estudios Políticos Sindicales de la Sección 22; CEPOS 22), the Center of Social Communication (Centro de Comunicación Social de la Sección 22; CENCOS 22), and the Commission of Honor and Justice (Comisión de Honor y Justicia).¹¹²

Each of the auxiliary organisms has different areas of responsibility. The CETEO serves as a guard, keeping an eye on the CES as well as on the base to prevent violations of the ethics code—the secretary general of the CETEO is also the secretary general of the non-statutory structure. In the case of a detection of such behavior, the Comisión de Honor y Justicia will act as a judge. According to Fausto Rivera, it is this tightly bound structure that makes it very difficult to corrupt the Sección 22.¹¹³ The CEPOS 22, one of the newest organisms of the structure, is in charge of informing and educating *la base*, as well as elaborating general infor-

111 CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas,” 23–25; Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 222–24; SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 18.

112 CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas,” 23–25; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 80–94; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII” (2006), 24–26.

113 CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas,” 23–25; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 80–94; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

mation and analyses that serve as a foundation for discussion in the different areas.¹¹⁴

To support this structure, the MDTEO further expanded its meeting forms. The most vital to ensure its survival in the interaction with the SNTE is the Precongreso, held in the days before the Congreso Ordinario, with the members of the CES and the delegation representatives. The Precongreso establishes the list of candidates that the delegates will vote for in the actual Ordinary Congress, which is when members of the national CES of the SNTE will hold the elections. While pre-congresses can last various days and until very late, the Ordinary Congress only consists of the presentation of the nominees elected the days before and the actual election in the presence of the SNTE's delegates who then swear in the new CES.¹¹⁵

Furthermore, there is a Pre-Pleno, a meeting before the Plenary held once every year to inform about the section's activities. The CES, the Political Commission—made up of the first seven Secretarías and two representatives from every region—, the secretaries general of the delegations, and the sectorial and regional representatives give account to the other members as well as to delegates of the CNTE present to eradicate disunion, adjust the programs, and, in the end, stand united before the representatives of the SNTE in the Plenary.¹¹⁶

The Asamblea Estatal is probably the most important event for the internal functioning of the dissident structure, and the highest decision-making organ in the Sección 22, representing *la base*. It is made up of all delegation representatives and usually meets once per month; during periods of mobilization or negotiation it sits permanently. The Political Commission analyzes the situation in the state and with the data proposes plans of action, which it then brings to the Asamblea. The delegates of the Asamblea in turn accept or negate the proposals and establish *la ruta y las formas de lucha*—the route and forms of the fight—and the *pliego petitorio*—the list of demands. The secretaries general of

114 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 25–26; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

115 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático”; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 75, 78.

116 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 218; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 84.

the delegations then communicate the decisions to the representatives of the schools and *centros de trabajo*. This way, the teachers of the *base*, through their representatives, decide which direction the movement should take—in the sense of democratization the CNTE wants to establish within the SNTE.¹¹⁷

To react to the crisis the movement experienced in the beginning of the 21st century—treated in chapter seven—, the MDTEO also installed a Political Congress, the first of which was held in 2006. As we will see later on, especially the first political congress served to forge cooperation with other social movements and organizations in the state, as well as to establish a program that aims to re-educate the *base* and to reinstall the conscience that should be integral to being a teacher in Oaxaca.¹¹⁸

The Sección 22 furthermore operates its own radio station, the Radio Plantón, Radio Sit-in, which one of my interview partners, Maestro Daniel, co-founded. It is operated from the head offices of the Sección 22 in the street Armenta y López in the historic center of Oaxaca. The program includes entertaining elements, such as music and a program for kids, as well as informational sequences, news, or the call for Oaxaca to wake up. The creation of an independent radio station—as well as the takeover of already existing TV stations, as we will see later on—display the position of the Sección 22 regarding mass media: That the government employs the latter for its own purposes, and since the government supposedly opposes the movement, the media is not suitable for the distribution of information of the Sección 22.¹¹⁹

On the national level, state sections adhering to the CNTE and representatives of states, where the SNTE has the upper hand and possibly suppresses dissident movements, meet in the National Representative Assembly (Asamblea Nacional Representativa; ANR) where they coordinate activities and plan the CNTE's stand in official negotiations with the

117 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 219–220, 227; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 78; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 143 and 329; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018; SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 18.

118 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII”; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 84.

119 CENCOS 22, “Radio Plantón 92.3 FM,” Sección 22; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

SNTE and the federal government. In 2012, the Sección 22 sent 72 representatives to the ANR.¹²⁰ Judicially and statutory, however, the organism above the Sección 22 on the federal is the CES of the SNTE, where all representatives of state sections confer; the ANR is simply a complementary organism for the dissident movement inside the SNTE.¹²¹

Due to the Sección 22 comprising the large majority of teachers in Oaxaca, its strength in the state is equally prevalent: Fausto Rivera noted that in “Oaxaca, we’re basically hegemonic.”¹²² Maestro Mario Leyva Galicia from the Sección 10 described the Sección 22 in a similar fashion: “The mobilization in Oaxaca is showing us the way,”¹²³ and in the X Pre-Congress, voices expressed a similar opinion: “Oaxaca is the spearhead of the teachers’ movement and of the CNTE.”¹²⁴ Within the CNTE the section is one of the leaders, due to this strength within the state yet also because of its successful fight in the movement’s history. As the secretary general of the Delegation 025 stated: When the Asamblea Estatal meets and declares that there will not be any classes today, in 90% of the state’s schools the doors are closed.¹²⁵ The Sections 7 and 40 of Chiapas enjoy similar standing due to its historic position. According to Fausto Rivera, the sections of Guerrero and Michoacán now have similar strength within the CNTE.¹²⁶

For coordinated movement and organization, transparency and communication play a vital role, not only with the base of teachers but also with society, particularly the parents. Information can be distributed in a variety of ways: While the teachers might employ modern technology and social media, such as WhatsApp-groups of their classes, the Sección 22 also makes use of the CEPOS and CENCOS and

120 CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas,” 25.

121 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

122 “Oaxaca somos cuasi hegemónicos” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018).

123 “la movilización oaxaqueña nos está marcando el camino” (Mario A. Leyva Galicia, “La CNTE: 27 Años De Lucha Democrática,” *Trabajadores*, 2013, 3).

124 “Oaxaca es la punta de lanza del movimiento magisterial y de la CNTE” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 16).

125 Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

126 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

issues, for example, a *brigadeo*¹²⁷ via the website or the Facebook page. It is also common that a school directly reaches out to the community and informs via brochures. In 2018, for example, the students of the primary school ‘Adolfo López Mateos’ in Puerto Escondido were given two brochures; the first showed a definition of the concept of a workers’ union, followed by an enumeration of the central demands of the *pliego petitorio*, questions regarding the benefits of the structural reforms, e.g., in regards to the basic costs of living, the effects of the Educational Reform, and the names of the structural reforms issued in consequence of the Pacto por México.¹²⁸ The second brochure started out with an introduction to the purpose, necessity, and role of social struggles, even if these are not for a specific goal but in rejection of something. It also further explained the responses issued by the government to the last *pliego petitorio* of the Sección 22.¹²⁹

3.2.2 Behavioral Guidelines

Sección 22: Principios Rectores

In 1982, the XII Extraordinary Congress of the Sección 22 passed the Principios Rectores, the Governing Principles. The elaboration of such guidelines was deemed necessary at the time to “establish the norms and politico-syndical character in the interior and exterior of the Sección 22 of the SNTE and with the purpose to consolidate the process of the teachers’ insurgency.”¹³⁰ The Principios Rectores are based on the in Oaxaca widely spread indigenous form of auto-government *usos y costumbres*—practice and customs—, originally starting out as 19, now comprising 24.¹³¹

127 The word ‘brigadeo’ is a neologism rooted in the word ‘brigada’—brigade. It aims to provide the information the dominant media supposedly refuses to relate or display in a different light.

128 “Demandas del Pliego Petitorio Entregado al Gobernador del Estado, Ciclo Escolar 2017–2018” (Escuela Primaria Adolfo López Mateos, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, 2018).

129 “Respuestas a las Demandas del Pliego Petitorio Entregado al Gobierno del Estado, 2017–2018” (Escuela Primaria Adolfo López Mateos, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, 2018).

130 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO” (2018), 3.

131 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 56; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 144.

The document shows the carefully constructed interplay between the *base* and its *dirigentes*, in contrast to the established ways of the SNTE. Again, the importance of the *base* and its just representation is prevalent: The *base* will check and always fight for its Principios Rectores (no. 1), will participate in the movement in order to ensure true democracy (no. 2), will hold the leaders accountable (no. 5), will sanction them if deemed necessary (no. 6), will constantly check the democratic advance and fight repression, imposition, or corruption (no. 12), and will check the background of those applying for leading positions (no. 13).¹³²

The *dirigentes*, in turn and on the various levels, will act according to the will of the *base* (no. 3), will—considering that holding a higher position in the SNTE for many opens a door into politics—only hold one leading position and after the completion of their term return to their teaching position (no. 4), will raise awareness of the political project with a classist orientation in the *base* (no. 8), will fight divisionist tendencies raised by regionalism (no. 9) and further union (no. 19), will represent the *base* instead of other classes (no. 10), and should have a record of defending the teachers' as well as society's rights (no. 11).¹³³

The movement in itself rejects any type of involvement of political control by the state, parties, or ideological currents (no. 7), respects workers' (no. 14), women's (no. 23), and children's (no. 24) rights, recognizes the importance of its syndical structure as a representation of democracy (no. 18), and works towards strengthening the democratic national movement by promoting action as well as awareness of workers' class struggle across different sectors (no. 17). The Principio 15 calls for liberty of expression and thinking, as well as critique and 'auto-critique,' as long as it is not directed against the Sección 22 (which removes some of the democratic fervor of the document).¹³⁴

The Principio Rector 20 is the one best known in the *base*: It reiterates the values and morals the leadership of the Sección 22 is supposed to have. In case of corruption or any other kind of deviation from or acting against the Principios Rectores or the movement, the person can

132 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 4–7.

133 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 4–9.

134 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 6–11.

be sanctioned by a Commission of Honor and Justice that is established expressly for this purpose. If found guilty, the person is barred from holding a leadership position in the Sección 22 and has to reimburse the movement. The Principio Rector 20 was annexed in 1996.¹³⁵

The Principios 16, 21, and 22 allude to the Plan for the Transformation of Education in Oaxaca (Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca; PTEO) and the alternative education it entails: It calls for a democratization of education that tends to the needs of the working class people (no. 16), the reconsideration and inclusion of the values and culture of the *pueblos originarios* against neoliberal politics (no. 21), and an education “stemming from the cosmovision of the indigenous”¹³⁶ and promoting sustainability.¹³⁷

Sección 22: Código de Ética

Apart from the Principios Rectores, the Sección 22 further has a Código de Ética, an ethics code, regarding its governing body as well as the work of the representatives in the State Institute for Public Education in Oaxaca (Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca; IEEPO)—how the IEEPO is connected to the Sección 22 will be discussed later on. The first part is directed at all teachers: They are to verify that the representatives act according to universal values and fundamental ethics: “responsibility, honesty, justice, truth, respect, liberty, equality, solidarity, the attitude of dialogue, and the service mindset.”¹³⁸ Second, they should check that all leaders and representatives comply with the agreements established at the various events. They are also to complete a background check of all aspirants to positions (no. 6). Further, the Código calls on all teachers to promote the respect for and commitment to the Ethics Code (no. 9), and to encourage internal or even public denunciation in case of misconduct (no. 5).¹³⁹

135 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 9–10.

136 “desde la cosmovisión de los pueblos originarios” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 11).

137 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 8–11.

138 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 14.

139 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 14–15.

The leaders and representatives, in turn, refrain from using immoral behavior in general and promise to respect the above-mentioned values (no. 3), sign a pledge to respect the Código (no. 7), and acknowledge the benefits of transparency in governing positions (no.10). Moreover, they will not use their position to hide the misconduct of others (no. 8), or, even worse, cover them and protect the offender (no. 12).¹⁴⁰

Additionally, the Código provides an example of the conduct that is to be followed: In general, solidarity should be practiced with “honest organizations that advocate the emancipation of the dispossessed”¹⁴¹ (no. 11). On the other hand, pedophilia, abuse, and sexual harassment are examples of conduct that must be punished (no. 13), just as much as *aviadores* display an example of lack of proper moral conduct and must be removed from the payroll (no. 14). Other examples of misdemeanor include unexcused absence or a lack of responsibility (no. 15). Furthermore, the Código bans junk food from schools, and understands not recycling and the pollution of the environment as a transgression of a teacher’s moral conduct (no. 16).

To observe the abidance to the ethics code, the Código further established the Comité de Ética (Ethics Commission) which will observe the conduct of all members of the Sección 22 (no. 4) additionally to the *compañeros* that are already encouraged to do the same (see above). The Comité will further provide a report of the moral conduct of all persons in charge in established periods of time (no. 17).¹⁴²

Sección 22: 16 Principles for an Honest and Democratic Management by the Directors and Heads of Educational Areas in the IEEPO Appointed by the Oaxacan Democratic Movement¹⁴³

The Sección 22 passed an additional set of guidelines regarding the behavior desired by the personnel in the IEEPO appointed by the Sección 22. First, the fundamental goal of their position is to promote the pedagogical movement and the plan for alternative education (no. 1). Acts of corruption or ‘bureaucratism’ are not tolerated (no. 2), and the

140 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 15–16.

141 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 15.

142 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 15–16.

143 16 Principios para una Gestoría Honesta y Democrática de los Directores y Jefes de Área Educativa del IEEPO Nombrados por el Movimiento Democrático Oaxaqueño

delegates should do their duty with honesty and responsibility (no. 3), transparency and accountability (no. 15). The workers' rights are always to be respected (no. 5). Once their term is over, the delegates are to return to their teaching position (no. 6). They are not to perform the duties of the current CES (no. 16). If they do not comply with the expectations regarding their position, they are to be replaced (no. 11).¹⁴⁴

They are to promote more coordinated activity between the different instances of the educational sector (no. 4) and, to that end, reorganize the technical workgroups (no. 7), create new workgroups for joint decision-making (no. 8), and allow for permanent sessions to propose improvements (no. 9). The movement "will demand the total support, in infrastructure and resources of all type,"¹⁴⁵ making a restructuring of the IEEPO necessary (no. 10).¹⁴⁶

The functionaries of the Sección 22 in the IEEPO will, in regular intervals, inform the CES about plans and actions taken and will wait for evaluation and proposals of correction (no. 12). They are furthermore required to work with the CES to establish a workplan and publish it to further transparency (no. 13). State assemblies are to be held and the representatives of the IEEPO are to participate (co. 14).¹⁴⁷

Principios de la CNTE

In a similar fashion, the CNTE, in the II National Ordinary Congress in November 1992 held in Michoacán, ratified the 22 Principios de la CNTE that had been asked for in the first National Ordinary Congress two years prior.

In contrast to the Principios Rectores of the Sección 22, the CNTE's Principios are much more radical: They position the movement very distinctly in the socialist current. Principio 17 endorses the universal principle of class struggle, Principio 18 advocates the principle of an international proletariat and the CNTE's solidarity with the struggle of other people, and Principio 19 ratifies overall socialism. To this end,

144 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 12–14.

145 "exigirá el apoyo total, en infraestructura y recursos de todo tipo" (SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 13).

146 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 12–13.

147 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 13–14.

the CNTE calls in the Principio 6 for the creation and maintenance of a consciousness of class, to fight for the improvement of living conditions and defense of the class' interests and rights (no. 7), and recognizes the "historic destiny of humanity"¹⁴⁸ in a society without exploiters and exploited.

The Principios also acknowledge the necessity to "contribute to the organization at the head of the working class' general struggle"¹⁴⁹ (no. 12), and to promote the CNTE's values to unite all in class syndicalism (no. 13). It further takes up the ideological struggle as a basic element in the movement (no. 20), and recognizes the CNTE in general as a preparation for the overall struggle against the bourgeoisie and the state with the intention to destroy the capitalist system (no. 5).¹⁵⁰ It clearly identifies friend and enemy according to this notion, and even states this idea in the Principio 8: The primary enemies are the bourgeoisie and the state, and the CNTE recognizes "the working class and the peasantry as the principal social force for structural change in society."¹⁵¹

The remainder of the Principios allude to guidelines more specific to the CNTE: They recognize the importance of the statutory and non-statutory structure (no. 14) as well as the free election and revocation of leaders (no. 16). They call for critique, auto-critique, solidarity, and reaffirm the power of the *base* (no. 11). To the latter, the Principio 15 and 21 call for absolute respect of agreements. Further, they reject all outside financing to guarantee the CNTE's independence (no. 22) and allow all forms of struggle and organization, as long as the education is not impeded or the organization in any other way negatively affected (no. 1 and 10). In this struggle, the dominant and tried-out tactic of mobilizing in a manner simultaneous to negotiations is confirmed (no. 4).¹⁵²

The Principios de la CNTE also position the movement in relation to the SNTE, which is where most parallels can be drawn to the Principios Rectores of the Sección 22: Similarly to the intent to 'democratize' the SNTE as mentioned in the Principios Rectores, the Principio 2

148 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 2.

149 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 2.

150 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 2-3.

151 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 2.

152 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Documentos Básicos del MDTEO," 1-3.

aims to recover “the revolutionary content that the bourgeoisie and its agents have taken from [the SNTE].”¹⁵³ The Principio 3 further reinforces this notion by stating that the CNTE aims to “destroy *charrismo*, the new syndicalism”¹⁵⁴ and its manifestations in the different sections. To this end, the CNTE will elect its leaders democratically and collectively, reject the adherence to political parties, and build surveillance mechanisms to ensure the compliance with the Principios.¹⁵⁵ According to Mario Leyva Galicia, teacher in the Sección 10, it is these principles that “gave the democratic teacher an identity, and formed a revolutionary culture in the context of the ideas and in the process of appropriation of their teaching material.”¹⁵⁶

3.2.3 Sección 22 in Action

The Sección 22 and the CNTE consider themselves to be in constant struggle—they have even adapted the Chilean battle hymn ‘*Venceremos*’ to their context and sing it occasionally on mobilizations. In order to attain the objectives of the Sección 22—the defense of the workers and public education, democratization of the SNTE and the country, etc.—, the Political Congress, the Asamblea Estatal, and the Political Commission meet to establish the plan of action for the upcoming year, as well as the list of demands, considering the country’s political, economic, and social situation and the proposals for the demands emanated by the base. In a similar fashion, the CNTE establishes a plan of action and list of demands on the national level, which is then communicated to and included in their plans by the various sections adhering to the dissident movement.¹⁵⁷

From the Asamblea Estatal, the plan of action is first approved by the CES and then passed on down the structure until it reaches the schools,

153 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 1.

154 “destruir al charrismo [sic], al nuevo sindicalismo” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 1).

155 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Documentos Básicos del MDTEO,” 2.

156 “le han dado una identidad al maestro democrático, y le han formado una cultura revolucionaria en el ámbito de las ideas y en el proceso de apropiación de su materia de trabajo” (Leyva Galicia, “La CNTE: 27 Años de Lucha Democrática,” 2).

157 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

where the representatives give the details to their colleagues. The directors of the schools and the teachers are then in charge of relaying the plan and its consequences to the parents and the authorities. According to Fausto Rivera, today this happens mainly via WhatsApp.¹⁵⁸

The Sección 22 uses a basic pressure-pattern, which serves as the basis for large parts of its acts of civil disobedience: mobilization – negotiation – mobilization. The classic mobilization—in the general sense of the word—of the Sección 22 starts with the submission of the list of demands to the authorities and a petition for negotiation, accompanied by a 24-hour strike with street blockades of key locations and businesses.¹⁵⁹ Should there be no reply, the answer be unsatisfactory, or the authorities refuse to negotiate, a 48-hour strike with blockades will ensue, increasing again to 72 hours if the demands are still not met. In case this does not provide the desired effect either, the next mobilization will be indefinite. The exact dates of these mobilizations are set provisionally in each plan of action. Even in the case of apparently satisfying results, the teachers will not return to the classrooms immediately but keep up the mobilization until the agreements are put into law or other circumstances justify the end of the protest measures—a lesson learned when the government yielded to the demands in order to reestablish peace, only to revoke the decision as soon as the dissidents had lifted their strike measures.¹⁶⁰

To illustrate such mobilization, we will have a closer look at the events in 2018. As might be the case in many other countries, the period leading up to presidential elections is favorable for negotiations between workers' unions and the government. While the mobilization often and usually for a prolonged period of time falls on deaf ears, upcoming

158 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

159 These locations are busy traffic intersections, the entrance to airports, intercity and interstate highways, and the offices of the IEEPO in Oaxaca City. Among the businesses that are blocked are above all the international businesses, such as Walmart, and other larger chains.

160 CEPOS 22, "Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización: Formando Militancia," *Corre, ve y dile* 6 (2003), 10; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

elections cause a propensity in the government to grant concessions or make more detailed election promises.¹⁶¹

As there had been no satisfying conclusions to the demands put forth by the CNTE on the national level as well as by the Sección 22 on the state level in 2017, the former started the year with a 24-hour strike on January 31. From February 26 to 28, the Sección 22 held the V Political Congress to discuss national politics and the possibilities to react according to their ideology and goals. The congress split into five task forces, articulating their respective considerations, and the actions and pronouncements deriving from them: The first task force analyzed the international, national, and state situation, designating imperialism—“the exploitation of man by man”¹⁶²—as a primary factor that needed to be opposed. The second task force revised the structure of the Sección 22 in light of its internal crisis (further explained in chapter seven). To this end, the third task force revised the Principios Rectores, while the fourth analyzed the role of the Sección 22, the CNTE, and the social movement in the political context of 2018. The fifth task force was in charge of developing the strategies and tactics, as well as the list of demands and the plan of action for the upcoming *jornada de lucha*: In March and April, various *brigadeos* were to inform society of the measures and the reasons for them. Also in March, there was to be a 72-hour strike of the students in the *escuelas normales* against the exams, and an extraordinary political congress on the national level. On May 1, the list of demands was to be handed over and a massive march effected to underline the gesture. Two weeks later, a massive march in light of Teachers’ Day—traditionally a set date for marches and strikes¹⁶³—was scheduled to set off the indefinite strike.¹⁶⁴

Mobilizations within the scope of demands unanswered by the Oaxacan government continued in the 72-hour format from March 11 to 13, followed by mobilizations due to the national (CNTE) demands of 48

161 Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

162 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Resolutivos V Congreso Político del MDTEO” (2018), 2.

163 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca. This impression goes so far that parents count with their children not returning to school before the end of the school year in June.

164 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Resolutivos V Congreso Político del MDTEO.”

hours on April 9 and 10, augmenting to 72 hours from April 30 to May 2.¹⁶⁵ An announcement (exemplary for the Sector Sierra) on April 18 explained the proceedings for the last strike: On April 30, assemblies would be held to inform the parents. On May 1, 80% of the teachers would march in the state, 20% in Mexico City. The next day, there would be blockades, all with the objectives to demand the reinstatement of negotiations on the national level, against the Ley of Internal Security and the terrorism of the state, and for solutions of the further demands of the Sección 22.¹⁶⁶

On May 1, as planned, the list of demands was handed over to the governor. It was split into six overarching categories with a number of demands repeated—in general, it is also possible to divide the general demands into the three categories social, political, and educational, harking back to the overall goals of democratizing the SNTE to include the base in negotiations, and of democratizing the country.¹⁶⁷ In the central demands, the Sección 22 calls for the immediate repeal of the Educational Reform, and the State Law of Public Education of Oaxaca, the observance of the freedom of speech, the prosecution of the political criminals of the incidents in Asunción Nochixtlán in 2017, the reconstruction and aid to the buildings damaged in the earthquakes of September 2017 and February 2018, and an end to the administrative repression. The second part is made up of political demands: the adherence to political agreements, a space for negotiations between the state government and the Sección 22, and the disappearance of the sections in Oaxaca adhering directly to the SNTE. The third category of demands concerns justice, such as the return of funds and the persecution of violators.¹⁶⁸

The fourth section covers labor demands, such as the repeal of the reform of the IEEPO in 2015, the immediate employment of the graduates of the *escuelas normales*, and employment security. The fifth part

165 CEPOS 22, “Elementos para la consulta a las bases (mayo 2018),” 2.

166 Comité Ejecutivo Organización Sección 22, “Convocatoria April 18, 2018” (Oaxaca de Juárez, 2018).

167 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

168 CEPOS 22, “Elementos para la consulta a las bases (mayo 2018),” 5–9.

of the demands regards those of an educational nature, which primarily aims at replacing the current educational model with the project of alternative education. The sixth part concerns financial demands, such as the payment of teachers that have salaries outstanding, the renovation and maintenance of the vehicles, the maintenance and remodeling of buildings of the Sección 22 and the CNTE, and the construction of a Hotel del Magisterio in Puerto Escondido. The seventh and eighth sections of the list of demands refer to rights of the whole of Mexican society, such as social security, basic equipment for students, and the respect for the people defending their natural resources. The list concludes with the comment that the Sección 22 reserves the right to act in case of a lack of satisfactory response.¹⁶⁹

As during most mobilizations, the first points to be blocked were the offices of the IEEPO and the Zócalo in Oaxaca, as well as major crossroads and supermarket chains. In Puerto Escondido, these locations included the entrance to the airport and the city from the north, the other two entrances to the city on the east and south, the supermarkets Chedraui and Bodega Aurrera, and the department store Coppel. Street blockades do, in most cases, not completely shut down traffic, but aim at hindering the transnational companies from delivering their goods to the subsidiaries, however also forcing the people to pass through on foot.¹⁷⁰ Emergency vehicles are able to pass, albeit considerably slowed down by the hindrance. When the dissidents ‘take’ the highways, on the other hand, they either occupy the toll houses, defrauding the private companies possessing these parts of the highway of their revenue, or block the road altogether.

Fausto Rivera gives two reasons for these specific measures: On the one hand, the people—accustomed to the neoliberal convenience of getting everything in one transnational compartment store—are obligated to make their purchases at the smaller stores, owned by locals. On the other hand, the dissident teachers thus exert indirect pressure on the government (via the companies) as the latter is forced to resolve the issues brought up by the teachers either through negotiation or forced

169 CEPOS 22, “Elementos para la consulta a las bases (mayo 2018),” 9–11.

170 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

removal.¹⁷¹ Despite the notifications sent to the affected businesses—also the drivers of the local transport routes¹⁷²—this method leads to alienation by the common people not associated with the teachers and generally a negative attitude towards the Sección 22.

The teachers are distributed to block the different locations according to prior agreements between the secretaries general of the sectors and the secretaries general of the delegations. The latter then have different regulations concerning attendance: While some make it voluntary, others consider attendance mandatory. Either way, participation in such events is necessary for promotion and inquiries—such as a relocation—within the structure of the union. For national mobilizations, the fellow teachers usually cooperate financially to be able to send their delegates to the protests in Mexico City.¹⁷³

On May 3, 2018, the CEPOS issued a *brigadeo*¹⁷⁴ to inform “all of the base of workers of our MDTEO, the parents, communal authorities, and people in resistance”¹⁷⁵ about the teachers’ struggle, the national politics, and its effects on society. It contextualizes the class and the teachers’ struggle and places them in the contemporary and historical political background, the structural reforms passed after the election of Enrique Peña Nieto and their effects on society, the teachers’ plan for organized resistance, the educational reality in the state, and the plan of the Sección 22 to transform it.¹⁷⁶ Since there was no satisfactory answer, the Sección 22 started planning the indefinite strike.¹⁷⁷

171 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

172 Taxi-driver at street blockade, Interview on April 10, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

173 Maestro José, Interview on February 12, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

174 It was developed in a meeting on April 23 and 24 to strengthen the class consciousness, develop a list of demands, “agitate the people in general to organize the *Jornada Unitaria de Lucha*” and to strengthen the alliance with parents (CES (2017–2021) Sección 22, “Convocatoria April 20, 2018” (Oaxaca de Juárez, 2018)).

175 “toda la base trabajadora de nuestro MDTEO, a los padres de familia, autoridades comunales y pueblos en resistencia” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 2).

176 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018.”

177 CEPOS 22, “Elementos para la consulta a las bases (mayo 2018),” 1.

Between May 14 and 18, 2018, the CES distributed a collection of documents in the *consulta a las bases*—the consultation of the base—with the goal to determine the starting date of the indefinite strike. The documents begin with the explanation of the consultation: According to the Principio Rector No. 2, the base should be included in all decision-making. Since the teachers of the Sección 22 were at that point in full mobilization in the indefinite strike, the *consulta a las bases* called for an analysis of the situation with a consequent plan of action based on the results, as well as a decision of the date that was to be set for the strike on the national level, the *huelga nacional*. It explains the antecedents of the struggle period, a political evaluation, propositions for the upcoming struggle period, and the current list of demands from May 1.¹⁷⁸

On May 28, the dissidents commenced their indefinite strike and established a sit-in in the historic center heart of Oaxaca City. On June 20, after a vote in the assembly, the blockade was lifted and only a representation of 20% maintained the sit-in despite unsatisfactory answers from the authorities.¹⁷⁹ In most years, the strike period rather dissolves towards the end. We will look at exceptions to this rule in chapter six.

The year 2018 as an election year also brought another conflict: On April 12, the Sección 22 called on the CES, the auxiliary organisms, and the workers in education of the region coast to assemble in Puerto Escondido on April 14 to boycott the visit of the PRI-candidate José Antonio Meade and his campaign manager and former secretary of public education Aurelio Nuño Mayer. They accused Meade of having implemented the structural reforms, Nuño of “trying to impose the Educational Reform that cost lives, unjust dismissals, and wrongful salary reductions of the workers in education”¹⁸⁰—however, it is also necessary to consider that the relationship between social movements

178 CEPOS 22, “Elementos para la consulta a las bases (mayo 2018).”

179 Alondra Olivera, “Acuerda Sección 22 De La CNTE Ir a Paro En Oaxaca,” *La Silla Rota*, May 13, 2018, accessed May 29, 2021; Jorge A. Pérez Alfonso, “Finaliza El Paro De Labores De La Sección 22 En Oaxaca; Las Mesas De Trabajo Se Mantienen,” *La Jornada*, June 20, 2018, accessed May 29, 2021; Jorge A. Pérez Alfonso and Diana Manzo, “Maestros De La Sección 22 De Oaxaca Inician Paro Indefinido Y Plantón,” *La Jornada*, May 29, 2018, accessed May 29, 2021.

180 “tratar de imponer la reforma educativa que ha costado vidas, despidos injustificados y descuentos indebidos a trabajadores de la educación” (Secretaría de Organización, Región Costa Sección 22, “Convocatoria April 12, 2018” (Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, 2018)).

and the PRI party in general is in itself already one of hostility, facilitating the eruption of conflict.¹⁸¹ On April 14, the teachers of the Sección 22 united in Puerto Escondido and were, furthermore, joined by other workers' unions, most prominently those of the Confederation of Workers in Mexico (Confederación de Trabajadores de México; CTM). Meade was scheduled to speak at the Agencia Municipal, however, the mass of protesters obstructed his path, and he was relocated. Meanwhile, a skirmish erupted between the protesters and Meade's supporters: The two parties took to the sides of the crossroads and threw stones and other items they could find at the other side. Using the opportunity in the electoral campaign to remind the people of the CNTE's apparent alliance with the candidate for the party Morena, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Meade also followed in what the dissidents perceived as a smear campaign against their cause, claiming that the teachers were "[n]ot satisfied with only torpedoing the educational qualities of our children and young ones, are [instead] opting for the violent path as a means of expression."¹⁸²

In general, election years are ones of great mobilizations due to an increased possibility of actually attaining goals or at least faring better in negotiations.¹⁸³ Since the party that the SNTE throws its weight behind usually wins, the teachers' vote also makes a great impact: In 2006, Elba Esther Gordillo supported the National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional; PAN), helping its candidate Felipe Calderón win the election, and in 2012, she returned to support the PRI, ensuring its success.¹⁸⁴ However, the Sección 22 also tried using the elections in a different way: In an election of federal representatives for Congress, the *base* of the dissident teachers was called upon to nullify its ballots. In the end, however, as one teacher explained, this supposedly only resulted in the PRI winning.¹⁸⁵ Recognizing the influence and power they exerted through sheer mass, for the presidential election in 2018

181 This dynamic will be further analyzed in chapter 4.2.2.

182 "[n]o contentos con torpedear la calidad educativa de nuestros niños y jóvenes, apuestan por la vía violenta como expresión" (Milenio, CNTE, Chocó Con Seguidores De Meade En Oaxaca (2018)).

183 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

184 Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

185 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

the leaders of the Sección 22 as well as on the national level in the CNTE agreed to modify the actions: The Principios Rectores and other guidelines do not allow direct allegiance of the section with a party. However, the leaders decided to call upon the base to not vote for a party that passed the Pacto por México.¹⁸⁶ Effectively, this only left the Morena party and its candidate López Obrador.

In the decades since the beginning of the movement, the Sección 22 has also resorted to other—and more impressive—measures of protest and mobilization. Historically, the teachers of Oaxaca were the first to march to the national capital and the first to begin a hunger strike for their cause, and the impressions of these first mobilizations and the reactions of the people and the officials have a lasting effect on the collective memory of the teachers of the Sección 22 that is sought for in actions today as well. Fausto Rivera explained:

“We organized the first protests. When we took the streets, highways, the reaction was immediate. [...] We all went, no one stayed at home, we all went to Mexico [City]. It was wonderful. It was a tumult. Because the movement was young, there was a lot of hope, much work, and much disposition.”¹⁸⁷

Maestro Daniel seconded this impression, stating that in the mobilizations in 1979 and 1986,

“[f]rom the Zócalo to the ISSSTE¹⁸⁸, to San Felipe all was full of teachers. There were stretchers, and people crying. The next day, had they not stopped the hunger strike, the dangers would have been irreversible. Because the last week, they had done without water.”¹⁸⁹

186 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

187 “Organizamos las primeras manifestaciones. Cuando tomábamos a calles, carreteras, la reacción era inmediata. [...] Todos fuimos, nadie se quedaba en su casa, todos íbamos a México. Estaba hermoso. Era un tumulto. Porque el movimiento era joven, había mucha esperanza, mucho trabajo, mucha disposición” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018).

188 Institute for Security and Social Services for the Workers of Education (Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado; ISSSTE)

189 “Desde el Zócalo hasta el ISSSTE, hasta San Felipe los valles de maestros y maestras. Iban las camillas, y la gente llorando. Al día siguiente, si no paraban la huelga de hambre, los daños hubieran sido irreversibles. Porque la última semana la habían hecho sin agua”

The march to Mexico City and the hunger strike are frequently employed tools of civil disobedience in the Sección 22, next to the above-mentioned sit-ins, ‘normal’ strikes, boycotts,¹⁹⁰ and the blockades—Maestro Daniel also remembers a march in 2006: “We went walking from here 19 days. We did not get on any car. I walked to Mexico City. There we were one week and then we started the hunger strike.”¹⁹¹ Furthermore, the Sección 22 takes legal measures, filing lawsuits, or make use of what they call ‘administrative resistance:’ not handing over information the government is asking for, also of the students, except for graduating classes¹⁹²—according to Maestro Daniel, they also provide this information due to the parents’ pressure as they want to celebrate their children’s success.¹⁹³

Protests grow especially forceful when other workers’ unions join, such as in the above-mentioned encounter of the candidate Meade in Puerto Escondido, and generally, solidarity between workers’ unions is a prominent motif in mobilizations for social causes. In 2007, the government passed a law reforming the ISSSTE and all state workers mobilized in protest against the measures that were to be implemented by the reform. They eventually achieved a protective clause.¹⁹⁴ Two years later, the Sección 22 mobilized in solidarity with the state electricity workers in their protest. The different protesting unions or movements also organize joint congresses. In 2012, various other social groups also spoke at the event of the Sección 22, who they perceive as “the ones that guide us to keep on fighting.”¹⁹⁵ In this sense, the Sección 22 and the CNTE are still aiming to achieve a national strike with as many unions

(Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

190 CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Escuela por Escuela: por la construcción de una nueva constituyente” (2015), 13.

191 “Nos fuimos caminando de aquí los 19 días. No nos subimos a ningún carro. Yo me fui caminando hasta México. Estuvimos en México una semana y después empezamos la huelga de hambre” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

192 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018; SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 26.

193 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

194 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 337; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

195 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 9.

and independent groups participating as possible to attain a greater impact.¹⁹⁶

On most occasions, the government does not react—“I do not see you, I do not hear you.”¹⁹⁷ However, when the pattern of mobilization – negotiation – mobilization continues for a prolonged period of time due to a lack of agreements, the government on occasion does react. When the mobilization of the Sección 22 strikes a nerve or has already continued for a long time, the government will attempt to lift the sit-ins and blockades with the help of the police force—such as, for example, in 2006 and 2016, which will be treated in chapter six.

Furthermore, many of the dissidents have apprehension orders on them, due to, for example, property damage during demonstrations—although it is also important to state in this context that the teachers speak of infiltrators doing the damage and even provoking fights inside the movement in order to discredit the group.¹⁹⁸ As Maestro Daniel and his colleague explain, one does have a certain kind of fear when walking alone at night, since many others have already been apprehended and have not always returned. Still, this feeling was always mingled with anger, as they consider their struggle just and legal.¹⁹⁹ In fact, the COMADH and the judicial organisms of the Sección 22 are concerned, on the one hand, with the defense and demands of release for the political prisoners.²⁰⁰ On the other hand, they deal with the defense of the teachers that have, in their eyes, been unjustly dismissed—according to the secretary general of the Delegation 25, in April of 2018 these amounted to 586 teachers.²⁰¹

Fear of repression also prompts civil disobedience and solidarity in situations that did not appear to be dangerous from the outset, especially in light of the disappearance of the 43 students from the *escuela normal* in Ayotzinapa in 2014. On March 11, 2018, calls for help suddenly

196 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 280–281; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

197 “No te veo, no te oigo” (Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018).

198 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

199 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

200 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 154.

201 Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

went through the social media: Teachers from the Sección 7 of Chiapas travelling on a bus were stopped by a squadron of the federal police on their way to reinforce the protests of their *compañeros* in Veracruz, demanding the teachers get out so they can take them into custody. The teachers of the Sección 7 refused, leading to the police calling for towing vehicles that eventually moved the bus. Using modern methods for protection, the dissidents made various videos to record the situations and the names of the teachers in the bus and eventually, the bus was liberated before the situation could escalate.²⁰²

The Sección 22 managed to establish a structure that is both statutory and non-statutory to accommodate its function as a movement alongside its role as a union section. Additionally, the movement integrates its beginnings in the 1970s and 1980s into its structure, as well as in the memory of the Sección 22. We will now move on to examine a very prominent strand in the general Mexican and Oaxacan cultural memory, and how the Sección 22 makes use of it in the form of myth and narrative in its social movement.

202 Jose Luis Pavelguevara Escobar Perez, "Llamado Urgente," accessed October 6, 2020; Keta Shalo, accessed October 6, 2020; Lidyvet Murillo, "Maestros De Chiapas Se Manifiestaron Bloqueando Calles Del Centro De Xalapa," accessed October 6, 2020; Multigráfica Agencia, "Maestros De La @cnte_7 Retenidos Por Elementos De La @SP_Veracruz En La Zona Conocida Como Corral Falso," accessed October 6, 2020.

4 The (Socialist) Revolutionary Narrative

“Información es conciencia y conciencia es actitud. Si una persona está informada, adquiere una conciencia. Si esa conciencia de clase es muy clara, va a tener una actitud de las calles.”¹

Mexican culture is rich in symbols, rituals, and rhetoric that harken back to past heroes and events, calling for identification and, in some cases in social movements, for action according to the meaning associated with the hero and/or event. Needless to say, Mexican national history is a treasure chest for such symbols. Above all, its history of colonization results in great importance of events relating to foreign powers: the arrival of Christopher Columbus and Hernán Cortés,² the fall of the Aztec Empire and the Spanish colonization, the Independence in 1821, the Mexican American War 1846-1848, and the French Intervention in the 1860s finally hoisting Benito Juárez to the position of national hero in light of his victory over Maximilian of Habsburg, who was imposed as Emperor of Mexico by the French. Especially the Independence and the Battle of Puebla as part of the French Intervention have persisted in national memory—earning holidays and commemorative celebrations—as a symbol of Mexican resistance and strength in the face of a foreign enemy. The arrival of Columbus serves as a steppingstone to this celebratory glory—as the idea of overcoming oppression—and the Mexican American War basically functions as a reminder of the great injustices ‘el Norte’ has done to the Mexican nation.

Many of these events have made their way into the cultural memory, e.g., through figures of memory, symbols, or myth. We will now examine

1 “Information is awareness, and awareness is attitude/mindset. If a person is informed, they are going to acquire an attitude. If this awareness of class is very clear, they are going to have an attitude of the streets” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

2 While not as prominent in the popular memory as Columbus, Hernán Cortés was, without a doubt, a vital figure in the conquest of Mexico. For a comprehensive biography of Cortés see Stefan Rinke, *Conquistadores Und Azteken: Cortés Und Die Eroberung Mexikos* (C.H.Beck, 2019).

in more detail one period that is of great importance in the country's cultural memory and in the narrative of the Sección 22: The Mexican Revolution.³ To this end, we will first revisit the major events of the Revolution and, in a second step, analyze their consequences, interpretation, and use for the identity and organization of the union section.

4.1 The Stuff of Legends: The Mexican Revolution

The Mexican Revolution exposed the deep trenches that had built within Mexican society. The multiplicity of facets during the armed period and the integration of the Revolution as national heritage in Mexican politics in the decades afterwards have led scholars to discuss until today whether the Mexican Revolution still continues, and whether the myth has an effect even on contemporary politics. For the purpose of delimitation, the following deliberations will begin with the Porfiriato—a common denominator scholars agree on as the beginning of the Mexican Revolution—and end with Lázaro Cárdenas, the last great reformer.⁴

4.1.1 Prelude to the Revolution: The Porfiriato

José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz Mori—Porfirio Díaz—was born in Oaxaca in the aftermath of the Independence in 1830 to parents of Spanish as well as indigenous descent. Already born in the state that has a reputation for being a cradle of rebels—if not at that time, then at least today—he additionally experienced the chaos that followed the Independence as the country attempted to form a stable federal government. Revolts and corruption were daily business and so the country saw a rapid change of leaders in a rather short period of time, and the

³ The War of Independence and the Reform War in the second half of the 19th century also influence the social movement, yet their effects have already diminished. What is still of importance to the movement of the Sección 22 of these events will be included in the chapter on the Revolution and other parts of this analysis.

⁴ Alan Knight, "The Myth of the Mexican Revolution," *Past & Present*, no. 209 (2010): 223–29.

young Díaz was drawn into the ranks of the army. By the time the (liberal) Reform Wars around Benito Juárez—yet another Oaxacan—began, Díaz had joined the army and started gathering experience in combat. During the French Intervention, Díaz fought and strategized in the heroic Battle of Puebla (the first one) and became a renowned figure in Mexican history—the city of Miahuatlán in Oaxaca is named in his honor: Miahuatlán de Porfirio Díaz. He was also the one to reconquer Mexico City from the French, fostering his reputation as a committed and loyal liberal and patriot—he registered his daughter on the anniversary of the Battle of Puebla on May 5⁵ and celebrated his own birthday on Independence Day.⁶

In 1868, Juárez was elected president, allowing him to further implement his liberal ideology. The modifications to the staunchly liberal Constitution of 1857 he proposed were finally passed by his successor, Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, brother of the reformer Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, refueling latent anti-clerical sentiment. Díaz had instigated a failing revolt following Juárez' re-election in 1872, but by the time Lerdo de Tejada was supposedly re-elected in 1876, Díaz had assembled a large group of supporters, accusing the president of election fraud, and demanding the prohibition of re-election. This time, the revolt was successful, and a renewed election provided the desired result. Díaz was elected president for the first time, ringing in the Porfiriato—34 years with Díaz at the head of the nation, with one term (1880–1884) going to Manuel González,⁷ his recommended candidate.⁸

5 May 5 has become a holiday attaining great international popularity, while, in Mexico, it is mostly celebrated only in Puebla.

6 William Beezley, *Mexico in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71 and 81; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9.

7 Alan Knight does not provide much detail on González' term, while William H. Beezley accredits the latter with the installment of the necessary frameworks for economic growth as intended by the 1857 Constitution. According to Beezley, González also played a vital part in the reformation of the banking system and the utilization of supposedly unoccupied lands (Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 84–85).

8 Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 77–79.

Politics

Díaz made an effort to pacify a country that had grown accustomed to prolonged fights and civil wars, providing stability as well as relative peace and unprecedented economic growth. Although with a liberal record, he did not govern on the party ticket. Instead, he tried to accommodate both parties to “legitimate his seizure of power, secure his government, and legislate the enabling laws for the constitution of 1857.”⁹ This also entailed a remodeling of relations with the Catholic Church, which had played a prominent role in the conflicts of the preceding decades. While not reversing the achievements of the liberals’ fight against the status of the clergy—including the ownership of a great amount of land—the Díaz regime also did not enforce the provisions mentioned in the Constitution of 1857 to push the Church further into the background. Laws already put into place were sometimes overlooked—above all in states with a large base of Porfirian supporters—, representatives of the Catholic Church exiled by liberals were allowed back into the country, and even Díaz’ wedding was officiated by the returned Archbishop.¹⁰ This “end of ideology,” as Alan Knight put it, was established as a fundamental pillar of the new stability and peace: “Old Liberals died off¹¹ or were harassed into silence or grew fat on the spoils of office.”¹²

The latter indicates a principle that much in the Porfirian government revolved around: the *pan o palo* (‘carrot or stick’) policy.¹³ In the beginning of the Porfiriato, Díaz strategically sifted through his higher administrative ranks, leaving only supporters in place, rewarding loyal supporters with newly vacant positions, and occasionally using them to counterbalance local *caciques*.¹⁴ When distributing positions among his adherents, Díaz took advantage of the divide-and-rule tactic: The

9 Beezley, Mexico in World History, 82.

10 Beezley, Mexico in World History, 92; Alan Knight, The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals and Peasants (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 19.

11 That ‘old liberalism’ died out was of course not a phenomenon restricted to the Mexican context but could be observed internationally.

12 Knight, The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1, 15.

13 Beezley, Mexico in World History, 82.

14 Beezley, Mexico in World History, 82; Knight, The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1, 15–17.

appointment of an outsider to a state government facilitated the representation of the regime's interests in the periphery, tying it closer to the centralist government while simultaneously ensuring that the focus of the appointee remained in the interests of the president.¹⁵

On the level of the federal government, Díaz' appointees were determined to preserve the peace instated by the Porfirian rule—they feared this a change of government would throw the nation back into a state of unceasing civil wars and, at best, halting economic growth. For this purpose, the Liberal Union was founded in 1892 as a tool to lobby for and rationalize Díaz' third re-election on the premise of upholding the order to safeguard stability, peace, and economic growth—even some of the government's critics admitted to its necessity for continued stability. The hopes of some that the Liberal Union would keep the president in check and pass reforms to curb his power, however, were slighted. Díaz eventually conceded to establishing the vice-presidency in 1904, yet he also made sure that the influence of the position remained minimal.¹⁶

Within this conviction, a new generation of leaders began to develop. These men were not shaped by the experiences of the Reform Wars like their predecessors, but well-educated and influenced by the scientific positivism of August Comte, designating them with the name *científicos*.¹⁷ Their belief dictated a strong administration, the implementation of liberal politics, secularism, a capitalist economy, and social programs only as far as their understanding of rationality allowed. The idea of 'order' was prevalent.¹⁸ Díaz increasingly turned to this new elite to modify and reform his own politics in accordance with his government's motto *mucha administración y poca política* ('much administration and few politics').¹⁹

It was, above all, their urge for economic development composing their reforms. As Knight stated: "[T]hey emerged as the foremost

15 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 17.

16 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 8; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 21–22.

17 As the people's aversion to the government grew, the name *científico* was increasingly connoted as an insult.

18 Just as the liberals, the positivists were by no means genuinely oriented towards democracy.

19 Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 93; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 10; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 21–22.

advocates, apologists, and beneficiaries of Mexican capitalism.²⁰ As a first step, the domestic financial system underwent major reforms: José Limantour, the finance minister since 1893, managed to balance the budget, which facilitated the renegotiation of foreign loans, remodeled the treasury and the banking system to sustain and support this change, and eliminated the internal tariffs. The crown to his achievements was the elimination of the constant fluctuations in the value of the peso by setting the country on the gold standard in 1905, which allowed the government to borrow at a 5% rate.²¹

In a second step and thanks to the newfound stability increasing Mexico's attractiveness for foreign investment, the *científicos* intended to integrate Mexico in the international markets.²² To this end, relations with foreign countries that had suffered over the previous decades needed to be pacified. The U.S. recognized Mexico already during Díaz' first term, France followed suit in 1880, and Great Britain as the largest holder of Mexican debt recognized the government in 1885. These achievements allowed Manuel Dublán, yet another Oaxacan, to reorganize the Mexican foreign debt, enabling the country to make new loans at lower interest rates.²³

While this reconciliation served as a first step to attract foreign investment, a further (economic) incentive was provided by reforms implemented, e.g. in land and resource ownership: Spanish colonial tradition was revoked in the sense that the subsoil and water did not automatically pass into government property. The mining law now permitted private titles, and the surveying law initiated studies for government

20 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 22.

21 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 11; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 23.

22 Far from seeking a *laissez-faire* economy, as some scholars suggested, the *científicos* actively turned towards foreign capital to achieve this inclusion—the selection of the origins of this capital, the latent nationalism, and the constant fear of a loss of sovereignty are a further indicator rejecting the idea of *laissez-faire* in the Porfirian era. However, the careful protectionism also does not hint at a general orientation in the other extreme, suggesting rather an eclectic use of political and economic theories in light of current necessities and circumstances (Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 86–87; Richard Weiner, “Battle for Survival: Porfirian Views of the International Marketplace,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, no. 3 (2000): 647).

23 Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 86–87.

planning and industry.²⁴ Further concessions, e.g. in taxes, completed the attraction package. The *científicos* who pushed these reforms constituted parts of the higher levels of companies; their special interest in the well-being of these enterprises can hence not be denied.²⁵

Many cities—especially in the center and northern parts of Mexico—were remodeled after this new relationship. European culture found its way into the country, mostly expressed in the newest fashion, as well as in intellectual ideas. Pompous edifices were built as an expression of wealth and progress, and monuments erected in preparation of the centennial celebration of the Independence in 1910. Cities were furnished with the latest infrastructure, providing, above all, the capital, with tramways, electric lights, and a new drainage system. At the world exhibitions around the turn of the century, the Porfirian government aimed to display the progressive side of the country. On the domestic level, however, it was the lower classes and indigenous that suffered under these efforts: They were not considered part of the ‘new Mexico,’ but of the traditional, supposedly backward Mexico that needed to be reformed.²⁶

Control Mechanisms

Díaz established a control system of various instances in order to maintain the country’s newfound balance. With no immediate and foreseeable foreign threat justifying a full standing army, Díaz dismantled large parts of it so as to avoid unnecessary expenditure, keeping only a minimum to enforce the government’s directives and to pacify the country. Complementary to the army on the executive, federal level were the *caciques*—men of influence—and the *jefes políticos*—local politicians—on the institutional, local level. *Municipios* play a rather important role in Mexican tradition and politics and provided a certain sense of autonomy. With the centralization implemented by Díaz, the *jefes* thus, on the one hand, inherited power and influence, while, on the other, they were forced to use them to mediate the government’s ideas to the common

24 Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 84.

25 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 22.

26 Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 91–92; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 128.

people in order to stay on the president's good side and enjoy the benefits that come with it.²⁷ Ironically, however, it is in this tradition-laden position that the *jefes* were free to indulge in nepotism, favoritism, and corruption without great hindrances and so they frequently used their position to further their own and their families' interests.²⁸

Protest, whether against the local *jefes* or against the government, was quickly quelled in the interest of national peace and security. While *jefes* might also employ impressment into the army as a tool for punishment and to quiet dissidents, a popular tool and "showpiece of the Pax Porfiriana"²⁹ were the *rurales*, the local police. Dressed in the traditional *charro* outfit—boots, spurs, tight pants, short jacket, wide sombrero, and of course some type of weaponry—the *rurales* were to provide peace on the local level. They had been brought into being by Benito Juárez to control the lawlessness in the countryside, and by the turn of the century they enjoyed a rather romanticized reputation. This derived from their impressive performance on selected horses during parades, the notion that many were themselves ex-bandits now hunting fellow bandits, and the comparison to the Canadian Royal Mounted Police.³⁰

However, as Paul J. Vanderwood noted, "their public image was far more striking than their performance."³¹ Only seldom did they hunt train robbers—their everyday tasks rather focused on keeping order during celebrations or paydays and accompanying paymasters, and during these they established a different kind of reputation. Increasingly riddled by desertion and insubordination, the *rurales* were predominantly illiterate, either very young or quite old, sometimes physically unfit, and largely prone to drunkenness. They frequently made use of the *ley fuga*—the law permitting the shooting of a fugitive—when transferring prisoners, or beat peons, providing security by their mere presence and enhancing the fear of police arbitrariness. To outsiders, they

27 Their position resembles that of the 'bosses' in political machines in the U.S., yet there is no evidence to suggest a relationship between the two.

28 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 18–19, 24–25, 28–29.

29 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 33.

30 Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 89; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 18–19; Paul J. Vanderwood, "Mexico's Rurales: Image of a Society in Transition," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (1981): 52–53.

31 Vanderwood, "Mexico's Rurales," 52.

appeared to be effective since the number of overall trials decreased, yet this decline traces back rather to the frequent application of the *ley fuga* than their actual effectiveness.³²

However, Knight asserts that the impression of a military dictatorship, a tyranny, or even a police state would be misleading. He states that since Díaz, especially in the beginning decades, still ruled with a “lingering legitimacy,” a sense of democracy that brought him to the position. Furthermore, “the coercion was selective and limited, not indiscriminate,” thus contrasting with the typical definition of tyranny or police. In fact, Knight adds, that had the Porfiriato been a police state, the rebellion in 1910 could have been dealt with.³³

Integrating the Economy—Railroads and Oil

As previously mentioned, the Porfiriato was an era of unprecedented economic growth and industrialization. Exports increased by 6.1% p.a., national income by 2.3%, the economic production by 2.7% and the population by 1.4%, with about 3.4 billion pesos of foreign capital invested in the country by 1911.³⁴ The investment taken by a country usually concentrated on one sector: U.S. Americans primarily invested in mining, railroads, and oil, Germans in manufacturing, French and Dutch in the public debt, and Canadians in public utilities as well as the Britons, who also invested in railways. Overall, it is suspected that about two thirds of the capital investment made—outside of agriculture and the handicraft industry—was provided by foreign sources with the U.S. constituting the largest share.³⁵ In all, however, Díaz was cautious with the influence the U.S. might win in Mexico: The neighbor’s interventions in the Caribbean countries and the Monroe Doctrine suggested increased interests and a paternal notion that could infringe the states’

32 Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 90; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 33–34; Vanderwood, “Mexico’s Rurales,” 52.

33 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 35.

34 Jonathan C. Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 7; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 23.

35 Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico*, 7.

sovereignty, and so Díaz rather leaned towards investments from the other side of the Atlantic, Great Britain in particular.³⁶

The railroad business was one of the main driving forces behind the Mexican economic growth with tracks increasing from 640 km in 1877 to 28,000 km in 1910. This derives from Díaz' decision to include the railroads in his infrastructure plans, centralizing their development, which then prompted above all the U.S. to invest heavily in this sector—about 30% of all foreign investment went into the construction and maintenance of railways. Laws were passed to facilitate the extension of the already existing railway lines, all the while focusing their 'mexicanization,' leading to the founding of Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México in 1907.³⁷

The oil sector was an equally important pillar of the Porfirian system. Before the turn of the century, Henry Clay Pierce and the Waters-Pierce Oil Company had provided Mexico with the necessary fuel, and even after the first wells were discovered, the domestic petroleum market did not provide enough initiative for a Mexican petroleum company to be founded. As a result, the oil industry was completely dependent on the expertise of companies coming from more capitalized (foreign) economies,³⁸ and the speed and methods with which they were permitted to develop resulted in a further source of resentment for their government in the Mexican people.³⁹

36 Paul Garner, "The Politics of National Development in Late Porfirian Mexico: The Reconstruction of the Tehuantepec National Railway 1896–1907," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 14, no. 3 (1995): 343; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 12.

37 Jonathan C. Brown, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Investment: British Development of Mexican Petroleum, 1889–1911," *The Business History Review* 61, no. 3 (1987): 396, 398; Garner, "The Politics of National Development in Late Porfirian Mexico," 341, 342; Teresa M. Van Hoy, "La Marcha Violenta? Railroads and Land in 19th-Century Mexico," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 19, no. 1 (2000): 33.

38 U.S. companies apparently perceived Mexico as "the new frontier of deregulation" as their own government increasingly controlled the domestic oil sector (Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico*, 102).

39 Brown, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Investment," 396, 398; Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico*, 8, 102; Garner, "The Politics of National Development in Late Porfirian Mexico," 342, 347, 349, 353; John Skirius, "Railroad, Oil and Other Foreign Interests in the Mexico Revolution, 1911–1914," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35, no. 1 (2003): 27.

In 1901, Sir Weetman Pearson, a British engineer and Díaz' trusted ally in a variety of infrastructure projects, entered the business. Due to the trust he had won in previous projects as well as the latent fear of an infringement of Mexican sovereignty by the U.S., Díaz and the *científicos* came to aid Pearson in his establishment in the oil industry. In 1909, the Mexican oil company El Aguila was founded by the Mexican government, with the mother firm S. Pearson & Son, Ltd. as the primary stockholder and the upper level of *científicos* as directors.⁴⁰ In 1910, Pearson struck a major well in what later came to be known as the Golden Lane (a particularly oil-productive region close to Tampico), ringing in the Mexican oil boom.⁴¹ Pearson's El Aguila and the major U.S. American competitor, Huasteca, elevated Mexico to the rank of a major oil-exporting country and by May 1911, when Díaz and many *científicos* went into exile in the first convulsions of the Revolution, completed the conversion of Mexico as an importer to an exporter.⁴²

Economy and Labor in Industry and Mining

The rapid industrialization during the Porfiriato, driven by the expansion of the railroads, as well as the influence of international connections, migrants, and foreign capital was especially visible in the textile industry. Particularly prominent in the states of Veracruz and Puebla, about 90 textile factories employed approximately 30,000 workers; two of the major factories, based in Orizaba, Veracruz, were owned by French immigrants and gave employment to one quarter of the town's inhabitants.⁴³

40 Brown, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Investment," 389, 408, 409; Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico*, 29; George W. Grayson, *The Politics of Mexican Oil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), 9; Skirius, "Railroad, Oil and Other Foreign Interests in the Mexico Revolution, 1911–1914," 27; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 229–30.

41 Mexican oil production rose from 5,000 barrels in 1900 to 195 million by 1921 (Stephen Haber, Armando Razo and Noel Maurer, *The Politics of Property Rights: Political Instability, Credible Commitments, and Economic Growth in Mexico, 1876–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 199).

42 Brown, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Investment," 412–14.

43 Aurora Gómez-Galvarriato, "Networks and Entrepreneurship: The Modernization of the Textile Business in Porfirian Mexico," *The Business History Review* 82, no. 3 (2008): 476, 486; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 133; Armando Razo and Stephen Haber,

Another sector receiving considerable sums of foreign capital and prospering in the light of industrialization was the mining industry, which employed about three times the number of workers compared to the textile industry. While also concentrated rather in the states in the north of the country, the major production was not regionally focused but more dispersed throughout the states, in turn prompting the development of the railway infrastructure, while, of course, also facilitated by it. Where a foreign enterprise set foot, the entire community was often soon governed by the foreign interests: The companies made sure to integrate all the necessary infrastructure for its workers, incorporating not only the mine and the inherent workshops, but also schools and the hospital, creating little foreign districts. Needless to say, and whether Mexican or international, this practice also tied the workers closer to their workplace and ensured their dependence, a classic component of industrialization.⁴⁴

The economic situation and living standards for many workers were already meager in the 1900s, and yet the Mexican workers' wages fell while prices rose. The design of the Porfirian economy now reared its ugly head: The economic structure endorsed production for export, while neither stimulating the domestic market, nor increasing the purchasing power of the workers' wages. The recession in 1907 and periods of sparse harvest further worsened conditions—many lost their jobs and joined the masses of migrant workers. By 1910, however, much of the economy had already recovered, and Knight makes a decided point of separating underemployment from armed revolt, since, as evidence suggests, workers still preferred to work when offered, instead of rising to arms.⁴⁵

Working conditions, in mines as well as in the industry and on the *hacienda*, displayed the typical problematic nature that characterized the relationship between the economic integration of Mexico into the

"The Rate of Growth of Productivity in Mexico, 1850–1933: Evidence from the Cotton Textile Industry," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30, no. 3 (1998): 484.

44 Michael J. Gonzales, "United States Copper Companies, the State, and Labour Conflict in Mexico, 1900–1910," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 3 (1994): 653–54; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 140.

45 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 130.

world market and the Mexican workers: The workers were mainly used to subsistence farming and now entered modern capitalism, which required a different work ethic and discipline, and the transition often proved complicated. Management did not always see this process with much patience, sticking to traditional and coercive methods, which gave rise to frequent strikes. Regarding the role of foreign investment, Knight states that there was no hostility towards the foreigners for not being Mexican; there were, however, accusations made against foreigners for specific circumstances related to them, such as their conduct towards the workers and the preference for fellow foreigners for the higher positions in the enterprise, and the inequality in salary between the nationals and foreigners.⁴⁶

The traditional conflicts occurring within these types of enterprises, increased by the complaints against tyrannical management, frequently led to strikes and revolts—the most well-known being that of the mining town of Cananea, Sonora, in 1906, and the textile factories in the Veracruz/Puebla area in 1907. In both cases, the workers' grievances referred primarily to the dominance of foreign workers in the mines, their placement in the higher and better paid positions, and the traditional, coercive stance of the management, resembling the paternalism on the *haciendas*. During a demonstration in 1906 in Cananea, the conflict escalated, resulting in the arrival of U.S. American troops, and multiple deaths. The events caused major upheaval all over the nation, on the one hand, because of the involvement of foreign troops, which was perceived as a sign of national weakness, and, on the other, because of the apparent oppression endorsed by the federal government on the regional level. In the textile industry, meanwhile, a strike broke out in late 1906 and escalated in early 1907. As had been the case in Cananea, federal troops moved in to settle the disturbance, leaving over 50 people dead.⁴⁷

46 Gonzales, "United States Copper Companies, the State, and Labour Conflict in Mexico, 1900–1910," 658, 660; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 141, 143, 168.

47 Gonzales, "United States Copper Companies, the State, and Labour Conflict in Mexico, 1900–1910," 660; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 127, 133, 146–147; David W. Walker, "Porfirian Labor Politics: Working Class Organizations in Mexico City and Porfirio Diaz, 1876–1902," *The Americas*, no. 3 (1981): 282–84.

The *Hacienda*

The third sector undergoing major transformations during the Porfirian era—and producing the most cause for revolution—was agriculture. The new economic integration of Mexico into the world market required a new production system and ultimately led to an increasing cultivation of export goods, such as the already established products coffee, vanilla, and henequen, and the complementation of new export products, such as rubber, chickpeas, and livestock. The adaptation of the agrarian system was mainly reflected in the adjusted significance of the *hacienda*: Where previously small farmers conducted subsistence farming, the *hacienda* encroached, modifying the agricultural landscape to produce for the international markets and profit, instead of for local markets and home consumption, despite the growth of the population. The velocity of this process reflected the regime's desire for economic integration, enabling it both through land reforms allowing the appropriation of lands without an official title and often enough by way of connections to the right people. Overall, land the size of California went over into private property. By 1910, *haciendas* incorporated 80% of rural communities and almost half of the rural population.⁴⁸

For the peasants,⁴⁹ who after all made up the majority of Mexican workers, this meant a drastic change from their traditional agricultural life coined by subsistence farming. The *hacienda* had already existed before the Porfiriato, yet it had been comparatively inefficient and its size held in check by its opposition force—the village and its peasants. With the facilitation of property ownership and the appropriation of land, the delicate balance between *hacienda* and village turned towards the *hacienda* and dominance by the few over the many. As *haciendas* slowly swallowed the land, peasants were forced to offer their services to the *hacendados*, making themselves vulnerable to the market economy.

48 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 80.

49 Contrary to other colonized countries, the indigenous population was by this point already mixed to great extends with the heirs of the colonizers, leading to the mestizo race. While in some communities those that could still be considered indigenous lived separate and quasi autonomous, many others had already integrated into society and can in the following deliberations be considered as part of the peasants and the *serranos* (Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 3–6).

Work was usually within three categories: resident workers—also debt peons—, seasonal workers, and renters or sharecroppers. Just as within the other sectors, the working conditions were highly dependent on the *hacendados*: In some cases, the traditional, close relationship between the owner and the resident workers was kept in place, while in others, the *hacendados* rather focused on production instead of the social factor, leading to *haciendas*—especially in the south—resembling plantation slavery with the landlords attracting workers—often indigenous—and maintaining them in close economic dependence. In a country that had always placed special emphasis on the ownership of land, many suddenly found themselves without it, leading to unexpected bursts of violence on the *haciendas*, especially in the south.⁵⁰

The Triad of Values

By 1910, the Porfirian economic structure had aggravated certain parts of society to the extent that they were ready to join an armed rebellion against the regime. Among these groups were, most notably, the peasants who found themselves degraded by agrarian dispossession and oppressive working conditions. The unprecedented exploitation, aggravated by the general decline of living standards, were more than this group was ready to endure, and when the opportunity for change arose, the peasants laid their cause at the heart of the Revolution.⁵¹

The people Knight collected under the general term *serranos*—people of the sierra—and their grievances built another prominent group in the Revolution. *Serrano* communities were very jealous of their independence and their community's autonomy, and attempts to curtail them often led to revolts, overall inhibiting the state's attempts to include the particular region in the state apparatus. While also predominantly peasants conducting subsistence farming, *serranos* also had a strong bandit element, which, coupled with their community spirit as well as their being accustomed to violence provided them with a certain readiness for rebellion.⁵²

50 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 82.

51 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 95, 156, 166.

52 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 115–116, 119, 126.

Furthermore, there was an element of urban protest. Many urban artisans, who saw themselves unable to compete with merchandise from other states or even other countries, faced similar economic desperation as the rural population. Not unionized like those in the industry, these workers displayed a readiness for violent revolt similar to that of the peasantry and the *serranos*, leading Knight to state that the “physical violence which lay at the heart of the Revolution [...] derived [...] from the action of declining, ‘conservative,’ groups, who resented the deleterious effects of progress and who fought [...] to defend their ancient, threatened position.”⁵³

While the first decade of the 20th century did not see more revolts than usual, the Díaz government had by this point lost the legitimacy it had previously had. Interestingly enough, the many parts of Mexican society opposing the regime assembled under the common call for liberalism, nationalism, patriotism, and, in general, the defense of past values, represented by the symbols and heroes of past battles, such as Benito Juárez. Liberalism, the crowning achievement of the domestic battles in the 19th century, had already been mythologized and thus acquired a range of connotations for the different parts of society that were not always part of the original philosophy or the historical context: Peasants associated liberalism with their own tradition, their right to land, and the constitution of 1857, while perhaps overseeing the *científicos*’ perception of liberalism as a right to defend progress and the measures the market required. However, also the elites and middle-class slighted by the regime, who compared the French and U.S. American democracies to their own, referred to the liberal constitution of 1857 and Benito Juárez in their rebellion against the government. Meanwhile, nationalism and patriotism assembled themselves along similar lines, extending over a wide range of ideas. The incompatibility sometimes occurring between the broader philosophies was usually ignored, and the triad served as a battle cry for freedom.⁵⁴

⁵³ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 133.

⁵⁴ Beezley, *Mexico in World History*, 100, 102; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 165.

The stark dichotomy between beneficiaries and benefactors created by the Porfirian regime as well as the land expropriation reached a new height in 1910. Hence, when Madero called for revolution, the discontented parts of society saw their opportunity to change the system and took it, rising up against a regime that was entirely unprepared and caught by surprise in light of the sheer size of the insurgency.⁵⁵

4.1.2 1910–1920: the Violent Decade

The apparent opening of the Porfirian system arose in the context of the 1910 presidential elections. Díaz was, by then, already in his seventies, which made the election of a successor all the more pressing. Furthermore, Díaz himself did his part for this opening: Admitting that his administration had achieved stability, a middle-class, and economic growth, he stated in an interview with the U.S. journalist James Creelman in 1908 that the country was now ready to enjoy the democratic freedom it had been lacking during his administration. So, if an opposition party was to participate in the coming elections, he would only welcome it.⁵⁶ The opposition sensed an opportunity and started to organize. In the elections of 1910, Francisco Madero emerged as Díaz' adversary.⁵⁷

Madero was the son of a wealthy family from the northern state of Coahuila and managed to unite, most of all, the middle-class with their grievances against the Díaz regime behind him. To draw as many supporters as possible, he published *The Presidential Succession in 1910* in January 1909, in which he recognized Díaz' achievements while standing firm that absolute power should not lie in one man. He founded the weekly newspaper *El Anti-Re-Eleccionista*, edited by José Vasconcelos, in June of the same year, and created the Anti-Re-electionist Party, made up mainly of the middle-class and rallying under the cry of

⁵⁵ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 169.

⁵⁶ The intention behind this statement is not exactly clear. While some attributed it to Díaz' wish to draw his opponents into the light to better oppress them, others see the interview in general as directed at foreign powers to make a democratic impression. Some even hint at Díaz' age and the possibility that he was simply not aware of the effects such a statement could cause (Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 48).

⁵⁷ Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 52–53; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 48.

“*Sufragio Efectivo, No Re-elección.*” This revolutionary current was still rather political and ideological as opposed to an armed revolution.⁵⁸

In April of 1910, the party held its first convention and nominated Madero as its candidate. Madero wanted to prevent an armed revolution by all means and was still prepared to run as vice-president to Díaz in the elections, yet the latter was unaware of the momentum the party had already developed, and refused to alter his plans. Right around this time, the repression against the Maderistas started as rallies were obstructed, supporters assigned to the army, and Madero himself accused in a trumped-up case of territorial claims. By election day, many were either imprisoned or on the run, while large parts of the overall organization of the Maderista movement were scattered. With all the mechanisms of repression in place, the election results confirmed Díaz as president, and the preparations for the celebration remembering the centennial of independence resumed their course.⁵⁹

Supporters contested the undemocratic election methods but the commission examining the accusations confirmed the election results. This reinforced Madero in his earlier suspicion that an actual revolution was unavoidable. He fled across the border to Laredo and drew up the Plan of San Luis Potosí, a combination of political statement—among others, he called the elections null and void and promised the restitution of unjustly appropriated land—and a call to rise up in arms against Díaz on November 20, 1910. At that time, however, the Díaz regime was still strong—upheld mainly by the *científicos* and the national and state oligarchy—, and the few skirmishes and smaller revolts were easily repressed. All the same, November 20 commemorates the beginning of the Mexican Revolution.⁶⁰

58 Michael J. Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 73; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 53; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 59, 70, 71; Frank McLynn, *Villa and Zapata: A History of the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2000), 28.

59 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 73; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 53; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 73–75.

60 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 73–74; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 53 and 57; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 73–77; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 31–32; Eileen Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar: Pershing's Hunt for Pancho Villa. A True Story of Revolution & Revenge* (New York and Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2006), 23.

Madero's supporters were a very heterogeneous mass with different causes, united by the goal to overthrow Díaz and fulfilling in large parts the conditions Friedrich Katz illustrated in order for a rebellion to be successful: "widespread dissatisfaction with political, economic, and social conditions affecting not just one segment or class of the population but a wide variety, of social classes and social groups," "a widespread politicization of the people," "a sense by increasing numbers of people of the illegitimacy of the existing government," and "the appearance of a clear alternative to the existing regime."⁶¹

The dissidents in the northern state of Chihuahua were different: Their rebellion was more profound than spontaneous, caused largely by an intense discontentment over the Chihuahuan power structure, which had for a long time been in the hands of the Terrazas and the Creel family. This anger could finally be expressed in the rebellion against Díaz, his administration, and his disciples, such as the Chihuahuan oligarchs. The rebels were furthermore strengthened by circumstances of history: Many were experienced fighters from wars against Indians and their culture did not make great disparities between the urban middle-class and the militants, who had been middle-class *rancheros* before their lands had been taken (unlike in the south where indigenous communal land was common). These groups' persistence and rigor were rewarded with successes against the Díaz system, and these successes, in turn, encouraged other rebels across the country to rise in arms.⁶²

In this period, two heroes of the Mexican Revolution started to rise up as regional leaders and eventually entered Mexican mythology: Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata. Villa—born Doroteo Arango—supported Madero early on, stood with him in the siege against Juárez, and seized the city on May 10, together with Pascual Orozco—a gifted general who led the largest revolutionary force in Chihuahua early in the Revolution. Observing the power the local landlords and oligarchs exercised over the people, Villa joined the *serranos*

⁶¹ Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 54–56.

⁶² Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 57, 59; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 180.

and became a bandit at an early age and at a time when banditry was considered an almost legitimate career path, decorated with glory and myths in its attempt to avenge the common people. In fact, Villa portrayed his reasons of becoming a Mexican version of Robin Hood by proclaiming himself a “victim of the ‘system.’”⁶³ Seeing an opportunity in Madero’s rebellion, Villa quickly made himself a name in the rebel forces, something that came easier for Villa than Zapata due to the northerners’ already mentioned disposition to violence and rebellion. The proximity of the U.S. border furthermore aided in the acquisition of weaponry and proved useful as a possibility for quick escapes.⁶⁴

Morelos, Zapata’s home state, was an entirely different environment, distinguishing the ‘Attila of the South,’ his cause, and his rebellion from the ‘Centaur of the North.’ In Morelos, land held and worked by a (typically indigenous) community was very widespread, making the state an exemplar of fast encroaching *haciendas* with tyrannical new business concepts and frequent land grab. Communities were left in desolate states with an ever-increasing number of land distribution cases to be settled in courts manned by Porfirian appointees. Zapata’s qualities as a leader quickly earned him a reputation and let him rise to lead the (predominantly agrarian) Morelos rebellion. In all of his alliances and strategies during the Revolution, Zapata never moved even an inch from this central premise. His almost mystical worship for the land and its importance for the people working it is a central part of the myth attached to his person today.⁶⁵

By January 1911, Díaz was forced to admit that his well-developed system of repression was faltering and, in some places, even crumbling entirely. Riots broke out in protest against the Díaz administration and neither the federal troops nor the *rurales* were able—or at times even willing—to keep up the repression. Moreover, especially the latter had themselves grown susceptible to corruption. On February 14,

63 McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 61.

64 Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 91; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 123, 176; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 58–59, 70–71; Alejandro Quintana, *Pancho Villa: A Biography* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2012), 10, 20.

65 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 66–67; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 190, 304; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 35–36, 41, 43, 47, 51.

1911, Madero finally crossed the border near El Paso with 130 men and now led the rebellion in person, winning recognition for his bravery in combat. Díaz' desperate moves and promises to please the rebels only reinforced the latter in their actions and despite the rebel army being ill equipped, it quickly achieved major strategic victories. On April 7, when Díaz' government only counted five states and urban areas in other states under its control, the rebel army took hold of Ciudad Juárez. Under pressure, Díaz proposed an armistice of two weeks. As he still refused to resign after this period, Madero's rebel army, suspicious of Madero's plans and witnessing slowly disappearing morale in light of Madero's only lukewarm revolutionary fervor, attacked Ciudad Juárez before the latter could prevent it. On May 10, the federals surrendered and the rebels took the city.⁶⁶

Díaz finally accepted his defeat: On May 21, the Treaty of Juárez was signed, removing Díaz as head of the government and placing Madero in his stead. Francisco León de la Barra was pronounced interim president until elections could be held to eventually install an administration that would govern according to the people's will in the different states. The man that had reigned over Mexico for 35 years fled to Veracruz and left for France.⁶⁷

Francisco I. Madero (Nov 6, 1911–Feb 19, 1913)

The sequence of organized rebellion, followed by riots and, eventually, peasant insurrection that Knight identifies in the months preceding the Treaty of Juárez, alarmed the political elites on both sides. In order for the situation to not get out of hand entirely, Díaz as well as Madero recognized the urgent need for a transfer of power. This is also what distinguishes the Mexican Revolution from others: The end of Díaz' reign "represented not the logical culmination of a narrow, controlled, political revolution, but rather the alarmed reaction [...] to a mount-

⁶⁶ Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 78, 80; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 107; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 181, 188, 202–203, 208; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 77, 81, 86–87, 96–97; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 23–25.

⁶⁷ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 203–4; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 87, 96 and 98.

ing social upheaval.”⁶⁸ Hence, the Treaty of Juárez, the ensuing provisional government, its appointees, and its laws seemed rather as a simple transaction of the man in power.⁶⁹

Díaz supposedly voiced his skepticism on his way into exile, stating that “Madero has unleashed a tiger, now let us see if he can control it.”⁷⁰ For the people up in arms, Madero’s changes were too slight and not sufficient. Some regions had achieved a change in government, while others remained or were reconquered by Porfirians. As Knight states: “A partial revolution had taken place,”⁷¹ and in light of the missing strong center, local authorities were left to their own devices in the battle against the revolutionaries. The people had found their voice and now they were not about to return from the fight with empty hands. Madero’s policies and laws pleased the middle-class yet neglected the rural masses and the matters that had caused them to rebel in the first place.⁷²

Although elected president in October 1911, the situation for Madero looked bleak. The revolution had evolved into rioting and banditry and Madero’s decision to keep a cabinet with different ideologies caused doubt in many whether the revolution had really been successful. Indeed, many thought that only a new Díaz could bring peace and order, leading to society splintering into even more factions and groups of interest. Due to the sheer size and strength of many of these movements, augmented by the civil authorities’ occasionally refusing to intervene, they could not be suppressed as easily as before Díaz’ fall.⁷³

Already in the period leading to the elections, Madero had alienated Zapata by retreating from the agrarian reforms announced in the Plan of San Luis Potosí. Madero dissolved the revolutionary forces and Zapata reluctantly obeyed, yet his followers did not. Madero, faced with an increasing number of former supporters leaving his ranks, sent Vic-

68 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 204.

69 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 80; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 204.

70 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 82.

71 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 242.

72 Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 120; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 242, 247, 301; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 83.

73 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 91; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 227, 248, 252, 264, 267, 384, 388–389, 396, 415, 455.

toriano Huerta to Morelos, a general with a reputation for bloodlust and a quenching thirst for power, who implemented martial law in an effort to subordinate the state and its people. Huerta's violence provoked Zapata to resume the lead of the increasing number of Morelos rebels, against Madero's original orders. Madero instructed Huerta to go about with more moderation, yet his efforts were in vain. Huerta's ruthlessness further re-kindled the revolutionary flame.⁷⁴

While in the end the conflict was solved by retracting Huerta from Morelos, Madero had lost Zapata's support. In November 1911, Zapata issued the Plan of Ayala, his blueprint for a successful revolution. Declaring that Madero had betrayed the Plan of San Luis Potosí, Zapata called on the people to remove Madero from the presidency. Additionally, he demanded the restoration of communal land taken from the *haciendas*, coining the phrase '*Tierra y Libertad*.' Instead of Madero, Zapata identified Orozco as the true leader of the Revolution who was to lead the country to peace as Chief of the Revolutionary Army. By March 1912, Zapata's liberal army was in control of most of southern Mexico.⁷⁵

The following events display the multitude of factions fighting in the Revolution and the readiness to switch sides for a major personal benefit. In March 1912, Orozco issued a manifesto, demanding the resignation of Madero. Huerta was called in to help in the north and soon the Orozquistas were defeated and forced to retreat. Villa joined Huerta but the two headstrong men soon clashed, and Villa was lucky enough to escape the firing squad. Madero saw himself unable to protect Villa from Huerta—yet another indicator of his weak standing in office. Huerta pardoned the Orozquistas, while Villa learned of Zapata's revolt and the rebellion of Felix Díaz—Porfirio Díaz' nephew who planned to overthrow Madero and become president himself. Huerta was offered to participate in the coup and it seemed that he, after being

74 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 87; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 262–263, 308–309; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 107, 109–114; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 26–27.

75 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 87; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 309–10; Dana Markiewicz, *The Mexican Revolution and the Limits of Agrarian Reform 1915–1946* (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 17.

dismissed by Madero, found increasing pleasure in the idea. However, he preferred to be the principal executor of a plan and thus also president and not the minion of another man.⁷⁶

Madero also faced international opposition: The U.S. government grew increasingly worried in light of the nationalist actions undertaken by the revolutionaries as well as the government. While on the one hand, complaints concerned new taxes that were levied against oil businesses, on the other, the U.S. government had apparently observed the dismissal of a number of U.S. American workers, the destruction of U.S. property, and even the murder of U.S. citizens. As a result, the neighbor to the north charged the revolutionary government with not being able to protect U.S. interests in Mexico, gradually souring relations and eventually leading the U.S. government to conclude that the army was key in the necessary coup against Madero.⁷⁷

On February 9, 1913, began what came to be known as the ‘Ten Tragic Days’—the *decena trágica*. It started with a coup by Felix Díaz and Bernardo Reyes—former general under Porfirio Díaz and co-conspirator for his nephew—when they were liberated from prison. On February 17, Huerta was arrested by Madero’s brother. He struck a deal, promising that he could end the rebellion within 24 hours. He kept his promise, yet in a different way: On February 18, he used his forces to have Madero and the vice-president Pino Suárez arrested—the influence of the U.S. ambassador Henry Lane Wilson in the support of the coup needs to be emphasized here. They were asked to resign in exchange for the permission to go into exile and the promise of a safe passage there.⁷⁸

On February 20, Madero wrote to a friend: “Will they have the stupidity to kill us? You know, they would gain nothing, for we would be

76 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 329 and 474; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 133–134, 140 and 142–45.

77 Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 92–95.

78 Jürgen Buchenau, *Plutarco Elias Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 37; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 94–98; Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 95, 105; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 482–88; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 156–58; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 28–29.

greater in death than we are today in life.”⁷⁹ However, late in the evening of February 22, 1913, two cars came for Madero and Pino Suárez, supposedly to drive them to a different penitentiary. When the cars stopped, they were ushered out, and the man that had ousted Porfirio Díaz and his vice-president were shot by Huerta’s co-conspirators. The scenario had been arranged to justify the apparent application of the *ley fuga*, yet no one found their pretexts credible. Madero and Pino Suárez were made the first martyrs of the Revolution that night, ringing in the next and much bloodier phase.⁸⁰

Victoriano Huerta (Feb 19, 1913–July 15, 1914)

Having no ambitions to become president himself, Pedro Lascuráin, the secretary of foreign relations and successor for the presidency passed the office on to Huerta after 45 minutes of ruling over Mexico. The latter slowly transformed the civil government into a military government, the appointed members of government changing ranks quickly and exerting next to no influence on the president and his decisions.⁸¹

The Mexican people reacted to Madero’s death as might have been predicted: with shock that re-ignited and even amplified the previous rebellion. Huerta counted on his army to oppress the masses, yet his forces were riddled with desertion as well as internal rebellion. On top of evoking domestic hostility, he further attracted international alienation, and foreign governments decided to keep an eye on the president and the general situation in Mexico. The U.S.—still supporting Huerta due to the manipulations of Ambassador Wilson—meanwhile issued an arms embargo to the rebels that lasted for a year until February 1914, while maintaining a policy of ‘watchful waiting.’⁸²

⁷⁹ McLynn, Villa and Zapata, 159.

⁸⁰ Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 98–99; Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 110; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 489–90; McLynn, Villa and Zapata, 159; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 30.

⁸¹ Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 105–6; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 488–89; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2: *Counter-Revolution and Reconstruction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 1, 4, 89.

⁸² Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 103; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 15, 21 and 30; McLynn, Villa and Zapata, 159; Skirius, “Railroad, Oil and Other Foreign Interests in the Mexico Revolution, 1911–1914,” 37–38.

On March 4, 1913, a group of rebel army officers chose Venustiano Carranza from Sonora as First Chief of the 'Constitutionalist Army,' starting the Constitutionalist movement against Huerta. To strengthen his position, Carranza drew up the Plan of Guadalupe, declaring Huerta's regime illegal, unconstitutional, and piratical. He installed an alternative government in Sonora where he remained for one year, acting as if elected by the Mexican people in democratic and representative elections, and delegating the rebels.⁸³

While Carranza was trying to establish himself as leader of the movement, Villa and Álvaro Obregón—another strong leader in the North—were winning hearts and followers in the battlefield, albeit independently of the Chief: Obregón negotiated with the Yaquis in Sonora, calming a hot spot that had been simmering for a prolonged period of time, as well as providing additional force to the rebel army. Villa in the meantime gained major recognition after using a Trojan horse to retake Ciudad Juárez from Huerta. In the South, Zapata, remote from the other rebels, had difficulty in raising a big army, so instead, he added a political notion to his insurgency: He revised the Plan of Ayala in an attempt to gain official recognition by the U.S. and maybe negotiate an alliance with Villa.⁸⁴

Over the winter of 1913/1914, the probability of Huerta succeeding over the rebels grew more and more dim. In early 1914, the outlook grew even bleaker as relations with the northern neighbor deteriorated. Woodrow Wilson, who had refused to recognize Huerta as president and only wanted to keep the administrative structure, first decided to lift the arms embargo against Carranza. Then, in April, a federal general at Tampico arrested crewmembers of a U.S. naval ship. With relations already tense, Wilson decided to intervene when the German ship *Ypiranga* arrived at Veracruz later the same month, ordering U.S. marines to take the port and the city by force.⁸⁵

⁸³ Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 113, 115; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 16; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 163–66.

⁸⁴ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 60; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 169, 172–173, 180–182, 185–186.

⁸⁵ Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 108–9; Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 167, 184, 196, 232–240; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 138, 151, 157; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 213–15; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 42–43.

In the rebel faction, Carranza and Villa were slowly growing adverse towards each other. Both were rather stubborn and set on defending their position over the other. Carranza was especially afraid that one day Villa might grow too strong, so he let Obregón fight the important battles and created a Division of the Center in counterbalance to Villa's Division of the North. In return, Villa did not always comply with Carranza's instructions. In contrast to the rebels' forces, Huerta's army grew increasingly weak: The uphold of his large army was very costly, and the more he managed to increase his numbers—through press-ganging and other violent means—, the weaker it got internally, increasing the weight on the state treasury while rendering only little of its intended effects in return.⁸⁶ A meeting, proposed by Wilson, in Niagara Falls from late May to the beginning of July 1914 with representatives of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile for the arbitration did not improve Huerta's outlook. In the end, only the withdrawal of his troops from Veracruz was negotiated and the arms embargo reinstated.⁸⁷

Villa and Obregón counted the successes in decisive battles, and on July 15, 1914, Huerta resigned and exiled himself to Spain. About one month later, his successor, Foreign Minister Francisco Carbajal, also threw in the towel and fled. The old order from the Porfirian system was now destroyed by the Revolution: The rest of the Porfirian army, the *jefes políticos*, the oligarchs, and the church were forced to surrender their power to the people, and Mexico could be built up from the ground, seemingly without political remnants.⁸⁸

Convention of Aguascalientes (Nov. 6, 1914–Oct. 10, 1915)

Despite the fact that the apparently sole obstacle to peace, Huerta and his followers, had been removed, the four major rebel forces could not come to an arrangement regarding the future of the country,

⁸⁶ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 109–110, 168; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 231–232, 236.

⁸⁷ Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 356–57; Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 200–202; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 165–67; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 240–41; Skirius, "Railroad, Oil and Other Foreign Interests in the Mexico Revolution, 1911–1914," 46.

⁸⁸ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 170–71; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 242.

eventually kindling the “War of the Winners.”⁸⁹ Zapata and Villa wanted regional autonomy and agrarian reform, while Carranza and Obregón had strong nationalist aspirations. By September 1914, the conflict of opinion and resulting disagreements between Villa and Carranza reached new heights and Villa withdrew his recognition of Carranza as First Chief. Both kept recruiting. Obregón mediated between the two, escaping Villa’s firing squad multiple times, and in the end managed to secure Villa’s attendance at the planned Convention of Aguascalientes on October 10.⁹⁰

In contrast to the convention installing Madero’s government, this time, civilians were excluded and only those revolutionaries were allowed to participate that could provide a record of longer revolutionary activity. The goal of this measure was to ensure an outcome according to the Revolution’s will—or its many facets. The Zapatistas remained cautious yet attended with delegates. The Convention—for many perceived as a third force that was neither Carranza nor Villa—declared itself a sovereign body, approved the Plan of Ayala in part, proclaimed a general truce, and elected a provisional president to replace Carranza.⁹¹

Carranza refused to yield to the Convention’s verdict and in early November, the Convention declared Carranza a rebel, ringing in the bloodiest phase yet of the Mexican Revolution: rebels fighting against rebels. Villa, apparently abiding by the Convention’s rules, was given the title General in Chief and with it the mandate over the Convention’s army to lead it against the Carranzista rebellion. Having tried his best to achieve peace by way of the Convention, Obregón was now faced with the decision to join either Villa and Zapata and the Convention, or Carranza. Obregón chose the latter.⁹²

By January 1915, the Convention had lost next to all of its significance and the Revolution had, in its essence, gone back to a fight-off between

⁸⁹ Knight, “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution,” 235.

⁹⁰ Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 133, 135; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 253–54; McLynn, 243–244, 246–248, 254–256.

⁹¹ Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 135; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 256–258, 261; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 257–60.

⁹² Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 138; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 433; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 262–63; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 261–63; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 48.

the Carranzistas and the Villistas. Carranza had vacated the capital in November, fleeing from the Division of the North to Veracruz, providing Villa and Zapata with the opportunity to meet for the first time. However, since neither had any aspirations to rule, the leaders soon moved out of the capital again.⁹³

In the beginning of 1915, Villa seemed to enjoy the support of the rich as well as the poor. Nonetheless, he increasingly showed signs of autocratic behavior and seemed focused mainly on achieving his dream of the military colonies. Furthermore, Villa's anti-American sentiment was born in that period: The U.S., driven by contradictory interests and with the wish to have a stable neighbor in times of a world war, used a pro-Villa rhetoric, yet actions were rather pro-Carranza. Meanwhile, the latter, aware of his reputation as a dictator, tried to win the agrarian forces by decreeing the restitution of village lands in January 1915. Obregón's forces proved more capable than Villa's, yet the leader himself went on record as opposing workers' rights, which alienated this particular part of society. At the end of March 1915, Obregón defeated Villa at the Battle of Celaya. Villa was forced to retreat, his reputation badly hurt. Zapata, despite seeing that his ally was about to be defeated, did still not send reinforcements—displaying his alliance with Villa to this extent would have involved a stand-off between Zapata and Obregón, which the Attila of the South was keen to avoid.⁹⁴

The following months showed a similar pattern and by September, Villa's forces were defeated and the Centaur forced to retreat and go into hiding. What remained of the Division of the North was now spread into guerrilla groupings. With only Zapata left as opposition in the South, Carranza had won the civil war that had been raging for almost a year—with the help of Obregón, the rising star of the military. The Convention was forced to retire and dissolved on October 10, 1915. Shortly

⁹³ Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 434–37; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 263, 303, 307 and 311; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 264, 275, 28–283, 287.

⁹⁴ Buchenau, *Plutarco Elias Calles and the Mexican Revolution*, xix; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 469; Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 298–299, 301–302; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 322–27; Markiewicz, *The Mexican Revolution and the Limits of Agrarian Reform 1915–1946*, 20; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 290–94, 297–300, 302; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 54–55.

afterwards, the Carranza government gained recognition by the U.S. and six Latin American nations.⁹⁵

Reconstruction under Venustiano Carranza (Oct 19, 1915– May 21, 1920)

In the following five years, Mexico entered a period of reconstruction, accompanied by relative tranquility and stability. Nonetheless, (armed) disagreements were by no means over: In the South, the federal forces were busy with Zapata, and underestimating the threat from Villa in the North—even though in hiding—would have been equally, if not even more, dangerous. Villa, not able to execute the full-sized assault on Carranza that he would have preferred, changed tactics and instead aimed at straining the relationship between the president and the U.S., while also settling scores with the latter who—thought he—had abandoned and betrayed him. To this end, he ordered the killing of sixteen U.S. mining engineers on January 17, 1916. The international dispute he had desired did, however, not ensue.⁹⁶

In March 1916, Villa raided the border town of Columbus, New Mexico. After coming to terms with Carranza, Wilson sent troops across the border in pursuit of the raiders in what came to be known as the ‘Punitive Expedition’ under General ‘Black Jack’ Pershing. The presence of U.S. troops inside Mexico played into the Centaur’s hands: Anti-U.S. sentiment in the population grew as even impoverished farmers refused to betray Villa for money. This resentment and the assassination attempts on Villa increased to the extent that he was reinstated in the ranks of national heroes. Consequently, Carranza demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Expedition. Wilson in return demanded that the poor and starving in Mexico receive federal help, which Carranza perceived as an interference in domestic affairs, and refused to

⁹⁵ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 328–29; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 304, 312; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 56.

⁹⁶ John Eisenhower, *Intervention! The United States and the Mexican Revolution, 1913–1917* (New York: Norton, 1993), 215–16; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 152–53; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 317; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*, 65–68.

bargain. As tensions built up again, the Punitive Expedition was finally withdrawn in January 1917 to prevent a full-scale war.⁹⁷

The years 1916 to 1920 showed the Mexicans weary of war—and U.S. influence cautious due to the ongoing world war, despite protests of U.S. companies in Mexico. The country was haunted by hyperinflation and people starving due to the land conflicts, dropping production, bankruptcy, and unemployment. The railways built in the time of Díaz had largely been damaged and the gold reserves used up. To make matters worse, illnesses, which had been almost defeated with vaccination and other medical treatment in the Díaz period were reappearing: smallpox, typhus, malaria, and yellow fever took many lives and in 1918, the Spanish flu hit Mexico again.⁹⁸

In early 1917, a new constitution, modeled after its liberal predecessor in 1857 and “one of the most radical of its time,”⁹⁹ was submitted. It maintained central provisions from 1857, such as the principle of no re-election and the separation of powers, and was enhanced by socio-economic restructuring, providing the state with more power in the management of society. The most popular and commemorated additions were the Articles 27 and 123: The former transferred the right to subsoil resources and land to the nation—*patrimonio cultural*, cultural heritage—allowing for foreign expropriation and the override of private property rights, and paving the way for comprehensive land reform.¹⁰⁰ The latter was a far-reaching and, at that time, unique labor reform, providing, among others, for worker’s protection, the right to strike, minimum wages, and an arbitration board.¹⁰¹

97 Eisenhower, *Intervention!*; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 153–57; Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 303, 307–314; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 353; Welsome, *The General and the Jaguar*;

98 Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 493; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 406, 421; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 339, 358.

99 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 470.

100 More than 100 million hectares of land were redistributed and organized into ‘ejidos’ (USAid, “USAid Country Profile. Property Rights and Resource Governance: Mexico” (2016), 3).

101 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 164–65; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 74; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 470–71; Markiewicz, *The Mexican Revolution and the Limits of Agrarian Reform 1915–1946*, 26, 28.

Carranza was elected president in the March elections and was able to continue with his reconstruction scheme, aided by the recovering economy. Villa, Zapata, and even Felix Díaz in Oaxaca were still actively fighting against Carranza, and yet, as mentioned earlier, the country had grown weary. Zapata found his base of support slowly crumbling: Villages turned against him and his followers defected, causing him to look for strategic alliances with more desperation than ever before; he even adjusted his agenda to allow for national unity instead of the originally planned village autonomy. On April 10, the once so cautious Zapata rode into the Chinameca *hacienda* to meet with Carranza, who had made him an offer of alliance, and rode right into a trap: He was riddled with bullets by the men stationed all around the entrance, elevating him to the status of a legend of the Mexican Revolution.¹⁰²

The presidential elections in 1920 returned revolutionary sentiment for a short time: Since Carranza could not be re-elected, it was on him to throw his weight behind one candidate. Obregón had counted on a nomination, and yet Carranza opted for Ignacio Bonillas, a close friend without any revolutionary reputation. The uproar followed soon: Obregón was backed by prominent men, such as Plutarco Elías Calles, congressman and politician from Sonora, and José Vasconcelos, who resented the recurring nepotism. In late April, Calles was the first to sign the Plan of Agua Prieta, declaring that Carranza had violated Sonora's sovereignty. A strike of the military generals supporting Calles and Obregón soon decided Carranza's fate, and he was assassinated in May 1920, while fleeing to Veracruz. Adolfo de la Huerta provisionally assumed the presidency until, in September, Obregón was elected. Despite the country being far from democratic elections, as the overthrow of Carranza in itself had shown, the election of Obregón marks the end of the bloodiest phase of the Mexican Revolution.¹⁰³

102 Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 710; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 74; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 392; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 347, 350–351.

103 Buchenau, *Plutarco Elias Calles and the Mexican Revolution*, 83, 87–89; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 178, 180; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 2, 493; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 381.

Villa finally retired after Obregón was elected and went to live on an *hacienda* with his favorite women. He survived multiple assassination attempts until in July 1923, he was caught in a trap with his bodyguards, and all were killed. Who ordered his assassination remains unknown—some point a finger at Pershing, who still regretted not having been able to catch Villa. The most likely suspect, however, is Calles. All in all, between 350,000 and one million people died in direct consequences of the Revolution while another 300,000 dead can be accredited to the Spanish flu.¹⁰⁴

4.1.3 Institutional Revolution in the 1920s and 1930s

In the 1920s and 1930s, the country was gradually pacified and the provisions of the Revolution carried out, up to a certain degree, consolidating the modern Mexican state and society and introducing a new mode of doing politics—from a quasi-dictatorship to a democracy. As Katz stated: “Carranza, Obregón, and Calles were the creators of the new nationalistic revolutionary Mexican state, which proved to be one of the most stable constructs in the history of Latin America.”¹⁰⁵ Still, the new leaders would now have to establish a new system and decide, which of the revolutionary ideals and concepts could be implemented and how.¹⁰⁶

Obregón managed to attain legitimacy and international recognition for his government through a combination of moderate reforms as well as negotiations with or execution of political enemies, which, on the other end, led to a long-lost political stability. Calles, his successor, was intent on implementing the provisions limiting the power of the church as stipulated in the constitution, yet his unwavering stance caused the outbreak of the Cristero Rebellion, a bloody confrontation between the Catholic Church, its supporters, and the new government. That the

104 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 200–201; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 765–66; McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 385.

105 Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 816.

106 Sarah Osten, *The Mexican Revolution's Wake: The Making of a Political System, 1920–1929* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.10107/9781108235570>, 3.

Revolution was, in fact, not over was demonstrated not only by this war and continued executions, but furthermore in the presidential elections in 1928 when Obregón was re-elected as president after thwarting an anti-re-election movement and passing a corresponding law to permit re-election as long as it was not consecutive—and was assassinated. After his death, however, re-election was again prohibited.¹⁰⁷

Calles, in 1929, created the Revolutionary National Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario; PNR)—the forerunner of the PRI—as a vehicle of control. The party would nominate the presidential candidates and would ensure that this candidate won the elections, making use of the measures necessary. It also safeguarded the position of the revolutionary elite and its allies in power, on occasion calling on the supporters to fight dissidents. At the same time, Calles—also called the *jefe máximo* (*de la Revolución Mexicana*)—thus guaranteed his continued power over the government for the six years following his presidency. During the ‘Maximato’, he effectively presided over Mexico, in the background, a subtle but decisive influence in the policy-making and in the selection of those in the higher ranks of the Mexican government.¹⁰⁸

In 1934, Lázaro Cárdenas was elected president. Although endorsed by the *jefe máximo*, he detached from Calles’ influence to implement his own plans: During the Calles presidency and the Maximato, rebuilding and cultivating the economy in the surroundings of the Great Depression had taken priority over workers and the people. Cárdenas was set on reversing this dynamic and recentering the young government on the central achievement supposedly promulgated by the Revolution: a government for the people. To this end, he pursued a rather progressive agenda, including socialist education, agrarian reform, and economic and social opportunity for the workers. He also revived the nationalist sentiment, best portrayed in the oil expropriation in 1938. Among others, he promulgated the revolutionary sentiment by creating holidays

107 Buchenau, Plutarco Elias Calles and the Mexican Revolution, 112–113, 126–130, 141, 143; Gonzales, The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940, 201–202, 215–216; McLynn, Villa and Zapata, 386, 397, 399; Osten, The Mexican Revolution’s Wake, 3.

108 Buchenau, Plutarco Elias Calles and the Mexican Revolution, 144, 149, 155–156; Gonzales, The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940, 216, 219–220; Osten, The Mexican Revolution’s Wake, 3–4.

and streets in the name of historic events and figures and employing the arts to further this cause. He also added a socialist message to the pledge of allegiance: “I will fight the three powerful enemies of our Fatherland, which are: the Clergy, Ignorance, and Capital.”¹⁰⁹

While his efforts at agrarian reform were largely unsuccessful and the populist stance was to some extent at the expense of the economic well-being of the country, his “efforts on behalf of workers and peasants transformed him into an icon of the Mexican left”¹¹⁰ and he contributed considerably to the immortalization of the Revolution. His transforming the PRN into the PRM further underscored this notion, as the new party was to provide improved representation for the above-mentioned groups.¹¹¹

After the Revolution, and also due to Cárdenas’ efforts to appear on the international scene, Mexico—what could be considered a ‘backyard’ of the U.S.—suddenly received international attention. On the one hand, the country was generous in accepting European refugees.¹¹² On the other hand, U.S. intellectuals searched within the recent events for ideas to be implemented in the New Deal.¹¹³ Furthermore, artists were drawn in by the combination of surrealism and memory culture promoted by the government and displayed, among others, by Diego Rivera—which also influenced art during the New Deal. The legends around the Revolution also attracted filmmakers and led to various popular movies, such as, e.g., ‘Viva Zapata!’ starring Marlon Brando, or MGM’s ‘Viva Villa!’.

109 In Adrian A. Bantjes, “Idoltry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico: The De-Christianization Campaigns, 1929-1940,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, no. 1 (1997): 105.

110 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910-1940*, 223.

111 John A. Britton, *Revolution and Ideology: Images of the Mexican Revolution in the United States* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 144; Buchenau, *Plutarco Elias Calles and the Mexican Revolution*, 163, 174, 177; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910-1940*, 222-223, 242-243, 266; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 38.

112 Leonardo Senkman, “Parias Und Privilegierte: Die Jüdischen Und Spanischen Flüchtlinge in Mexiko Und Argentinien 1939-1945. Eine Vergleichende Studie,” *Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut*, accessed June 2, 2021.

113 Britton, *Revolution and Ideology*, 154-57.

4.2 ¡Viva la Revolución! Symbols of Myth and Master Narrative

From the age of kindergarteners, Mexicans are taught about their country and its major historical events, celebrated in commemorations and administered continuously with a dose of nationalism. Starting in preschool, every Monday morning, the pupils and teachers celebrate the *homenaje*, singing the National Hymn and marching to the Hymn to the Flag, commemorating events in the nation's history of this day or month. Particularly beginning this analysis here, the relationship between history, memory, and myth becomes outstandingly relevant.

Assmann himself states that “[myth] is the past condensed into foundational narrative.”¹¹⁴ Heidi Hein-Kircher in her analysis of the myth surrounding Evita Perón builds on this idea, acknowledging that historical events have evolved into political myth and, as such, into “a kind of social master narrative.”¹¹⁵ Effectively hinting at what Assmann calls the figures of memory and their function of relating an idea, values, etc., Hein-Kircher further explains that “myth’ can be seen as a meaningful narrative that explains unknown or difficult to explain events or facts in terms that are easily understood.” As such, “[myths] are a cognitive frame of reference”¹¹⁶ and hence a form of master narrative. Again supporting the above drawn connection between collective/cultural memory and narrative, she states that political myths—as a category of myth—“explain present-day social issues on the basis of historical experience and derive from it social goals and values,” from the “political and social events or personalities that are interpreted as important for that group.”¹¹⁷ At the same time, these myths need to appeal to emotions: It is “important that a myth is ‘lived’ or experienced emotionally, which is often more impressing than the actual mythical narrative.”¹¹⁸

114 Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 61.

115 Heidi Hein-Kircher, “Social Master Narratives: Romanticisation and Functionalisation of Personalities and Events Through Political Myths,” in *Evita Vive: Estudios Literarios Y Culturales Sobre Eva Perón*, ed. Anne-Berenike Rothstein and Pere Joan Tous (Berlin: Walter Frey, 2013), 17.

116 Hein-Kircher, “Social Master Narratives,” 14.

117 Hein-Kircher, “Social Master Narratives,” 15.

118 Hein-Kircher, “Social Master Narratives,” 20.

A vital insight for the Mexican context is provided by Hein-Kirchner's deliberations on the function of myth for identity: She states that "[the] main and most powerful function of myth in modern society, which as a result of increased secularisation often lacks significant points of orientation and identification, is to compensate for growing rationalization."¹¹⁹ Whether rationalization is, indeed, what follows secularization, is, of course, up for debate, yet in the case of Mexico, this might be one factor facilitating the prominent nationalist sentiment, derived from myth surrounding historical occurrences and legendary figures, and providing exactly these points of orientation and identification.

Taking this interpretation further, this notion also offers an explanation for the 'revolutionary nationalism' that the Mexican political system is often associated with. The country has a strong sense of nationalism, and patriotism is very prominent. Symbols of these sentiments are, as would be in most cases, the flag, the hymn, and the crest, and they resemble in their significance the Holy Trinity—are "almost holy"¹²⁰—and cannot be modified to the smallest degree—an artist once published a mambo version of the hymn and, apparently, it was the end of his career.¹²¹

With these considerations in mind, we will now take a look at the Revolution, as well as various figures and effects it produced that have developed great importance for the social movement of the Sección 22 and its narrative.

4.2.1 Redemption through and of the Revolution

The Mexican Revolution in itself has already become a prominent symbol in the national master narrative, carrying great importance for Mexican society¹²²—as Rafael Segovia stated: "The mythification of the

119 Hein-Kircher, "Social Master Narratives," 23.

120 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

121 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

122 There is a great amount of literature on the myth around the Revolution, yet due to the limited scope of this dissertation, I will only provide a short overview with the most important insights and its significance for contemporary Mexican politics and the Sección 22. For more information see Knight, "The Myth of the Mexican Revolution."

Mexican Revolution is an omnipresent and indisputable fact.¹²³ Knight further states that “[the] ‘project’ of the Revolution is, we could say, the hard political kernel of the process; the ‘myth’ consists of the fleshy pulp which surrounds it, and which makes it altogether more tasty and appealing.”¹²⁴ It is furthermore possible to define the myth of the Mexican Revolution as a ‘political myth.’ Hein-Kirchner delineates political myths as “narratives dealing with political and social events or personalities that are interpreted as important for that group.”¹²⁵

In Rosa Nidia Buenfil Burgos’ interpretation, which she calls “Mística de la Revolución Mexicana,”¹²⁶ the Revolution, starting out in the context of Assmann’s idea of cultural memory, is elevated to a higher, divine-like level. It “emerged and [was] invented to restore the social order”¹²⁷ in the period of political uncertainty and occasional outbreak of violence—Knight even goes so far as to say that “the Revolution—as a ‘real’ historical process—never happened; it is a myth, created from above, by a myth-making state, albeit on the basis of some original raw materials.”¹²⁸ Apparently, in the 1920s and 1930s, the Revolution and ‘its’ achievements were perceived as an alternative path to salvation,¹²⁹ which allows for a comparison in metaphor between the Divine and the Revolution, uniting various factors, such as the sense of unity they create, the proposition of identity, and the impossibility to clearly define it.¹³⁰

Buenfil Burgos clarifies, paraphrasing Cornelius Castoriadis, that

123 “La mitificación de la Revolución Mexicana es un hecho omnipresente e indiscutido” (Rafael Segovia, *La Politización Del Niño Mexicano* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1975), 96).

124 Knight, “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution,” 228.

125 Hein-Kirchner, “Social Master Narratives,” 15.

126 The author uses the word *mística*, which translates to mysticism. The more precise term, however, would be ‘myth,’ which will be used in this analysis.

127 “emergida e inventada para restaurar el orden social” (Rosa Nidia Buenfil Burgos, *Argumentación Y Poder: La Mística De La Revolución Mexicana Rectificada* (México, D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, 2004), 35).

128 Knight, “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution,” 224.

129 In this context, Cárdenas took on the role of Jesus (Cf. Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995)).

130 Buenfil Burgos, *Argumentación y Poder*, 35.

[the] Myth of the Mexican Revolution is neither the Constitution of 1917 nor the *ejido*; it is also neither the expropriation of uncultivated lands and its distribution, nor the *Misión Cultural* that reached the lost corners of the country; it is neither the legendary image of Zapata, nor the slogan ‘*Tierra y Libertad*.’ The Myth of the Mexican Revolution conditions the possibility to establish these signs as symbols of the Mexican Revolution.¹³¹

As a result, the myth of the Mexican Revolution was “becoming independent of its origins and presenting itself as an order above the subjects, like a transcendental rationality, self-contained and complete, without fissures.”¹³² Consequently, “similar to the religious discourse, the subject appears to be dominated by his own creation, the myth of the Mexican Revolution demands an autonomy so that it can rule social life.”¹³³ The famous politician Jesús Silva Herzog himself confirmed this divine-like character: “Us Mexicans we have two gods: Our Lady the Virgin of Guadalupe and Our Lady the Mexican Revolution.”¹³⁴

In this attempt, according to Buenfil Burgos’ suggestion, the myth succeeds in unifying the diverse Mexican society in the national project, characterized by “intellectual and political hybridism and eclecticism,”¹³⁵ by merging necessities and demands of the involved with political concepts, intellectual traditions and “the inevitable *common sense*

131 “la MRM [Mística de la Revolución Mexicana] no es la Constitución de 1917 ni el ejido; tampoco es la expropiación de tierras baldías y su reparto, ni la Misión Cultural que llegaba a los rincones perdidos del país; no es la imagen legendaria de Zapata, ni la consigna ‘Libertad y Justicia’. La MRM es condición de posibilidad que instituye estos signos como símbolos de la Revolución Mexicana” (Buenfil Burgos, *Argumentación y Poder*, 34).

132 “independizándose de su origen y presentándose como un orden por encima de los sujetos, como una racionalidad trascendental, autocontenida y acabada, sin fisuras” (Buenfil Burgos, *Argumentación y Poder*, 35).

133 “semejante al discurso religioso, el sujeto aparece dominado por su propia creación, la MRM cobra una autonomía tal que le permite regir la vida social” (Buenfil Burgos, *Argumentación y Poder*, 35).

134 “Los mexicanos tenemos dos deidades: Nuestra Señora la Virgen de Guadalupe y Nuestra Señora la Revolución Mexicana” (Jesús Silva Herzog in Arnaldo Córdova, “La Mitología De La Revolución Mexicana,” in *Mitos Mexicanos*, ed. Enrique Florescano (México, D.F.: Debolsillo, 2013)).

135 “*hibridismo y eclecticismo* intelectual y político” (Buenfil Burgos, *Argumentación y Poder*, 33).

[...] that lives in Mexican idiosyncrasy, which articulates religious and anticlerical fanaticism, nationalism and malinchism¹³⁶, a bitter pessimism and a gullible optimism.”¹³⁷ In this sense then, the myth creates a clear distinction of heroic figures and behavior—“Villa, Zapata, the rural teacher, the peasant, the worker [...], the strike, distribution, the indigenous as an aesthetic value” on the one hand, and “the cleric, the landowner and his minions, the ruthless and egotistical patron, the Porfirista dictatorship, the US imperialism, [and] all forms of oppression (economic, political, moral, juridical, intellectual, etc.) against which they fought in the Revolution”¹³⁸ on the other. Due to the overarching character of this myth that aims to encompass the entire Mexican society in its diversity,¹³⁹ these symbols hence only serve as a basis for a set of values—by nature, they are flexible and can be employed in a great variety of contexts, making it possible for political opponents—such as, e.g., the PRI party and the CNTE/the Sección 22—to use its symbols in their campaigns and justifications.¹⁴⁰

Arnaldo Córdova offers an additional interpretation of the rise of the myth, which also relates to its emotional character and to the identification happening upon narrative engagement: He states that the places, heroes, laws, and concepts, such as

agrarianism, social justice, the [*ejido*] inspired by soviet collectivization, all converted into history, by way of them history was made; but in the popular consciousness, in the masses every time more numerous and better organized, they turned into myths, something that overtook what they were in their moment and resized itself permanently: the value, the

136 Malinche is a character in Mexican history that supposedly sold the Mexicans to the Spaniards. The readiness to betray one's own country is thus known as '*malinchismo*'.

137 “el inevitable *sentido común* [...] que habita en la idiosincrasia mexicana, que articula fanatismos religioso y anticlerical, nacionalismo y malinchismo, un amargo pesimismo y un optimismo ingenuo” (Buenfil Burgos, *Argumentación y Poder*, 33).

138 “Villa, Zapata, el maestro rural, el campesino, el obrero [...], la huelga, el reparto, lo indígena como valor estético” (Buenfil Burgos, *Argumentación y Poder*, 37).

139 Needless to say, not all Mexicans perceived the Revolution as beneficial (Knight, “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution,” 252).

140 Parallels can be drawn to Carl Schmitt's scheme of friend and enemy as a ‘criteria of the political’ (Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff Des Politischen: Text Von 1932 Mit Einem Vorwort Und Drei Corollarien*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1991), 26–28).

heroism, and the achievements of the men [...]; the benevolence of the laws and the majesty of the principles; the feat of the working people; the always burning hope of a just future; the pride of feeling *a part of all of this* and of feeling *independent*, in the innermost part of the intimacy of the personal and collective being.¹⁴¹

Especially in this rendition, the emotional character of this myth shows, and hence, commemorations of the Revolution aim at the emotional side in this particular facet of Mexican cultural memory. Heroism, the defense of the people, nationalism, a sense of belonging to and fighting for a bigger and just purpose are emotions triggered by the myth, playing on the narratives heard from a young age on. These stories, values, and emotions are consequently anchored in Mexican identity—effectively, these narratives also need to be considered as ‘true’ in order for the myth to take effect.¹⁴²

In this process—and in line with what Buenfil Burgos called the Mexican idiosyncrasy—many facets of the Revolution that do not fit into the picture are glossed over, exaggerated, or disregarded for the creation of the myth. Above all, this concerns the relationship between the hero and their apparent adherence to their own values: The heroes did not always stand on the same side—the most prominent example being Villa, Carranza, and Obregón—or even defended the values now associated with the Revolution. Furthermore, the division of the country at the time and the fact that, apparently, everyone was fighting against everyone and allegiances changed quickly is usually concealed, as the myth required only two sides with fixed values and principles: good and bad.

141 “el agrarismo, la justicia social, el ejido inspirado en la colectivización soviética, todos se convirtieron en historia, a través de ellos se hizo la historia; pero en la conciencia popular, entre las masas cada vez más y mejor organizadas, se volvieron mitos, algo que rebasó lo que fueron en su momento y se redimensionó permanentemente: el valor, el heroísmo y las hazañas de los hombres [...]; la bondad de las leyes y la majestad de los principios; las gestas del pueblo trabajador; la esperanza siempre ardiente de un futuro justo; el orgullo de sentirse parte de todo eso y de sentirlo propio, en lo más recóndito de la intimidad del ser personal y colectivo” (Córdova, “La mitología de la Revolución Mexicana”).

142 Knight, “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution,” 229.

The transempirical nature of the myth surrounding the Revolution is further reinforced by the fact that it never had an official end—something that also leaves space for far-reaching interpretation and speculation. While the bloodiest phase was the decade of the 1910s, the 1920s and 1930s were characterized by the attempt to pacify the country and instate a new political system encompassing the people as well as the achievements of the Revolution. However, scholars agree in large that there is a definite break with the end of Lázaro Cárdenas' presidency in 1940—Cárdenas himself being a legend in the Mexican cultural memory, as we will see.

Particularly in the context of the Sección 22, it is necessary to mention the role of education and the teachers in and after the Revolution. Traditionally, the role of the teacher is the wise and respected guide of the village, vital “in the social cohesion, the transmission of the values of the Mexican state, and in the formation of the national identity. They frequently function as organic intellectuals of subordinate groups, above all in rural communities.”¹⁴³ In the 1920s, José Vasconcelos—also of Oaxacan heritage—was commissioned with the public school system. He made sure that education reached every corner of the country, and established a central syllabus—including elements of the myth of the Revolution—effectively anchoring the teacher in every community and spreading their significance.¹⁴⁴ According to Hernández Navarro, the myth of the Revolution bolstered this impression: Teachers transformed into “public servants, capable of sacrificing their union necessities for the national interests, conveyor belts of state knowledge, semi-professionals, loyal to their employers.”¹⁴⁵ During the era of Cárdenas, the image of the teacher was further strengthened in the government's tendency for social reforms. Today, however, the teachers of the Sección 22 and the CNTE lament the, what they perceive as, attempts of the

143 “en la cohesión social, en la transmisión de los valores del Estado mexicano y en la formación de la identidad nacional. Con frecuencia funcionan como intelectuales orgánicos de los grupos subalternos, sobre todo en las comunidades rurales” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 40).

144 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

145 “servidores públicos capaces de sacrificar sus necesidades gremiales en función de los intereses nacionales, correas de transmisión de saberes estatales, semiprofesionistas leales con sus empleadores” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 63).

government to discredit their reputation,¹⁴⁶ which could be interpreted as an endeavor to erase the role and symbol of the teacher from the cultural memory and myth attached to the Revolution, effectively nullifying their significance in the historic image and nationalist pride created by the myth.

One of the most prominent motifs in the narrative of the Sección 22 and other social movements is the ‘defense of the achievements of the Mexican Revolution:’¹⁴⁷ “the right to strike and syndical democracy and independence and the defense of social victories accomplished in the Revolution of 1910.”¹⁴⁸ This notion ties in with the idea of needing to ‘redeem’ the Revolution, which again points back to the idea of the Revolution as a divinity—Joseph U. Lenti analyzed this idea in his work on the Tlatelolco massacre.¹⁴⁹ Needless to say, a straightforward definition of the concept of ‘redemption’ is in itself hard to establish, yet exactly this vagueness and nebulosity surrounding the concept, just as with the myth, aids in the use of the Revolution in narrative. Lenti also emphasizes the significance of the concept of ‘redeemers’ and ‘redemption’ for Mexican society since they have always existed in history and even contemporary figures—such as Andrés Manuel López Obrador—are, by some parts of society, considered to be ‘redeemers’ of the Mexican people.¹⁵⁰

One of the symbols of the achievements is the Constitution of 1917, “a leftist and totally liberating constitution”¹⁵¹ and “the most progressive document in the 20th century”¹⁵²—the element that was to incorporate the central demands and issues of the Revolution and ensure their enforcement for ‘the people,’ fought for by ‘the people’ and their

146 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 24.

147 See e.g. in CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 9.

148 “el derecho de huelga y la democracia e independencia sindical y la defensa de las conquistas sociales alcanzadas por el pueblo de México en la Revolución de 1910” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 12).

149 Joseph U. Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution: The State and Organized Labor in Post-Tlatelolco Mexico* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

150 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 1.

151 “una constitución de izquierda totalmente liberadora” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

152 “el documento más avanzado del siglo XX” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

heroes—in form of “the protection of labour, the promotion of agrarian reform, [and] the commitment to secular education.”¹⁵³ As Maestro Daniel noted, “[maybe] the Mexican Revolution does not have an end, but it has a moment when the ideas need to be defined in the Constitution of 1917.”¹⁵⁴ Notably most celebrated were Article 3—guaranteeing an education, *laica y gratuita*—, Article 27—agrarian concessions—and Article 123—conceding the right to work and a minimal salary for everyone as well as providing workers with the right to strike. When reforms are proposed aiming at these particular passages, the teachers’ and in general the workers’ movements are strongest: “These three articles are the backbone of the first social constitution of the world!”¹⁵⁵ However, Maestro Daniel also concedes that the Russian Revolution and Constitution

did transform the regime but also social structures, and this one did not change social structures—it did a simulation. [...] It was like the outlet valve for the social containment, of the social inconformity, and it took away the valve. These three articles, finally, calmed the people again. It simulated that ‘I will give them [the people] land, agrarian distribution, I simulate that there is a kind of general law of work where there is a minimum wage, and I simulate that there will be a right to education for all the children in the country.’ These simulated articles then allow to play with a social project, but also a neoliberal capitalist project.¹⁵⁶

153 Knight, “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution,” 237.

154 “A lo mejor no tiene fin la Revolución Mexicana pero tiene un momento en que hay que definir las ideas en la Constitución de 1917” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

155 “Esos tres artículos son la columna vertebral de la primera constitución social del mundo!” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

156 “sí transformó [sic] el régimen pero también estructuras sociales, y ésta no transformó estructuras sociales —hizo una simulación—. [...] Era como la válvula de escape de contención social, de la inconformidad social, y le quitó la válvula. Esos tres artículos, ya, calmó [sic] otra vez al pueblo. ‘Simulo que le doy tierra, un reparto agrario, simulo que hay alguna ley general del trabajo, donde hay un salario mínimo, y simulo que va a haber el derecho de educación de todos los niños de este país.’ Entonces, estos artículos simulados permiten jugar con un proyecto social pero también con un proyecto capitalista neoliberal” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

This idea of the valve of social pressure likewise supports the notion that a symbol was needed to calm the people, even though nothing would change, which is a prominent belief in the Mexican stoicism regarding politics and the government.

Carlos Sanchez¹⁵⁷ further offers a more historic reasoning for the apparent need of constant celebration, particularly of history: Mentioning cultural memory, he states that many have already forgotten the true meaning of the Revolution and other historic events, instead everything is celebrated in order to not remember what really happened, leading to an excess of parties enveloping historic events. This conjuncture he associates with the culture of the colonial usurpers—the Spanish as “the worst of Europe.”¹⁵⁸ With them came religion as a fixed fact that needed to be obeyed, says Sanchez, and Mexicans are too busy following traditions to even remember what they are celebrating, let alone modify them, which, after all, is convenient for the government, as the people hence are not reminded of what earlier governments had done. As for the Independence, this was different: There is a march in uniform on September 16, to celebrate the day the Mexicans’ liberation movement against the oppressing colonial power began. Yet on November 20, the day Madero crossed the border, there is a yearly celebration that involves dancing. Finally, Sanchez states, what Mexicans are missing was the emotion of unity that many Europeans felt after the Second World War, a feeling that united them. The Mexican government instead was keen on keeping the people separated, following the principle of ‘divide and conquer,’ and keeping them in the oblivious myth of the Revolution and other historic events, even instating the *día puente*—when a holiday falls on a Sunday, the benefits of the holiday are passed on to the following Monday, in order for the workers to be able to really enjoy the celebration as well as their Sunday of.¹⁵⁹

157 Carlos Sanchez is a secondary school teacher in Puerto Escondido and, as Maestro Daniel and Fausto Rivera, participates on ideological grounds while also being auto-critical about the movement.

158 “lo peor de Europa” (Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018). What Sanchez describes here to some extent resembles, probably without his intention, the *Leyenda Negra*, interpreting the Spanish and their culture as particularly brutal and barbaric (for more information on the *Leyenda Negra*, see John H. Elliott’s extensive research on Spanish colonialism).

159 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

The police force—including its duties and its significance—is a further factor loaded with revolutionary connotation: The Sección 22 and those in solidarity in their perception of the government as their foe have learned to see the police as a tool of repression of the government. The police patrolling in pick-ups, armed to their teeth, further augment the impression of being watched and surveilled by an overpowering state. This behavior caused an awareness of a deep rift between the government and the people, which leads to the perception of ‘either you are with us, or against us and thus for the government.’ The myth and memory of the Revolution, however, dictate that the police should protect and work for the people. In line with this idea, after the police’s attempt of breaking up the protests in 2016 ending in a brutal riot with various dead, the people of Asunción Nochixtlán have installed a people’s watch that, apart from looking out for renewed attempts of repression by the police, also control the police force as far as is in their power.¹⁶⁰

However, can the Revolution really be over when social movements need to defend the achievements of the great heroes they are constantly reminded of? Can it be over if the government brutally represses the people and denies them these provisions? While, according to Maestro José,¹⁶¹ the country is right now immersed in a type of pre-revolution¹⁶²—which implies that the Mexican Revolution ended at some point—, Maestro Daniel states that the Revolution is still very much continuing: “Everything is a simulation. At the end of the day, there was only a change in the regime.”¹⁶³ Either way, “[past] revolutions neither endure nor perish. They permeate and transform themselves in the social life as an independent culture, and as a heritage received from the preceding generations. They become recurring myths,”¹⁶⁴ narratives that convey a notion of values and identity by their mere mentioning.

160 Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018, Asunción Nochixtlán, Oaxaca.

161 Maestro José is the director of a primary school in Puerto Escondido and, in his position, promotes the struggle of the Sección 22.

162 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

163 “Todo es una simulación. Al final de cuentas, no hubo una transformación social, hubo un cambio de régimen” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

164 “[las] revoluciones pasadas ni perduran ni se extinguen. Permean y se transfiguran en la vida social como cultura propia y como herencia recibida de las generaciones precedentes. Se vuelen mito recurrente” (Adolfo Gilly, “Un Mito Que Se Transfigura,” nexos, 2009, 32, accessed October 7, 2020).

4.2.2 The PRI: the Anti-Christ

The regime that eventually took over in the 1920s and planted itself as the true heir of the Revolution is also the most prominent manifestation of the myth. The story of its significance is especially interesting when considering that the PRI—the party developing from this regime—‘lost’¹⁶⁵ the presidential elections in 2000, despite its claim of being the ‘institutionalized Revolution’ and the contention over the truth this position maintains.

As already mentioned, Plutarco Elias Calles founded the first version of the PRI, the PNR,¹⁶⁶ in 1929 to officially include the Revolution in collective memory, to immortalize and institutionalize the Revolution, and to legitimize the rule of the ‘revolutionary family’¹⁶⁷—of which only Calles remained, and leaving out the fact that Madero, Carranza, Obregón, Villa, and Zapata had occasionally fought each other.¹⁶⁸ By instating one party that was to unite the majority of Mexicans and the ruling politicians, Mexico was to be freed from the one-man-rule that had dominated since the Independence in 1821.¹⁶⁹ According to Sarah Osten, in the establishment and construction of the long-time dominating party, Calles was guided by politics in the southeast of the country where socialists had been powerful in the first half of the 1920s,¹⁷⁰ yet the creation of the PNR was not “a response to a vacuum of postrevolutionary political institutions in Mexico but rather, the product of a bloody fight over the character of its institutions and who would control them.”¹⁷¹ She further underscores the contemporary situation and the prospect of a party that would bring peace at a comparatively low cost:

165 There are voices claiming that the PRI did not, in fact, lose in the elections, but ‘gave’ the elections to the PAN in order to maintain credibility and influence.

166 After its reorganization by Cárdenas in 1938 to become the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM), the party was again transformed by Manuel Ávila Camacho in 1946 to become the (less radical) Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).

167 Of course, the founding of the precursors of the PRI also falls into a time period when it was popular to found unity parties supported by masses to claim democratic legitimacy.

168 Buchenau, Plutarco Elias Calles and the Mexican Revolution, 155–56.

169 Osten, *The Mexican Revolution’s Wake*, 3–4.

170 Osten, *The Mexican Revolution’s Wake*, 2.

171 Osten, *The Mexican Revolution’s Wake*, 233.

For a nation and a political class exhausted by nearly two decades of war and regularly recurring episodes of political violence, the PNR offered a compelling alternative, one in which campaigns and elections were fundamental, but electoral results were not irrevocable if they were perceived to have the potential to cause further unrest or violence. Democratic processes remained important in this new political era, but were sometimes overruled by other considerations: above all, preventing further coups or political mutinies.¹⁷²

On this foundation, the PNR established and offered affiliation to local parties, which included benefits, such as support and intervention of the national PNR.¹⁷³ Many of these local parties considered themselves socialists—in fact, ‘socialism’ becoming a buzzword much like ‘Revolution,’ not always having roots in theoretical socialism and often working on a loose definition, if at all. The lack of such a refined and definite ideology was precisely what allowed the new party to encompass ‘all Mexicans.’¹⁷⁴

The socialist tendencies—vital in the myth of the Revolution—played an important role at this stage, as well as in the 1930s during the election of Lázaro Cárdenas. Cárdenas is considered one of the key figures of the institutionalization of the Revolution and is remembered for three grand gestures: agrarian reform and land redistribution, the consolidation of workers’ union in the government, and the expropriation of foreign oil companies in 1938, which rekindled Mexican nationalism. He further reorganized the PNR and created the Party of the Mexican Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Mexicana; PRM) in 1938 as a more direct representation of the people.

In the spirit of the Revolution—as the divine-like sovereign—Cárdenas aimed to extinguish the *hacienda* system that had caused so much hardship among Mexican peasants, and to generally improve the standard of living of the latter. To that end, he expanded the *ejido* system—land that was owned and worked by a collective—and sped up land redistribution, a process that had already been instigated before, yet had been thwarted on the local level since it occasionally served as compen-

172 Osten, *The Mexican Revolution's Wake*, 248–49.

173 Osten, *The Mexican Revolution's Wake*, 249–50.

174 Osten, *The Mexican Revolution's Wake*, 256.

sation for loyal followers and contained much bureaucracy, making it difficult for simple peasants to assert a claim. Furthermore, Cárdenas established an agricultural credit bank and introduced a more socialist education. By 1940, the land he had redistributed amounted to more than all of his predecessors' together. The overall success of these measures, however, is highly debatable.¹⁷⁵

Workers' rights in general experienced a period of reinforcement in the 1930s: In 1931, the first Ley Federal del Trabajo (Federal Work Law) was instated despite opposition from industrialists, followed by the Ley del Seguro Social (Social Insurance Law) in 1943. Furthermore, a number of workers' unions were founded, which then in themselves became part of the myth of the Revolution as a symbol of the workers' representation, a safety mechanism in case the government abandons the values of the Revolution and its true purpose of serving the people. Among the most prominent and until today strongest unions founded in this period is the National Worker's Confederation (Confederación de Trabajadores de México; CTM). In 1943, the SNTE was consolidated from the various currents and the existing unions,¹⁷⁶ aided by pressure from and the efforts of the CTM, the Mexican Communist Party, and first Cárdenas and then his successor Manuel Ávila Camacho.¹⁷⁷

The government's—and particularly Cárdenas'—concern in and its active pursuit of the founding of unions as a representation of workers' interests in negotiations, on the one hand, secured the workers' support and, on the other, forged a close relationship between the ruling party and the unions.¹⁷⁸ According to Joseph U. Lenti, those consolidating the

175 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 190–191, 223, 232–233; Lynn Stephen, *Zapata Lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002), 42.

176 According to Maestro Daniel, the SNTE was founded to control the workers, as an “appendix of the government, not to defend the workers”—“un apéndice del gobierno, no [...] para defender los derechos de trabajadores” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

177 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 62–63; Michelle L. Dion, *Workers and Welfare: Comparative Institutional Change in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), <https://ebookcentral-proquest-1com-1008395n20d8c.emedia1.bsb-muenchen.de/lib/bsb/reader.action?docID=2039349&ppg=72>, 53–54; Osten, *The Mexican Revolution's Wake*, 262.

178 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 62–63; Dion, *Workers and Welfare*, 53–54; Osten, *The Mexican Revolution's Wake*, 262.

state after 1917 “acted to make two paradigms—the nation and the Mexican Revolution—analogue in order to redeem the former concept and show organized workers that the regime that emerged from the latter could be a force of good and a deliverer of social justice.”¹⁷⁹ Lenti draws on Kevin Middlebrook’s notion of postrevolutionary authoritarianism that identifies “mass actors in the governing coalition”, “elites [seeking] to legitimate their rule in part through reference to distinctive ideologies or political ideas associated with the revolutionary experience,” and “a distinctive form of authoritarian rule because of the dual, though not necessarily equal, importance of a hegemonic or single political party and an interventionist state.”¹⁸⁰ With this concept as a foundation, Lenti developed the term “collaborationism,” which describes the “tendency of the state and organized labor toward a symbiotic relationship that strengthens their respective positions” through reciprocal favors.¹⁸¹ Citing Michael Snodgrass, Lenti also asserts that this tight bond between the CTM, in particular, and the government led to a kind of “revolutionary unionism,” creating a new class of workers coined by revolutionary values and the notion of the government as a defender of the workers’ interests.¹⁸²

However, Knight also cautions not to apply a ‘post hoc ergo propter hoc’ approach: He identifies the myth of the Revolution as a fundamental base of support not in what he calls the Formative Period of myth construction of 1920 to 1940, when the party still heavily relied on coercion, nepotism, and social reform, but in the Classic Period of 1940 to 1982. He suggests that monuments, murals, and other memorabilia were only slowly accepted and adopted by the population and spread to an increasing degree by the state. The peak of unison between the myth and the PRI and societal support in the 1960s he establishes during the Pax PRIísta and the economic miracle: The state printed new textbooks that, while still promoting revolutionary nationalism, now focused less on the socialist aspect and class consciousness. The PRI had

179 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 3.

180 Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 6, 8.

181 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 21.

182 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 19.

incorporated the Revolution to an extent, that, in 1960, it celebrated its 50th anniversary, having achieved stability—through a kind of “soft authoritarianism”¹⁸³—at a period in history when other Latin American countries were facing deep political rifts and civil wars.¹⁸⁴

While the PRI party claims to be the true and institutionalized heir to the Revolution—having first worked to establish the myth, and then incorporated all figures of memory into “mass politics and ritualized public spectacle”¹⁸⁵—according to the Sección 22 and other leftist movements, the PRI has betrayed the Revolution and the values it portrays by adopting corrupt methods, supporting capitalism, and introducing neoliberalist measures, just to name a few. This reveals an interesting conundrum in the narrative: Both parties claim to be the true heir to the Revolution. The government institutionalized this claim and reminds of its revolutionary ancestors through figures of memory. Social movements, however, see in the PRI a parallel to the dictatorship experienced during the Porfiriato. Either way, for the dissident population, the Revolution provides a narrative and a justification to rebel against their supposedly democratically elected government, causing a dichotomy of friend and foe, a clear distinction between the government and its disciples and the ‘real Mexicans’ still incorporating Revolutionary values.

According to the director of a primary school in Puerto Escondido, particularly with the introduction of capitalism and then neoliberalism in Mexico the government twisted the meaning of the Revolution, slowly disappearing the real values ascribed to the events and the myth.¹⁸⁶ Carlos Sanchez again emphasized the Mexican idiosyncrasy—derived from the crash of the Mexican with the Spanish culture—, preventing the PRI from persevering with the Revolutionary model, as e.g. did the Cubans. Instead, insisting that the Revolution was not over but instead passing from an armed to an institutionalized phase, the PRI slowly introduced capitalism and neoliberalism while feeding the

183 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 23.

184 Knight, “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution,” 241, 255, 260–261.

185 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 23.

186 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

people “*atole* with the finger”¹⁸⁷—stalling and feeding the population with the idea of maintaining and nurturing the Revolutionary heritage.¹⁸⁸

A common motif in the tales about the PRI and its political adherents is their impunity. Enrique Morales¹⁸⁹ complained that Freddy Gil, the municipal president of San Pedro Mixtepec, which parts of Puerto Escondido belong to, had already killed a number of people, yet since he is ‘untouchable,’ there was no prosecution. However, “[i]f a teacher or worker does it, they immediately go to prison.”¹⁹⁰ Of the ruling classes, only political opponents, such as Elba Esther Gordillo at one point, were sent to prison. He further admits to having heard rumors that President Enrique Peña Nieto, apart from not having any education, had killed his first wife, but was not sentenced for it due to his impunity. Morales then applied this idea to education, stating that “education, like politics, [is] totally distorted, kicked, only for those at the top.”¹⁹¹

Morales’ deliberations on an accident in late February 2018 display this awareness of political impunity and the extent to which some consider events to be driven by political motifs: After an earthquake of a degree of 7.2 close to Santiago Jamiltepec, the governor of Oaxaca, José Murrat, wanted to assess the damages, however, his helicopter crashed into a group of people having sought refuge on an open field, killing 13.¹⁹² While the government blamed a malfunction of the technology, Morales interpreted this accident as a deliberate killing of Oaxacans. That the PRI governor was not sentenced to prison, Morales construes as a clear sign for his conclusion that the PRI party wants to suppress the people—“they are untouchable.”¹⁹³ For many of the disenfranchised

187 “*atole con el dedo*” (Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018).

188 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

189 Enrique Morales is a retired primary school teacher and one of the most outspoken opponents of the PRI and the SNTE. In front of his home in Puerto Escondido on one of the most frequented roads in the city, he places a board every day with articles about ‘the truth’ to raise awareness in the passers.

190 “[s]i un maestro o un trabajador lo hace, inmediatamente se va a la cárcel” (Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca).

191 “educación, como la política, [es] totalmente distorsionada, pateada, solamente para los que están arriba” (Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018).

192 Meganoticias TVC, Sismo Y Desplome De Helicóptero En Jamiltepec, Oaxaca, accessed November 3, 2020.

193 “son intocables” (Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018).

and the disappointed, this political orientation doubtlessly provides an alternative theory and a location to place blame.

Maestro Daniel sees the beginning of the control of the PRI over the people in 1929 with the founding of the PRI's ancestral party and the beginning of the Maximato. He maintains that "with Calles' regime, ideologically, a chip was planted inside the cell to the DNA of the Mexican, that all relations will pass through politics. And politics of the lowest kind."¹⁹⁴ Only organized crime was able to build an organized structure, while "[t]he only thing this government did is generate politics and its ambiguity as the central relation in all of society's relations. This happens due to a total perversion of the exercise of power,"¹⁹⁵ which also helped keep the PRI in power for more than 80 years.

Perhaps the biggest challenge to the position of the PRI party as the Revolution's heir and the chief executor of its values and narrative were the student protests before the Olympic Games and the following Tlatelolco-massacre in 1968. By this point, the close relationship between workers' unions and the government was already tainted by the effects of the Mexican (Economic) Miracle, which bloomed in the 1950s and required a strong bond between employers and government rather than workers and government, which led to increasing unrest in the working class. Furthermore, students' protests gained momentum—according to Fausto Rivera they were fighting to "rid themselves of the chains of presidential authoritarianism, and introduce more democratic forms"¹⁹⁶—, yet due to the impending Olympic Games in mid-October and Mexico's international reputation, the government sent forces to suppress the protests. By the end of July 1968, protesters and state forces clashed on the streets. Attempts to resolve the situation did not come to fruition and on August 27, 400,000 people marched on the streets of Mexico City, hoisting the red-and-black flag in the

194 "con el régimen de Calles, ideológicamente se le entra a la célula un chip, al ADN del mexicano, y es que todas las relaciones van a pasar por política. Y la política al más bajo estilo" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

195 "Este gobierno lo único que hizo es generar la política y su ambigüedad como la relación central en todas las relaciones de la sociedad. Y eso pasa por una perversión total del ejercicio del poder" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

196 "[q]uitar las cadenas del autoritarismo presidencial e introducir formas más democráticas" (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

middle of the Zócalo. Police and military managed to clear the city center by force, yet repression as well as opposition and protests continued. On October 2, 1968, negotiations were unsuccessful, leading to a protest in the afternoon in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in the district of Tlatelolco. As is often the case, the government as well as the protesters blame the first shots on the respective other. Either way, the massacre that ensued between the military and police forces and the protesters left many¹⁹⁷ wounded or dead.¹⁹⁸

While the immediate reaction of the government was to calm relations with unionized workers that had been seething for a number of years—eventually leading to the New Federal Labor Law passed in 1970¹⁹⁹—, the massacre also had a more far-reaching effect: It “finally removed the shroud of state infallibility in civil society”²⁰⁰ and serves as a symbol of government oppression for Mexican social movements as one of the first occasions after the Revolution that the democratically elected government brutally suppressed the people.²⁰¹ Needless to say, already existing social movements found confirmation for their cause in these events, and new ones built as a result of the massacre²⁰²—yet at this point in history, the CTM, supposedly a representative of workers, was already institutionalized to the extent that it opposed a liberalization of the government, afraid of losing its power and benefits.²⁰³ Both the day October 2 as well as the year 1968 have made their way into the array of figures of memory of the Sección 22 with repeated calls of “neither pardon nor forgetting;”²⁰⁴ in fact, the events in 1968 established

197 The exact number is contested; accounts have varied between none and 1,500 deaths. In the end, they seemed to have settled at 300, without being certain of the victims (Kate Doyle, “The Dead of Tlatelolco: Using the Archives to Exhume the Past,” The National Security Archive, accessed June 1, 2021).

198 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 27–32.

199 Lenti bases his analysis on this period, stating that the state needed to redeem the Revolution in order to recapture its credibility (Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 32–35, 69).

200 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 69.

201 This reaction seemed particularly surprising and brutal since Mexico, in comparison to most of the Latin American countries, did not have a dictatorship in the 20th century.

202 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

203 Bensusán, Middlebrook and Celorio Morayta, “El Sindicalismo y la Democratización en México,” 801.

204 “Ni perdón, ni olvido!”

the category of cultural memory of state repression, joined by, among others, events in Oaxaca in 2006, Ayotzinapa in 2014, and Asunción Nochixtlán in 2016.²⁰⁵ Morales even claims that Luis Echeverría was rewarded for the massacre with the presidency.²⁰⁶

The dynamic between the PRI as the ‘official’ and institutionalized heir of the Revolution and the Sección 22 as self-perceived representatives of the people and hence the ‘real’ heir, is therefore rather difficult—as Hein-Kircher states, “a political myth also defines ‘alterity’ (as being separate from society) and thus the ‘other,’”²⁰⁷ hence always containing the implicit allegation of enemy to the values passed down by the Revolution. In the headquarters of the Sección 22 in the street Armenta y López in Oaxaca, a mural displays this relationship: A revolutionary skeleton on a horse with a hat, usually associated with Zapata, is riding triumphantly over bones with the letters PRI written on them. A phrase next to it reads:

Putrid odors is oozing the PRIAN [name for the PRI and PAN parties]
 They take for certain their labor reform
 Politicians of all colors are conspiring
 To impose slavery and wage restraint upon us.²⁰⁸

Consequently, as long as the PRI party—and parties closely associated with it—attempts to introduce reforms that appear to be in opposition to what the Sección 22 perceives as the legacy of the Revolution, the allegation of a new usurper that needs to be ousted—just as Díaz a century earlier—will prevail.

²⁰⁵ It is rather apparent that especially locations have a tendency of being remembered for a specific battle. Pierre Nora’s deliberations on *Lieux de Memoire* need to be mentioned in this context, will, however, be further explained later on.

²⁰⁶ Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018.

²⁰⁷ Hein-Kircher, “Social Master Narratives,” 26.

²⁰⁸ “Olores putrefactos destila el prian / pues dan segura su reforma laboral / conspirando politicos [sic] de todos los colores estan [sic] / para inponernos [sic] esclavitud y contencion [sic] salarial.”

4.2.3 Memory Figures

The Mexican Revolution and the period of social unrest in the mid-century leading up, eventually, to the founding of the CNTE produced various individuals that constitute part of the national cultural memory today.²⁰⁹

The myth surrounding Porfirio Díaz is of a rather curious nature and neither unambiguously negative nor positive due to his various roles in Mexican history. Especially in Oaxaca, the distinction whether he was ‘good’ or ‘evil’ is not clear-cut. The city of Miahuatlán de Porfirio Díaz, nestled into the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre del Sur and known for the collection of Mezcales the *campesinos* of the surroundings bring to the market, dedicated a museum to his memory. The permanent exposition does, however, not display the last decades of Porfirio’s reign, but rather his early life and his glorious victory in the Battle of Puebla against the French on May 5, 1862. Oaxaca, in fact, has a rich memory culture for the number of national heroes the state has brought forth—Benito Juárez being the most popular and unambiguous—, and according to Fausto Rivera, during Porfirio’s reign, the state fared much better economically and was even the richest in Mexico, causing the ‘Sonorans’—the line of presidents in the 1920s from the northern state of Sonora—to view Oaxaca as a “retrograde state, as reactionary, but it was soaked with this economy of the Reform [period] and the Porfirian epoch. We were treated like dirt.”²¹⁰ There is a saying that the biggest problem for Mexico is if an Oaxacan comes because Oaxacans will not want to leave.”²¹¹ Rivera sees the national cultural memory of Díaz as a villain also as an attempt to unite the people—in the sense that

209 Even though contemporary social movements usually display an emphasis of the diversity within the movement and in history, there is still a notable lack of women in the rows of this movement’s heroes.

210 In the period from 1915 to 1920, Oaxaca also declared its sovereignty and autonomy from Mexico four times, which, according to Lynn Stephen, was rather the problem of the unfavorable opinions the national government had of the southern state and its inhabitants (Stephen, *Zapata Lives!*, 230).

211 “estado retrógrado, como reaccionario, pero estaba impregnado de esa economía de reforma y la época porfirista. Fuimos ninguneados. Hay un dicho actual que dice que el mayor problema para México es si llega un Oaxaqueño porque los Oaxaqueños luego no se quieren salir” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

‘nothing unites more than a common enemy.’²¹² This ties in with what Gabriel Huerta, representative in the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca; APPO) noted: “Because the government represses, the people move closer together,”²¹³ solidarity being another very prominent motif of the Revolution. Still, Fausto Rivera admits that a man also changes during his lifetime and during his term as a general, Díaz had people around him he could look up to, but as president, he was surrounded by economists and the upper class, which tainted his character, and let him establish a divided nation that showed great infrastructure and numbers at the top, but a “social structure of misery below”²¹⁴—much like today. In a similar perception, Morales contends that “[the] French had already heated the brain of Porfirio Díaz and he handed over the country. He finished with all the forests we had.”²¹⁵

A conference call in the context of the State Workshops of Alternative Education (Talleres de Educación Alternativa; TEEAs) 2020–2021 with the historian Pedro Salmerón Sanginés demonstrates nicely the version of events in the Mexican Revolution the Sección 22 is ready to believe—always against the background of the notion that the ‘official’ version is somehow not the ‘truest’ one and only aims at securing the ruling elites more power.²¹⁶ Salmerón Sanginés shows the curious dynamic of the villainization of the Porfirian period: It is not Porfirio Díaz himself that is portrayed as the villain but his regime, villainizing rather the ruling elites and the *científicos* than the person at the top. He states that the Porfiriato was “a regime of dictatorial privilege that excluded the majorities and that operated the plundering by the inter-

212 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

213 “Porque el gobierno represa, el pueblo se junta” (Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca).

214 “estructura social abajo de miseria” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

215 “A Porfirio Díaz ya le habían calentado la mente los franceses, y entregó al país. Acabó con todos los bosques que teníamos” (Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018).

216 Salmerón Sanginés also published a volume named “Los falsificadores de la historia y otros extremos”—“The falsifiers of history and other extremes.”

national big capital in Mexico”²¹⁷ and rebels supposedly took offense with it and started a revolution²¹⁸—this is partly in line with Alan Knight who sees the reason for the outbreak in local power structures, yet only marginally in relation to international economic interests in Mexico.

Salmerón Sanginés further parallels the presidency of Madero to that of Andrés Manuel López Obrador stating that, contrary to other opinions, Madero did not fail in his attempt of transformation, or rule with the Porfirian state apparatus but it took simply more time than was expected by the large masses, much like it does for López Obrador—in fact, López Obrador himself had compared neoliberalism in Mexico to the Porfirian era in his volume *Neoporfirismo: Hoy como ayer*, published in 2014 in reaction to the return of the PRI party.²¹⁹ Especially against the background that Salmerón Sanginés is a member of the Morena party, this comparison seems mandatory to justify López Obrador’s presidency in the spirit of the Mexican Revolution. He also maintains that the economic backwardness of Chiapas and Oaxaca can be retraced to the oligarchy knowing how to prevent agrarian redistribution in these states, appealing to the emotions of his listeners caused by this injustice-frame. He further triggers the emotions of patriotism when stating that “We Mexicans” cannot accept the coup against a democratically elected president and that “We Mexicans” “even if we do not have them, we know that we have rights and we organize to defend them in a permanent manner. We are not like the Mexicans of the Porfiriato, yes. The Revolution changed our mentality.”²²⁰ Still, returning to the person of Porfirio Díaz, Salmerón Sanginés decreases Díaz’ role in the Revolution and emphasizes the significance and influence of international capitalism, even acknowledging that Díaz was able to main-

217 “un régimen de privilegio dictatorial que excluya a las mayorías y que opera el saqueo que en México hace el gran capital internacional” (CENCOS 22, “Historia De México. Conferencia Del Historiador Pedro Salmerón Sanginés,” Sección 22, accessed November 12, 2020).

218 CENCOS 22, “Historia de México. Conferencia del Historiador Pedro Salmerón Sanginés.”

219 López Obrador, however, does characterize Díaz as the villain of the story (Andrés Manuel López Obrador, *Neoporfirismo: Hoy Como Ayer* (México, D.F.: Grijalbo, 2014)).

220 “aunque no los tengamos, sabemos que tenemos derechos y nos organizamos en su defensa de manera permanente. Ya no somos como los mexicanos del Porfiriato que creíamos que no teníamos derechos, sí. Nos cambió la mentalidad la Revolución.”

tain some kind of equilibrium against this influence and could not have fought it without risking an armed intervention.²²¹ Again, on the other hand, he also notes that the Porfiriato was not the period of peace and stability that it is often said to have been, but that this is rather a version of the contemporary neoliberal elites to justify neo-Porfirian politics.²²²

Returning to more unambiguous memory figures: Villa and Zapata are what one might call the ‘heart of the Mexican Revolution,’ and both have become popular figures in the national cultural memory as well as on an international level as symbols of the country. Within Mexico, Carlos Sanchez ascribes their level of popularity in comparison to that of Madero as the ‘beginner’ of the Revolution also to the fact that the latter was petit bourgeoisie while Zapata was of rural importance and was, hence, easier to relate to.²²³ Furthermore, Madero aimed at transforming the political system to become more democratic—something that is not easily related to in daily life—while Villa and Zapata—in the stereotypical idea of heroes—fought against oppressors and injustices in daily life and for the defense of the agrarian population. Especially the injustice-frame applied in the context of the latter can easily be related to and makes their images an easily reproduced memory figure. Their to some extent mysterious deaths²²⁴ are the source of conspiracy theories—some Mexicans wonder where Pancho Villa’s head is today—and serve to establish their immortality in myth as iconic images of the Mexican’s rebellious character, ready at all times to fight an unjust government.

Due to his origins and life in Morelos, Zapata is more in the foreground of the popular memory in the south of the country than is Villa. There is a variety of citations ascribed to the Attila of the South that contribute to his reputation as a defender of the Mexican peasants and an opponent to an oppressive government: “It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees,”²²⁵ “I forgive those who murder and

221 CENCOS 22, “Historia de México. Conferencia del Historiador Pedro Salmerón Sanginés.”

222 Pedro Salmerón Sanginés, “La Farsa Del Neoporfirismo,” *La Jornada*, 2014, accessed November 12, 2020.

223 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

224 Enrique Morales attributes Villa’s death to the local caciques’ fear of a loss of power (Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018).

225 “Mejor morir de pie que vivir toda una vida arrodillado.”

steal because they did it out of necessity, but a traitor never,”²²⁶ “I want to die as a slave to principles, not to men,” and “If there is no justice for the people, let there be no peace for the government,”²²⁷ among others. However, the most consequential ones for his reputation and his role as a fighter for agrarian rights are “Land and liberty!”²²⁸—which he took up from Ricardo Flores Magón—and “The land is for those who work it.”²²⁹

In fact, Zapata might be the best example for Hein-Kirchner’s claim that the “mythical narrative is [...] a ‘show of excellent performance’ and the society’s master narrative,”²³⁰ as Zapata is readily used to portray ‘correct’ values, such as persistence in the ‘right’ cause—the defense of ‘the people’—, the inability of corruption, or the renegeing of personal gain. As Carlos Sanchez noted, Zapata is “associated with the defense of the land, the peasants, and the proletariat,”²³¹ hence closer to many than would be Madero or even Villa. Lynn Stephen explains that Zapata had already been used in the 1920s and 1930s to promote programs of agrarian redistribution and to instate the Revolution further in popular cultural memory.²³² The Sección 22 also makes use of his image to parallel his fight to the cause of the social movement, e.g., in pictures and in chants. By harking to the national master narrative, the leaders play on the emotional side of the narrative, invoking a sense of higher purpose in the participants on the one hand, as well as, on the other, spiritual guidance from one of the historic leaders of the country, accompanying those that appear to tread in his footsteps, depicting the same values as did the hero himself in the defense of the people. In their cause, the teachers therefore perceive themselves as Zapata’s heirs when they chant “Zapata lives, the fight goes on and on,”²³³ employing national cultural

226 “Perdono al que roba y al que mata, pero al que traiciona, nunca.”

227 “Si no hay justicia para el pueblo que no haya paz para el gobierno.”

228 “¡Tierra y libertad!”

229 “La tierra es para quien la trabaja.”

230 Hein-Kirchner, “Social Master Narratives,” 17.

231 “asociado con la defensa de la tierra, del campesino y del proletariado” (Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018).

232 Stephen, *Zapata Lives!*, 39–50.

233 “¡Zapata vive, la lucha sigue y sigue!”

memory and a mythical memory figure to justify their movement and provide it with additional strength.

The most prominent manifestation of the connotations surrounding the myth and memory figure of Zapata was in the form of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional; EZLN)—Zapatismo resurfacing in the form of a social movement in the mountains of Chiapas in the beginning of the 1990s. In the spirit of neo-liberal reform, the government in the 1990s promoted the privatization of land held by *ejidos*, urging the people to provide for their individual rights—in line with neoliberal ideology—and opening the system up to capitalism and even foreign direct investment. The versatility of memory figures shows here, as the government used the image of Zapata to make these measures more attractive, implying that only individualization guarantees the right to the land. Within these measures, the indigenous in Chiapas were, as is often the case, disadvantaged. In the general spirit of dissent and social movement that had been on the rise since 1968, amplified by the austerity measures in the 1980s and the prospect of further neoliberal reforms, these groups started organizing in a communal defense.²³⁴

On January 1, 1994, the EZLN rose in arms in large parts of Chiapas against the federal government—completely caught by surprise—and its neoliberal politics, seizing various cities and villages. In its declaration of war, the First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle, the EZLN explained that their cause was the continuation of a 500-year long struggle—beginning with the colonization by the Spanish—against oppression and in the defense of basic rights for all groups of society, including those marginalized by the neoliberal reform plans, which had recently culminated in the NAFTA. It was particularly Subcomandante Marcos, the Delegado Zero, the only non-indigenous and principal representative of the EZLN famously clad in a black mask, who helped the EZLN to national and even international fame. To provide the people of Mexico with free and democratic elections, the EZLN intended to

234 Alex Khasnabish, *Zapatistas: Rebellion from the Grassroots to the Global* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd), 54–55; Stephen, *Zapata Lives!*, 62, 64, 67.

march to Mexico City and overthrow the national government.²³⁵ The movement, by laying its foundation on the memory of Zapata, took advantage of a national symbol and memory figure to make an automatic connection of their cause to the cause of historic Zapatism, and through this claim provide justification to their movement.²³⁶

The CNTE, as a fellow movement considering itself an offspring of Zapata, met with the EZLN on various occasions in the attempt to join forces and integrate more political strength.²³⁷ To this end, in 2006, the Sección 22 also invited Subcomandante Marcos underscoring the power of the teachers' movement in the state and for the CNTE, the parallels in the two movements' causes, and the benefits that would result from such a cooperation.²³⁸

Ricardo Flores Magón—the most radical of the Flores Magón brothers—is a further memory figure that emerged in the context of the Mexican Revolution, yet less well-known than Zapata. Flores Magón—joining the ranks of historic personages born from the Oaxacan rebel soil—actively lobbied for workers' rights in the beginning of the 20th century during the Porfiriato, which, predictably, resulted in unending collision with the government, as well as frequent exile and, eventually, death in a prison in the U.S. According to Salmerón Sanginés, Flores Magón was the initiator of the social revolution within the Mexican Revolution.²³⁹

In reaction to the Catholic Church's efforts to unite workers, the liberal sentiment—deeply entrenched in the cultural memory due to the Reform Wars and the myth of Benito Juárez—flared up again. In 1901, the First Liberal Congress took place, bringing the Flores Magón brothers on the national stage and marking the beginning of liberal opposi-

235 Khasnabish, *Zapatistas*, 60, 64.

236 The media played a considerable role in the distribution of information, leading to the Zapatistas receiving much transnational support and solidarity. Khasnabish further identifies the movement as a catalyst for what he calls 'the alter-globalization movement,' the "movement of movements' that emerged in the aftermath of the Zapatista rebellion to contest neoliberal capitalist globalization" (Khasnabish, *Zapatistas*, 167).

237 Cf. Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 272.

238 Enrique Rueda Pacheco, "Propuesta de reconsideración del rechazo al encuentro programado con la Asamblea Estatal del magisterio oaxaqueño" (Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, 2006).

239 CENCOS 22, "Historia de México. Conferencia del Historiador Pedro Salmerón Sanginés."

tion against the Porfiriato: “The Congress radicalized the Flores Magón brothers and they in turn sought to radicalize the Liberals.”²⁴⁰ Needless to say, such organization was followed by immediate repression, yet Ricardo Flores Magón, although in exile, kept in contact with Mexican liberals through the publication of the newspaper *Regeneración*, while also adopting an increasingly more anarchist (anarcho-syndicalist and anarcho-communist) ideology.²⁴¹

In 1905, together with other exiled liberals, he founded the Liberal Mexican Party (Partido Liberal Mexicano; PLM)²⁴² in St. Louis, which provided a “capacious umbrella of patriotic liberalism,”²⁴³ under which many opponents of the system of different ideologies were able to unite. In 1906, the party issued a manifesto, demanding a broad spectrum of liberties and rights, ranging from general issues, such as freedom of speech and progressive tax reform, to the rights of individual groups, e.g., the indigenous and workers, and organized two major uprisings, one that year and one in 1908. Knight again warns of a ‘post hoc ergo propter hoc’ approach, emphasizing that, while the PLM was certainly an important driving force for the Revolution, it was not the principal valve for societal discontent as was shown by the limited success of their uprisings.²⁴⁴ Issues of their manifesto were, however, eventually taken up in the constitution of 1917, e.g., the eight-hour-day and the prohibition of child labor.²⁴⁵

The ideology of Flores Magón and his potential for the incorporation into the treasure of national cultural memory is also displayed in

240 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 45.

241 Norman Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State: From the Porfiriato to NAFTA* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1998), 14; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 65–66.

242 The term ‘liberal’ should not be taken in the strict definition of the term but perceived instead in a more encompassing sense of currents that are united by their objection to the predominance of the church.

243 Similar to the remembering or ‘reconstructing’—to use Halbwachs’ term—of the Revolution, patriotic liberalism employed a mythomotor, harking back to a glorious period—in this case the second half of the 19th century—and mobilizing the people against Díaz while still “[embodying] some serious contradictions: it glossed over Juárez’s palpable failings and abuses” (Knight, “The Myth of the Mexican Revolution,” 232–33).

244 Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 46–47, 230.

245 Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State*, 1–2; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 65–66; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Volume 1, 45–46.

the Manifiesto del Partido Liberal of 1911, co-signed by Enrique Flores Magón, Anselm L. Figueroa, and Librado Rivera. It states that

[i]t is the duty of us, the poor, to work and fight to break the chains that make us slaves. Leaving the solving of our problems to the educated and rich classes means voluntarily placing ourselves in their clutches. We, the plebeians; we, the ragged; we, the hungry; that we do not have a clod to recline our heads on; that live tormented by the uncertainty of next day's bread for our companions and our children; that, when old, are fired ignominiously because we cannot work anymore, it is up to us to make a powerful effort, a thousand sacrifices to destroy down to its foundations the building that is the old society that has up until here been a kind mother to the rich and the evil, and an mean step-mother to those that work and are good.²⁴⁶

It further asserts that who eventually wins supremacy in the Revolution does not matter, as “no man, however good-willed, can do anything in favor of the poor class when he is in power,”²⁴⁷ this being the reason that Flores Magón did not support Madero in his attempt to take over the government; in fact, members of the PLM always stood before the question of whom to support in the political battles over the presidency.²⁴⁸ The Manifiesto also contains the famous battle cry “¡Tierra y Libertad!” that was later taken up by Emiliano Zapata.²⁴⁹

246 “Es el deber de nosotros los pobres trabajar y luchar por romper las cadenas que nos hacen esclavos. Dejar la solución de nuestros problemas a las clases educadas y ricas es ponernos voluntariamente entre sus garras. Nosotros los plebeyos; nosotros los andrajosos; nosotros los hambrientos; los que no tenemos un terrón donde reclinar la cabeza; los que vivimos atormentados por la incertidumbre del pan de mañana para nuestras compañeras y nuestros hijos; los que, llegados a viejos, somos despedidos ignominiosamente porque ya no podemos trabajar, toca a nosotros hacer esfuerzos poderosos, sacrificios mil para destruir hasta sus cimientos el edificio de la vieja sociedad que ha sido hasta aquí una madre cariñosa para los ricos y los malvados, y una madrastra huraña para los que trabajan y son buenos” (in Editores unidos, *La Revolución Mexicana*: R. Flores Magón (Tlalnepantla: Edilar, S.A. de C.V., 1993), 129).

247 “ningún hombre, por bien intencionado que sea, puede hacer algo en favor de la clase pobre cuando se encuentra en el poder” (in Editores unidos, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 128).

248 Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 76.

249 Editores unidos, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 131.

The PLM grew to become a mouthpiece of advocates for workers' and peasants' rights, containing a very pronounced anarcho-syndicalist faction. In 1912, the Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the World Worker) was founded, providing even more substance to the party and its cause of social revolution, as well as a lasting impact on politics in the subsequent decades—even the CTM in its early years displayed anarcho-syndicalist tendencies that had developed in this period. In 1914, Flores Magón issued the *Manifiesto to the Workers of the World*, calling for international solidarity with the Mexican workers who were attempting to rid themselves of capitalism. In exile in the U.S., Flores Magón was arrested multiple times, contributing to the sense of justifiability surrounding his cause in the eyes of many dissidents, and eventually sentenced to 20 years imprisonment in Kansas in 1918. He died in confinement, most likely sick and without proper medical care.²⁵⁰

Reiterating the role of Mexico for international anarchism and the bond to the Russian Revolution—“Don't forget that Trotsky died in Mexico!”—, Fausto Rivera calls Flores Magón “our great ideologist of the [Mexican] Revolution.”²⁵¹ In a course for ideological orientation, the Sección 22 furthermore confirms the ideological considerations of the Flores Magón brothers as the base on which the unions were eventually founded.²⁵² As in the case of Zapata, it was Flores Magón's undying and incorruptible persistence in line with his own principles, values, and ideas regarding the rights of the Mexican people that, albeit not to the same degree as in the case of Zapata, won him the rank of a memory figure in the Mexican cultural memory and lets him serve as a model of virtue in the narrative of the Sección 22.

Similar virtues are ascribed to the leaders of movements prior to the founding of the CNTE: Othón Salazar, Lucio Cabañas, Arturo Gámiz, Genaro Vázquez, and Misael Núñez Acosta. Salazar, as men-

250 Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State*, 1, 2, 12; Editores Unidos, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 7–8; Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution 1910–1940*, 146–47; Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 18.

251 “No olvides que Trotsky murió en México,” “nuestro gran ideólogo de la Revolución” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

252 CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas,” 6.

tioned already, was the principal organizer of the teachers' protest in the Revolutionary Movement of Teachers (Movimiento Revolucionario del Magisterio; MRM) of the Sección 9 in the 1950s. He lived according to the principles of modesty, despite having held higher political positions, which aided the myth that eventually formed around him. Due to his syndical activism, he was imprisoned on various occasions—even tortured by the authorities—and his permission to teach was withdrawn, yet his activism and his hope, that the political left would regain strength again, never ceased. In the founding of the CNTE he saw “the expression of a rebirth of anarcho-syndicalism and the assertion of a utopian socialism in the left.”²⁵³ According to Hernández Navarro, “he was convinced that his central mission was that of making consciousness, illuminate with the lantern of dignity in the darkness of racism and of abjection, call the oppressed to raise their voice and not let themselves go.”²⁵⁴ He died, rather recently, in 2008. The organization of the first teachers' strike on a large scale in times of heavy repression, the founding of the MRM as the historic forerunner of the CNTE, and his continued efforts for a revolution from the left by the teachers earned him the status of hero and role model for the dissident teachers.²⁵⁵

The logo of the CNTE displays the figures that can be considered the ‘founding fathers’ of the CNTE, Arturo Gámiz, Genaro Vázquez, Lucio Cabañas, and Misael Núñez Acosta, as well as an elevated (left) fist and the phrase “United and organized we prevail!”²⁵⁶ on an outline of the Mexican national territory. Gámiz was born in 1940, a teacher, and a socialist activist prepared to take up arms in his cause. He led the Grupo Popular Guerrillero, the first modern guerrilla movement in Mexico. He died at the age of 25 in an assault against a garrison in Chihuahua.²⁵⁷

253 “expresión del renacimiento del anarcosindicalismo y de la reivindicación del socialismo utópico en la izquierda” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 71).

254 “estaba convencido de que su misión central era la de hacer conciencia, iluminar con el farol de la dignidad la oscuridad del racismo y la abyección, llamar a los oprimidos a levantar la voz y no dejarse” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 69–70).

255 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 68–71; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

256 “¡Unidos y organizados venceremos!”

257 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 365; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 166–67; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

Genaro Vázquez also converted into a *guerrillero* in his socialist activism. He was trained in the Escuela Normal Rural de Ayotzinapa, providing him with a solid basis of socialist ideology that nourished his already existing revolutionary disposition. Due to his participation in the MRM, his permit to teach was withdrawn after having only taught for three years. He nevertheless continued in the activist movement. Among others, he led the Civic National Revolutionary Association (Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria), turning it into a constant threat of guerrilla activism to the local authorities in Guerrero. His death is the stuff of legends as the circumstances leading to it in February 1972 are not finally resolved: He was involved in an accident and died shortly after. Whether his injuries stemmed from the accident—as claimed by the authorities—or he died because of maltreatment by the military in charge of clearing up the accident—as claimed by Vázquez’ supporters—cannot be traced back, a fact that surely contributes to his legendary status.²⁵⁸

Lucio Cabañas is the third personage in the row of founding fathers of the CNTE. He, too, was educated in the Escuela Normal Rural de Ayotzinapa, and participated in the MRM. He founded the (armed) Party of the Poor (Partido de los Pobres), and for a time led the Federation of Socialist Peasant Students of Mexico (Federación de Estudiantes Campesinos Socialistas de México; FECSM), a central organ in the organization of dissident students. In an organized action in 1974, Cabañas and his group of supporters kidnapped the PRI candidate for the elections of government and held him hostage in the school of Ayotzinapa for three months.²⁵⁹

The fourth figure in the collection of founding fathers makes the exception: Misael Núñez Acosta was a graduate of the Escuela Normal Rural ‘El Mexe’ and a vital figure in the founding process of the CNTE,

258 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 366; Estela Martínez Torres, “Genaro Vázquez Forma Una Guerrilla Rural,” accessed December 15, 2020; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

259 CDHMTlachinollan, *La Normal De Ayotzinapa*, accessed November 20, 2020; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 366; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Marco Salas, “Las Normales Rurales, Un Siglo De ‘Enseñar a Enseñar,’” September 26, 2020, accessed November 18, 2020; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

especially in the organization of states in the center of Mexico, yet he did not call to or make use of arms in the movement. He founded the Comité Central de Lucha Valle de México and led the teachers in their dissident movement against the undemocratic behavior of the SNTE and the acts of repression of the government. He was assassinated at the end of January 1981, allegedly masterminded by Elba Esther Gordillo, which provided additional fuel to the struggle of the dissident teachers in the early years of the CNTE. His efforts for the young movement and his unavenged assassination made him a legend as well as a memory figure for the CNTE and the organization still organizes marches on the anniversary of his death.²⁶⁰

While these leaders were teachers, their particular backgrounds and dispositions allowed their movements to incorporate marginalized groups of society, expanding the popular base as well as reinforcing the teachers of the CNTE in their belief that they were fighting for all the people disadvantaged by nepotism, capitalism, and, eventually, neoliberalism. Criticism of these legendary personages is frowned upon and celebrations are held in their commemoration. Of the five guerrilla movements in Mexico in the 20th century, three were led by teachers—Gámiz, Vázquez, and Cabañas—, fostering the reputation of *escuelas normales* as institutions of education for rebel teachers.²⁶¹

4.2.4 'Breeding Grounds of Guerrillas:' *Escuelas Normales Rurales*

Next to the institutionalized party and the variety of memory figures *escuelas normales*, and particularly the *escuelas normales rurales*, are a further part of the legacy of the Mexican Revolution that is of vital interest for the CNTE.

Escuelas normales, modeled after the examples provided in Europe, were established first in the 19th century to warrant standardized education for Mexican teachers—the foundations of modern Normalismo is

²⁶⁰ Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 101, 170, 173; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

²⁶¹ Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

most likely found in the state of Veracruz, where the Bavarian Enrique Laubscher and the Swiss Enrique Rébsamen laid the theoretical and pedagogical groundworks for the founding of the Benemérita Escuela Normal Veracruzana in 1886.²⁶² What is perceived as a legacy of the Revolution and in particular Art. 3 of the constitution, however, is the creation of *escuelas normales rurales* after 1925 with the explicit goal, attributed to José Vasconcelos, to carry education even to the most remote areas of the country and to balance the educational level of rural and urban areas as best as possible. The teachers themselves would then become a type of revolutionary missionary and reinforce their role as community leaders.²⁶³ According to an analysis by the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Instituto Nacional de la Evaluación de la Educación; INEE) in 2017, there were 460 *escuelas normales* overall in Mexico in 2015–2016, 16²⁶⁴ of which were explicitly *normales rurales*.²⁶⁵ The most well-known are the Escuela Normal Rural de Ayotzinapa in Guerrero, the Escuela Normal Rural Mactumactzá in Chiapas, and the Escuela Normal Rural Vasco de Quiroga in Michoacán.

Due to their original purpose of providing education to the poor and those most marginalized, *escuelas normales rurales* aim at training aspiring teachers from rural areas that would not otherwise have been able to climb the social ladder. To this end, the requirements for admission include a financial statement from the parents, signed by the municipality, *ejido*, or other corresponding official; highly qualified students with a low-income background are preferred. Ideally, these students would be from agrarian backgrounds with the intention to return to their commu-

262 DGESPETV, Los Orígenes. Benemérita Escuela Normal Veracruzana ‘Enrique C. Rébsamen’ (2012), accessed November 18, 2020.

263 Galván Lafarga, “La formación de maestros en México,” 57; Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

264 Andrés Manuel López Obrador, upon taking over the presidency, reinstated the Escuela Rural “El Mexe” in Hidalgo, which had been closed in 2008 due to its being the center of revolutionary and dissident protests. The school is, however, not yet equipped as a boarding school, causing discontentment for students of the tradition-loaden school (Giovanny Flores, “El Mexe, La Normal Rural Que Quedó En Promesa,” La Silla Rota Hidalgo, February 9, 2020; Salas, “Las Normales Rurales, un siglo de ‘enseñar a enseñar’”).

265 Verónica Medrano Camacho, Eduardo Ángeles Méndez, and Miguel Á. Morales Hernández, “La educación normal en México: Elementos para su análisis” (2017), 54.

nities or other predominantly poor and marginalized regions to teach.²⁶⁶ According to Maestro Daniel, as by 1980 only half of the communities in Oaxaca had schools, a system was developed for children to be able to acquire an education at no cost to the parents, which culminated in the creation of an *escuela normal rural* boarding school.²⁶⁷ Attending these schools, students have the possibility of attaining a stipend. Some schools are restricted for students of either sex.²⁶⁸

The hymn of the *escuelas normales* displays the idealistic notion that is attached to the teachers' schools:

Normalistas, working is the mission,
 That it redeem, save, and ennoble
 With the task the enthusiasm grows
 To save the homeland and the nation (...)
Normal rural, beloved mother,
 In you strong souls are forged,
 The lessons that you pour
 Will be the guide for my life.²⁶⁹

In the *normales rurales*, this sense of purpose is, due to their particular provision of being for the marginalized, still more elevated: "The *normales rurales* were the image of the fight, of work, of true transformers of the countryside, of the living conditions of their fellow Mexicans;"²⁷⁰ "[we] knew that coming from there was not to get rich or to look for positions, but to be in the fights of the communities, of the people.

266 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 367, 368, and 375; Normal Rural de Hecelchakan Campeche, 'Justo Sierra Méndez', "Convocatoria de nuevo ingreso 2019-2020. De la Esc. Nor. Rur. 'Justo Sierra Méndez' de Hecelchakan Campeche" (2019).

267 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

268 Salas, "Las Normales Rurales, un siglo de 'enseñar a enseñar.'"

269 "Normalistas, trabajar es la misión / que redime que salva y ennoblece / con la labor el entusiasmo crece / de salvar a la patria y a la nación (...) Normal rural, madre querida / en ti se forjan almas fuertes / las enseñanzas que tú viertes / serán la guía de mi vida" (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 381).

270 "Las normales rurales eran imagen de lucha, de trabajo, de verdaderos transformadores del campo, de las condiciones de vida de sus compañeros mexicanos" (Francisco Ornelas in Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 367).

Because we stem from there.”²⁷¹ The image and narrative around the students of *normales rurales* hence involve an entrenched sense and necessity to serve, as well as the narrative of the Revolution, of a just fight for improved social conditions.²⁷²

This heightened sense of purpose—still bolstered by poor living conditions, a scarcity of material in the schools themselves, and the necessity for them to be active in the maintenance of the school—further results in an enhanced disposition for these students to be shaped by a decidedly leftist and revolutionary ideology that emphasizes class and the class struggle.²⁷³ Students are exposed to the opus of Marx, Trotsky, and Lenin—Carlos Sanchez admits that sometimes Stalin erroneously also makes an appearance²⁷⁴—and learn to place their purpose in the context of other national and international social movements and revolutionaries, such as that of the MRM, Zapata, Lucio Cabañas, Othón Salazar, Misael Núñez Acosta, Fidel Castro, or Che Guevara.²⁷⁵ It is not uncommon to observe murals and citations from liberators on the walls of these schools—outside the main gate of the *escuela rural* in Ayotzinapa it reads: “Ayotzinapa[,] cradle of social consciousness.”²⁷⁶

Hence, coming from these schools, the students and newly formed teachers display a decidedly dissident ideology, which also provides these schools with the reputation of being “nests”²⁷⁷ or “breeding grounds of guerrillas”²⁷⁸ or “communists,”²⁷⁹ an allegation that has increased in substance since in 1940 20 *normales rurales* organized a strike for better nutritional standards, reconstruction of destroyed

271 “Sabíamos que salir de allí no era para ir a hacerse rico o buscar puestos, sino para estar en las peleas de las comunidades, del pueblo. Porque nosotros provenimos de ahí. Adquiríamos una ideología a favor de la lucha de liberación” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 269).

272 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

273 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

274 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

275 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

276 Margena de La O, “El Ejército Ha Estado Infiltrado Permanentemente En Ayotzinapa: Normalistas,” *La Silla Rota Hidalgo*, March 19, 2019.

277 “nidos de guerrilleros” (Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018).

278 “semilleros de guerrilleros” (Elba Esther Gordillo in Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 382).

279 “semilleros de comunistas” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 384).

infrastructure, and more educational materials.²⁸⁰ Further nurturing this allegation is the fact that some of its graduates have in fact turned to armed rebellion—e.g. Genaro Vázquez, Lucio Cabañas, and Misael Núñez Acosta. While this can certainly not be said for all of its inhabitants, *escuelas rurales* do have a tendency to produce system-critical thinkers and hence display a close ideological proximity to contemporary social movements.²⁸¹ As the Central Committee of the FECSM stated: *Normales rurales* “are breeding grounds for good persons: critical, analytical, and reflective [...]. These schools open the minds of people, they show them the injustice that exists. The mission of rural professors is to show the people what their rights are.”²⁸² Alejandro, a student at the Escuela Normal Rural de Ayotzinapa, explains (standing next to an image of Zapata):

Every student that enters for the first time, we take care of opening their eyes, taking off the blindfold. About what? If you were living in a world where you complain about everything being expensive, but you didn't know why, here, we guide them to open their eyes to reality. Why? It's unjust to have a submissive people. It's unjust to have a people that practically doesn't know why things are expensive, why the basket of basic goods is expensive, why the Diesel, the gasoline, is so expensive, why so many things, why the social injustices. [...] If there existed more Ayotzinapas in the state of Guerrero, in all states of the Republic, we would help many students that decided to fulfill their work, that decided to better themselves in life. Why? Because, unfortunately, the situations of violence happening in our country, it's because of this: because of a lack of education.²⁸³

280 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 384.

281 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

282 “Son semilleros de buenas personas: críticas, analíticas y reflexivas [...]. Estas escuelas abren la mente de la gente, le muestran la injusticia que hay. La misión de los profesores rurales es enseñar a la gente cuáles son sus derechos” (in Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 385).

283 “Cada alumno que entra por primera vez, se tiende a abrirle los ojos, quitarse la venda. ¿De qué? Si tú vivías en un mundo, donde te quejabas que todo está caro, pero no sabías por qué, aquí nosotros los guiamos para que abran los ojos a la realidad. ¿Por qué? Es injusto tener un pueblo sumiso. Es injusto tener un pueblo que no sabe prácticamente porque de las cosas, por qué está cara la canasta básica, por qué está tan caro el Diesel, la gasolina,

That this attitude and ideological alignment is an idealized image that does not apply to all teachers, especially in the contemporary context, will be treated in chapter seven.

However, this ideological disposition and upbringing exhibited by graduates of the *normales rurales* leads to an apparently natural tendency to associate themselves with the CNTE, as “they are already mentally prepared that ‘teacher’ in itself is a synonym for struggle,”²⁸⁴ that “mobilization and protest are for them the tools to survive and to keep a legacy alive”²⁸⁵—the legacy of the Mexican Revolution in the sense of rights and justice for all Mexicans. Furthermore, the students learn how to organize rebellion, e.g., how to hold meetings and assemblies, how to preside over them, how to organize marches, etc.²⁸⁶—a fact that caused a taxi driver in Oaxaca to state that “the final exam in the teachers’ school is to shout their march cries, and the exam to pass the doctorate is to paint walls on the streets”²⁸⁷ with slogans and anti-systemic drawings. As Maestro Paco, a recent graduate of the Escuela Normal Rural Mactumactzá stated, they even learned how to make Molotov cocktails.²⁸⁸ Even if the *normal rural* is not directly associated with the CNTE and under the auspices of the SNTE, such as for example the Escuela Normal Rural ‘General Matías Ramos Santos’ in San Marcos, Zacatecas, the students, due to their backgrounds that facilitate the assimilation to leftist ideology, tend to turn to activism and an eventual association with the CNTE.²⁸⁹

por qué muchas cosas, por qué injusticias sociales. Si existieran más Ayotzinapas por todo el estado de Guerrero, por los demás estados de la república, ayudaríamos a muchísimos jóvenes que decidieran realizar su trabajo, que decidieran superarse en la vida. ¿Por qué? Porque, lamentablemente, las situaciones de violencia que acontecen en nuestro país, es por eso: por falta de educación” (IBERO MX, Documental: Ayotzinapa: La Otra Historia, accessed November 11, 2020).

284 “Ya se mentalizan que ‘maestro’ por sí es sinónimo de lucha” (Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018).

285 “La movilización y la protesta son para ellos las herramientas para sobrevivir y mantener vivo un legado” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 377).

286 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

287 “el examen final de graduación de la escuela de maestros es gritar sus gritos, y el doctorado es pintar paredes en la calle” (Taxi-driver in Oaxaca, Interview on August 8, 2018, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca).

288 Maestro Paco, Interview on September 8, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

289 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

As the PRI moved away from the legacy of the Revolution—according to the CNTE—and towards neoliberalism, the relationship between the government and the *escuelas rurales* deteriorated. Apparently, a former secretary of education in the state of Guerrero once stated that “the auto-government and the rural education are ‘customs’ that need to be finished with” and that “what traditionally happened will not happen anymore.”²⁹⁰ Examples of repression against these schools support the argument that ‘the government’ wants to end ‘Normalismo.’ As a consequence of the protests in 1968 and 1969, a large number of *escuelas rurales* was closed, and the frequent attempts to limit the system of the schools or close them altogether are the basis for events and rallies organized by the Sección 22 and the CNTE: Hernández Navarro speaks of five collisions at *escuelas rurales* in the 2000s, one of them resulting in the already mentioned closing down of ‘El Mexe’ in 2008—the argument of the state government usually being a lack of order, and militancy.²⁹¹ The dissidents perceive the cause to be the position of the teachers as “bastions in the defense of public education.”²⁹²

The most prominent example of this kind of repression is the until today not entirely solved disappearance of 43 students from the Escuela Normal Rural de Ayotzinapa²⁹³ in 2014, which led to massive and international protests and investigations on the matter with international help. Versions of the event by the government of Peña Nieto as well as the dissidents overlap on the initial position: Buses that students from Ayotzinapa were traveling with in order to attend a demonstration in the capital on October 2 were shot at close to Iguala on September 26, 2014, at about 120 km distance from the school in Tixtla de Guerrero.²⁹⁴

290 “el autogobierno y la educación rural son ‘costumbres’ con las que hay que acabar”, “lo que tradicionalmente venía ocurriendo ya no va a ocurrir” (in Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 375).

291 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 368, 371–373.

292 “baluartes en la defensa de la educación pública” (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 75).

293 For an impression of the school see: CDHMTlachinollan, *La Normal de Ayotzinapa*; IBERO MX, Documental.

294 For a version of events told by surviving students, see IBERO MX, Documental.

After the incident, six people were dead, 25 injured, and 43 students had disappeared.²⁹⁵

From here on, the versions differ. What is known as the “historical truth”²⁹⁶ distributed by the Peña Nieto government claims that the students had hijacked the buses, justifying the police intervention. The officers took the 43 and handed them over to the Guerreros Unidos drug cartel, who burned the bodies in a nearby trash dump and threw the remains in the river. However, as various independent investigations soon established, this version was flawed—among others, satellite pictures showed no fire at the location that night.²⁹⁷

The dissidents and social protesters have various versions of events they defend, as too many factors are unknown—according to some sources there was even heroin found in one of the buses.²⁹⁸ While not all claim the government’s involvement in the assassination of the group, all condemn the Peña Nieto government for the apparent lack of interest in solving the case and sticking to the official version²⁹⁹ of events despite the irregularities that have been discovered in the measures that were taken—according to an investigation of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, half of the reports of accused persons that have been analyzed cannot be utilized as the accused have been tortured in the hearing.³⁰⁰

295 Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018; Redacción Animal Político, “Cronología Del Caso Ayotzinapa: Los 43 Normalistas Que Aún No Aparecen,” Animal Político, November 7, 2014; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

296 Milenio, Peña Nieto Defiende ‘Verdad Histórica’ Del Caso Ayotzinapa, accessed November 20, 2020.

297 Anonymous, “Mexico Missing Students: Suspect Detained in 2014 Case,” accessed November 19, 2020; Anne-Katrin Mellmann, “Mexikos Suche Nach Der Wahrheit: 43 Verschleppte Studenten,” accessed November 19, 2020; Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018; Katy Watson, “Mexico Missing Students: Unanswered Questions Two Years on,” accessed November 11, 2020.

298 Mellmann, “Mexikos Suche nach der Wahrheit?”

299 Presidencia Enrique Peña Nieto, Mensaje a Medios Del Presidente Peña Nieto Sobre Iguuala, Guerrero (2014), accessed November 19, 2020.

300 Ana G. Rojas, “La ONU Dice Que La Investigación De La Desaparición De Los 43 Estudiantes De Ayotzinapa En México Fue ‘Afectada Por Torturas Y Encubrimiento,’” accessed November 19, 2020.

The incident, considered to be “the most serious case of human rights violation in the recent history of Mexico”³⁰¹ has lowered the Peña Nieto government’s rankings to a new historic low³⁰² and has marked the country—literally, as ever since many bridges and other landmarks have been painted with the slogans “There are 43 missing!”³⁰³ or “Alive they took them, alive we want them!”³⁰⁴ That the authorities have until now been unable to make out and sentence a prime suspect and have not offered any indemnification to the families has only elevated the discontent and caused recurring nation-wide protest. The government of López Obrador has made it one of its primary goals to find conclusive evidence and arrest the guilty for the assassination of the 43 students. In June 2019, a truth commission, involving international organizations, was installed to investigate the matter, yet the apparent involvement of corruption and organized crime appear to make the task a difficult one.³⁰⁵

The incident has not only kindled the flame of society’s discontent with its own government and provided additional strength for social movements—a picture in the workshop material provided by the Sección 22 in 2015 reads: “They wanted to bury us, but they didn’t know that we were seeds.”³⁰⁶ It likewise contributes and gives substance to the narrative utilized by the Sección 22 claiming that the government has deviated from its former purpose of defending the legacy of the Revolution, effectively handing the task over to social movements.

301 “el caso más grave de violación a derechos humanos en la historia reciente de México” (Alberto Nájjar, “Caso Ayotzinapa: El Polémico Video De Torturas a Un Detenido Por La Desaparición De Los 43 Estudiantes Normalistas,” accessed November 19, 2020).

302 Azam Ahmed, “La Desaparición De 43 Estudiantes En México, La Tragedia Que Marcó Al Gobierno De Peña Nieto Pero Que No Afectará a Su Partido,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2016, accessed November 19, 2020.

303 “¡Faltan 43!”

304 “¡Vivos se los llevaron, vivos los queremos!”

305 Mellmann, “Mexikos Suche nach der Wahrheit.”

306 “Quisieron enterrarnos, pero no sabían que éramos semillas” (CEDES 22, “TEEA 2015–2016,” 1).

5 The Narrative of Neoliberal Globalization

“Para lograr una verdadera transformación educativa y social es necesario reeducar la colectividad en la escuela.”¹

The Sección 22 identifies neoliberal globalization as the evil causing—or at least influencing—large parts of the mischief and grievances in Mexico as well as worldwide. The neoliberal wave gripping the world from the 1980s onwards did not make an exception at Mexican shores. To properly explain its implementation and its effects, we will first take a closer look at the roots of neoliberalism and how it was implemented in Mexico. In a second step, we will examine an economic theory and one economic model that will enable us to allocate the Sección 22 in this economic reality, as well as analyze the reactions of the section in narrative and in their intention to transform society.

5.1 Neoliberalism: One Wor(l)d, Many Meanings

Neoliberalism—especially in the contemporary sense of the word—has many facets and often depends on the contexts of its implementation.

5.1.1 Neoliberalism in Theory

Thomas Biebricher in his introduction on neoliberalism places its official birth at the Colloque Walter Lippmann in 1938 in Paris, where Lippmann himself pointed at the two reasons of the downfall and discrediting of liberalism: the first was external factors, such as the economic crisis, while the second was the simple consequence of laissez-faire liberalism, which he sees responsible for its own demise. In the attempt to revive liberal ideology, the Colloque set the guidelines according to

¹ “To achieve a true educational and social transformation, it is necessary to reeducate the collective in the school” (CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015: La concienciación revolucionaria en la identidad y autonomía curricular en la educación de Oaxaca” (2014), cover).

which liberalism was to experience its renewal and reevaluation. Particularly evident in these guidelines was the clear separation of good (neoliberalism) and bad (social democrats, socialists, fascists), defining government intervention in the market as the basis for the development of the latter.² This distinction, as well as what Biebricher calls its “reactive character”³ and the emphasis on the individual serves as the basis for all currents of neoliberalism.

World War II temporarily halted the neoliberal talks, yet also led to governments favoring market intervention as a consequence of the planned economy during the war period. This was also due to thinkers such as John Maynard Keynes, who, during the Great Depression, were out to find an explanation and a solution to prevent the recurring of economic crisis. What came to be known as ‘Keynesianism’ found great resonance with governments and set the basis for economic politics for about three decades: Keynes’ principal assertion was that, in times of recession, governments should get actively involved in the market economy and, e.g., create jobs to increase consumer spending, which would ensure the balance between inflation and unemployment, and therefore prevent an economic crisis.⁴

Needless to say, these ideas stood in dire contrast to those of the neoliberals. After World War II, neoliberal thinkers met again at the first meeting of the Mont Pèlerin Society in 1947, and discussed the ideas that were to influence the different currents within neoliberalism. The above-mentioned distinction between good and bad, and the necessity to revise liberalism united those present. Yet, according to Biebricher, it was the question as to the exact traits that neoliberalism should or should not display, and its biggest antagonist that divided the opinions and split neoliberalism into its various interpretations.⁵

A current so distinct that scholars discuss whether it is not an entirely separate category is ordoliberalism, closely associated with

2 Thomas Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus: Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag GmbH, 2012), 33–34.

3 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 35.

4 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 31.; Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5–6.

5 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 37–38.

Walter Eucken, Wilhelm Röpke, and Alexander Rüstow, disciples of the School of Freiburg. Ordoliberalism, broadly speaking, emphasizes the order (lat. *ordo*) that the economy should be placed under. Ordoliberals do not trust the supposedly natural self-regulating characters of the market system and call for government intervention to establish and maintain this order and the competition system, and to prevent a concentration of power, for example in the hands of monopolies.⁶

Contrary to this idea of intervention by the state stand the representatives of neoliberalism Friedrich August von Hayek and Milton Friedman. Hayek sees the market in the light of its evolutionary function—Biebricher calls him an “evolutionary neoliberal.”⁷ In this sense, Hayek emphasizes the idea that the market order is a product of evolution and can therefore be seen as a factor in the natural selection of humans. It should hence not be tempered with. What further differentiates his interpretation of the market from the ordoliberals’ is the idea of the dynamic character of the market: Contrary to the ordoliberals, he argues that possible shortages or other events in the market cannot be predicted by humans, that humans, in fact, will never have enough knowledge to guide, much less plan, the economy—one of his convictions condemning planned economy. Such measures of intervention would be “ominous milestones on the ‘road to serfdom’”⁸—serfdom being socialism or fascism. Instead, he suggests that the forces regulating the market for the common good—much in the sense of Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’—steer knowledge and action in the direction needed to satisfy the demand in the unpredictable dynamic of the market.⁹

Regarding the human factor in the market, Hayek expresses the somehow peculiar idea, that, according to Biebricher, only few are following: While, in principal, Hayek also wants to prevent a competition for state privileges between strong interest groups, he, on the other hand, states that the market—as a natural tool of selection—cannot be accused of injustice, just as much as you cannot accuse an earthquake of having selected its victims. However, in the justification of this

6 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 39.

7 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 58.

8 Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 15.

9 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 25, 58, 61, 62.

argument, Hayek, on the one hand, emphasizes the necessity of individual effort for success or failure on the market as a process of natural selection, while, on the other, he admits to the occurrence of luck and coincidence, since the market would not be natural if it was guided by humans. Still, individual effort and achievement appear to have greater and a more lasting value to Hayek and serve as the justification of the market and its effects on inequality in society.¹⁰

According to Wendy Brown, Hayek's neoliberalism goes beyond the mere necessity of liberty of the market forces: It is a "moral-political project,"¹¹ including moral as the counterpart to the market in the foundation for a free and well-functioning society. Just as the market, society regulates itself, rendering governmental intervention outside the structural support and framework unnecessary and inadvertent. Intervention of the state in the 'social' Hayek deems anti-democratic: "Social regulation and redistribution were discursively delinked from democracy's dependence on political equality and inverted into tyranny, democracy's opposite."¹² Instead, individuals should follow, by their own conduct, rules provided by the market and moral traditions.¹³

Of particular importance in the context of Mexico is Milton Friedman and his interpretation of neoliberalism—monetarism or monetary neoliberalism—, as his work and influence at the Chicago School of Economics had far-reaching consequences for the entire American continent. One of the most consequential ideas for the implementation of Friedman's neoliberalism was its reach into other aspects of life. As we will see later on, it was not only government bureaucracy that was placed under supervision and revised according to entrepreneurial standards of efficiency, it was also the social sector that was reformed. Friedman indicates Keynesianism as the principal reason for the downfall of liberalism and thus sets his considerations called monetarism in direct contrast—Biebricher even calls it a counter-revolution to the

10 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 62, 63, 67.

11 Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism's Scorpion Tail," in *Mutant Neoliberalism: Market Rule and Political Rupture*, ed. William Callison and Zachary Manfredi (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), 43.

12 Brown, "Neoliberalism's Scorpion Tail," 44.

13 Brown, "Neoliberalism's Scorpion Tail," 44.

Keynesian revolution.¹⁴ Where Keynes argues that crisis derives from missing demand, Friedman sees the responsibility with the government not acting quickly enough to increase the money supply on the market. One of his basic solutions would, as a result, be the steady increase in money supply by the government according to the rate of economic growth. However, the state—as a democracy ruled by the interests of minorities—should not interfere with the dynamics of the market, allowing for a natural development of the market and its consequences, as well as the establishing of correct prices and wages determined by the market.¹⁵

These notions further connect to the crisis of governability of democracy Grégoire Chamayou treats in *La société ingouvernable. Une généalogie du libéralisme autoritaire*.¹⁶ Social inequality needs to remain untouched by the government in order to ensure democracy. The mobilization of disadvantaged and marginalized groups—those excluded from participation in the democracy—in recent years and their claiming the right to participate in democracy, has led to a weakening of democracy, as the government was forced to step in and install political provisions to support these groups. These interventions, in turn, contested natural selection as installed by the market forces and the idea of the individual functioning as a company, subjected to these forces and their rules.¹⁷

This also translates into a general phenomenon of neoliberalism: the strength as well as the limitedness of the powers of the state. In order to sustain a self-regulating market and a self-regulating society, the government needs to instate rules and laws setting up and maintaining the necessary frameworks within which both can operate. However, the scope of the government's powers, in turn, should be limited to exactly

¹⁴ Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 70.

¹⁵ Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75; Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 17.

¹⁶ Published in English as *The Ungovernable Society: A Genealogy of Authoritarian Liberalism*, cited here from the German edition *Die unregierbare Gesellschaft: Eine Genealogie des autoritären Liberalismus*.

¹⁷ Grégoire Chamayou, *Die Unregierbare Gesellschaft: Eine Genealogie Des Autoritären Liberalismus* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019), 267–269, 346–347.

these functions to not interfere in the processes of self-regulation—for example by way of the defense of socially discriminated groups.¹⁸

5.1.2 Neoliberalism Implemented

The theory of neoliberalism, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, was ‘born’ shortly before World War II. In praxis, the exact shape it adopted, however, depended strongly on the economic and political circumstances in the respective country, and the experiences already made beforehand in others.

The implementation began roughly in the 1970s, when Keynesianism, the system that had been dominant in large parts of the world since World War II, was suddenly faced with economic conditions that, in the realm of Keynesian theory, could not happen, and for which it consequently had no explanation or solution: stagflation—the simultaneous rise of inflation and unemployment. In fact, part of Friedman’s critique on Keynesianism concerns this central premise that lower unemployment rates resulted in higher inflation rates and vice versa (Phillips-curve): He argued that fiscal and financial politics could, in the long haul, only affect the money supply on the market but not the employment rate, leading to higher inflation and stationary unemployment.¹⁹

Apart from stagflation, the western world was also faced with two major oil price shocks, instigated by the OPEC countries, prompting countries to turn to neoliberalism and implementing major changes—yet in different fashions—in their economic systems in different fashions. Steger and Roy see three dimensions of the implementation of neoliberalism: as an ideology, as a mode of governance, and as a policy package. The first usually expresses itself in truth-claims that are then distributed by ‘codifiers’, mainly elites in power. In this case, they disperse the picture of a better world achieved through globalization and a free market capitalism.²⁰

18 Chamayou, *Die unregierbare Gesellschaft*, 348–49.

19 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 72.

20 Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 11–12.

In the dimensions of the mode of governance, Steger and Roy refer back to Michel Foucault's idea of governmentality—the basic premises that make up a specific manner of governance, or the “rationalities and techniques of governing.”²¹ Applied to neoliberalism, the core values of neoliberal governmentality are entrepreneurial by nature, manifesting in the call for a self-regulating free market, individual empowerment, and the application of rules from the realm of enterprises to the state bureaucracy to make it more efficient, specifically manifesting in the model of ‘new public management.’²² Foucault also includes the change of definition of the *homo oeconomicus* to better display the role of the individual in neoliberalism: Where in traditional liberalism it was a trading partner, the *homo oeconomicus* in neoliberalism is the entrepreneur, and all aspects of life—also the social aspects—should be perceived in the context of entrepreneurial standards. As a result, society would be separated into various smaller entrepreneurial units.²³

In the third dimension—that of the policy package, which is, perhaps, the most obvious—, neoliberalism reveals itself in what Steger and Roy call the “D-L-P Formula: (1) deregulation (of the economy); (2) liberalization (of trade and industry); and (3) privatization (of state-owned enterprises).”²⁴ More concretely, this formula expresses itself in tax cuts for high incomes, the reduction of welfare, the establishment and support of global markets, and campaigns against organized labor.²⁵

In the industrialized world, we can speak of two waves of neoliberalism—the first in the 1980s, the second in the 1990s—and, perhaps, though contested, a revival or ‘new’ neoliberalism following the economic crisis in 2008. The first wave of neoliberalism—also, yet more infrequently, called “Combative Neoliberalism”²⁶—was subsequent to the stagflation and the crisis in the 1970s and is commonly associated with two prominent examples: Reagonomics in the USA and Thatch-

21 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 166.

22 Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 13.

23 Michel Foucault, *Die Geburt Der Biopolitik: Geschichte Der Gouvernementalität II* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004), 313–14.

24 Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 14.

25 Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 13–14.

26 William Davies, “The New Neoliberalism,” *New Left Review*, no. 101 (2016): 124.

erism in the UK. Biebricher also calls this phase “Roll-Back-Neoliberalism,” as the idea was to break the socio-economic order, undermine institutions, and discredit old perceptions.²⁷ Steger and Roy also perceive it as “a successful ideological crusade against Keynesian-style ‘big government’ and state ‘interference’ in the market [...] centred on releasing the entrepreneurial energies of the individual.”²⁸

The second wave of neoliberalism—“Normative Neoliberalism”²⁹ or “Roll-Out-Neoliberalism”³⁰—was principally represented in the USA by Bill Clinton and by Tony Blair in the UK. The major factor that changed, compared to the first wave, was a slightly leftist tendency, resulting in more constructive (social) policies while still attempting to promote entrepreneurial values. Human rights and social justice played a bigger role, and yet, while the economic growth rates supported the notion of success of the neoliberal system, growing levels of inequality showed the other side of the neoliberal coin that was to be the major cause of rebellion against this philosophy.³¹

In the international context, neoliberalism is closely connected to the Washington Consensus—a term coined by John Williamson in 1990—and the structural adjustment programs building on it. The Washington Consensus is a collection of ideas that serve as the smallest common denominator in policies supposedly necessary for every country to establish economic stability and growth. Among them are: fiscal discipline, reduction of public spending, tax reform, encouragement of foreign direct investment, and the above mentioned D-L-P Formula.³²

Before the first wave of neoliberalization in the industrialized world commenced with Reagan and Thatcher, there was a trial run that, on top, served as the first step of its internationalization throughout the rest of the world. This trial run was instigated in Chile, where econo-

27 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 124.

28 Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 48–49.

29 Davies, “The New Neoliberalism,” 127.

30 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 124.

31 Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 75.

32 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 89; Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 19–20; John Williamson, “What Washington Means by Policy Reform,” in *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?*, ed. John Williamson (Washington D.C.: Petersen Institute for International Economics, 1990), accessed February 17, 2021.

mists from the U.S.—in particular the Chicago School, who had set up schools in the region already in the decades before—played a vital role in the restructuring of Chilean politics after the coup of Augusto Pinochet. The triad of economists, an authoritarian military regime, and a liberal elite supporting this regime, was also evident in the spread of neoliberalism in Brazil and Uruguay. Friedman himself traveled in this region and, while admitting that such a political environment is beneficial for the introduction of neoliberalism, he specified that it was not a condition.³³

The second step of internationalizing neoliberalism and spreading the alleged freedoms economists kept emphasizing, occurred parallel to and beyond the first wave in the industrialized countries mentioned above. In the international context, the relation between crises—be they financial or economic—and the spread of neoliberalism as part of their combating strategy—and often called shock-therapy—is rather prevalent, and Mexico was the first in a long line of patients that was supposed to be cured with the neoliberal potion, administered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

5.1.3 Early Neoliberalism in Mexico

After World War II, Mexico, as many others, followed the Keynesian model of economics and, in more detail, the Import Substitution Industrialization, requiring a strong state that implemented high tariffs to protect the domestic economy from international competition and hence reduce a country's dependence on foreign imports, increased domestic production, and moderate social reforms.³⁴ These measures led to the 'Mexican Economic Miracle,' portrayed in an average growth of the GDP by 5%, while the inflation remained below this level. Furthermore, society experienced a restructuring as the importance of agriculture slowly decreased to the benefit of the industry—causing also greater inequality. In the financial realm, the country grew increas-

33 Biebricher, *Neoliberalismus*, 88; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16–17.

34 Francisco Salazar, "Globalización Y Política Neoliberal En México," *El Cotidiano* 20, no. 126 (2004); Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 106–7.

ingly dependent on foreign capital due to the increase of imported capital inputs and consumer goods, the fixed exchange rate of the currency, and, above all, public spending, which caused quickly rising debt financed by foreign investors who perceived Mexico as a safe country to invest in because of its oil resources.³⁵

President Luis Echeverría passed populist correction programs in the first half of the 1970s to create more union in society by generating more industry in the middle- and working-class sector, yet they only exacerbated the problems and further increased public debt, leading to the first devaluation of the peso in over 20 years and negotiations with the IMF. The discovery of major oil resources was able to bring short-time relief and good credibility among investors, and still the country transformed to become dependent on the revenue of oil and thus at the mercy of international oil prices.³⁶ Additionally, the government had not managed to decrease the deficit of the public sector—between 1973 and 1981, the external debt increased on an average of 30% per year, which, to make matters worse, was financed largely by short-term credit. The stark dependence on foreign investment and the oil price weakened the country further, deteriorating conditions when international interest rates rose and the oil price sank.³⁷

In early August 1982, the conditions that had been deteriorating over the previous months but had not been perceived as too serious by the IMF as well as the Mexican authorities reached an alarming level, and the Mexican finance Jesús Silva Herzog called the IMF for emergency negotiations. Considering that Mexico defaulting on its payments would reverberate around the entire world and potentially lead to an

35 Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution*, 33; Miguel D. Ramirez, “Mexico’s Development Experience: 1950–85: Lessons and Future Prospects,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, no. 2 (1986): 39, 40, 41, 44; Kathleen C. Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Latin American History*, 2019, 5.

36 Ramirez, “Mexico’s Development Experience: 1950–85,” 51–54; Salazar, “Globalización y política neoliberal en México”; Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 107.

37 James M. Boughton, *Silent Revolution: The International Monetary Fund 1979–1989* (Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2001), 282–83; Adam D. Morton, “Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: ‘Passive Revolution’ in the Global Political Economy,” *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2003): 637; Salazar, “Globalización y política neoliberal en México”; Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” 5–6.

economic crisis on a larger scale, everyone involved worked incessantly on finding a solution, and a default could temporarily be prevented. Yet already in the first negotiations, the demand for structural adjustment towards liberalization and the opening of Mexico for trade in the country's economic system to avoid a recurrence rang clear.³⁸

Notwithstanding the successful negotiations of Silva Herzog and the IMF, on September 1, 1982, President López Portillo nationalized the banks and introduced exchange controls, blaming the economic crisis on the IMF and other foreign creditors, and damaging Silva Herzog's credibility in the negotiations. While the latter were kept alive, the requirements, among others, caused a delay in finding a settlement.³⁹ These included that

the public sector deficit should be cut by more than half in proportion to GDP in 1983; that subsidies should be reduced; that wage policy should be consistent with a reduction in inflation; that interest rates should be allowed to rise by enough to encourage residents to keep their savings in domestic banks; and that exchange rate policy should help restore international competitiveness.⁴⁰

After negotiations between the Mexican authorities, the IMF, and the creditor banks—making sure that Mexico would do as much in structural adjustment as could be expected—the country was to receive \$5 billion from the banks and a further \$3.75 billion from the IMF, as approved on December 23, 1982.⁴¹

The interference of the IMF should not have occurred according to the theory of neoliberalism, since lenders always carry the risk of their investments falling through. In the case of the Mexican as well as many other markets, the IMF stepped in to protect the big investor countries

38 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 289–90.

39 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 300; Morton, "Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: 'Passive Revolution' in the Global Political Economy," 638.

40 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 302.

41 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 311 and 314; Asa C. Laurell, "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico: The Destruction of Society," *International Journal of Health Services* 45 (2), no. 2 (2015): 248; Salazar, "Globalización y política neoliberal en México."

from the consequences of a default, and instead of letting the investors face the consequences of their investment choices, the IMF turned the tables and punished the borrowing countries for having ended up in this economic situation.⁴²

The financial scheme was maintained throughout 1984, since Mexico had adhered to the requirements specified and the goals set in 1983. Due to this apparent success, a multi-year program was passed in 1984, further specifying the requirements Mexico had to complete, and installing a monitoring agent in the IMF to ensure this compliance. While largely promising success, the Mexican economic strategy up until that point had, nevertheless, not managed to elicit more export industry while decreasing imports, or keep the overvaluation of the exchange rate in check. By 1985, the country had grown tired under the adjustment programs and by mid-1985, the goals previously established could not be met, causing the discontinuing of loans. To make matters worse, September 1985 saw two of the worst earthquakes in the country's history, making further international financial help necessary.⁴³

While in 1985 the crisis was again as profound as in 1982, the problems this time went deeper (and Mexico was not the only case). The intention to return the indebted countries to normalcy by the rules of what only later came to be known as the 'Washington Consensus'—as explained above—did not provide the promised improvements and, despite overcoming the first hurdle of the financial crisis, had by then created long-term issues.⁴⁴

In 1985, the Baker Plan did not propose any revolutionary solutions but called for more of the same: structural adjustment in the debtor countries that is supported by the international financial community—translating into the building and liberalizing of market institutions, more support for the private sector, and the endorsement of domestic investment and saving—, the continued monitoring of the IMF, and increased lending by private banks for the adjustment programs.⁴⁵

42 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 74.

43 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 364–365, 369–371.

44 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 415.

45 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 417, 419.

Mexico's willingness and preparation to finally join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986—after having refused for a long time—demonstrated the government's willingness to liberalize its economy, and promised long-term benefits. Yet, while the government further decreased public spending, the deficit did not lower as expected, but actually rose and by June 1986, Mexico was again close to defaulting. In the ensuing negotiations, Silva Herzog lost the support of his government—apparently, he was perceived as too sympathetic with the U.S.⁴⁶

A stand-by arrangement was negotiated with Mexico, setting a floor on the primary fiscal surplus, as well as focusing on overall deficit and operational balance. Additionally, the government promised to renegotiate in case inflation got out of control again. At first, the program appeared to provide success, yet in August 1987, a stock market crash again brought the focus to Mexico. This time, the solution came from the Mexican government that set up the Pacto de Solidaridad Económica, which set four key goals—“immediately restore and then maintain international competitiveness, strengthen the fiscal balance over the coming year, further liberalize trade policy, and establish a permanent basis for maintaining a social consensus on wage policy.”⁴⁷ The plan managed to stabilize the economy to the extent that by March, 1988, conditions were put in place to receive loans for externally financed investment projects.⁴⁸

The government under Carlos Salinas de Gortari is also known as the second neoliberal Mexican government and installed a list of neoliberal policies. Salinas de Gortari managed to contain and even lower inflation from 167% in 1987 to 8% in 1993, renegotiated the loans, continued the re-privatization that had started under his predecessor Miguel de la Madrid, permitted the charging for higher public education, and modified Articles 3, 27, and 130 of the Constitution in the attempt to further open the country to international finances. He also reversed land reform achieved during the Revolution, signaling the final departure

46 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 437, 440; Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” 7.

47 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 451.

48 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 442, 449–450, 452; Morton, “Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: ‘Passive Revolution’ in the Global Political Economy,” 640.

of the revolutionary legacy that had promoted the interests of Mexico's agrarian population over that of international and liberal interests.⁴⁹ Yet the most groundbreaking achievement of his term was the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993, which provided further incentives for foreign investment and continued the liberalization of trade and finances, as well as the "denationalization of economy,"⁵⁰ tying the country closer to its neighbor in the North. This step of international integration was completed with Mexico's joining the OECD a year later.⁵¹

NAFTA was, however, also in the interest of drug-traffickers who enjoyed the new liberty at the border. The inkling that this sector might have influenced talks about NAFTA—and a possible involvement of President Salinas' in this sector—was buttressed by the allegations against the president's brother, Raúl Salinas de Gortari: A Swiss police report confirmed that Raúl took charge of "practically all drug shipments through Mexico," when his brother became president in 1988, bribing the police as well as the army to support the business. He was convicted in 1994 for scheming a murder and served ten years in prison.⁵² Carlos Salinas further organized the (peaceful) arrest of the master drug-lord, Miguel Ángel Felix Gallardo, something that, according to Ioan Grillo, hints at the government's involvement in the drug trade and an exhibition of 'who is the boss'—however, Grillo further suggests that the imprisoning of Gallardo robbed the enterprise of its head figure, opening the field for rivalry and violence.⁵³

What was supposed to be the crowning achievement of Salina's term was overshadowed by events of that year. On New Year's Day, the world, at last, saw the uprising of a collective of indigenous groups—the

49 Judith Adler Hellman, "Structural Adjustment in Mexico: and the Dog that Didn't Bark" (York University, 1997), 5; Salazar, "Globalización y política neoliberal en México."

50 Laurell, "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico," 251; Schwartzman, "Mexico and the New Neoliberalism," 7.

51 Laurell, "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico," 250; Aldo Musacchio, "Mexico's Financial Crisis of 1994–1995: Working Paper" (Harvard Business School, 2012); Schwartzman, "Mexico and the New Neoliberalism," 9.

52 Ioan Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 84.

53 Grillo, *El Narco*, 77–78.

poorest of the poor in Mexico—, represented by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional; EZLN) and its spokesman Subcomandante Marcos in reaction to NAFTA. Then, in March, the presidential candidate for the PRI party was assassinated, followed by months of political crimes. The previous optimism of investors regarding Mexican reforms had caused significant cash flow, but slowly started decreasing in light of the developments. Additionally, the investment had not been used for long-range projects or generated households' saving, nullifying the possible benefits of foreign direct investment. The investors started to withdraw.⁵⁴

To thwart the capital flight and maintain the exchange rates, the Mexican government was forced to borrow heavily. Yet the necessity to borrow more money to balance the trade deficit in order to stabilize the exchange rate, on top of the president-elect's decision to change the finance minister, ultimately only increased the investors' nervousness and the capital flight continued. The government's decision to devalue the peso on December 20, 1994, was the last straw that broke the camel's back, leading to the worst recession in Mexican history, eventually spreading to other parts of the world—giving the crisis the name 'tequila crisis.'⁵⁵

As the Mexican market continued on its downward spiral, the U.S. government, jointly with the IMF, the Bank for International Settlements, and smaller private banks, managed to offer a loan. As before, the loan came with the requisites of more privatization—also the, until then, protected sectors, such as railroads and gas—and other neoliberal policies. Only little more than half of what the U.S. Treasury made available was actually utilized. The fund to rescue the bankrupted banks was formalized as public debt in 1997, placing it on the shoulders of the already strained society. The impression arose that it was the U.S. that had rescued Mexico, of course entailing the usual prejudices of superiority and necessity by the 'weak' neighbor.⁵⁶

54 Musacchio, "Mexico's Financial Crisis of 1994–1995."

55 Laurell, "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico," 251; Musacchio, "Mexico's Financial Crisis of 1994–1995"; Salazar, "Globalización y política neoliberal en México."

56 Laurell, "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico," 251; Musacchio, "Mexico's Financial Crisis of 1994–1995"; Salazar, "Globalización y política neoliberal en México."

Either way, after this crisis and the rescue, Mexico managed to stabilize its economy rather quickly, paying back the loans even before they were due. The crisis, however, had also brought three developments that marked the Mexican economy: First, after 1997, the banks were opened up to allow a controlling share of foreign investment, resulting in a large number of Mexican banks being controlled by foreign interests. Second, NAFTA and the ensuing U.S. rescue made the Mexican economy even more dependent on the neighbor's, making it vulnerable to changes and crises. Third, the Mexican south, already the country's orphan, was, after more than a decade of neoliberalism, even poorer compared to central Mexico and the North that have profited under increasing investment.⁵⁷

5.1.4 Effects of Neoliberalism on Mexican Society

The 'Lost Decade'—as the 1980s are also called—and the period of crisis in the 1990s have affected the local population to a great extent. The requirement of structural adjustment programs attached to the loans of the IMF given to a number of developing countries and the ensuing neoliberalization—the shock therapy—has always caused debate regarding the appropriateness in the contexts of these particular countries. Already before the debt crisis erupted in 1982, in a meeting of the IMF Ariel Buira, the Mexican representative, rejected the expressed idea that it was special interest groups in developing countries refusing the adoption of neoliberal reforms. He also stated that “assigning a central role in adjustment programs to price incentives was a matter of ‘ideology and fashion,’ not economics.”⁵⁸ Others second this assumption, finding a strong correlation between financial globalization and financial crises, rather than between openness for foreign direct investment and economic growth.⁵⁹

As Williamson already stated when coining the term ‘Washington Consensus:’

57 Musacchio, “Mexico’s Financial Crisis of 1994–1995”; Salazar, “Globalización y política neoliberal en México.”

58 In Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 589.

59 Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” 12.

Washington certainly has a number of other concerns in its relationship with its Latin neighbors [...]. These include the promotion of democracy and human rights, suppression of the drug trade, preservation of the environment, and control of population growth. For better or worse, however, these broader objectives play little role in determining Washington's attitude toward the economic policies it urges on Latin America.⁶⁰

This missing sensitivity by Washington—and the U.S. as a symbol of the worldwide financial system—was seconded by Joseph Stiglitz, economic scientist at Columbia University, in 2004, 10 years after NAFTA passed into law: He stated that “the United States has been demanding that countries fully liberalize their capital markets just as the International Monetary Fund has finally found that such liberalization promotes neither growth nor stability in developing countries.”⁶¹ Especially the role of many governments in Latin America as a strong promoter of development—as opposed to private capital—was, among other factors, overlooked.⁶²

On the other hand, this stance could also be interpreted as an intent to destabilize a foreign economy and this country's sovereignty to advance one's own goals, going hand in hand with the catch that “a country cannot simultaneously have international economic integration, a strong nation-state, and mass politics.”⁶³ A leaked U.S. document in 1982, hinting at the possibility to connect loans to Mexico to requirements regarding foreign policy and domestic policies, certainly suggests such an attempt of weakening political sovereignty.⁶⁴

The structural adjustment programs had a lasting effect on the availability and terms of employment beyond the immediate years of restructuring. Small industries that had before been protected from foreign imports and had survived with the subsidies of the state, and some other sectors were not able to keep the production up after the beginning

60 Williamson, “What Washington Means by Policy Reform.”

61 Joseph E. Stiglitz, “The Broken Promise of Nafta,” *The New York Times*, January 6, 2004.

62 Boughton, *Silent Revolution*, 589.

63 Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” 3.

64 Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” 2, 14.

of the debt crisis and the ensuing international austerity demand. As a result, hundreds of thousands were looking for employment. The debt of 1994 and the inflation of 100% caused further damage, leading to over 20,000 small- and medium-sized businesses in various sectors declaring bankruptcy between 1995 and 1997.⁶⁵

The fate of wages fared similarly. Four years after the onset of the crisis, the income of two thirds of urban households lay below the official minimum wage.⁶⁶ Overall, wages decreased 30-40%, causing their purchasing power to drop by 66% from 1982 to 1997, and between 1992 and 2010 the average income actually stagnated. The minimum wage decreased by 26% in the two decades between 1994 and 2014, and the redistribution of available funds to capital instead of to labor, also resulted in dramatic wage decreases for state workers.⁶⁷ While NAFTA also had positive effects on Mexico, the idea of North America's workshop and the border enforcement caused Mexican labor wages in 2013 to be 20% cheaper than in China. Needless to say, the informal sector amplified.⁶⁸

Agriculture was especially hard-hit by the adjustment programs. The foreign direct investment that the government had expected after an opening of said sector and the opportunities available in the countryside failed to materialize. For more than half of the workers in this sector, this resulted in wages dropping below the minimum wage. The major alteration, however, was the privatization of land in 1992 that was formerly protected under the *ejido* system—communal land that could be cultivated by landless peasants and an achievement of the Mexican Revolution. The abandonment of this system in favor of international markets caused the elimination of government subsidies for fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, and credit, as well as price supports and marketing boards. Agricultural producers, already vulnerable after the elimination of govern-

65 Adler Hellman, "Structural Adjustment in Mexico," 3; Laurell, "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico," 251; Schwartzman, "Mexico and the New Neoliberalism," 11.

66 Adler Hellman, "Structural Adjustment in Mexico," 3.

67 Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico*, 21.

68 Laurell, "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico," 250–58; Raymond Robertson, "Has NAFTA Increased Labor Market Integration Between the United States and Mexico?," *The World Bank Economic Review* 19, no. 3 (2005); Schwartzman, "Mexico and the New Neoliberalism," 13.

ment subsidies, found themselves helpless in the face of international food imports that finally pushed many out of the business and into the informal sector or northbound migration—it was this separation of the peasants from their land that triggered and nurtured the Zapatista rebellion in 1994. The elimination of the protective tariffs on basic foodstuffs in 2008 further aggravated the fate of the peasants as cheap foreign imports swept the market and outbid the domestic products.⁶⁹

The opening of the agricultural sector did, however, not only affect the part of society working in it, but also the consumers. On the one hand, the price ceilings were removed from 4,700 basic goods, bringing about a continuous rise in prices also of the basic foodstuffs, such as corn and beans, in turn causing a departure from traditional nutrition. The elimination of the protective tariffs allowed for the import of the basic agricultural products of lesser quality at a cheaper price, contributing not only to the deterioration of conditions for the domestic producers, but also to a less healthy nutrition.⁷⁰

On the other hand, the introduction of neoliberalism in general—and the nutrition in particular—led to a variety of illnesses. As Asa C. Laurell, naturalized Mexican doctor and sociologist, suggests, neoliberalism has caused a “state of chronic social and individual stress and the destruction of traditional dietary habits, which have been replaced by a junk food culture promoted by mass media and associated with migration.” She connects this idea to the rising rate of diabetes mortality, as well as death by heart diseases, and—the most obvious—obesity, where Mexico ranks at the top in both the child and the adult category. The complementary health care system has also received a great number of significant cutbacks without the expected increase in private investment, leaving it incapable of including all Mexicans as well as with limited functions.⁷¹

69 Adler Hellman, “Structural Adjustment in Mexico,” 5–6, 8; Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 251; Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” 8–9, 13–14.

70 Adler Hellman, “Structural Adjustment in Mexico,” 3; Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” 8.

71 Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 254–256, 260.

Williamson had already noted that government expenditure in the public sector was mostly in the area of subsidies, public investment, and the sectors health and education.⁷² The austerity programs thus disproportionately affected those of low income, already heavily depending on the state's intervention through direct subsidies as well as indirectly through the protection of basic foodstuffs. Poverty programs countering this trend only show a slight impact on the statistics: In the two decades between 1992 and 2012, poverty decreased by close to 1% from 53.1% to 52.3%, while extreme poverty decreased slightly more, from 21.4% in 1992 to 19.7% in 2012.⁷³

As mentioned above, the adjustment programs left a large number of Mexicans unemployed that then tended to turn to the informal sector or migration as a means to make a living. However, not only those two numbers increased in the statistics—the neoliberal turn also caused a radical surge in violence and terror as “the adoption of fiscal adjustment and structural reform has destroyed the country's industrial and agricultural productive structure as well as its public social institutions.”⁷⁴ Particularly after the year 2000 and the historic loss of the PRI in the presidential elections, Laurell identifies three principal reasons for this surge of violence: The first is the taking over of the PAN party in the year 2000 that loosened the grip of the PRI on the narco-system, turning the country into a narco-state. Second, she sees the War on Drugs, instigated by President Felipe Calderón in his term from 2006 to 2012, as a prevalent factor for the surge of violence and the terror that swept the country, also considering the increased military presence and its disposition to open fire on the streets.⁷⁵

The third reason she mentions, and related to the narco-state, is the significance of the criminal economy for the overall Mexican economy, since the former apparently kept the latter from crashing in light of one of the lowest growth rates in Latin America. According to Laurell, these circumstances, in general triggered by the neoliberal turn, caused

72 Williamson, “What Washington Means by Policy Reform.”

73 Lourdes Beneria in Adler Hellman, “Structural Adjustment in Mexico,” 1; Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 258.

74 Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 247.

75 Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 249, 252.

the almost tripling of violent deaths among men from 7,776 in 2007 to 22,986 in 2012, as well as the atrocities the country faces in the new term of the PRI, such as the massacre in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, in 2014 or the disconcerting number of forced disappearances.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the introduction of neoliberalism contributed significantly to the erosion of democracy and the rise of inequality in Mexico. According to David Harvey, human geographer and sociologist,

We can [...] interpret neoliberalization either as a utopian project to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism or as a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites. [...] I shall argue that the second of these objectives has in practice dominated.⁷⁷

The case of Mexico supports this impression. During the age of the Import Substitution Industrialization, the classes could still be kept balanced. After the oil boom in the 1970s, to smooth relations with students, President Echeverría extended the scholarship programs. Many were able to go abroad and get influenced by foreign ideas of the workings of economy, providing a basis for the argument that this new generation supported and promoted the introduction of neoliberalism.⁷⁸

The neoliberal adjustment programs and the ensuing legislation could not have been enforced without those in power supporting the argument, and as neoliberalism entered Mexico in the early 1980s, so started the separation of society into elites profiting from the adjustments, and ‘the rest’ that was exposed to marginalization, exclusion, and extreme poverty. The privatization of state assets and the financial opening allowed for a new oligarchy to grow, which is now part of the league of the world’s most wealthy (e.g., Carlos Slim). Under the umbrella idea of individual rights and freedoms, society consented.⁷⁹

76 Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 247, 252, 259.

77 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 19.

78 Morton, “Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: ‘Passive Revolution’ in the Global Political Economy,” 639; Steger and Roy, *Neoliberalism*, 106.

79 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 41; Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 247, 251; Salazar, “Globalización y política neoliberal en México”; Schwartzman, “Mexico and the New Neoliberalism,” 7.

The media played a significant role in this scenario, since “[n]eoliberalization required both politically and economically the construction of a neoliberal market-based populist culture of differentiated consumerism and individual libertarianism.”⁸⁰ The elites and oligarchy had a substantial interest in this change of society towards individual freedom and achievement and, with the aid of their influence over the media and the political process, managed to implement it into legislation. As Harvey notes: “The freedom of the market that Bush [representing the elites] proclaims as the high point of human aspiration turns out to be nothing more than the convenient means to spread corporate monopoly power and Coca Cola everywhere without constraint.”⁸¹

Judith Adler Hellman, political scientist and sociologist, stated that “[o]ne of the most dubious assumptions underpinning the arguments of proponents of neoliberalism is the belief that economic and political ‘modernization’ necessarily go hand in hand and that the democratization of the political system and the neoliberal economic project are mutually reinforcing.”⁸² This disintegration of democracy expressed itself in the rise of the oligarchy and their use of the media to promote their intentions, as well as the further development of the PRI party. In this context, the philosopher Adam Morton emphasizes the historic role of the PRI as a defender of the Revolution going conjointly with the Import Substitution Industrialization that supposedly fostered society’s values. The introduction of neoliberalism split the party in factions, pro and contra the new economic system, effectively ending the period of PRI hegemony, leaving only the political class and their interests without the support of the masses.⁸³

This tension manifested in the increasing use of coercion and manipulation by PRI politicians endorsing the international involvement. The presidential election in 1988—the first after the introduction of neoliberal reforms—was the first showcase for this tension, as Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of the last great reformer of the Revolution, ran as

80 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 42.

81 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 38.

82 Adler Hellman, “Structural Adjustment in Mexico,” 1.

83 Morton, “Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: ‘Passive Revolution’ in the Global Political Economy,” 645, 648.

a candidate for the Frente Nacional Democrático, opposing neoliberal reforms and the PRI candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari. By now, the consensus states that Cárdenas won the elections, yet Salinas was declared winner, and he became president from 1988 to 1994.⁸⁴

Starting his term with accusations of electoral fraud, Salinas had to fight hard for domestic legitimacy, while experiencing no such trouble internationally due to his support of neoliberal adjustment. Domestically, however, he saw the need to generate political support by the masses to reinstall hegemony. On that account, he passed a series of programs, the most iconic being the Program of National Solidarity (Programa Nacional de Solidaridad; PRONASOL). PRONASOL was designed to provide aid—in the new (neoliberal) style—to communities for development on the condition of public participation, while demonstrating to society the benefits of the neoliberal mindset: to work for one's individual destiny. As a side effect, the program was to reduce potential social mobilization through selective subsidies, as well as organize PRI elites on the grass roots level. In practice, however, this program was used to condition political aid and services to votes in elections, coercing those depending on state subsidies to support the reigning party, while having a negligible effect on poverty.⁸⁵

Ernesto Zedillo, Salinas' successor, after one month in office, was faced with the social discontent expressed by the Zapatistas in Chiapas. Although he did manage to calm them down, he was not able to rally enough support behind the PRI again for the party to win the presidential elections in 2000. When, after about six decades, the PAN party and their candidate Vicente Fox finally broke the PRI reign, hopes of an imminent change were high. Fox intended to achieve a new social union in the country and with this idea established the *Alternativa Latinoamericana*—a set of ideas supposedly contrary to the Washington Consensus, yet in its essence still neoliberal. In practice, however, the Fox presidency and his preference and deeds for the elites were, for many, upsettingly similar to the terms of PRI presidents, even though

84 Adler Hellman, "Structural Adjustment in Mexico," 5; Laurell, "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico," 248.

85 Adler Hellman, "Structural Adjustment in Mexico," 6; Morton, "Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: 'Passive Revolution' in the Global Political Economy," 643–44.

Fox allowed mass demonstrations and refrained from employing direct visible repression.⁸⁶ Hence, for the dissidents and their rhetoric, the change of party did, in the end, not make a difference.

Felipe Calderón's term in 2006 started with allegations of electoral fraud after an election that strongly built on a hatred campaign against the opposition candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, supported by the mass media. He was never able to rid himself of the accusations and, in order to establish legitimacy, initiated the War on Drugs, which, however, led the country to greater violence and terror. Just as his predecessor, Calderón attempted to pass further structural reforms to advance the adjustment to the international ideals, yet he, just as much as Fox, failed to rally the majority behind their proposals, since these proposals are rather unpopular with the people and hence have a high political cost.⁸⁷

In 2012, López Obrador attempted his luck for a second time, now for the PAN party, yet once again the mass media was rallied behind the candidate of the elites—in this case the young (and supposedly especially attractive to the female public) Enrique Peña Nieto. As before, there were allegations of election fraud and coercion on the grassroots level. This time, a major social movement—the movement *#YoSoy132*—gathered on the streets and on social media, promulgating the election conditions and the electoral fraud in Mexico, discrediting the president-elect, and calling for well-defined rules in the election process.⁸⁸

5.2 Reacting to Neoliberalism: Alternative Education in Oaxaca

Oaxaca, as mentioned already, is one of the poorest states in Mexico—consequently, neoliberalism adopts a particular flavor in the state during the implementation of the economic model. The Sección 22, aided by the position traditionally allocated to teachers, reacts to these

⁸⁶ Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 249; Morton, “Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: ‘Passive Revolution’ in the Global Political Economy,” 646–47.

⁸⁷ Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 249; Jorge E. Rocha-Quintero, “El Pacto Por México Bajo La Lupa,” *Análisis Plural*, 2013, 95–96.

⁸⁸ Laurell, “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico,” 249; Rocha-Quintero, “El Pacto por México bajo la lupa,” 96–97.

attempts. Two theories from the realm of economics will help us embed the Sección 22 in the context of Mexican neoliberalism. Afterwards, we will analyze the proposal of the Sección 22 regarding the further development of Oaxaca by way of an alternative path of education.

5.2.1 Double Movement and Moral Economy

The first theory is Karl Polanyi's double movement,⁸⁹ established in his work *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* in 1944.⁹⁰ In his book, Polanyi traces the transformation of pre-industrial Europe to the world order after the Industrial Revolution, mostly on the example of England. He bases his analysis on the basic premise that the idea of a self-regulating market is a utopia and can thus only fail, that, if it were possible, it "could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness."⁹¹ Society, in turn, reacts to this threat and "[takes] measures to protect itself, but whatever measures it [takes] [impair] the self-regulation of the market, [disorganize] industrial life, and thus [endanger] society in yet another way."⁹² This mechanism is what he calls 'double movement': the first being economic liberalism and the self-regulating market, the second social protection.⁹³

In the center of the intent to establish a self-regulating market economy stands the restructuring of society, particularly regarding the importance of economy and social relations. Drawing from Aristotle's observation that production for gain is not part of human nature, Polanyi states that social relationships must be disconnected from economic motives, as the former always set limits to the latter and can thus not co-exist. Consequently, where before economy was subordinated to

⁸⁹ The idea to apply this theory in the context of Mexico is by no means original and can be found in Mexico in Transition: Neoliberal Globalism, the State and Civil Society, edited by Gerardo Otero in 2004.

⁹⁰ On the grounds of his socialist views, Polanyi left Austria for England, from where he went to the U.S. (Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 20–21).

⁹¹ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 3.

⁹² Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 3–4.

⁹³ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 138.

social relations, this was now turned around and social relations subordinated to economic motives. However, Polanyi also notes that what might appear to be economic motives are only in the foreground, as material goods actually represent someone's social standing, claims, or assets.⁹⁴ Therefore, neither the complete separation from nor the subordination of social relations to economic motives can ever be successful.

In combination with the intent to establish a self-regulating market economy that subordinates social life to the economic goes the suddenly increased importance of the economic motive 'gain', the effectiveness of which, Polanyi notes, can only be compared to "the most violent outbursts of religious fervor in history."⁹⁵ For the traditional agricultural society, this transition—often going hand in hand with the novel use of machines of the Industrial Revolution—meant the adjustment of economic motive, from subsistence to gain. Polanyi concedes that it was not the economic basis of society that was threatening in this scenario, since every society must somehow be based on it—it was the self-interest that was unnatural.⁹⁶ In this context, he states that "compassion was removed from the hearts, and a stoic determination to renounce human solidarity in the name of the greatest happiness of the greatest number gained the dignity of a secular religion."⁹⁷

The necessity to move around the country in search of work in the factories further destroyed the traditional social fabric. The worker, though not gaining for his work what it was worth, in some cases earned more than before and hence enjoyed a better economic situation. However, Polanyi states, citing Robert Owen, the workers' dependence on the industry for their subsistence and the ensuing migratory character of large parts of the population resulted in grave social dislocation, as the individual was formerly tightly embedded, socially and economically, in their community and the social environment.⁹⁸

One basic detrimental premise of the self-regulating market economy, as Polanyi states, is the idea that even what he calls 'fictitious

94 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 48, 57, 60.

95 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 31.

96 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 44, 257.

97 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 107.

98 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 134–35.

commodities’—primarily labor, land, and money—were included in the market scheme, since all elements of industry needed to be on sale. This, however, entailed serious consequences for a society that was traditionally bound to land through labor, as mentioned above, and transformed the organization of said society.⁹⁹ In regard to labor, Polanyi states: “To separate labor from other activities of life and to subject it to the law of the market was to annihilate all organic forms of existence and to replace them by a different type of organization, an atomistic and individualistic one.”¹⁰⁰ Concerning land, he even goes one step further and notes that “land is an element of nature inextricably interwoven with man’s institutions. To isolate it and form a market for it was perhaps the weirdest of all the undertakings of our ancestors.”¹⁰¹ The weakening of man’s social security in light of the reorganization of agriculture was an additional part leading to the social dislocation already mentioned above.¹⁰²

Polanyi shows this on the example of colonized countries that, while not having great economic growth, nevertheless were socially intact. Through the implementation of the colonizers’ economic system and the introduction of hunger as the primary driving force, however, societies with a functioning system of social security were transformed to base on individual motives. As Polanyi states: “It is the absence of the threat of individual starvation which makes primitive society, in a sense, more humane than market economy, and at the same time less economic.”¹⁰³ He even goes as far as to say that “the white man’s initial contribution to the black man’s world mainly consisted in introducing him to the uses of the scourge of hunger.”¹⁰⁴ On the example of India he shows the detrimental effects of the implementation of the market system on a society that is organized differently, yet showed similar effects: He states that “Indian masses in the second half of the nineteenth century did not die of hunger because they were exploited [...]; they perished in large numbers because the Indian village community

99 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 78–79.

100 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 171.

101 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 187.

102 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 96.

103 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 172.

104 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 172.

had been demolished.”¹⁰⁵ And since these countries were vital to the stability of the international market system and trade, their participation was required, even if they themselves could not be convinced of the apparent advantages of this economic system.¹⁰⁶

Polanyi identifies various difficulties in the liberals’ stance towards the implementation and maintenance of the self-regulating market. The first is their “mystical readiness to accept the social consequences of economic improvement, whatever they might be”, “fired by an emotional faith in spontaneity.”¹⁰⁷ Undoubtedly, the idea of economic gain spurred the supporters to the extent allowing the neglect of possibly negative effects on society. Further, liberals failed to see that even though the economic interests of the individual and the community might be in harmony, to maintain this harmony, the individual would have to obey the laws of the self-regulating market, even if this turned out to be fatal.¹⁰⁸

Of greater discrepancy still was the basic principle of the system that was to be implemented: A requisite of the self-regulating market—as the name suggests—means non-interference by the state and thus a separation of the political from the economic sphere. However, the market system, including free trade and competition, needed to be implemented by the state and maintained and protected by laws in order to ensure its functioning. Especially considering that labor and land are integral parts of the social realm and fictitious commodities, as Polanyi calls them, this separation seems impossible.¹⁰⁹

This then leads him to, what he calls, the ‘liberal myth’ in the double movement. Accompanying and following the intent to introduce the self-regulating market was regulation, aiming at protecting society—represented by the fictitious commodities land and labor—from the effects of such a system in the 19th century. Needless to say, this protectionist interference inhibited the self-regulation of the market.¹¹⁰

105 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 167.

106 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 217.

107 Both quotes: Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 35.

108 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 89.

109 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 74, 156, 205.

110 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 42, 79, 225.

Liberals claim, however, that only because of “impatience, greed, and shortsightedness” could the self-regulating market not unfold in its totality, that had it not been for the self-protection of society, “the market would have resolved its difficulties.”¹¹¹ Due to the lack of a successful example, it seems easier to believe Polanyi when he says that such a market would destroy the entire social framework.

Polanyi emphasizes the role of the classes due to their different positions in society and yet does not see class as the driving force behind social protectionism, but the whole of society. He concedes that classes have different interests—here he reiterates the importance of social standing over economic aims—however, the protective movement was an effort of the cooperation of various classes. He also concedes that the brunt of the work seems to fall on one part of society rather than another, and yet this part does not labor in the defense of only its class’ interest, but in that of the entire society’s social fabric and organization.¹¹²

As mentioned before, Gerardo Otero used Polanyi’s theory of the double movement and applied it to Mexico in the past and present.¹¹³ In fact, Otero identifies two double movements: The first he finds at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century with the increasing liberalization of the country and the Porfiriato, trailed by the Revolution as society’s protective movement. The introduction of neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s established the beginning of the second double movement.¹¹⁴ A multitude of protest movements arose in that period and since then in the intent to defy the neoliberal government. The Sección 22 and the CNTE are a part of these groups representing the movement of social protective movement in Mexico’s second double movement.

We will, for the sake of better analysis of the Sección 22, borrow another concept from economics: moral economy. Used already in the 18th century and elaborated as a proper concept by E. P. Thompson

111 Both quotes: Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 148.

112 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 139, 159, 160, 169.

113 Gerardo Otero, “Mexico’s Double Movement: Neoliberal Globalism, the State and Civil Society,” in *Mexico in Transition: Neoliberal Globalism, the State and Civil Society*, ed. Gerardo Otero (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2004).

114 Otero, “Mexico’s double movement,” 7, 9–10.

in “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” moral economy is a counter-design to an economy guided merely by capitalist endeavors. Similar to Polanyi, Thompson analyzed the dynamics of transition of English society in the period leading up to the industrialization, primarily, as the title of the article suggests, in the late 18th and early 19th century, and, just as Polanyi, Thompson criticized the idea of a free market: “It should not be necessary to argue that the model of a natural and self-adjusting economy, working providentially for the best good of all, is as much a superstition as the notions which upheld the paternalist model — although, curiously, it is a superstition which some economic historians have been the last to abandon.”¹¹⁵

In the context of social uprisings, he condemns the use of the words ‘mob’ and ‘riot’ as a reductionist manner of treating uprisings up until the French Revolution and suggesting that it was ‘only hunger’ that lay at the core of these insurrections. Instead—and quite decidedly hinting at the (neoliberalist) beliefs that economics explain everything, despite disregarding social factors¹¹⁶—, Thompson asserts: “It is of course true that riots were triggered off by soaring prices, by malpractices among dealers, or by hunger. But these grievances operated within a popular consensus as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices in marketing, milling, baking, etc.”¹¹⁷

This consensus was based on a “consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community.”¹¹⁸ These functions also included the paternalistic role of the authorities, and Thompson admitted that this view “can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor.”¹¹⁹ The protests to uphold this system, while always simmering, boiled over at times when the conditions of the people worsened, pressuring the authorities to tend to their paternalistic duties—which, according to Thompson,

115 E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present*, no. 50 (1971): 91.

116 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 76–78.

117 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 78–79.

118 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 79.

119 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 79.

is a circumstance too prominent and all-pervading to be captured in the expression of ‘riot.’¹²⁰

These uprisings, in short, resulted from the transition of the old system, an “old moral economy of provision”¹²¹ guided along the lines of the “bread-nexus,”¹²² to a “the new political economy of the free market”¹²³ and the “cash-nexus.”¹²⁴ As Thompson states:

It is not easy for us to conceive that there may have been a time, within a smaller and more integrated community, when it appeared to be ‘unnatural’ that any man should profit from the necessities of others, and when it was assumed that, in time of dearth, prices of ‘necessities’ should remain at a customary level, even though there might be less all round.¹²⁵

It was, simply said, a time when ‘profit’ was not the central premise of the market.

The importance of a more local economy is especially vital in this understanding of economy: “The economy of the poor was still local and regional, derivative from a subsistence-economy. Corn should be consumed in the region in which it was grown, especially in times of scarcity. Profound feeling was aroused, and over several centuries, by export in times of dearth.”¹²⁶ As has to some extent already been shown and will be shown in the following chapters, the parallels to the demands of the Sección 22 in the context of neoliberal globalization are rather palpable.

Thompson connects the notion of moral economy particularly to an idea of the structure of a pre-industrialized society—and fears an excessive application of the term if this prerequisite was disregarded.¹²⁷ Yet, as Norbert Götz explains, these limits are set too narrowly to do justice to all the meanings surrounding the terms ‘moral’ and ‘economy.’ Götz

120 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 79.

121 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 136.

122 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 79.

123 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 136.

124 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 79.

125 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 131–32.

126 Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” 98.

127 E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin, 1991), 339–40.

instead offers a more encompassing definition: “Rather, for centuries moral economy has been endowed with a more universal meaning. It has served as a synonym either for a divine order given to the world or for the human condition.”¹²⁸ Paraphrasing Thomas Clay Arnold, he further states that “[t]oday it offers an antithesis to the ‘rational choice’ imperatives that conflate rationality and utility maximisation in a crude material sense and dominate the present political imagination.”¹²⁹

By way of an analysis of the interpretation of ‘moral economy’ of various scholars, Götz himself, however, shows difficulty in setting a precise definition for the term—this, of course, also due to the complexity of the word ‘moral’ and its subjective implementation, depending on the society and the individual interpreting or applying it. Converging on a basic idea of ‘moral economy,’ Götz states:

If one concentrates on civil society, the focus of the moral economy will be shifted away from the destitute and towards those employing economic options in moral ways, that is, to the economic supply side. The ‘moral’ would thus no longer be something per se uneconomic or laudable, but an alternative way of ‘utility maximisation’ through the construction of altruistic meaning for economic transactions.¹³⁰

It might be necessary to clarify, however, that a society based on moral economy does not inevitably lead to a harmonious setting, in which everyone is unconditionally satisfied: “The moral might then find approval, or it might appear as something selfrighteous, ignorant, and fuelling destructive forces. [...] Morality and the emotive forces behind it will vary according to what individuals and collectives believe they can afford.”¹³¹ Hence, apart from the distinct understanding of ‘moral’ in a given society, it is also necessary to factor in the propensity to charity as well as the market forces supply and demand.

128 Norbert Götz, “‘Moral Economy’: Its Conceptual History and Analytical Prospects,” *Journal of Global Ethics*, no. 2 (2015): 147.

129 Thomas C. Arnold, “Rethinking Moral Economy,” *The American Political Science Review*, no. 1 (2001): 85; Götz, “Moral economy,” 147.

130 Götz, “Moral economy,” 158.

131 Götz, “Moral economy,” 158.

Seeing the difficulty in determining one precise definition for the concept of ‘moral economy,’ I will refrain from attempting the endeavor—also considering that such a clear-cut definition is not necessary for the analysis of the Sección 22. It seems safe to say, however, that the section appears to envision a type of moral economy similar to the one displayed in Thompson’s exploration of the pre-industrialized English society, based on tradition,¹³² traditional values—as e.g. displayed in the cultural memory and by the memory figures—, and the importance of the community, even though such a concept fails to include an idea of the national economic system and the inclusion in the world economy, as well as the benefits derived from the latter.

5.2.2 Towards a New Mexican Society

In line with the narrative of being the true heirs of the Mexican Revolution, the Sección 22 and the CNTE take a decided stance against neoliberalism, economic globalization, and capitalism. From this stance they derive another part of their narrative, their sense of mission, as well as an idea for a new—and perhaps more ‘moral’—Mexican society.

In informative material to teachers and parents, the Sección 22 assesses Mexican neoliberalism:

[R]ecent history demonstrates us how the last five six-year terms [of the last five presidents until 2012] deprived us of the legacy of the basic industry of transformation to deliver it to private hands, but at the same time they took ownership over the natural resources and wealth of the soil and subsoil. Additionally, today they control a whole judicial and legal system to seize the labor achievements of the workers, which causes the devaluation and instability of labor in schemes of exploitation resembling

132 Knight, in fact, acknowledges that some peasant communities during the Mexican Revolution displayed a type of moral economy (Alan Knight, “Interpreting the Mexican Revolution: Texas Papers on Mexico” (Department of History, University of Texas at Austin, 1988), 13).

those at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, given the large army of unemployed (laid off) highly-skilled workers attempting to enter the labor market.¹³³

This statement also reiterates the parallels the dissidents see to the period leading up to the Revolution, suggesting that another revolution is yet to come. Regarding structural reforms in particular, one booklet reads that they

have been destroying us individually and collectively for the last 30 years or more, breaking apart the constitutional order inherited by the revolution of 1910, auctioning to the business leaders the bit of national patrimony that is left (PEMEX, CFE [Federal Electrical Commission]), and eradicate public education, labor rights, and social security.¹³⁴

The terms ‘globalization’ and ‘neoliberalism’ are used rather synonymously in the dissident teachers’ rhetoric: “The politics of globalization are not an abstract phenomenon, but a concretion of a new phase of development of the capitalist system to extend itself with more profoundness to impose its interests.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, “the globalization of the big economies and markets, which they call Neoliberalism, has

133 “la historia reciente nos ilustra de cómo los últimos 5 sexenios nos despojaron del patrimonio de la industria básica de la transformación para depositarla en manos privadas, pero al mismo tiempo, se apropiaron de los recursos naturales y riquezas del suelo y el subsuelo. Además, hoy disponen de todo un esquema jurídico – legal para arrebatar las conquistas laborales de los trabajadores que provoca la devaluación y precarización de la mano de obra en esquemas de explotación similares a las de finales del siglo XIX e inicios del XX, dado el vasto ejército de desempleados (trabajadores cesantes) altamente capacitados que buscan ingresar al mercado laboral” (CEPOS 22, “XI Congreso Estatal Ordinario de la CNTE” (2012), 7).

134 “nos destruyen en lo individual y lo colectivo desde hace ya 30 años o más al desarticular el orden constitucional heredado por la revolución de 1910, subastar al empresariado el poco patrimonio nacional que nos queda (PEMEX, CFE) y desaparecer la educación pública, los derechos laborales y la seguridad social” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 108–9).

135 “La política de la globalización no es un fenómeno abstracto, sino la concreción de una nueva fase del desarrollo del sistema capitalista para extenderse con mayor profundidad para imponer sus intereses” (CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización: Consolidando Militancia,” Corre, ve y dile 7 (2006), 5).

prostrated humanity and essentially the workers' segment in the uncertainty of its own survival,"¹³⁶ while national and transnational corporations swallow smaller companies or create an environment in which the latter are unable to compete, still less with a fair salary and appropriate working conditions.¹³⁷ Needless to say, this treatment of workers collides with the teachers' revolutionary ideology and purpose.

While they would most certainly also rise against neoliberalism in general, Maestro Daniel states that in Mexico it is not simply neoliberalism, but neoliberalism 'a la Mexicana' they are facing—neoliberalism within the Mexican political system. It is a mixture of the latter,

combined with that neoliberal part, we say, of the last 40 years, because when we go, e.g., to study at Cambridge or Harvard, and we return to Mexico and say: 'We will apply the neoliberal recipes.' And then we apply them and privatize highways and they do it wrong and now they have to rescue them.¹³⁸

He even goes as far as to say that "the crisis of neoliberalism in Mexico exists due to the functioning of the government that attempted to implement it"¹³⁹—with a sarcastic undertone, Maestro Daniel added that "Mexico even had a brothel [...] operated by the government, and it was in red numbers."¹⁴⁰ It is hence the combination of what the Sección 22 perceives as a malfunctioning government with a capitalist system that provides financial opportunity only for a few: "We have struggled

136 "la globalización de las grandes economías y los mercados, que han dado en llamar neoliberalismo, ha prostrado a la humanidad y esencialmente al segmento trabajador, en la incertidumbre de su propia sobrevivencia" (CEPOS 22, "XI Congreso Estatal Ordinario de la CNTE," 6).

137 CEPOS 22, "XI Congreso Estatal Ordinario de la CNTE," 9–10.

138 "mezclado con esta parte neoliberal que decimos de los últimos 40 años porque si nosotros, por ejemplo, vamos a estudiar a Cambridge o a Harvard, y ya regresamos a México y decimos: 'Vamos a aplicar las recetas neoliberales.' Y entonces las empezamos a aplicar y vamos a privatizar carreteras y lo hacen mal y luego las tienen que rescatar" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

139 "la crisis del neoliberalismo en México es por el funcionamiento del gobierno que lo quiso aplicar" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

140 "México hasta tenía un burdel [...] que estaba en nómina del gobierno y operaba en números rojos" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

against a neoliberal regimen ‘a la Mexicana,’ with a political structure ‘a la Mexicana.’”¹⁴¹

To tackle neoliberalism, the dissident teachers see the need to “combine the vindictive struggle with the political struggle, for a ‘new constituent’ and a ‘new constitution.’”¹⁴² Without a doubt, the goal of a new ‘constitution’ does not propose the writing of a new constitution of law in light of failure of the previous one, but rather, in an ideological sense, a new make-up of society. This struggle, Maestro Daniel considers, can only be fought by a movement: “[T]he proletarian struggle is not parliamentary, it is of direct political action.”¹⁴³

This notion, in turns, hints at the ideology of class struggle in the teachers’ movement: “Inside the Sección 22 exists the conception of a class syndicalism which has Marxist theory as a reference, as a revolutionary ideology of economic, social, and political emancipation of the workers”¹⁴⁴—considering Marxism and Socialism only as reference points is wise, since the ideology of the Sección 22 is rather eclectic, adopting some aspects of various ideological currents while disregarding others. Furthermore, in a document meant for distribution to teachers and parents, the Sección 22 explains the situation in the country and the role of their class as follows:

In our capitalist and dependent country, the bourgeoisie acts like an agent of foreign capital and subordination to imperialism. At the same time, the bourgeoisie relies on various forms of oppression and control to strengthen its domination and the exploitation of the working class. For this reason, the struggle against capitalist exploitation is inseparable from

141 “Nos hemos enfrentado a un régimen neoliberal ‘a la Mexicana,’ con la estructura política ‘a la Mexicana’” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

142 “para enfrentar al neoliberalismo, es necesario combinar la lucha reivindicativa con la lucha política, por una ‘nueva constituyente’ y una ‘nueva constitución’” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 272).

143 “la lucha proletaria no es parlamentaria, es de acción política directa” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

144 “Al interior de la Sección XXII existe la concepción de un sindicalismo clasista, el cual tiene como referencia la teoría marxista, como una ideología revolucionaria de la emancipación económica, social y política de los trabajadores” (CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 23).

the struggle against imperialism and for national liberation, and against all forms of oppression. Thus, the struggle of the workers against capitalism is not only syndical. It develops on three fronts: economic, political, and ideologic, which combine to prepare the activities of the workers and thus generate the conditions for the liberation of the working class.¹⁴⁵

Even more specific, the document reads: “This eternal opposition and antagonism of classes [...] politically and ideologically empowers the *raison d'être* of the struggle of the Sección 22,”¹⁴⁶ while defining the working class as “[t]he original people [the indigenous], the peasantry, the impoverished class and the popular sectors, [and] the professionals (among them the magistrate),”¹⁴⁷ which is, undoubtedly, a range very much open for interpretation. This ‘empowerment’ through antagonism is also made clear in the following statement: “[L]et’s remember that throughout history was shown that the government will never be our friend, and that goodwill will never be in favor of us, the working class.”¹⁴⁸ Fausto Rivera adds that they are fighting under “one flag [that] is the fight against the Educational Reform, but it is only one flag. In reality, it [the struggle] is against the system. We are anti-systemic. We want a

145 “En nuestro país capitalista y dependiente, la burguesía actúa como agente del capital extranjero y de la subordinación al imperialismo. Al mismo tiempo, la burguesía se apoya en diversas formas de opresión y control, para reforzar su dominación y la explotación de la clase obrera. Por eso, la lucha contra la explotación capitalista es inseparable de la lucha contra el imperialismo y por la liberación nacional, y en contra de todas las formas de opresión. Así la lucha de los trabajadores contra el capitalismo no es sólo sindical. Se desarrolla en tres frentes: económico, político e ideológico, los cuales se combinan para preparar las acciones de los trabajadores y así generar las condiciones para la liberación de la clase trabajadora” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 3).

146 “Esta eterna oposición o antagonismo de clases, que viene desde los conflictos históricos entre el amo y el esclavo, el terrateniente y el plebeyo, ahora la burguesía y el obrero, habilita política e ideológicamente la razón de ser de la lucha de la Sección 22” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 5).

147 “[l]os pueblos originarios, el campesinado, la clase empobrecida y los sectores populares, los profesionistas (entre ellos el magisterio)” SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 3).

148 “[R]ecordemos que a lo largo de la historia se demuestra que el gobierno jamás será nuestro amigo, y que la buena voluntad jamás será a favor de nosotros la clase trabajadora” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 21).

change of system.”¹⁴⁹ This struggle also includes seemingly minor issues, such as the battle against the change to and from daylight savings time in spring and fall—they call it the “neoliberal time.”¹⁵⁰

The Sección 22 and the CNTE promote solidarity with other movements working for similar goals, national as well as international. Press releases in 2018 show such examples: On March 3, the CENCOS 22 issued a statement calling for justice for the “persecution, raid and harassment by individuals of the police”¹⁵¹ of protesters in the Committee for the Defense of the Indigenous People (Comité de Defensa de los Pueblos Indígenas; CODEDI) and for continued alertness of the *compañeros*. On March 6, the CENCOS 22 voiced solidarity with Catalanunyan workers in their struggle against the “tentacles of the oligarchs and capitalist organisms.”¹⁵²

Generally, press releases and documents to the base have an appeal to dissidence at the end, underlining this legacy. In press releases in 2018, these read:

Justice for our fallen *compañeros* in Nochixtlán!
 Total rejection of the neoliberal reforms!
 Immediate liberty of the political prisoners and prisoners of conscience!
 End state terrorism!
 End the criminalization of social protest!
 Oaxaca de Juárez, City of Resistance¹⁵³

149 “una bandera es la lucha contra la reforma educativa, pero es nada más una bandera. En realidad, es contra el sistema. Somos anti-sistémicos. Queremos un cambio de sistema” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

150 “horario neoliberal” (CENCOS 22, “Rechazo Total, Al Horario Neoliberal: ¡Seguimos En Resistencia!” Sección 22, accessed April 8, 2021).

151 “persecución, allanamiento y hostigamiento por elementos policiacos” (CENCOS 22, “No más agresiones contra luchadores: Exigimos justicia para el CODEDI” (Sección 22, Oaxaca de Juárez, 2018)).

152 “tentáculos de los oligarcas y organismos capitalistas” (CENCOS 22, “Solidaridad con Catalunya” (Sección 22, Oaxaca de Juárez, 2018)).

153 “¡Justicia para nuestros compañeros caídos en Nochixtlán! ¡Rechazo total a las reformas neoliberales! ¡Libertad inmediata a los presos políticos y de conciencia! ¡Alto al terrorismo de estado! ¡Alto a la criminalización de la protesta social! Oaxaca de Juárez, ciudad de la resistencia” (CENCOS 22, “Solidaridad con Catalunya”).

The exact composition of these statements varies, also according to the current circumstances of the document, yet particularly the location “Oaxaca de Juárez, City of Resistance” remains the same and exhibits the ideology and inclination of the Sección 22.

All these considerations support a central observation in the analysis of the Sección 22 and the CNTE on the level of domestic politics: Induced by the claim of being the true heir to the Revolution and the defender of the people and its will, the PRI and the Sección 22 place the other in the position of the adversary—one the true representative of the people, the other the antagonist, turning its back on the people by acting only in its own interest. Consequently, the Sección 22, the CNTE, and their supporters denounce the PRI and the ruling class for their part in the introduction of neoliberalism and its effects on Mexican society, highlighting the necessity of their mission to redeem the legacy of the Revolution.

On the one hand, the change intended by the Sección 22 entails rather structural modifications. Prominent here is the country’s economic position: “We are a consumer country. We do not produce! We send crude oil. [...] We are *maquiladoras*, the prime material. We do not contribute technology. We provide labor and charge cheaply for it.”¹⁵⁴ In line with this observation is Mexico’s dependence on the U.S.: The apparent control of the U.S. over the Mexican economy not only shows in remittances sent from Mexican workers in the north to their families in Mexico and in the price of gasoline and basic foodstuff, but also in the privatization of resources, institutions, and companies, as is stated in the information material published by the Sección 22.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, the teachers of the Sección 22 propose a more ideological transformation of society:

154 “Somos un país consumidor. ¡No producimos! El petróleo lo mandamos crudo. [...] Somos maquiladores, la materia prima. La tecnología no la aportamos. Aportamos la mano de obra y la cobramos barato” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

155 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 95; CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 6.

We do want a reform! We want an educational reform that pulls us out of the backwardness, of the marginalization, the oblivion that many villages find themselves in. [...] By making communities centers of thinking and production, not of the consumption anymore that the government has us in. [...] We fight for the countryside to rise again. For production in the fields!¹⁵⁶

Going hand in hand with this modification is the introduction of a social state, providing help for the poor, allowing for social justice, and a better distribution of the country's wealth. Carlos Sanchez explains that, especially by implementing the former two ideas, the crime rate in the country would drop drastically and people would be more content.¹⁵⁷

To make this change long-lasting, the functioning of politics in general in Mexico would also need to be reformed, since in contemporary Mexico politics are considered "an instrument of control over society."¹⁵⁸ According to the Sección 22, there is a myriad of ways that the government, and particularly the PRI in this context, employs this sense of control. One is the criminalization of protest and the deployment of the country's forces and criminal system against its own people¹⁵⁹—the distrust due to this demonstration of power even led the Sección 22 to declare in a workshop for teachers that documents of identification only serve the punitive system.¹⁶⁰ Another—and far more ideological—is the narrative employed by the government, and its distribution via the media—also called the 'fourth pillar of the government.' While less obvious, the Sección 22 does, however, see the dangers of these tactics: "The communication media are the lever that orients, persuades, directs, modifies attitudes, influences to change opinions, and domesticates the

156 "Nosotros sí queremos una reforma! Una reforma educativa que nos saque del retraso, de la marginación, el olvido en que se encuentran los pueblos. [...] A partir de que hagamos de las comunidades centros de pensamiento y de producción, ya no de consumo en que nos tiene el gobierno. [...] ¡Luchamos por que el campo se levante otra vez, que se produzca en el campo!" (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

157 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

158 "un instrumento de control de la sociedad" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

159 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático," 95.

160 CEDES 22, "TEEA 2014–2015," 21.

human mind. We are vulnerable in the face of the communication media that surround us [...].¹⁶¹ Fausto Rivera offers a concrete example of this vulnerability: “All power builds itself a specific culture. Like this current fascist¹⁶² power not in vain favors the *música de banda*, of *narcos*. Why? Because this is its psychological and philosophical base: violence.”¹⁶³

Acknowledging that the issue with this narrative lies as much in the sender as in the receiver, the Sección 22 installed a special institution, the Center for Syndicate Political Studies (Centro de Estudios Políticos Sindicales; CEPOS) to spread information. The intention is to not only counter the government’s narrative of competition as the only way of survival,¹⁶⁴ and its apparent attempt to delete the ‘good stories of history’¹⁶⁵—much of the Sección 22’s rejection of the government’s schoolbooks and programs is based on the fact that they apparently neglect Mesoamerica and Mexican history prior to colonization.¹⁶⁶ The idea is also to create and distribute a counter-narrative, one of resistance, providing information as well as creating conscience and an attitude¹⁶⁷—as Fausto Rivera stated, a reform is necessary that “transforms the mind of Mexicans.”¹⁶⁸

The information material reads that to “counteract the effects of globalization, it is necessary to create a class conscience in the exploited society, particularly in the magistrate, since it is in this profession where

161 “Los medios de comunicación son la palanca que orienta, persuade, dirige, modifica actitudes, influyen para cambiar opiniones y domestica [sic] la mente humana. Somos vulnerables ante los medios de comunicación que nos rodean” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 104).

162 While the government might not be fascist according to the common definitions of fascism, Rivera—and in fact many others—applies the term ‘fascist’ to express his discontent with the government and the accusation of being, simply, authoritarian.

163 “Todo poder se construye una cultura específica. Como este poder actual fascista no en vano privilegia la música de banda, de narcos. ¿Por qué? Porque esa es su base psicológica y filosófica: la violencia” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018).

164 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 2.

165 Cf. Salmerón Sanginés, “La farsa del neoporfirismo.”

166 Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

167 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

168 “transforma la mente de los mexicanos” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

the seed of change should be born.¹⁶⁹ The traditional role of the teacher is also an issue, making the teacher an “agent of change, a motor of history in the communities, a motor of, above all, intellectual development.”¹⁷⁰ Apart from the role of the teacher in the societal structure, it is also their position in the class system and between the classes that enables them to exhort change from below: In the 1970s, the teachers noticed that they did not pertain to the middle but rather to the working class,¹⁷¹ still above the workers and farmers, “but on the other hand, [teaching] the sons of workers and farmers, of the employed, and the unemployed.”¹⁷²

In the context of rebellion, the teachers of the Sección 22 define their role as that of “a social fighter, teaching to wake consciences, teaching to provide knowledge to be able to live and fight better because the teachers, we are part of the people, and we are associated with its fights,”¹⁷³ which shows both their double-role of being part of the people as well as its teacher, and their perception of being the defender of the people. The notion that the dissident teachers are “the heirs of these great thinkers of the independent Mexico, reformist and revolutionary,”¹⁷⁴ further sets these impressions regarding their role in the historical context, suggesting that they are the legitimate successors of the great Mexican battles and are hence now in charge of redeeming the Revolution—the second part of the double movement. The fact that, despite the importance of their profession and the role they play, they only receive a “miserable salary,” according to Maestro José, and do their job solely “due to the

169 “contrarrestar los efectos de la globalización se requiere crear una conciencia de clase en la sociedad explotada, sobre todo en el magisterio, por considerar que en este gremio es donde debe nacer la semilla del cambio que posteriormente serán esparcidas en los demás campos sociales” (CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 22).

170 “agente de cambio, un motor de historia en los pueblos, un motor de desarrollo, sobre todo intelectual” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

171 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 77.

172 “pero por otro lado educa a hijos de obreros de campesinos, asalariados, desempleados” (CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 23).

173 “un luchador social, educando para despertar conciencias, educando para proporcionar conocimientos para que se pueda vivir y luchar mejor porque los maestros somos parte del pueblo y estamos vinculados con sus luchas” (CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 23).

174 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 75.

passion of working with children,¹⁷⁵ endows them with an additional characteristic of a hero.

This position, the Sección 22 perceives, further entails the requirement of active participation in the movement, which, within the movement's structure, translates into a scoring table documenting the individual's contribution, involvement, and performance. A higher score is necessary, for example, to obtain a transfer to a position in a 'more preferable—usually more urban—zone,' on top of the performance in the classroom.¹⁷⁶ Hence, the more a teacher is engaged in the movement, the more likely they are to climb the career ladder inside the Sección 22. Moreover, this leads to the Oaxacan teachers being rather politized: "They know how to lead an assembly at all times. They know how to hold a meeting. They know how to build a plastic tent in little time. They know how to tell you the background of their struggle, the form of their struggle. [...] [They are] inconvenient, uncomfortable for the government."¹⁷⁷

In this context, it is also necessary to consider the particular circumstances in Oaxaca, since the state ranks among the poorest states in Mexican statistics with most indigenous communities, a high level of marginalization, insufficient infrastructure, and a poor economy that is mostly based on tourism. Teachers in rural communities in Oaxaca, in the position between the government and the people, particularly feel the discrepancy of expectation on the one hand and the social and economic realities and possibilities on the other. This, in turn, promotes political activism. As Fausto Rivera states: "It's logical that an agent with an ideological component, with a precedent of political struggle, will not keep quiet facing a reality of misery, of abandonment."¹⁷⁸ In bet-

175 "salario miserable," "por la pasión de trabajar con niños" (Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018).

176 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018.

177 "Te sabe dirigir una asamblea en cualquier momento. Te sabe dirigir o un mitin. Te sabe armar una casa de campaña de plástico en cualquier ratito. Te sabe narrar el fondo de su lucha, su forma de lucha. [...] E inconveniente, incómodo para el gobierno" (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

178 "Es lógico que un agente con componente ideológico, con antecedente de lucha política, no se calle ante una realidad de miseria, de abandono" (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

ter developed regions, a teacher's salary is, apparently, higher and the discrepancy felt less, provoking less activism,¹⁷⁹ yet the social and economic realities in Oaxaca provide rich grounds for social movements to develop.

5.2.3 Change from Below: The Pedagogical Movement

The dissident teachers' considerations mentioned now translate into a response to the neoliberal measures and can be considered the second wave within a double movement, as well as a measure toward a more moral economy: While the first and second demands of the CNTE since its inception were the democratization of the union and the increase of the teachers' salary, a third emerged towards the end of the 1980s, calling for an "alternative, indigenous, and democratic"¹⁸⁰ education, one that is "more real and more consistent in the population,"¹⁸¹ "a public education, democratic, scientific, popular, class-based, critical, reflective, and committed," which is a "historic responsibility which should emanate from the base."¹⁸² This third demand hence aims at transforming society from below in a direction contrary to neoliberalism.

The Coalition of Teachers and Indigenous Advocates of Oaxaca (Coalición de Maestros y Promotores Indígenas de Oaxaca) initiated the pedagogical movement and, arising from two congresses in 2014, the CNTE issued the National Plan and Program of Alternative Education (Plan y Programa Nacional de Educación Alternativa) that is revised on a regular basis.¹⁸³ Oaxaca, as a state with a wide array of indigenous communities, leads this movement for what is called 'alter-

179 Cf. Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

180 Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 24.

181 "más real y más consistente dentro de la población misma" (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

182 "una educación pública, democrática, científica, popular, clasista, crítica, reflexiva y comprometida," "una responsabilidad histórica que debe emanar de las bases" (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 286).

183 CEPOS 22, "Brigadeo Estatal Escuela por Escuela," 11; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 288, 295.

native education¹⁸⁴—the defense of the different values and cultures of the peoples, as well as the protection of nature in light of the neoliberalist developments are, as a matter of fact, even represented in the *Principios Rectores* 21 and 22.

The Sección 22 distinguishes two major issues in the Mexican system of public education. The first, roughly spoken, is the attempt to create one homogenous Mexican society. With the presidency of Manuel Ávila Camacho, Cárdenas' successor, began the removal of socialism also from public education—accompanied by increased control over the teachers via unions to be able to make these changes without dissent.¹⁸⁵ Henceforth, public education received a decidedly nationalist element that was to unite the Mexican peoples under one common umbrella, disregarding cultural differences. Maestro Daniel traces this development back to the creation of a new state after the Revolution: When cooking the 'soup' that was to be the new society, a 'little stone' called nationalism was to give it flavor. Harking back to history instead of looking at the future was an additional problem: "If I don't have a project for a nation to give a dignified life to the people, I create an ideologic project to subdue the people. [...] The nationalist identity is a product of the modern, Prussian educational system."¹⁸⁶ According to Maestro Daniel, nationalism is an "ideological chip of the federation"¹⁸⁷ that has no place in schools.

The second major issue in the Mexican system of public education, though undoubtedly also depending on the first, is the incorporation of this society into the globalized capitalist world—and its specific vision of the Mexican people's position and function in it. According to the information material handed to teachers in the State Workshops for Alternative Education (*Talleres Estatales de Educación Alternativa*; TEEAs)—workshops held at regular intervals for the conscientization

184 While not as prominent or active, other states have their own projects, such as the "Movimiento Pedagógico José María Morelos y Pavón" in Michoacán or the "Escuelas Altamiranistas" in Guerrero (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola* Magisterial, 81).

185 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

186 "Si yo no tengo un proyecto de nación para darle vida digna a las personas, creo un proyecto ideológico para someter a las personas. [...] La identidad nacionalista es un producto del sistema educativo moderno, prusiano" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

187 "chip ideológico de la federación" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

of teachers¹⁸⁸—, the current educational system aims to produce workers that produce.¹⁸⁹ More generally speaking: “For neoliberal globalization, education is not considered a human right anymore, today it’s an investment that should generate profit.”¹⁹⁰ While on the one hand, this model establishes and fosters social inequality,¹⁹¹ it likewise inhibits the incentives and motivation for the individual to learn critical thinking and draw their own conclusions. Modern technology, easy and convenient, only contributes to this dynamic.¹⁹²

Two major reform packages in the recent decades have—to different degrees—incorporated these characteristics: the National Agreement for the Modernization of the Basic Education (Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica; ANMEB) in 1992 and the Alliance for the Quality of Education (Alianza por la Calidad de la Educación; ACE) in 2008. Particularly the latter can be interpreted as a predecessor of the Educational Reform passed in 2013, which will be analyzed in more detail shortly.

The ANMEB, installed to counteract deficiencies, decentralized the system of public education, revised the curricula, increased the number of school days from 180 to 200, and extended compulsory basic education to include not only primary but also secondary school. The Sección 22 rejected the Acuerdo, on the one hand, due to the scheme of decentralization, effectively placing the responsibility of maintaining public education on the states: “The government launches decentralization because it didn’t want to take care of more than 1000 schools; ‘Oaxaca, I hand them to you. I, as the federation, give you your education [...]. Yes, I will give you your resources; you know where you will employ them.’”¹⁹³ Furthermore, the Sección 22 rejected the Acuerdo as it would,

188 Cf. CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 28.

189 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 41.

190 “Para la globalización neoliberal, la educación ya no se considera un derecho humano, hoy en día es una inversión que debe generar ganancias” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 11).

191 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 34.

192 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 2; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

193 “El gobierno lanzó la descentralización porque ya no quería estar manteniendo más de 1000 escuelas. ‘Oaxaca, te los entrego a ti. Yo, como federación, te entrego tu educación [...]. Sí, te daré tus recursos. Tú sabes donde los empleas’” (Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018).

predictably, only have little effect on the problems it was to solve, and the interests it would serve instead: It would only adapt education to international neoliberal guidelines, which, however, are not compatible with the teachers' educational realities. After the new system's introduction, a great chaos regarding the payment of the teachers ensued. Nevertheless, the dissidents managed to negotiate an agreement with the state governor that transferred a great amount of power to the newly founded state representation of the SEP—the State Institute for Public Education in Oaxaca (Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca; IEEPO)—to the Sección 22.¹⁹⁴ This arrangement provided the dissidents with “23 years living life in peace”¹⁹⁵—not the peace one might imagine, as decentralization brought many new problems to the front, but at least a relatively functional administrative relationship between the Sección 22 and the SEP.

Regarding the ACE, passed in 2008, the CNTE and the Sección 22 opposed especially its neoliberal character, converting education into a “synonym of ‘investing in human resources’” and remodeling the formation of teachers according to a “standardized certification, designed with entrepreneurial and technocratic criteria”¹⁹⁶—a further point of critique was that the reform seemed to be modeled after the U.S. program ‘No Child Left Behind.’ Teachers' benefits, such as the possibility to inherit a parent's position and the seniority, were to make way for tangible achievements, such as university degrees. The reform furthermore entirely disregarded regional circumstances and necessities by introducing evaluations and the term ‘quality.’ The opposition to the ACE—particularly the accusation that the ACE wants to make the secular, free and obligatory school disappear, and privatize education—resembles

194 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 40–42; CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 25; Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 59; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 155, 215, 220, 225–226; Margarita Zorrilla Fierro, “Diez Años Después Del Acuerdo Nacional Para La Modernización De La Educación Básica En México: Retos, Tensiones Y Perspectivas,” *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa*, no. 2 (2002): 2, accessed January 22, 2021.

195 “23 años llevando la vida en paz” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

196 “sinónimo de ‘invertir en el recurso humano’” and “certificación estandarizada, diseñada con criterios empresariales y tecnocráticos” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 357).

the problems with the Educational Reform in 2013, and just as in 2013, the teachers in 2008 were accused of standing in the way of modernization.¹⁹⁷

As to the English language in schools—which is already rather difficult to offer and implement, but would, however, facilitate the integration of Mexico into the globalized market—the Sección 22 makes it clear that it opposes the introduction of English as an official national language, as it would “offset the maternal languages.”¹⁹⁸ Yet since only recently the question was raised whether to place an official language in the Constitution—and this would be Spanish¹⁹⁹—the rejection of English seems to be rather a precaution in light of the language’s importance in globalization processes and the consequent possibility of its introduction in Mexican politics.

As noted, the teachers of the Sección 22 find themselves in the position between the people and the government, implementing the instructions from the latter as to how education is to form the people—quasi from the top down. However, with the movement for alternative education, the Sección 22 wants to change this dynamic by, instead, working from the ground up; from the educational realities existing in the communities, attempting to modify the government’s goals regarding education and the people it forms to create a different kind of economy and politics.

Two motifs can be detected in the movement for alternative education: emancipation and the strengthening of the community. In these endeavors, the movement builds on theorists of the Frankfurt school,

197 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2011–2012: La Práctica Pedagógica desde una Perspectiva Crítica y Social” (2011), 11–18; CEPOS 22, “XI Congreso Estatal Ordinario de la CNTE,” 26–33; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 95; Hernández Navarro, Cero en Conducta, 356, 357, 359, 360, 362, 426; César Navarro Gallegos, “La Alianza Por La Calidad De La Educación: Pacto Regresivo Y Cupular Del Modelo Educativo Neoliberal,” *El Cotidiano*, no. 154 (2009): 30–31, 34, accessed January 22, 2021; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

198 “desplaza las lenguas maternas” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 136).

199 Enrique Méndez, “Hablado Por Siglos En México, El Español No Es Idioma Oficial,” *La Jornada*, December 30, 2020, accessed January 22, 2021.

as well as Trotsky, Marx, and Lenin.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, the movement employs knowledge from the educational current ‘critical pedagogy,’ based on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and other works by Paulo Freire, and advocated prominently by Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren. Freire defines the Pedagogy of the Oppressed as “the pedagogy of the men that insist on the struggle for their freedom.”²⁰¹ However, he also states that the oppressed might be entirely unaware of their own position of oppression—even fearing liberty—, and require constant dialogue to raise awareness and to promote action for transformation. While this dialogue cannot take place with the oppressor, Freire also opposes a constellation of educator and educated. Instead, he asserts that everyone educates as well as is educated while the world mediates.²⁰² The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, he states, “should be elaborated *with* him [the oppressed] and not *for* him.”²⁰³ Specifically the notion that the oppressed might be unaware of their state, in addition to the action potential for teachers arising from this fact find implementation in the Sección 22 and the communication with the base, as well as with other parts of society.

Giroux and McLaren apply Freire’s knowledge above all in the context of neoliberalism, making both authors perfect cooperating partners of the Sección 22. In fact, Giroux had a live call on Facebook with the Sección 22 in May 2020, sharing his assessment regarding neoliberalism: He warned about what he calls ‘neoliberal fascism,’ the form neoliberalism has turned into because it has, apparently, reached a type of dead-end.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, in this call as well as in earlier articles, he advises to consider neoliberalism not simply as an economic force, but also an educational and cultural force, and even an ideology, since it

200 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

201 “la pedagogía de los hombres que se empeñan en la lucha por su liberación” (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogía Del Oprimido* (Mexico, D.F.: siglo veintiuno editores, sa de cv, 1970), 46).

202 Freire, *Pedagogía del oprimido*, 21, 43, 47, 60, 85–86.

203 “debe ser elaborada con él y no para él” (Freire, *Pedagogía del oprimido*, 34).

204 As, per definition, fascism cannot be neoliberal (while neoliberalism can have fascist traits), it is, again, necessary to keep in mind here that ‘fascism’ occasionally serves as a substitute term to describe apparently authoritarian systems and to express discontent.

shapes society—e.g., its agency, identification, and values—according to the norms of production and capitalism.²⁰⁵

Giroux further speaks of the oppressive systems' ability to normalize themselves, which happens in four ways: They

lead people to believe that there's no alternative, [...] don't provide tools for people to translate private ideas into larger social considerations, [...] as [they] attack the social state, they reproduce and heighten punishing state, criminalize social problems, so that homelessness, poverty, speaking out, dissent become a crime, [and] fourthly produce modes of inequality that make anything apart from survival impossible.²⁰⁶

As a type of counterforce, critical pedagogy then, first aims to understand the system and the individual's part in it. Second, it attempts to lead the oppressed, unaware of the oppression, to see the system they constitute a part of and even co-create: "The task of critical pedagogy is to invite students to become more conscious of the means by which subjectivity inheres in forms of social power."²⁰⁷ Particularly due to the engrained ideas concerning values and norms, appeals to a common sense regarding democracy are ineffective, necessitating someone, such as a teacher, to make aware of them²⁰⁸—a notion that the Sección 22 adopted and imparts in the teacher trainings, next to the definitions of critical theory, critical pedagogy, pedagogy of freedom, and communality.²⁰⁹

Schools are hence, on the one hand, institutions where the individual learns their position and the adjunctive values and norms in the system—in the common sense that the government's plans are imple-

205 CENCOS 22, "Retransmisión Del Conversatorio 'Pedagogía Crítica En Tiempos Dificiles': Con La Participación De Henry Giroux, Viernes 22 De Mayo De 2020," accessed May 23, 2020; Henry A. Giroux, "The Terror of Neoliberalism: Rethinking the Significance of Cultural Politics," *College Literature*, no. 1 (2005): 12.

206 CENCOS 22, "Retransmisión del Conversatorio 'Pedagogía Crítica en Tiempos Dificiles.'" **207** Peter McLaren, "The Emptiness of Nothingness: Criticism as Imperial Anti-Politics," *Curriculum Inquiry*, no. 4 (1991): 466.

208 Peter McLaren, "Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy," *Inter Actions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, no. 7 (2010): 3; McLaren, "The Emptiness of Nothingness: Criticism as Imperial Anti-Politics," 464.

209 CEDES 22, "TEEA 2009–2010: Hacia la Construcción de Nuestra Propuesta Educativa" (2009), 15–19; CEDES 22, "TEEA 2014–2015," 10–11, 34.

mented.²¹⁰ On the other hand, critical pedagogy aims at making the school a place where students are taught to reflect, question, and challenge, which would lead them to recognize their position in the system and the latter's mechanisms of power, e.g., via national identity. After all, pedagogy is, according to Giroux, "a political, moral, and critical practice."²¹¹ Following the analysis, students would draw conclusions, leading to a new sense of agency, as well as, ideally, creating social change, while also inviting self-criticism and self-consciousness.²¹² As McLaren states: "[W]e need a pedagogy of critique grounded in revolutionary love in the struggle for transforming these social relations."²¹³

The Sección 22 adopted these ideas in their pedagogical concept, stating that "we intend to form free students, spontaneous, that accomplish to challenge the paradigms supported in the *permanence of the models* imposed by the dominant class."²¹⁴ Fausto Rivera adds that the core of alternative education is "finding strategies, methods, pedagogical currents that permit directing philosophy towards an emancipation of man"²¹⁵ instead of the government's current philosophy that serves imperialism by transforming the student into "a robot, [...] a consumer

210 Both Giroux and McLaren also make a point of the importance of not sacrificing knowledge aiding employment and career opportunities, but to have both this as well as the learning of critical thinking as integral parts of the school system (Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren, "Introduction: Schooling, Cultural Politics, and the Struggle for Democracy," in Giroux; McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*, xvii–xviii).

211 Henry A. Giroux, "Academic Freedom Under Fire: The Case for Critical Pedagogy," *College Literature*, no. 4 (2006): 31.

212 Giroux, "Academic Freedom under Fire," 31; Henry A. Giroux, "National Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism," *College Literature*, no. 2 (1995): 56; Henry A. Giroux, "Schooling as a Form of Cultural Politics: Toward a Pedagogy of and for Difference," in Giroux; McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*, 141; Henry A. Giroux and Roger Simon, "Popular Culture and Critical Pedagogy: Everyday Life as a Basis for Curriculum Knowledge," in Giroux; McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*, 239; McLaren, "Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy," 5.

213 McLaren, "Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy," 10.

214 "intentamos formar estudiantes libres, espontáneos, que logren desafiar los paradigmas sustentados en la *permanencia de los modelos* impuestos por la clase dominante" (CEDES 22, "TEEA 2014–2015," 23).

215 "encontrar estrategias, métodos, corrientes pedagógicas que te permitan direccionar la filosofía hacia la emancipación del hombre" (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

ignorant of their social reality, removed from his peers.”²¹⁶ The school should instead “develop critical thinking in the student, show them to think by themselves; [...] to analyze problems from different perspectives, value others’ ideas, and contrast them to what is happening in reality.”²¹⁷

By showing the students how to think for themselves and critically reflect, society is to be transformed entirely, to not only revive the known, but to use it to create a new society.²¹⁸ Education should entail creating and reinforcing a new identity based on “equality amongst the forgotten,”²¹⁹ considering and integrating Oaxaca’s particular history and multi-faceted culture. Education in remote areas would therefore build on the living circumstances and educational possibilities of the region, instead of assuming that the conditions in these areas in any way resemble those of the bigger towns and cities, as allegedly does the federal educational plan.²²⁰ The role of the school is to be the place “where the collectives back their identities in community, where culture, conceptions, knowledges, and the social representations look for the school as the center of collective relations to generate possibilities to think and rethink its reality.”²²¹

Giroux also calls for a ‘Pedagogy of and for Difference,’²²² which matches the importance of the communities for the Sección 22 and the educational contexts of Oaxaca—while also displaying Giroux’s leftist tendency. He emphasizes the necessity of a multicultural approach to the national and ideological narrative that allows for and encourages

216 “un robot, [...] un consumista desentendido de su realidad social, ajeno a sus compañeros” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

217 “desarrollar en el alumno un pensamiento crítico, enseñarle a pensar por sí mismo [...] a aprender a analizar los problemas desde diferentes perspectivas, valorando las opiniones ajenas y contrastándolas con lo que sucede en la realidad” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 296).

218 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 16, 24; CEDES 22, “TEEA 2015–2016,” 3, 4; IEEPO and Sección 22, “Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca” (2013), 19–22; Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

219 “equidad entre los olvidados” (CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 2).

220 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 16.

221 “donde los colectivos fundamentan sus identidades en comunidad, donde la cultura, las concepciones, los saberes y las representaciones sociales buscan la escuela como el centro de las relaciones colectivas para generar posibilidades de pensar y repensar su realidad” (CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 3).

222 Giroux, “Schooling as a Form of Cultural Politics.”

differences in the creation of new social relations instead of drawing on these differences to justify a scheme based on and promoting a class system.²²³ This emancipation the Sección 22 wants to achieve by way of the cultures existing in the different communities and by reinforcing their autonomy—through *comunalidad*²²⁴—in light of the various threats to their existence.²²⁵ They understand education to be “a cultural movement in which the communitarian dimension of processes should be favored and, this way, the composition of the subjects as protagonists in their own education.”²²⁶

This significance of history in the movement for alternative education and the recollection and harking back to traditional values hint at Assmann’s contrapresent mythomotor: Transformation is justified by contrasting (glorious) history to present conditions. This perception leads to the apparent necessity of rescuing what already exists or existed: “The Mexican people have much wisdom. For example, [...] we know a lot about curing [diseases], even the smallest little town with the most humble person can cure you of this, of many things.”²²⁷ Enrique Morales, hinting at the governmental role, adds: “Necessity and urban spreading have gradually been extinguishing our languages, our cultures. But, above all, the negligence of the government [...] that

223 Giroux, “National Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism,” 54.

224 A concept similar to that of *comunalidad* is the idea of ‘commons,’ analyzed, among others, by Miriam Ticktin. She defines ‘commons’ as “a struggle against enclosures, against the privatization of spaces of freedom, against exclusion, and, perhaps most importantly, against private property. It can also mean the sharing of wealth and resources on the basis of collective decision-making; sometimes it is spoken of as grounded in social relations built on reciprocity, respect, mutuality, and responsibility” (Miriam Ticktin, “Building a Feminist Commons in the Time of COVID-19,” accessed June 7, 2021).

225 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2009–2010,” 19–26; CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 16, 20; IEEPO and Sección 22, “Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca,” 17, 18; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; CEPOS 22, “Jornada de Concientización a los Trabajadores de la Educación para el Diálogo con Padres de Familia” (Sección 22, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, 2013), 45.

226 “movimiento cultural en donde se debe privilegiar la dimensión comunitaria de los procesos y promover, de este modo, la constitución de los sujetos como protagonistas de su propia educación” (CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 30).

227 “El pueblo mexicano tiene muchos saberes. Por ejemplo, [...] sabemos muchísimo sobre curar, más el pueblito más pequeño con la persona más humilde de allá te puede curar de esto, de muchas cosas” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

takes over, that does not take charge and does not guide the educational programs in the right manner.”²²⁸

The Sección 22 hence—and in what can be considered the second part of a double movement—wants to set loose an “educational revolution,”²²⁹ to change the realities of those marginalized by neoliberal capitalism, and to employ public education as a tool, “an achievement by Mexicans,”²³⁰ to fashion “a society more just, more humane, more democratic, more Other”²³¹—on the basis of a more ‘moral’ economy—and an independent, sovereign, and proud Mexican nation.²³²

5.2.4 Lighting the Way: Alternative Education in Oaxaca

The movement for alternative education of the Sección 22 in Oaxaca is implemented by way of the Plan for the Transformation of Education in Oaxaca (Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca; PTEO), officially initiated in 2009 as a response to the ACE.²³³ The PTEO is based on the desire of emancipation through recentring on the traditional background, customs, and values of the Oaxacan people, thereby strengthening the indigenous communities as well as regaining autonomy. In other words: “The educational project is a collective dialectic construction that takes into consideration the knowledge of the communities, and that allows for the process of social transformation from

228 “La necesidad y el crecimiento urbano ha ido perdiendo nuestras lenguas, nuestras culturas. Pero sobre todo la dejadez del gobierno [...], que llega, que no se preocupa y no orienta de manera correcta los programas de educación” (Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018).

229 “revolución educativa” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 8).

230 “una conquista de los mexicanos” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 75).

231 “formando una sociedad más justa, más humana, más democrática, más Otra” (CEDES 22, “TEEA 2018–2019: Procesos Educativos Emancipatorios en la Formación del Sujeto Histórico-Social” (2018), 9).

232 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 2, 3; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 75; Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018.

233 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2015–2016,” 8.

the schools.”²³⁴ Consequently, a collective identity is to be created that includes the pride of being from Mixtecan, Zapotecan, etc. lands²³⁵—Maestro José even goes as far as to state that the students should be proud of their race in light of racist government policies.²³⁶

The aforementioned TEEAs have been created as yearly events to train the teachers of the Sección 22 in the PTEO, to raise awareness, to unite them, and to help them adopt their traditional role in society: that of the social transformer, worker, emancipator, investigator, and a part of the people.²³⁷ Still, the workshop material from the 2014–15 TEEA also acknowledges that while some “enjoy the majestic knowledge engraved in historicity and elements that characterize it,”²³⁸ it seems more difficult to others—this again hints at the internal problems the section is facing, which will be examined in further detail in chapter seven. Each TEEA has a different emphasis: The focus on the presentation of the PTEO, the contextual framework, and the theoretical background of, most prominently, critical pedagogy and *comunalidad* dominated in the first years of the TEEAs.²³⁹ In later years, the role of the PTEO in the pedagogical and resistance movement and the implementation of the theoretical frameworks came to the fore.²⁴⁰

234 “El proyecto educativo es una construcción colectiva dialéctica que toma en cuenta los conocimientos y saberes comunitarios y que posibilita el proceso de transformación social desde la escuela” (IEEPO and Sección 22, “Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca,” 56).

235 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 29; Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

236 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

237 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2011–2012,” 8, 23–26; CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 3; CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Escuela por Escuela,” 11; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 297; IEEPO and Sección 22, “Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca,” 44; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

238 “disfrutar de los majestuosos conocimientos impresos en la historicidad y elementos que la caracterizan” (CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 45).

239 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2009–2010”; CEDES 22, “TEEA 2011–2012”; CEDES 22, “TEEA 2012–2013: El Colectivo y los Proyectos Educativos como Esencia Transformadora de la Vida Escolar y Comunitaria” (2012); CEDES 22, “TEEA 2013–2014: La identidad de la escuela como fuente de utopías en el proceso de transformación de la educación de Oaxaca” (2013); CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,”

240 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2015–2016”; CEDES 22, “TEEA 2016–2017: Procesos de Formación del PTEO, para la Pervivencia del Movimiento Pedagógico” (2016); CEDES 22, “TEEA 2017–2018”; CEDES 22, “TEEA 2018–2019”; CEDES 22, “TEEA 2019–2020: Proyecto Educativo: La

Generally, all class content should emanate from the students' surroundings or be placed in their context, securing the communities' knowledge against 'hegemonic structures,'²⁴¹ while also attaching a folkloric reputation to the projects. In this sense, for example, a fable that is told and learned in class should originate in the community, in contrast to the ones often printed in the schoolbooks that the students cannot set in the context of their particular backgrounds. Another example is that the students get to know different occupations in their community by taking small trips and conducting interviews.²⁴² The focus on the community hints at the importance of the countermovement against the neoliberal advance in Mexico.

Arising from these contemplations, the Sección 22 establishes two systems that guide the development of new projects: The State System of Professional Training of the Workers in Education of Oaxaca (Sistema Estatal de Formación Profesional de los Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca; SEFPTEO) proposes a training that takes the career possibilities as well as the educational realities of the teachers in Oaxaca into consideration; the System of Evaluation of Education in Oaxaca (Sistema de Evaluación Educativa de Oaxaca; SEEO), analogously, proposes the evaluation of teachers and programs not in a standardized fashion—as does the state—but taking into account the discrepancies of educational contexts in the state.²⁴³

Three programs guide the PTEO amid these systems: The State Program for Improvement of the Scholastic and Life Conditions of the Children, Youths, and Adults of Oaxaca (Programa Estatal para Mejorar las Condiciones Escolares y de Vida de los Niños, Jóvenes y Adultos de Oaxaca; PEMCEV) aims at providing access to education for every-

Continuidad de la Resistencia Pedagógica en Oaxaca" (2019); CEDES 22, "TEEA 2020–2021: La reorganización colectiva del Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca frente a la crisis sanitaria mundial" (2020).

241 CEDES 22, "TEEA 2014–2015," 24.

242 CEDES 22, "TEEA 2014–2015," 20, 24, 35; Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018; CEPOS 22, "Jornada de Concientización a los Trabajadores de la Educación para el Diálogo con Padres de Familia," 45.

243 CEDES 22, "TEEA 2015–2016," 12–14; CEPOS 22, "Jornada de Concientización a los Trabajadores de la Educación para el Diálogo con Padres de Familia," 44; IEEPO and Sección 22, "Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca," 8–10.

one, while also generating a type of education that respects human, social, ecological, and economic rights. The Popular Community Project of Infrastructure and Educational Equipment of Oaxaca (Programa Popular Comunitario de Infraestructura y Equipamiento Educativo de Oaxaca; PROPCIEEO) intends to align the conditions of infrastructure and equipment in the communities by, on the one hand, documenting them and giving the information to the authorities, and, on the other, creating a collective, via *comunalidad*, that implements necessary changes. The third program, the Program for the Educational Recognition of the Workers in Education of Oaxaca (Programa para el Reconocimiento Educativo a los Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca; PRETEO), encompasses the ideals of emancipation, critical pedagogy, and the class struggle, as well as the recognition of the work, commitment, and dedication of the teachers in their respective educational contexts, and promotes working as a collective.²⁴⁴

Every project within the PTEO, initiated in the different schools, begins with a critical analysis of reality,²⁴⁵ of the students' living conditions and the educational environment.²⁴⁶ The workshop material from the TEEA 2014–2015 provides an example: A number of collectives in a school zone met to (critically) analyze their reality. Although different, they noticed that they share many denominators, such as responsibility, the individual social development, and the behavior as a citizen. They further concurred that these factors create their reality. They identified consumerism as the biggest issue their communities were facing, manifesting in the younger generation's lack of knowledge regarding their culture in favor of modes of entertainment endorsed by the mass media. As remedies and counteractions, the collectives proposed the elaboration of masks for carnival, the preparation of tortillas and foodstuffs

244 CEDES 22, "TEEA 2015–2016," 12–14; CEPOS 22, "Jornada de Concientización a los Trabajadores de la Educación para el Diálogo con Padres de Familia," 43; IEEPO and Sección 22, "Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca," 11–15.

245 The Análisis Crítico de la Realidad, or ACR (CEDES 22, "TEEA 2015–2016," 13).

246 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

derived from corn as well as other traditional ingredients and meals, and the recycling of paper and plastics to protect the environment.²⁴⁷

One of the activities in the same workshop material similarly establishes a plan of action that can most likely be transferred to the entire PTEO: A chart shows four columns, “General Objective,” “Specific Objectives,” “Actions,” and “Strategies.” The general aim is to strengthen the teachers in their work and teaching strategies that consider the identity of the community and consequently spike the students’ interest in the educational transformation and the preservation of their culture. This is to be achieved through three specific goals and actions: Educating the teachers in critical thinking and pedagogy, promoting an identity of community, and awakening the students’ interest in their own culture. Each of these is further divided into four strategies that are to deliver the desired outcomes. The division into the three specific purposes also demonstrates the perceived points from which the *Sección 22* intends to achieve societal change and which are always in the center of the movement’s actions: the teachers, the community, and the students.²⁴⁸

This chart furthermore appears to be the foundation for the entire PTEO, as all smaller projects can be subsumed under at least one of the strategies—many teachers are, indeed, not entirely sure whether the ‘P’ in ‘PTEO’ stands for ‘Plan’ or ‘Project,’ or can be applied quasi synonymously. An example for the implementation of the PTEO is also provided in the material: While general knowledge of Spanish and Math in the respective classes on the levels preschool and first grade of primary and secondary school cannot be replaced, the contents can be augmented by adding legends of the communities, Mixtec letters and local expressions, and the cultural exploitation of capitalism in Spanish; and, in Math, games of the community, Mixtec numbers, and modes of counting in the community (e.g. by bushel or hand).²⁴⁹

Some projects are of a rather theoretical nature; many others entail the description and analysis of the famous Oaxacan event ‘Guelaguetza.’

247 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 19.

248 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 26.

249 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 38.

Experimental strategies can manifest in the popular PTEO project *cocinas comunitarias*, ‘community kitchens.’ People of the community, typically women, cook traditional meals for the students in a school. Parents pay a small fee at regular intervals for this purpose, or the students pay directly at purchase. Occasionally, it can also be established that the parents of every child take turns in providing the meals, a system that is supervised by the teachers or the parents’ council.²⁵⁰

Carlos Sanchez implemented this project in a slightly different fashion in the secondary school he worked in, putting the focus on the benefits of traditional methods instead of on their mere preservation: The cooks—students’ parents—prepare meals with the idea of contextual substitution: using traditional ingredients as well as tools in the process instead of ‘globalized’ ones—they would, for example, use *panela* instead of sugar, and wooden or clay spatulas instead of the ones made from aluminum. Furthermore, the composition of the meals would be guided by the nutrition pyramid to guarantee a well-balanced diet. Apart from rescuing traditional methods and ingredients, the hypothesis of the project is that good nutrition aids the students’ learning process and attention. The avails were given in part to the cooks and in part to the school. The project ran for six months, the minimum period of a PTEO project, according to Sanchez.²⁵¹

The primary school “Hermenegildo Galeana” in Puerto Escondido informed the parents about their project in a brochure: The idea is to “[p]romote the integration, collaboration, and participation of the parents, teachers, and students drawing from community or popular knowledge, transforming the educational process for a better coexistence and socialization with the community”²⁵²—collecting everyone in the movement in the defense of tradition against neoliberalism. The

250 Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018; Enrique Morales, Interview on March 12, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

251 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

252 “[p]romover la integración, colaboración y participación de los padres de familia, docentes y estudiantes a partir de los saberes comunitarios o populares transformando el proceso educativo para una mejor convivencia y socialización con la comunidad” (“Proyecto del Colectivo Escolar 2017–2018” (Escuela Primaria Hermenegildo Galeana, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, 2018)).

strategies developed to attain this goal are as follows: One, to celebrate the national holidays of the neighborhood, in this case the Independence Day in the *colonia aeropuerto*, with a parade and the Shout of Independence;²⁵³ two, to celebrate the dead as a community and family tradition on the Day of the Dead; three, to learn by playing on the example of the Mexican Revolution; four, to value and participate in the festivals of the neighborhood; five, to have a lecture week to read, play, and learn; and six, to play and integrate parents.²⁵⁴ The significance of history and tradition for the Sección 22 is palpable in this example of a PTEO project.

After the completion of a PTEO project, the results and benefits are usually made public.²⁵⁵ This can, for example, be attained in meetings with the parents' council. As was shown in the case of an event in Puerto Escondido on March 23, 2018, those PTEO projects including a collective of various schools can also be presented to the community in the form of a *compartencia*—decidedly not the 'neoliberal' '*competencia*,' leaning not on the word '*competir*,' meaning 'to compete,' but on the word '*compartir*,' meaning 'to share.' In the square of the municipal agency, the different participating schools erected booths displaying the results of their projects: One school, for example, had fashioned a math game for visitors to play, while another had crafted a train with pictures of the heroes of the Revolution. The primary school "Las Primeras Luces" of Puerto Escondido laid out booklets made by the students of their different projects: Some treated a walk on the beach and the observations made—"Mi Recorrido de la Playa"—, others were recipe books. According to Maestra Eva, the latter had been elaborated in the different classes: In Math, the students dealt with the amount of ingredients and how they needed to be adjusted in case of more eaters; in Spanish, they

253 El Grito de Dolores is a ritual celebrated on Independence Day, commemorating the heroes of the events with the ringing of the bell that was rung by Miguel Hidalgo in 1810, marking the beginning of the War of Independence, and the weighty "viva," and ended with the ponderous shout "¡Viva México!" for three times.

254 Escuela Primaria Hermenegildo Galeana, "Proyecto del Colectivo Escolar 2017–2018."

255 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

wrote the recipes; in Art, they drew the pictures; and in Exploration of Nature and in Civic Education, they cooked the recipes.²⁵⁶

Furthermore, projects should undergo an evaluation during as well as after their completion and their presentation vis-à-vis the project's design and elaboration, the implementation, and the educational benefit, in order to improve the PTEO in line with the SEEO. This evaluation ideally entails the integration of the school collectives, the critical analysis of reality, the construction, development, and impact of the educational projects, the evaluation as a possibility of systematizing the educational practice, and the link of the educational projects to the programs and systems.²⁵⁷ The goal of the SEEO and the evaluation is to

gather information on a sustained basis about the learning process of the participants and the global pedagogic action, in order to analyze it and propose situations that promote the knowledge construction of each particular group. This way, this evaluation is an important medium to investigate and reflect, in collaboration with the educational actors, the process that is being carried out.²⁵⁸

The SEEO further proposes four types of evaluation—an auto-evaluation, a co-evaluation, a hetero-evaluation, and a meta-evaluation—to make the results as complete as possible. The Sección 22 in the TEEA workshop material also acknowledges the workload that this evaluation process poses, yet emphasizes its importance in the construction of a more permanent and successful alternative education.²⁵⁹

In addition to the projects, the PTEO also involves an 'alternative school calendar.' It is presented on one page and apart from the holidays also shows historical dates, actions the Sección 22 plans for these dates, and

256 Maestra Eva, Interview on March 23, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

257 Titles proposed in CEDES 22, "TEEA 2014–2015," 49–51.

258 "recabar, permanentemente, información sobre el proceso de aprendizaje de los participantes y la acción pedagógica global, para analizarla y proponer situaciones que favorezcan la construcción del conocimiento de cada grupo en particular. Así mismo, esta evaluación es un medio importante para investigar y reflexionar conjuntamente con los actores educativos acerca del proceso que se está llevando a cabo" (CEDES 22, "TEEA 2015–2016," 33).

259 CEDES 22, "TEEA 2014–2015," 40; CEDES 22, "TEEA 2015–2016," 35, 37; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018.

‘normal’ school days that are titled “organization of collectives.” In the case of the calendar for the period 2019–2020, the header reads: “The Continuity of the Pedagogical Resistance in Oaxaca.”²⁶⁰

In 2012, the Sección 22 submitted the proposal of the PTEO to the Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Avanzados del Instituto Politécnico Nacional; CINVESTAV) for analysis. The report acknowledges the effort and important observations the PTEO is including, yet the CINVESTAV is sure that the document in its current state would receive negative feedback from the national authorities. Suggestions for improvement included the overall length of the document, repetitions on various occasions, the editing, as well as content: The phrase “our people”²⁶¹ would not represent the heterogeneity of the Oaxacan indigenous groups, the discrepancy between rural and urban areas was disregarded, and the project inflicts too much governmental responsibility on teachers, among others. Furthermore, the CINVESTAV criticized that an entire administrative structure was to be implemented, including an evaluation, without actually defining the pedagogical content.²⁶²

According to Maestro Daniel, the report did show tangible difficulties, however, he concluded: “How are the processes in the movement when it’s bureaucratized? Things pass the political topic, and we also know how to make politics ‘*a la Mexicana*.’”²⁶³

260 “organización de colectivos,” “La Continuidad de la Resistencia Pedagógica en Oaxaca” (Sección 22, “Calendario Alternativo Escolar 2019-2020 Del MDTEO,” accessed February 5, 2021).

261 “nuestros pueblos”

262 CINVESTAV, “Comentarios Generales Al Plan Para La Transformación De La Educación De Oaxaca (PTEO),” accessed February 5, 2021.

263 “Como están los procesos en el movimiento cuando se burocratizan? Las cosas pasan por el tema político y nosotros también sabemos hacer ‘política a la mexicana” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

6 Battles of the 21st Century: Making Memory on the Streets

“Ser pueblo, hacer pueblo, es estar con el pueblo.”¹

By the beginning of the 21st century, the Sección 22 was already a well-established actor on the Oaxacan political landscape, fighting for its cause in the classrooms as well as on the streets. The new millennium brought this endeavor more to the front, leading to violent encounters with the police, street riots, and increased efforts of organization, internally as well as with the civil population. The banner of the movement, however, still reads the historic claim of preserving identity—the teachers’ as well as that of the Oaxacan population—, underpinned by the common narrative of defending and upholding traditional virtues and revolutionary heritage.

6.1 A Venture at Alternative Governing: Oaxaca 2006

For the Sección 22, the year 2006 turned out to be a landmark for the status and significance of the movement, as well as for the dissidents’ narrative and the imposition of an alternative policy that is more in line with their vision of a just society.

The conflict had been building up already over the previous two years: Despite accusations of electoral fraud, Ulises Ernesto Ruiz Ortiz was named governor of Oaxaca in 2004. His style of politics, as expected by many, was highly unpopular with the people: His decisions were marked by nepotism and often taken either without regards to the popular will or even despite it. In this fashion, much of the city center, including monuments and landmarks, such as the portals of the cathedral, was remodeled. The popular, and by tendency leftist, newspaper Noticias was closed on his first day in office. Furthermore, Ulises

¹ “To be people, to make people, is to be with the people” (Lucio Cabañas Barrientos in CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 106).

Ruiz did not refrain from using force against the people, leading to a high number of political arrests and human rights violations, as well as increased organization between affected groups—associations, such as the Front of Democratic Unions and Organizations of Oaxaca (Frente de Sindicatos y Organizaciones Democráticas de Oaxaca; FSODO) or the Promoters of National Unity against Neoliberalism (Promotora de la Unidad Nacional contra el Neoliberalismo; PUNCN) had been found already years before, yet experienced a renaissance in this period.² In this tense political atmosphere took place what might be the biggest showdown between the government and the people in recent Oaxacan history:

The disaster wrote one of the most meaningful pages in the history of Oaxaca and its civil resistance, but it has also been caught, captured by images that, in the fraction of a second, suddenly bring us this stream of sensations, of vertigo, of fears, of anguish that was reflected on every face, that was breathed on every street, in every square of the city taken by the popular verbena or battle ground.³

On May 1, 2006, the Sección 22 delivered its list of demands to the government, as every year, primarily demanding salary adjustments—the end to what they call ‘rezonification,’ determining the salary according to the cost of living in the different regions, as, apparently, the costs everywhere are about the same⁴—as well as respect for their movement

2 Viridiana Carrera Aguirre, “De la deferencia a la rebeldía: Ruptura de la relación hegemónica en Oaxaca y la movilización de 2006” (Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología, Buenos Aires, 2009), 4–6; Diana Denham, Patrick Lincoln, and Chris Thomas, “Introduction,” in Denham; C.A.S.A. Collective, *Teaching Rebellion*, 25, 29–30; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 122, 124–126; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Víctor R. Martínez Vásquez, “Crisis Política Y Represión En Oaxaca,” *El Cotidiano*, no. 148 (2008): 48–49.

3 “El desastre ha escrito una de las páginas más hondas de la historia oaxaqueña y de su resistencia civil, pero también ha sido atrapado, capturado por imágenes que en una fracción de segundo nos traen de golpe todo ese caudal de sensaciones, de vértigo, de temores, de angustia que se reflejaba en cada rostro, que se respiraba en cada calle, en cada plaza de la ciudad tomada como verbena popular o campo de batalla” (Abraham Nahón, “La Escritura Del Desastre (En Oaxaca),” in Leyva, *Memorial De Agravios*, 19–20).

4 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

and the ceasing of human rights violations committed by the government.⁵ As negotiations were fruitless, on May 22, the strike turned into a permanent occupation of the town square—a *plantón*—, rather an event for the dissidents encompassing workshops, discussion groups, and the ‘tying and strengthening of social bonds,’⁶ of indefinite duration.⁷

In the organization of the *plantón*, the parallel (dissident) structure of the MDTEO was made use of: There was a Permanent Assembly establishing the ‘activities’⁸ of the day and passing them on down the structure to the *mesas centrales*—central boards—made up of and coordinating the representatives of the regions and sectors. They, in turn, passed the information to the sectorial boards—the *mesas de sector*—who then updated the base. Similarly, the delegations could send notifications up the structure to the Permanent Assembly to keep it informed about the situation at the *plantón*.⁹

The organization of the necessities of daily life ran along similar lines: While the larger aspects (such as security, hygiene, or communication to the people via large speakerphones) were organized by all sectors, the basic organization—including the daily counting of the teachers present according to the list, and the coordination of activities—were managed within the various regions, sectors, and delegations with the group in charge rotating every other day. Each sector was further allotted an area of the Zócalo and later the surrounding streets, which they were to maintain clean and secure, also including a night watch.¹⁰

To start and later sustain the mobilization—which for some also meant bringing their children to the *plantón*—delegations stipulated

5 Enrique Rueda Pacheco, “Enviando Pliego de Generales Demandas del año 2006” (Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, 2006).

6 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

7 Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, “Introduction,” 25; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 128; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 321; Martínez Vásquez, “Crisis política y represión en Oaxaca,” 51; Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 28; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

8 The *actividades* encompassed the usual protest measures of the Sección 22, such as marches, the occupation of buildings, and the like.

9 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 128, 130.

10 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 128, 130.

the financial contribution that was to be made by every individual to pay traveling fees as well as the running costs. Where possible, teachers of the surrounding areas also invited their fellows to their homes to sleep, wash clothes, etc. To ensure that everyone participates the same amount, turns were taken in groups to participate at the different activities.¹¹

Already in its First Political Congress held from April 3 to 7, 2006, the Sección 22 decided to revise its relationship with the people and again create closer bonds to better integrate the teacher as a central part of the community. The political scenery created by Ulises Ruiz proved to be an ideal occasion to reunite in the face of a common enemy, and the teachers' mobilization was used to the end as well with people from other discontented social groups joining the teachers at their *plantón*. On June 2 and 7, mega marches were organized in repudiation of the governor and his politics, demanding a solution to the teachers' petitions. Three days later, the First State Assembly of People and Magistrate¹² took place and a *declaración política* was issued, asserting the intention to unite the disadvantaged and marginalized and presenting a list of grievances with the government.¹³

By mid-June, negotiations had still not born fruit, and the Ulises Ruiz administration, apart from having promised that there would not be any *plantón* during its term, feared that the protests would disrupt the Guelaguetza, the annual festival drawing large masses of tourists to the city, and hence a vital source of income for the state—in the government version of events, the teachers were also displayed as unreasonable and as an aggressive group, hindering as well as drawing in innocent bystanders in their protest. Talk erupted among the *plantonistas* that the government planned to clear the Zócalo, yet nothing concrete was communicated.¹⁴

11 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 128, 130.

12 Primera Asamblea Estatal Magisterial-Popular

13 Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca, "Resolutivos del Congreso Constitutivo de la APPO" (Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, 2006); CEPOS 22, "Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII"; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 114, 119, 127; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 77; Isidoro Yescas Martínez, "Movimiento Magisterial Y Gobernabilidad En Oaxaca," *El Cotidiano*, no. 148 (2008): 69.

14 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 20, 130; Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 29; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 6–7.

In the early morning of June 14, the night watch raised the alarm: The police were closing in on the *plantón*. Apparently, the government had managed to secure support from the municipal PRI-presidents in the surroundings as well as larger businesses in the conclusion that the Zócalo could only be evacuated by force—there are even rumors that the secretary general of the Sección 22, Enrique Rueda Pacheco, ‘sold’ the movement out to Ulises Ruiz.¹⁵ About 2,000 police elements—from various departments—entered the Zócalo and began with what came to be known as ‘*el desalojo del 14 de junio*’—the violent clearing of the *plantón*.¹⁶ Coming from all streets leading to the Zócalo, the teachers and the other social groups—women and children included—barely had a chance to escape the tear gas (also dispatched by a helicopter), tasers, nightsticks, and the fire set to the tents. However, the protesters managed to regroup, and a few hours later had reunited to confront the police. According to José Alfredo Gonzales,¹⁷ before one could even think of running away, the *compañeros* hooked arms and marched, united, against the forces of the oppressor¹⁸—Maestro Rodrigo¹⁹ stated that the police had no chance once they ran out of tear gas.²⁰ Apparently, the brutality with which the police acted against the people and especially the children caused an involuntary reaction of rage that aggravated and strengthened the *plantonistas* in their efforts to retake the city center.²¹

15 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 130–31; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; José Alfredo Gonzales, Interview on August 1, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 321.

16 A recording of events can be watched at mag1211008, *Entrada De La Policía En El Zócalo-Desalojo En Oaxaca 2006* (2010), accessed March 5, 2021.

17 José Alfredo Gonzales is a primary school teacher for music in Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, and in most cases follows the Sección 22 and its actions without further scrutinizing the information given.

18 José Alfredo Gonzales, Interview on August 1, 2018.

19 Maestro Rodrigo was a member in the top structure of the Sección 22 in 2018.

20 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018.

21 Carrera Aguirre, “De la deferencia a la rebeldía,” 9; Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 133; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 330; Martínez Vásquez, “Crisis política y represión en Oaxaca,” 52; Jorge Pech, “Memorial De Agravios 1486 – 2006,” in Leyva, *Memorial De Agravios*, 14; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

If not through the tumult of the conflict or through being affected without actually being involved, the rest of the civil population was informed about the events in the city center by way of large speaker-phones. Before midday, the Zócalo was retaken by the dissidents and the people joining the riot in solidarity in light of the government's brutality and to demonstrate their own disagreement with the administration. According to Diego Osorno, the *desalojo* "brought to the surface the contradictions accumulated in Oaxacan society: governmental authoritarianism, absence of democracy, misery, unemployment, jobs badly paid, stratospheric corruption, overwhelming migration, analphabetism, and repression."²² Citizens distributed vinegar and coke—which was known to bring relief to the burn of the tear gas—and helped with the wounded, despite potentially having had objections to the original *plantón*.²³ According to Estrada, 92 were hurt, including the police and children, two were hurt by shots, and two women aborted. The dissidents even managed to detain some of the police force, which were exchanged for detained dissidents.²⁴

The administration blocked the frequency of the teachers' Radio Plantón, so they moved to the university where the students took over the radio frequency of Radio Universidad for what, by now, was a newly emerging movement as people from all over the city and the surrounding areas and even the catholic church joined the protesters in solidarity against the Ulises Ruiz administration. To fortify the Zócalo, barricades were erected—the City of Resistance truly lived up to its name.²⁵

Three days later, on June 17, 2006 the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca; APPO)—

22 "sacó a la superficie las contradicciones acumuladas en la sociedad oaxaqueña: autoritarismo gubernamental, ausencia de democracia, miseria, desempleo, trabajos mal pagados, corrupción estratosférica, migración desbordada, analfabetismo y represión" (Osorno, Oaxaca Sitiada, 49).

23 Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, "Introduction," 25; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 133, 135; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Nahón, "La escritura del desastre (en Oaxaca)," 20; Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 29, 33; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Pech, "Memorial de agravios 1486 – 2006," 14; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 77, 80.

24 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 135.

25 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Nahón, "La escritura del desastre (en Oaxaca)," 21.

the first proposal said “of the People”, yet “the Peoples” was claimed to better represent the diversity of Oaxacan society—was founded by the Sección 22 and other social, civil, political, and non-governmental organizations, as well as prominent dissidents, such as the politician and activist Flavio Sosa.²⁶ The building of the CEPOS 22, not far from the university, was designated as founding place as well as headquarters. The objective was to install an alternative government, building on the considerations elaborated during the First Political Congress of the Sección 22 and the First State Assembly of People and Magistrate, guided by the indigenous concept of *tequio*—service to the community. The first demand to achieve this end was the resignation of Ulises Ruiz.²⁷

The APPO appeared to incorporate all the elements of Oaxacan political and social life: “the local political culture born from the popular assemblies, magisterial syndicalism, indigenous communalism, municipalism, religious extension, the radical left, regionalism, and the ethnic diversity of the entity.”²⁸ The composition was hence very diverse and represented the many different parts of Oaxacan society. It operated by way of the Dirección Colectiva Provisional—Provisional Collective Board—, which was further divided into different commissions, such as financing, press, security, indigenous people, etc., and the Asamblea General—the General Assembly. The latter was the highest organ of the APPO and was perceived as the “assembly of assemblies”²⁹ due to its representational character. However, the size of the assembly made

26 According to Hernández Navarro, it incorporated 365 social organizations, popular councils and unions (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 336).

27 Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, “Introduction,” 26, 37; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 135; Manuel Garza Zepeda, *Oaxaca 2006–2010: Insurrección, Fiesta Y Construcción De Otro Mundo En Las Luchas De La APPO* (Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociológicas; Juan Pablos Editores, 2016), 165; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 321; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 81; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 70.

28 “la cultura política local nacida de las asambleas populares, el sindicalismo magisterial, el comunalismo indígena, el municipalismo, el extensionismo religioso, la izquierda radical, el regionalismo y la diversidad étnica de la entidad” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 336).

29 “asamblea de asambleas” (Flavio Sosa in Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 147).

quick and flexible action difficult—sessions could, after all, last up to three days with no one able to leave as the doors were closed—, and so the Board took over the daily business. The radio stations served as a direct connection to the dissident community.³⁰

The Sección 22 took a leading role. Not only did they provide the location for the reunion, they further contributed their experience and knowledge in the structural organization of assemblies and larger social movements. Other organizations with similar strength, size, and the possibilities of mobilizing their members joined the Sección 22 in the prominent positions within the APPO and a latent dispute ensued regarding the importance of the individual organizations in the decision-making. According to Flavio Sosa, the relation between the organizations developed into a competition: “I am the one with the highest moral authority because I mobilize more people.”³¹ This antagonism was reinforced by differences in the movements’ aims and logic.³²

Upon joining the protesters in the defense against the police forces, 43 NGOs created the Espacio de Organizaciones Civiles de Oaxaca—Section of Civil Organizations of Oaxaca—to participate at the APPO assemblies, yet not lose autonomy and the possibility to distance themselves from decisions and actions taken. They worked to investigate and broadcast human rights violations, prove the ungovernability of the Ulises Ruiz administration, and open spaces for the discussion of a desired future government. The proposals for a new form of government, the political project basing on the circumstances of the state, eventually converted into the Comuna de Oaxaca,³³ the Commune of

30 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 147, 149, 226; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 333; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018.

31 “yo soy el que tengo más autoridad moral porque estoy movilizandando más gente” (Flavio Sosa in Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 149).

32 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 149, 157; Garza Zepeda, *Oaxaca 2006–2010*, 164.

33 It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that the *Comuna* was not an organized movement in itself, but rather the conglomerate of peoples fighting for the destitution of Ulises Ruiz.

Oaxaca, virtually a movement larger than any individual movement and even larger than the APPO itself.³⁴

Where people came together, or as a demonstration of solidarity, chants erupted. The one minced to the occasion was “¡Ya cayó! ¡Ya cayó! ¡Ulises ya cayó!”³⁵ These were interspersed with more traditional and more universal chants, such as: “¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!”³⁶ Chants and songs could, however, be a creation of the moment—the movie *Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad*, for example, shows women cooking and singing: “Con los huevos de Ulises voy a hacer un *estrellado*, para darles de comer a los *pinches diputados*.”³⁷ Where it is not vocalized, dissent is painted on the streets, cars, and houses as part of symbolic protest—in 2018, graffiti saying “*fuera UR*” or “*fuera Ulises*” could still be encountered.³⁸

To prove the administration’s inability to govern, the dissidents occupied hotels, bus terminals, and the event location where the Guelaguetza was to be held. Until July 13, the governor still had not cancelled the event, and on July 16, massive mobilizations took place—even including arson, but the dissidents claimed that the perpetrators were infiltrators from the government. Either way, Ulises Ruiz cancelled the event the next day. In the spirit of defending and rekindling traditions and indigenous culture, however, the dissidents organized their own Guelaguetza, which they then, in contrast to the ‘normal’ event,

34 Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, “Introduction,” 33; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 154–157, 244, 246, 451; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 337; Guillermo Pereyra, “El Conflicto Popular De Oaxaca En 2006: Revuelta Y Comunidad,” in *Procesos Políticos De América Latina: Una Lectura Crítica Del Neoliberalismo*, ed. Daniel Vázquez and Julio Aibar (México, D.F.: FLACSO México, 2013), 135.

35 “He already fell! He already fell! Ulises already fell!”

36 “The people, united, will never be defeated!”

37 “With the eggs of Ulises, I will make an *estrellado* [dish resembling scrambled eggs] to give to eat to the damned representatives” (Jill Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito De Tanta Verdad,” accessed June 10, 2021).

38 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 285; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad”; Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 85.

called Guelaguetza Popular, ‘of the people,’ and, as had been in former times, without charge for entry.³⁹

The media was of great importance, particularly the radio stations.⁴⁰ Since the destruction of Radio Plantón, the movement transmitted its news via Radio Universidad, making sure that the dissidents at the barricades were up to date regarding attacks and the location of police forces. To this end, and to make their voices heard, the Movimiento de Mujeres Oaxaqueñas organized a march on August 1, calling for other women to join them on their *marcha de las cacerolas*—march of the pans. The women marched with pans and other kitchen utensils, making noise and chanting. They went to the offices of the TV-station Canal 9 and, upon being denied the request to transmit for one hour, summarily took the entire television station. At this point, the dissidents had three radio stations—Radio Cacerola had been founded—and a television station to support the movement.⁴¹

While on the national level, the protesters were depicted as unreasonable and violent, in the state of Oaxaca, dissidents were attacked in what they call ‘terrorism of the state,’ and as the conflict drew on, both sides kept raising their level of aggression as a response to the other’s—the protesters in alleged civil disobedience and the police forces in protection of society against an uncontrollable mob. On August 9, following the take-over of the TV-station, governmental repression increased and so did the number of the disappeared, the detained, and the tortured. The APPO and the Sección 22 entered into negotiations with the federal government, yet the latter did not see the destitution of Ulises Ruiz as an option. In the early morning of August 21, in a clear attempt to interrupt the information chain, the transmitters of the TV channel as well as those of the radio stations were destroyed—the latter by

39 Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, “Introduction,” 36; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 409; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad”; Garza Zepeda, *Oaxaca 2006–2010*, 178–82; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 67.

40 For more detailed information about the role of the media in the representation of women and the indigenous see Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 121–77.

41 Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, “Introduction,” 35; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 180, 202; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad”; Garza Zepeda, *Oaxaca 2006–2010*, 190; Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 84–85; Pereyra, “El conflicto popular de Oaxaca en 2006,” 145–46.

infiltrators—, causing the dissidents to temporarily send their information via other, private radio stations.⁴²

Of vital importance in the conflict were the barricades. The government sent police forces to supposedly only de-block the streets, yet the convoys, appearing mostly at night, targeted the barricades with bullets—apparently even from AK 47s—prompting the dissidents to call them ‘*caravanas de la muerte*,’ caravans of death. This line of action again resulted in solidarity with the people and anger with the government, leading furthermore to people losing their fear in light of the sentiments of union and righteousness of their cause. They had already erected barricades before, in the streets as well as around vital points for the movement, such as government buildings or the radio stations, yet the brutality displayed now caused the people to increase the overall number of barricades as well as fortify those that had already existed before. The people used everything they found to burn in campfires, stones and rocks to defend themselves if attacked, and even created their own security forces, the Honorable Cuerpo de Topiles—The Honorable Police Force of Topiles—and the Teachers’ Police—the *Policía Magisterial*. Masks were handed out with sanitary pads sewed in to protect against the gas bombs. As Maestro Rodrigo stated, “it all looked like a war zone, the zone of Oaxaca was besieged. There were checkpoints, barricades, ...”⁴³ The social fabric at the barricades was very diverse, representing the different societal groups in Oaxaca, including those marginalized who felt that their lot had finally been acknowledged.⁴⁴

42 Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad”; Garza Zepeda, Oaxaca 2006–2010, 191; Martínez Vásquez, “Crisis política y represión en Oaxaca,” 55–56; Osorno, Oaxaca Sitiada, 112–13.

43 “todo parecía una zona de guerra, estaba sitiada la zona de Oaxaca. Había retenes, barricadas ...” (Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018).

44 Diana Denham and Laura Böök, “Preface,” in Denham; C.A.S.A. Collective, Teaching Rebellion, 16; Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, “Introduction,” 31; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 226, 228–230, 383–385; Marco Estrada Saavedra, “La Anarquía Organizada: Las Barricadas Como El Subsistema De Seguridad De La Asamblea Popular De Los Pueblos De Oaxaca,” *Estudios Sociológicos*, no. 84 (2010): 911–14; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad”; Garza Zepeda, Oaxaca 2006–2010, 191–94; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 333–335, 337; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 85, 87.

The barricades and the systems of defense entered the cultural memory and became the stuff of legends, arts, and music.⁴⁵

On September 21, more than 3,000 insurgents—mostly teachers of the Sección 22—began a mega march from Oaxaca to the national capital despite hesitation from Rueda Pacheco and the Asamblea. The route had more than 500 km of length, occasionally through rough territory. They were welcomed with acts of solidarity in many communities along the way, without which the dissidents would not have been able to continue as they did, seeing that many of them had not taken any money or carried even basic foodstuffs. Again, sanitary pads found use, this time in shoes as a measure against blisters. After 19 days, the protesters arrived in Mexico City and installed a permanent *plantón* in front of the senate building. In Oaxaca, however, repression increased as more than 4,000 troops of the Federal Preventive Police (Policía Federal Preventiva; PFP) arrived at the City of Resistance at the end of October and started wearing down the barricades. The private radio stations used up to this point were blocked with noise interference, yet, fortunately for the dissidents, Radio Universidad resumed its function that same day. Seeing the repression in Oaxaca and the ineffectiveness of their blockade, the insurgents in Mexico City commenced a hunger strike.⁴⁶

At this point, the insurgents had controlled the center of the City of Oaxaca against the attacks of the police and para-police forces for various months. The results of the presidential elections, going in favor of Felipe Calderón despite allegations of fraud, additionally wore down the dissidents and again increased repression from the federal government. The latter, however, also acknowledged the necessity to separate the Sección 22 from the APPO in order to quell the riot. Further nourishing the allegations against the teachers' secretary general, Enrique

45 See, e.g., CNTE Mexico, accessed February 25, 2021, Stephen, We are the Face of Oaxaca, 256–75, or the poems in Osorno, Oaxaca Sitiada.

46 Denham and Bööök, "Preface," 16–17; Estrada Saavedra, El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución, 385; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, "Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad"; Garza Zepeda, Oaxaca 2006–2010, 241; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Martínez Vásquez, "Crisis política y represión en Oaxaca," 56; Osorno, Oaxaca Sitiada, 197; Pereyra, "El conflicto popular de Oaxaca en 2006," 152; Redacción, "El Magisterio De Oaxaca Y La APPO Llegan Al Zócalo," acontecer, 2006; Stephen, We are the Face of Oaxaca, 92.

Rueda Pacheco, he announced, without having consulted with the base first, that the Sección 22 would return to work.⁴⁷

Around the same time happened what some called the ‘betrayal of the Sección 22.’ The teachers had by this point spent months on strike, and for the last two they had not received a salary. In negotiations with the dissident teachers at the end of October, the government, intent on divorcing the APPO from its strongest ally and aware of the international attention the conflict provoked, finally agreed to concessions regarding the demands in the *pliego petitorio* of the Sección 22—as opposed to that of the APPO. Furthermore, negotiations between the Oaxaca PRI and the national PAN-party in this critical period between presidential administrations showed that the movement’s success was highly improbable—while the atrocities of Ulises Ruiz and the state of ungovernability were not denied, the situation was perceived as too critical to introduce major changes. Besides, the various groups in the APPO had different interests and plans of action, occasionally difficult to blend. Adding the continued violent repression that only incremented in ferocity, the list of benefits obtained from returning to the classroom was enough for some teachers—and Rueda Pacheco announced the return of the teachers despite heavy resistance from within the ranks. Seeing that teachers of the Sección 22—the organization that was in general among the most organized in rebelling against the state and vital in the creation of the APPO—abandoned the movement, many insurgents felt betrayed.⁴⁸

Repression still increased, now also including selective repression against particular leaders of the movement—as the fighting continued, solidarity movements arose all over the world, aided by the publicity regarding the death of a U.S. journalist in the protests. Starting October 26, only two radio stations were operating, Radio Universidad and

47 Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca, “Resolutivos del Congreso Constitutivo de la APPO,” 24; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad.”

48 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, “Introduction,” 34; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 214–16; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad”; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 213–216, 238, 243, 267; Pereyra, “El conflicto popular de Oaxaca en 2006,” 140, 151–152; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 70–71.

Radio Ciudadana, a station operated by the government with programs in opposition to the dissidents, supposedly representing the ‘true’ people of Oaxaca. On November 2, the PFP launched an attack against *ciudad universitaria*, the ‘university city,’ to take down the dissidents’ last radio station. After more than seven hours of intense battle, the PFP withdrew.⁴⁹

On November 10, the APPO held a Constitutive Congress, lasting four days. The APPO, emphasizing the potential for change in the contemporary situation, called for a “profound and radical transformation of the relationship government, society, and institutions and the way to exert power,”⁵⁰ and a new power based on the various communities, on “comprehensive democracy, on sustainable development, on social equality, and on justice.”⁵¹ This change and the APPO should provide an example to the nation and spread the developments beyond the borders of Oaxaca.⁵²

On November 25, the dissidents made a last big effort against the federal police forces. They surrounded the camp of the troops, only a few blocks from theirs, with barricades and a human chain. The reaction of the PFP resulted in hundreds of people injured, detained, tortured, and disappeared. The police entered houses, and apparently even took dissidents being treated at hospitals, while the government’s Radio Ciudadana uncovered the addresses of the protesters’ safe houses. Arrest warrants were issued against many in the movement, and the radio frequency was blocked again. Eventually, the APPO returned

49 Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, “Introduction,” 35; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 211–214; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad”; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Luis Hernández Navarro, “Oaxaca: Imágenes De La Batalla,” in Leyva, *Memorial De Agravios*, 25; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Martínez Vásquez, “Crisis política y represión en Oaxaca,” 56; Osorno, *Oaxaca Sitiada*, 217–28; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 93, 232–242.

50 “transformación profunda y radical de las relaciones gobierno y sociedad, de las instituciones y de la manera de ejercer el poder” (Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca, “Resolutivos del Congreso Constitutivo de la APPO,” 25).

51 “en la democracia integral, en un desarrollo sustentable, en la equidad social y en la justicia” (Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca, “Resolutivos del Congreso Constitutivo de la APPO,” 25).

52 Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca, “Resolutivos del Congreso Constitutivo de la APPO,” 25; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, “Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad”; Pereyra, “El conflicto popular de Oaxaca en 2006,” 136.

Radio Universidad to the university. After this brutal confrontation, the resistance and insurgency slowly died down. The APPO held its first State Assembly in February 2007 and the Sección 22 was able to reinstall Radio Plantón, yet the rebellion would not climb to the same heights again. The APPO still meets and the Sección 22 calls for renewed cooperation, but a lack of enthusiasm is felt in the actions.⁵³

A Commission of Truth was called to unravel the details of state repression, yet despite confirming profound violations of human rights, no charges were pressed against Ulises Ruiz. Various international organizations have also analyzed the conflict and have pointed out the violation of human rights by the Ulises Ruiz administration.⁵⁴ The number of deaths and people injured, detained, or disappeared varies according to the different sources,⁵⁵ only causing more antagonism. So deep is the frustration and pain that in 2012, when Felipe Calderón visited the state, protests broke out again.⁵⁶ Manifestations are still organized at regular intervals to raise awareness to the fact that Ulises Ruiz was not held accountable, and when the ex-governor comes to the city, he is usually met with demonstrations.

Despite the fact that neither the destitution of Ulises Ruiz nor an alternative government was achieved, the events of 2006 proved vital for the rebellious people of Oaxaca and the Sección 22 and entered into cultural memory and the dissidents' narrative; the organization lay in large parts in the hands of the dissident teachers that had been organizing their rebellion for 26 years. As requested by the liaison of

53 Denham and Böök, "Preface," 18; Denham, Lincoln and Thomas, "Introduction," 37–38; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 397; Freidberg and Corrugated Film, "Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad"; Garza Zepeda, *Oaxaca 2006–2010*, 237, 240–241; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Martínez Vásquez, "Crisis política y represión en Oaxaca," 57–58; SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Resolutivos V Congreso Político del MDTEO," 22.

54 José A. Solalinde Guerra, Marina P. Jiménez Ramírez, and Diego E. Osorno González, "Informe de la Comisión de la Verdad Sobre los Hechos que Motivaron las Violaciones a los Derechos Humanos al Pueblo Oaxaqueño en 2006 y 2007" (Comisión de la Verdad de Oaxaca, 2016); Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 113–15.

55 For an example, see Rubén Leyva, ed., *Memorial De Agravios: Oaxaca, México, 2006* (Oaxaca de Juárez: Carteles Editores, 2008) Abraham Nahón, Jorge Pech Casanova and Sergio Santamaría, 156; Redacción AN, "El Día En Que Oaxaca Se Rebeló (Videos)," *Aristegui Noticias*, June 14, 2006, accessed March 5, 2021..

56 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 448–49.

the master narratives of revolution and neoliberalism that the Sección 22—as the mastermind—promoted, ‘the people’ united in solidarity and took direct political action to overthrow the (supposedly) tyrannical government, as ‘they’ had during the Revolution. For a period of six months, they tried out new forms of political participation and installed a draft for an alternative administration that represented not neoliberal global interests but the will of the people—including the marginalized—, supposedly eliminating the corrupt and self-serving practices that characterized previous government action—disregarding the fact that these governments were elected democratically and the election results accepted in most cases. The recurring violence displayed by the government in the handling of the conflict only reinforced the impression of a tyrannical administration acting against the will of the people and provided justification for the movement’s cause.

6.2 The Return of Neoliberalism: Pacto por México 2012

By 2012, 32 years after the initiation of the MDTEO, the movement counted about 75,000 members, almost three times as many as in 1980.⁵⁷ This year would, however, also ring in a new era of struggle for the Sección 22: The PRI-candidate supposedly won the presidential elections, giving rise to allegations of fraud, and his first act in office was the introduction of a major neoliberal reform package that appeared to defy all values of the Sección 22.

Massive popular protest broke out in the aftermath of the elections. Peña Nieto, or ‘EPN,’ as many called him, had already earned himself a less than favorable reputation during his period in the government of the State of Mexico. The largest opposition came from the (mostly) student movement “#YoSoy132”—“#Iam132”—, which has its origins in a speech given by Peña Nieto during the presidential campaign at the Universidad Iberoamericana. The students confronted the candidate with the brutal repression of peasants in San Salvador Atenco, which

57 CEPOS 22, “Curso de Inducción Político e Ideológico a Normalistas del Estado de Oaxacas,” 21.

had resulted in a number of claims of human rights violations, and, eventually, Peña Nieto could only leave with difficulty, surrounded by security detail. Upon assertions by the university administration that the protesters were imposters, the students started publishing videos of themselves showing their student-IDs. 131 videos were uploaded, and people used the catchphrase “#YoSoy132” to show their solidarity.⁵⁸ While there were other movements in opposition, the student movement was the most vocal and organized.

Various factors made it necessary for the new president to take decisive steps right at the beginning of his term: The first was the dire need to legitimize his government, having already attracted too much criticism.⁵⁹ The second was the rupture inside the political parties that made union on major issues difficult and could thus become an obstacle to Peña Nieto’s legislation proposals. And the third—perhaps or even probably related to the country’s ranking on international statistics and thus its attractiveness for foreign investment—was the idea to finish the neoliberal structural readjustment that had started in the 1980s but had not yet been implemented entirely.⁶⁰

The introduction of the Pacto por México in 2012 concedes the necessity to put aside the differences and interests of the political parties and to instead assemble all behind the interests ‘of the persons.’⁶¹ The endeavor to make Mexico an efficient democracy, politically and socially, translates into three basic guidelines: the strengthening of the state; the democratization of the economy and politics, as well as the effective amplification and application of social rights; and the public’s

58 Latino Voices, “YoSoy132: How a Mexican Student Movement Was Born,” accessed March 2, 2021; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

59 Following the elections, rumors arose that Peña Nieto had not read any book in his life and that he was, in fact, not able to read at all—rumors, which footage of him trying to read in front of the camera supported—attempting to display him as of rather limited intelligence.

60 Rocha-Quintero, “El Pacto por México bajo la lupa,” 99; Ignacio Román-Morales, “Las Reformas Estructurales De Peña Nieto,” *Análisis Plural*, 2012, accessed April 14, 2022; Marina Trajo Ramírez and Agustín Andrade Robles, “Evolución Y Desarrollo De Las Reformas Estructurales En México (1982–2012),” *El Cotidiano*, no. 177 (2013), accessed March 4, 2021.

61 Indeed, the wording “los intereses de las personas” is rather odd, as the more common phrasing would be “the people.” Critics might use this to suggest that this was a Freudian slip of the elites furthering their own interests in the passing of the Pacto.

active participation in the design, the execution, and the evaluation of public politics.⁶²

One step further into the Pacto, these three guidelines convert into five agreements: The first concerns the Society of Rights and Liberties—Acuerdos para una Sociedad de Derechos y Libertades. The introductory section explains the intent: to achieve the “inclusion of all social sectors and a reduction of the high levels of inequality that exist between the persons and regions of our country.”⁶³ The first subsection thus displays the intention to create a Universal System of Social Security for all Mexicans that is to include universal access to all health services, including the prohibition of junk food in schools. The second section states the objective to create a National System of Programs to Combat Poverty. Subsection 1.3 concerns the quality and equality of education, which is undoubtedly the basis for the CNTE’s protest, as it attempts to “elevate the quality of education for all Mexicans to better prepare them as citizens and as productive persons”⁶⁴ and “recovers the rectory of the national educational system”⁶⁵—most probably hinting at the power of the teachers’ union. To this end, the government plans a census of all schools, teachers, and students to provide a better overview and facilitate communication, as well as a system of evaluations that is to be overseen by the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education. Furthermore, schools are to have more autonomy, providing the teachers, students, and parents with the responsibility and ability to solve the problems of their particular school. Concerning the teachers, this section also states the aim to introduce a system of benefits for a positive evaluation and merit, and a system of competition for positions, while also improving their education in the *escuelas normales*. This section also declares the goal to provide full-time schools,

62 “Pacto por México” (2012), 1.

63 “inclusión de todos los sectores sociales y reduzca los altos niveles de desigualdad que hoy existen entre las personas y entre las regiones de nuestro país” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 3).

64 “elevar la calidad de la educación de los mexicanos para prepararlos mejor como ciudadanos y como personas productivas” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 4).

65 “recupere la rectoría del sistema educativo nacional” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 4).

as well as laptops for students of the fifth and sixth grade, a system of scholarships, and an overall increase of students in the higher grades.⁶⁶

Subsection four of the Agreement on the Society of Rights and Liberties refers to “culture as an element of social cohesion.”⁶⁷ It includes the protection of the cultural heritage, the infrastructure of the states, artistic education, and the broadcasting of Mexican culture in the world. The penultimate subsection concerns the protection of human rights by the state, as the country “requires that respect, the furtherance, and the defense of human rights be a constant in its culture and in the behaviors of its governing.”⁶⁸ Among the guidelines included here is also the intention to establish a clear set of rules on the use of the police and the army. The last subsection concerns the rights of the indigenous, the strengthening of the communities, their education, health, and the availability of infrastructure and credit, as well as the access to justice and education.⁶⁹

The second agreement of the Pacto por México is called “Agreements for Economic Growth, Employment, and Competitiveness.”⁷⁰ The introduction states that “[t]he best instrument to end with poverty is employment”⁷¹ and, hence, “[t]he state should generate the conditions that allow for economic growth, which leads to the creation of stable and well-paid employment.”⁷² Furthermore, public and private investment should rise to more than 25% of the GDP and be invested to increment productivity in order to trigger a rise of the GDP to more than 5%. To this end, the government intends to “[e]xtend the benefits of an

66 Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 4–6.

67 “La cultura como elemento de cohesión social” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 6).

68 “requiere que el respeto, la promoción y la defensa de los derechos humanos sean una constante de su cultura y del actuar de sus gobernantes” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 7).

69 Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 6–9.

70 “Acuerdos para el crecimiento económico, el empleo y la competitividad” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 8).

71 “El mejor instrumento para terminar con la pobreza es el empleo” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 9).

72 “El Estado debe generar las condiciones que permitan el crecimiento económico que resulte en la creación de empleos estables y bien remunerados” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 9).

economy shaped by competitive markets,⁷³ also in the telecommunication sector, “[p]romote development through science, technology, and innovation,”⁷⁴ and confront climate change with sustainable development. An energy reform shall generate investment and development. In this context, the Pacto states that “[f]ossil fuels will remain property of the nation,”⁷⁵ while reforming the state-owned PEMEX company to increase efficiency and reduce internal corruption, and allow for competition in refining, petrochemistry, and transport.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the mining industry is to better respect social rights, banks are to support companies and households, especially concerning projects that lead to economic growth, and the agricultural sector is to be reinforced in order to release the country from its dependence on international products for the people’s basic nutrition. Apart, particularly the south and south-east are to be supported in their integration into the economy. The penultimate subsection of section two calls for the control of the states’ over-indebtedness. The last subsection, leading to one of the first reforms passed, calls for a fair and efficient budgetary reform that is to increase development by expanding the number of taxpayers, fine-tuning control-mechanisms. In the classic idea of neoliberalism, the last paragraph of this subsection calls for a kind of ‘new public management,’ as “the cost of the public sector will permanently be revised to improve its efficiency and achieve better indicators of performance,”⁷⁷ translating also into the reduction of positions, areas, and government dependencies, and the revision of government subsidies.⁷⁸

Compared to the first two agreements, the last three turned out to be rather short—a fact that, certainly, could be interpreted as an ascription of importance to factors integrating Mexico into global neoliber-

73 “Extender los beneficios de una economía formada por mercados competidos” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 8).

74 “Promover el desarrollo a través de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 10).

75 “Los hidrocarburos seguirán siendo propiedad de la Nación” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 13).

76 Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 9–14.

77 “el gasto del sector público para mejorar su eficiencia y alcanzar mejores indicadores de desempeño” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 16).

78 Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 14–17.

alism. The third concerns security and justice: The government wants to implement a National Plan for Prevention and Communal Participation, reform the police and the prisons, and introduce a new penal system and code. The fourth agreement was installed to control corruption, aiming to implement a reform for accountability, increase the power of the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information, and the Protection for Personal Data, and establish a national system to fight corruption.⁷⁹

The last agreement relates to democratic governability in light of the necessity to “achieve agreements via dialogue and institutional negotiation so that all political forces make themselves responsible for the management of the country and its problems.”⁸⁰ The first subsection proposes to give the president the option to choose between a minority government or a coalition. The second proposes to anticipate the president’s inauguration to coincide with the National Independence Day on September 15, instead of December 1, to shorten the transition period between governments. Furthermore, this agreement aims to establish clear guidelines for the parties to attain greater transparency and stability. Among these is the prohibition to hand out promotional material to collect votes. Additionally, the Federal District is to be reorganized, political privileges and the right to re-election of legislators are to be revised, and four concrete laws are to be passed in order to implement the planned reforms. As an addendum deemed necessary after the 2012 elections, a public instance will be created to supervise public spending and the adherence to transparency and public utility in the communication media.⁸¹

In concrete terms, the Pacto was instated in the form of eleven structural reforms: an energy reform, a reform for economic competition, a telecommunication and radio reform, a tax reform, a financial reform, a labor reform, an educational reform, a new law of protection, a new

79 Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 17–19.

80 “alcanzar acuerdos mediante el diálogo y la negociación institucional para que todas las fuerzas políticas se corresponsabilicen de la conducción del país y de sus problemas” (Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 19).

81 Gobierno de la República Mexicana, “Pacto por México,” 19–31.

national code of criminal procedure, a political-electoral reform, and a reform for transparency.⁸²

The Educational Reform was the first to be passed in February 2013 and ratified by September.⁸³ It contained two secondary laws, the General Law of Professional Teaching Service⁸⁴ and the Law of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education⁸⁵, apart from the reform to the General Law of Education. The latter, simply said, created the System for the Evaluation of Education and the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación; INEE), which henceforward was to be responsible for education and its improvement through the process of evaluation.⁸⁶ The General Law of Professional Teaching Service, meanwhile, established the terms and conditions according to which teachers were to be admitted, promoted, recognized, and could remain in service.⁸⁷ Together with the reform to the General Law of Education, these secondary laws were to implement the nine commitments stipulated in the Pacto regarding education: to have a System of Information and Educational Administration, to consolidate the National System of the Evaluation of Education, to give administrative autonomy to the schools, to install full-time schools, to have laptops with connection for the pupils of the fifth and sixth grade, to create the Professional Teaching Service, to support the basic education of teachers in the *escuelas normales*, to increase the coverage of ‘medium superior’ and ‘superior’ education—the two years leading to university and university—, and to install a National Program of Scholarships.⁸⁸

82 “¿Conoces Las 11 Reformas?” Gobierno de México, accessed March 4, 2021.

83 Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación, “Reforma Educativa,” no. 11 (July 1, 2018), accessed March 4, 2021.

84 Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente

85 Ley del Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación

86 Ley del Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación, Congreso General de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (September 11, 2013).

87 Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente, Congreso General de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (September 11, 2013).

88 “Reforma Educativa: Marco Normativo” (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación, Mexico, D.F., 2015), 17.

In an executive summary about the Reform, the administration encapsulates these commitments in the following principal points of action: more administrative autonomy is to enable the schools to operate more efficiently according to individual circumstances; technical assistance is to help teachers and schools; parents are to be more involved in the daily affairs in the schools to ensure a better link to the students as well as the community; the educational system is to be made more responsible and efficient; a system of information and administration is to improve the flow of information and workload between the authorities and the schools; the Professional Teaching Service is to ensure the quality of education by warranting the teachers' suitability and level of training; further training is to be offered to the teachers according to their particular needs; the INEE is to provide the framework for evaluations; the National System for the Evaluation of Education is to implement these evaluations; teachers are to be evaluated with parameters that are more comprehensive than simply determining the teacher's merit through the grades of their students; equality and inclusion are to be reinforced; a new financial system is to correct the mistakes of the old, slowly driving already disadvantaged communities further into marginalization; this same system is to take over the salary system; and, finally, schools are to have greater administrative autonomy to regulate their own finances and make the connected procedures easier and quicker.⁸⁹

The Secretariat of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública; SEP) further turned these guidelines into seven priorities: "1. To place schools and students in the center of the Educational System. 2. To improve infrastructure, equipment, and educational material. 3. To offer an ideal and continuous development for the professional teaching staff. 4. To revise the study plans and programs. 5. To increase equality and educational inclusion. 6. To link the educational world with the labor market. 7. To implement an administrative reform inside the SEP."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ "Reforma Educativa," 12–14.

⁹⁰ "1. Colocar a la escuela y a los estudiantes en el centro del Sistema Educativo. 2. Mejorar la infraestructura, equipamiento y los materiales educativos. 3. Ofrecer un óptimo y continuo [sic] desarrollo profesional docente. 4. Revisar los planes y programas de estudio. 5. Mejorar la equidad e inclusión educativa. 6. Vincular al mundo educativo con el mercado

The Pacto provoked an intense wave of protest⁹¹ from the dissident teachers as well as other social groups all over the nation—the Sección 22, as usual, in the fore of the protest and its organization. Having decided in May that action would be more compelling at the time of the reform's ratification process, the dissidents began their strike in late August. In collaboration with the other dissident sections as well as like-minded labor unions, the Sección 22 rang in the years of prolonged and intense protest, negotiations, and educational events to discuss the reform and its effects, in Oaxaca and the nation's capital. A *plantón* and blockages of strategic points were established and the conflict made visible worldwide through occupied embassies and interviews with the international press. A mega demonstration was organized for September 15, however, acknowledging that the mobilization did not have much effect on the government, it was lifted on October 6, and only a representative *plantón* remained in the capital. The Sección 22 returned to Oaxaca from where it demanded the installation of the PTEO, the financial resources for its implementation and maintenance, and the disappearance of the Sección 59—more on this section in the next chapter.⁹²

The Pacto in its entirety was heavily criticized due to its neoliberal character and, according to the dissidents, detrimental effects on society, and over the years the CNTE sought to create a coalition of organizations to instate a nation-wide strike, building on the example of the APPO in 2006.⁹³ While all reforms received a fair amount of attention in the teachers' protests over the years—Peña Nieto was accused of having sold the patrimony PEMEX—, the Educational Reform did, of course, affect the teachers in particular and hence stood at the center of their protest. Hernández Navarro explains the general feeling of

laboral. 7. Implementar una reforma administrativa al interior de la Secretaría de Educación Pública" ("Conoce Las 7 Prioridades Para La Implementación De La #ReformaEducativa," Gobierno de la República Mexicana, accessed March 12, 2021).

⁹¹ Hernández Navarro calls it "the ninth wave," supposedly the strongest that, in the end, destroys everything (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 7–8).

⁹² Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 459–62; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 11.

⁹³ CEPOS 22, "Brigadeo Estatal Escuela por Escuela," 11–25; SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018," 6–11.

the dissident teachers: “Overnight, the state left [the teachers] orphans, subject to the powers of the market and the authoritarianism of the educational officials. Even worse, it declared war on them.”⁹⁴ Sanchez hints at theories stating the reform was passed first in order to secure the attention of those most affected as well as the most combative—the teachers—on this first reform so as to prevent protest in the passing of those following: “We were scared.”⁹⁵

The first point of attack is the nature of the Reform: The stipulations—particularly the secondary laws—do not actually modify the content of education but aim at its administrative structure, making it rather a labor reform and reminding the dissidents of the ACE in 2008—the educational model was updated three years later in 2016.⁹⁶ The implication behind this procedure was that the teachers and the current—in the 1990s decentralized—administrative system were to blame for the lamentable state the educational system was in—an accusation that the government contested.⁹⁷ This had, for example, manifested in union sections being able to negotiate on the state as well as on the national level, leading to uncalculated expenses in the budget. The government, therefore, needed to regain control, and already in September and November of 2013, censuses were undertaken to gain an impression of the state of the schools and working conditions of the teachers, as well as to align the official numbers and eradicate positions that were paid yet not worked in—for example where the teacher had died, yet the salary was still paid. In Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Michoacán, these counts were boycotted and—after negotiations with the respective officials and in their company—conducted and the numbers enforced by the respective section.⁹⁸

94 “De la noche a la mañana, el Estado los dejó en la orfandad, sujetos a las fuerzas del mercado y al autoritarismo de los funcionarios educativos. Peor aún, les declaró la guerra” (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 13).

95 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

96 Cf. “El Modelo Educativo 2016: El planteamiento pedagógico de la Reforma Educativa,” 1st ed. (Ciudad de México, 2016).

97 “Mitos Sobre La Reforma Educativa,” accessed March 8, 2021.

98 Azam Ahmed and Kirk Semple, “Por Qué La Reforma Educativa En México Ha Desatado Oposición Y Violencia,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 2016, accessed April 8, 2021; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 459–63; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

Evaluation was named and introduced as a first step, in line with the guidelines aiming for better qualified teaching staff. When a student graduated from the *escuela normal*, they were not, as common before, automatically assigned a workplace. Instead, they were to take an exam determining their suitability and level of training. Workplaces were assigned accordingly—apparently, this exam could only be taken once.⁹⁹ Teachers already working are to take an exam at regular intervals to confirm their abilities in the profession. If the test is failed, the government offers courses to update the teacher in the required material. This exam the teacher can take three times. If upon the third time the exam is still not passed, the teacher will be withdrawn from active teaching and instead be placed in an administrative position. Furthermore, upon applying to a higher position, an exam must be taken to prove suitability, breaking with the tradition that seniority qualifies for a promotion in favor of competitive exams. If a teacher refuses to take the exam or does not show sufficient achievement, they are discharged.¹⁰⁰

While the state perceived these measures as one part of the plan to ‘regain control’ over the educational system,¹⁰¹ the dissidents call the reform ‘*reforma punitiva*,’ ‘the punitive reform.’ The mere idea that the educational system was ever out of the state’s hands and controlled by the teachers, coupled with the claims that the teachers did not want to be evaluated and were practically the reason for the faulty educational system, insulted the dissidents, leading to myths as well as misinformation about the proceedings of the reform in line with the dissidents’ narrative:

[The] educational reform is, in reality, a labor and administrative reform that seeks to deprofessionalize the teaching staff, watch it, control it, and punish it. A reform based on the evaluation that makes of the threat

⁹⁹ Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Ahmed and Semple, “Por qué la reforma educativa en México ha desatado oposición y violencia”; Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente; Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Gobierno de la República Mexicana (February 05, 1917), Art. 3; Hernández Navarro, La Novena Ola Magisterial, 27; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018; Secretaría de Educación Pública, “Mitos sobre la Reforma Educativa.”

¹⁰¹ Secretaría de Educación Pública, “Mitos sobre la Reforma Educativa.”

and the fear of dismissal or degradation at work the center of an alleged professional improvement of the teaching staff, and the road to achieve educational quality.¹⁰²

In the *brigadeo* of 2018, the Sección 22 denounces the Reform as “not more than a justification for the massive dismissal to slim down the payroll of teachers.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, Fausto Rivera points out that the phrase ‘No to the evaluation!’ does not, as many falsely conclude, mean that the teachers are opposed to being evaluated in general. As he explains, they only resist the evaluation introduced by the Educational Reform that appears to want to punish the teachers for the deficiencies of the educational system.¹⁰⁴

The evaluation was further perceived as an attack against what the teachers call ‘labor conquests.’ As Hernández Navarro states: “The Educational Reform broke, in a unilateral and arbitrary fashion, the existing pact between the state and the teachers.”¹⁰⁵ Teaching had always been perceived as a secure employment with a stable salary and, especially in the more marginalized regions, as one of the few ways to climb the social ladder. Due to the competitive exam, this was now seen in danger; on the one hand already when entering the service, and, on the other, in light of the exams that need to be taken at regular intervals by the teachers to prove their suitability. Students were now categorized into ‘*idóneos*’—those suitable—and ‘no *idóneos*’—those not suitable. Additionally, the importance and benefits of seniority as an expression of and a recognition for the experience attained in the classroom—a central consideration for many aspects of a teacher’s career in the

102 “[L]a reforma educativa es, en realidad, una reforma laboral y administrativa que busca desprofesionalizar al magisterio, vigilarlo, controlarlo y castigarlo. Una reforma basada en la evaluación que hace de la amenaza y el miedo al despido o a la degradación laboral el centro de una supuesta mejoría profesional del magisterio y la ruta para alcanzar la calidad educativa” (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 28).

103 “no más que una justificación para el despido masivo y así adelgazar la nómina magisterial” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “*Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018*,” 12).

104 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

105 “La reforma educativa rompió, de manera unilateral y arbitraria, el pacto existente entre Estado y profesores” (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 13).

Sección 22 and a trait the dissidents had fought for repeatedly over the years—were nullified.¹⁰⁶

It was further criticized that students needed to take an extra exam before being admitted as a teacher. Graduates were already obligated to pass an exam when leaving the *escuelas normales*, and the extra exam gave the impression that the one already in place did not prove the students' suitability—to extreme dissidents, such as Enrique Morales, this appeared to be a simple mechanism of molesting the young students and, in the case of those originating from Oaxaca, sampling those with dissident ideology from those that might support the system without asking too many questions.¹⁰⁷ The dissidents furthermore interpreted the exam for admission as a method for *profesionistas*—those that studied another career and had no experience in pedagogy—to become teachers as well, allegedly to further undermine the already working teachers, their profession, and reputation, as well as demeaning the traditional training paths for teachers.¹⁰⁸

Apart from the administrative shortcomings of the exams, the dissidents further criticized their contents—even though their exact composition is disputed and might actually have been changed over the years. While Fausto Rivera states that very general things are asked, such as Hitler's reasons to murder Jews, or George Washington's philosophy, Sanchez, conceding that he has not seen the exam himself, explains that, from what he has heard, the exam was multiple choice and had three parts: the teachers' field, the legal grounds to education, and pedagogic knowledge.¹⁰⁹ Hernández Navarro offers yet another version of the evaluation, including a report from the school director, one of the teachers themselves, and two standardized exams.¹¹⁰ The dissidents concur, however, on the notion that the exams are standardized and

106 Ley General del Servicio Profesional Docente; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 12; Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

107 Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018.

108 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

109 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

110 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 102.

hence entirely removed from the teaching realities, as they do not factor in the specific circumstances the teachers find themselves in in the classrooms, whether they have to teach an entire school, whether they have to learn an indigenous language to properly teach the children, whether they have to learn sign language to teach deaf children,¹¹¹ or whether technical gadgets can be employed at all in the class.¹¹² Maestra Eva¹¹³ explains that in one exam, they ask the children about the colors of the traffic light; no problem for her students in Puerto Escondido, but the children in remote communities do not know traffic lights and can hence not answer the question, in turn reflecting badly on the teacher.¹¹⁴

Even sources not associated with dissidence provide varying information: The secretary general of the Sección 59 stated that there were two large areas of the exam, the didactics and the juridical. She further noted that every area had 120 questions and 100 correct answers were needed to pass.¹¹⁵ The website of the Mexican government describing the myths around the reform, however, stipulates that the exam determines the knowledge of the teacher in their field, while the evaluation in total also includes an assessment of the director, the performance of the students, as well as a report detailing how the teacher plans the classes, counting in the specific context.¹¹⁶ So, disregarding the question as to which source is right, this disparity of information provides a small insight into the condition of misinformation—consciously or unconsciously created—concerning the exact facts surrounding the exam and the reform in general.

According to Sanchez, the Sección 22 quickly organized to, at least, protect the teachers already working from the evaluation: They based their resistance on Article 14 of the Constitution, declaring that laws cannot be applied in retrospect, which would limit the applicability

111 Apparently, Maestra Eva took a course in sign language as she had a deaf student in her class (Maestra Eva, Interview on March 23, 2018).

112 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 102; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018.

113 Maestra Eva is a primary school teacher in Puerto Escondido.

114 Maestra Eva, Interview on March 23, 2018.

115 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

116 Secretaría de Educación Pública, “Mitos sobre la Reforma Educativa.”

of the reform to those now waiting to be admitted.¹¹⁷ An additional method of preventing the evaluation is the obstruction of delivery of the notifications: Apparently, the Sección 22 had sympathizers in the relevant offices that sent word when the notifications came in. The teachers, for example in Puerto Escondido in 2016, then met at the office from which the notifications were to be distributed and a skirmish ensued, leading, in the end, to someone setting them on fire.¹¹⁸ This method, says Sanchez, spared the teachers from the decision of whether to go or not, since the government cannot accuse them of not obeying the orders and fire them if there is no signed confirmation of receipt—Sanchez also states that during a period in 2014–15, everyone appeared to be scared of signing anything at all.¹¹⁹ Refusing to appear at the exam when cited did, however, lead to a number of teachers in the country dismissed from duty.¹²⁰ According to Maestro José, the fear of the exam also led to a decrease in the overall number of graduates applying for positions as a teacher, as well as, on the other end, many deciding to retire soon because of the uncertainty of the evaluation.¹²¹

Hernández Navarro adds that when teachers took the exam, it was out of fear of losing their jobs. However, the process was riddled with what might be conceived as typical problems in the introduction of a new system: Some teachers were informed too late about the date of their exam, and technology often failed. Furthermore, Hernández Navarro writes of many teachers describing the exams as “excessively large, confusing, crooked, exhausting, with errors in the instructions, orthographic mistakes, [and] syntax errors.”¹²² Apparently, many locations holding the exam also needed to be safeguarded by police forces against dissident protest—Maestro Rodrigo states that they automati-

117 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018.

118 SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 26.

119 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

120 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 157; SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 26.

121 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

122 “excesivamente larga, confusa, tramposa, agotadora, con fallas en las instrucciones, faltas de ortografía, errores de sintaxis” (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 101).

cally went to boycott nearby locations to hold the exam, also because some people taking the exam were not even teachers.¹²³

A more general concern, though connected to the evaluation as the central stone of the reform, is the introduction of the term ‘*de calidad*’—‘of quality’—to Article 3 of the Constitution, to be achieved, among others, through the guaranteed suitability of the teachers.¹²⁴ This, again, reminded of the ACE in 2008. While, to the dissidents’ eye, the implication once more appears to place the blame of the system’s deficiencies on their shoulders, it also raises the more general question of how ‘quality’ is to be defined. In the General Law of Education, Article 8, Subsection IV, quality is defined as “the congruence between the objectives, results, and processes of the educational system according to the dimensions of efficacy, efficiency, relevance, and equity.”¹²⁵ Sanchez sees the problem, again, in the educational realities in the different schools, yet also in the standardization and goals accompanying the concept: “How do I raise the educational quality? I include a lot of English and say that all have to speak English. But what is the aim? Really, what is achieved if we all know the same? What is it that is wanted? That we are productive, that we produce things?”¹²⁶ If everything was standardized and aimed at economic gains—as seemed to be dictated by capitalism, neoliberalism, and globalism in the concept of ‘quality’—, the cultural diversity, identities, and languages would be lost.¹²⁷ If they really wanted to raise educational quality, he states, teachers with 45 students in their class should be given an assistant instead of having to pass an exam.¹²⁸

123 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 94, 103, 105, 106.

124 Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Art. 3.

125 “la congruencia entre los objetivos, resultados y procesos del sistema educativo, conforme a las dimensiones de eficacia, eficiencia, pertinencia y equidad” (*Ley General de Educación, Gobierno de la República Mexicana* (July 13, 1993)).

126 “¿Cómo levo la calidad educativa? Meto mucho inglés y digo que todos hablen inglés. ¿Pero cuál es la finalidad de eso? Realmente, ¿qué se persigue que todos sepamos lo mismo? ¿Qué es lo que se quiere? ¿Que seamos productivos, que produzcamos cosas?” (Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018).

127 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018.

128 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018.

Instead, the reform, just as did the other reforms of the Pacto, carried a “business aroma”¹²⁹—a further concern of the dissidents. On the one hand, the dissidents claim the involvement of private companies in the design of the reform as opposed to them, the teachers, as those predominantly involved in the matter, as well as the orientation of the reform on the guidelines presented by the OECD. On the other hand, they are suspicious of the intention to provide the schools with more administrative autonomy through centralization. For the dissidents, this does not imply that the government will provide funds for the schools to use according to their needs, but that the schools are in charge of their own funding, e.g., by involving payments from the parents¹³⁰ or having private companies sponsor food and thus enter the schools. Both accusations lead the dissidents to conclude that the state is not attempting to control the educational system, but to hand it over to the market forces and have it work like a company, effectively freeing the state from responsibility. As a result, education would be privatized and the constitutional right to free education circumvented—“[b]ehind the labor reform—for the government the Educational Reform—stands the privatization.”¹³¹ This approach, according to the dissidents, ties in with the reform attempts to the health sector in 2007 and the ACE in 2008, making the movement’s appearance on the scene necessary to organize the people and communities in the defense of the land, life, public education, labor rights, and the health sector.¹³²

Fausto Rivera provides an example of the implications of this new autonomy for the schools: He, in his function as a school director, is

129 “aroma empresarial” (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 23).

130 In many schools, parents already are required to pay regular fees to the school, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

131 “[d]etrás de la reforma laboral —para el gobierno la Reforma Educativa— está la privatización” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

132 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2015–2016,” 17; CEPOS 22, “1er Brigadeo Estatal de Supervisiones Escolares en Oaxaca: Por la Defensa de la Educación Pública y Gratuita y los Derechos de los Trabajadores de la Educación” (n.d.), 1–2; CEPOS 22, “Jornada de Concientización a los Trabajadores de la Educación para el Diálogo con Padres de Familia,” 6–7; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 14, 23–24, 28; Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 29, 2018; SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 6–11.

required to ask for funding from the parents, institutions, and companies for the maintenance of his school. The parents, ‘blinded by the government’s version of events shown in the television,’ are confronted with the ‘real’ nature of the reform and the Pacto when they are asked to pay the electricity bills. Apparently, the parents organized in response, went to the office of the electricity company, and returned the bills.¹³³

The presumed neoliberal nature of the Pacto further strengthened the dissidents in their conjecture that the reform package was the government’s attempt to settle the country’s position in the international market: Mexico was to generate workers that produce and serve. According to Carlos Sanchez, the government does not want “you to grow in arts, literature, [it wants] you to produce. [It wants] you to learn the basics of the use of machines and instruments so that you produce.”¹³⁴ Morales sees this still in a more radical fashion: “Here is where the type of people that the U.S. want is prepared. The more stupid we are, the more better for them.”¹³⁵

On a website aiming to rectify myths about the reform, the SEP rejects both the accusation of wanting to privatize education as well as the supposed intention to only produce workers: To counter the former, it cites the phrases of the Constitution declaring the state’s obligation to make public education free of charge as well as accessible. Against the latter allegation—and adding the myth that the government wants to create submissive people—the Secretary poses the necessity of measures allowing Mexicans to survive and thrive in the environment and circumstances presented by the 21st century.¹³⁶ This assertion shows, of course, the ideological difference between the government and the dissident teachers: The former wants to integrate Mexican society into the neoliberal and globalized world, while the latter fears the loss of

133 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

134 “te desarrolles en artes, literatura, me interesa que produzcas. Me interesa que aprendas lo básico del uso de maquinaria/instrumento para que produzcas” (Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 6, 2018).

135 “Aquí es donde se está preparando el tipo de gente que quiere Estados Unidos. Entre más idiota seamos, más mejor para ellos” (Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018).

136 Secretaría de Educación Pública, “Mitos sobre la Reforma Educativa.”

the richness of cultures and the degradation of the Mexican people to a cheap workforce for the international market.

To aid the students in this integration in ‘the modern world’ and in order to help the schools implement the desired transition, the government issued the plan *Escuela al Centro*, School in the Center, and 25 associated programs, such as *Escuelas de Tiempo Completo* (Fulltime Schools) or *Escuelas de Calidad* (Quality Schools). The plan *Escuela al Centro* aims to “improve the organization of the schools so that all members of the community get involved in the continuous improvement of the schools, and the desired education is achieved”¹³⁷ in line with the guidelines presented by the OECD.¹³⁸ One of the most well-known programs is *Escuelas al CIEN*—Schools at 100, the acronym of the number 100 in Spanish standing for *Certificado de Infraestructura Educativa Nacional*, Certificate of National Educational Infrastructure. As the name suggests, the program aspires to improve the schools’ infrastructure as one of the pillars of providing education ‘of quality.’ To this end, the government increases the funding via the *Fondo de Aportaciones Múltiples* (Multi-Contribution Fund). Participation in the programs is voluntary.¹³⁹

The dissidents identify a number of problems with the programs. In general, Maestro José refuses to register the primary school he was directing for the programs because such a registration would, first, imply acceptance of the Educational Reform and, second, lead to the teachers and the school being integrated in the evaluation process—according to the director, he has not signed the document declaring his acceptance of the Reform, so neither he nor the teachers at the school can be obligated to take the exam. He explains that many schools refuse to hand over anything to the IEEPO or the municipal government or ask

137 “mejorar la organización de las escuelas para que todos los miembros de la comunidad se involucren en la mejora continua de las escuelas y se logren los aprendizajes esperados” (“*La Escuela Al Centro: Evaluación De Impacto De La Autonomía De Gestión Escolar. 2015 – 2018*,” Dirección General de Desarrollo de la Gestión Educativa, accessed March 12, 2021).

138 Dirección General de Desarrollo de la Gestión Educativa, “*La Escuela al Centro*”; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 66–67; Aurelio Nuño Mayer, “*La Escuela Al Centro*,” accessed March 12, 2021; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

139 “Programa Escuelas al CIEN: Auditoría Especial del Gasto Federalizado” (2018).

for funding—despite a pronounced lack of material—, as any transaction with a signature would lead to the registration of the school and the evaluation of the teachers.¹⁴⁰ To this end, he also rejected the donation of a number of computers to the school by the municipal authorities.¹⁴¹

Carlos Sanchez explains a different problem with Escuelas al CIEN: In the school he worked in, the parents committee wanted to register the school for the program. The teachers warned the parents of the consequences and were, allegedly, even prepared to take the exam. However, one of the conditions of participation was, supposedly, the handing in of the deed of the school grounds as a type of mortgage for the money the school was to receive. This apparently stopped the parents committee and the participation of the school.¹⁴²

A further concern is the funding of the programs. Allegedly, municipalities and states have to procure the funds, which are then tied to the international stock market and paid to private construction companies for the reconstruction of schools, often enough with low quality material. Furthermore, even inside the government the responsibility for the program is handed from one entity to the next, providing the impression that the program does, indeed, have no management. Apparently, the governor, José Murat, at one point even told the teachers to simply accept the money without handing over the documents of the school, so as to simply embellish the number of schools in Oaxaca participating in the programs of the Reform.¹⁴³

Information about and interpretations of the various reforms were passed on down the section's structure all the way to the base. The teachers were prepared, via brochures, the media, and meetings, for the consequences of the reforms and the actions the Sección 22 proposed to take in reaction, yet also for the conversation with the parents in the schools. Already in January 2013, for example, the booklet "Workshop for Awareness for the Workers in Education for the Dialogue with

140 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

141 This circumstance will be analyzed in more detail in the next chapter.

142 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on March 27, 2018.

143 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018," 2.

Parents”¹⁴⁴ was issued, informing the teachers about the specific changes in the various laws resulting from the Educational Reform and the reform of the Labor Law. It further contextualized the struggle of the Sección 22, explaining the judicial steps that had been taken up to that moment against the reforms in the health sector, the ACE, the Federal Law of Work in 2012, and those being taken now against the Educational Reform, as well as explaining the countermovement in form of the PTEO.¹⁴⁵

The example of the Educational Reform shows the intricate interaction between narrative, identity, and emotions for the Sección 22: The identity corresponding to a teacher in this section demands distrust as a first reaction to any government reform not immediately conceding to the wishes of the dissident teachers—and perhaps even more if it did. This distrust was turned into anger by the perception of punishment imposed over the teachers for their dissidence, initiating a cycle of emotions going from hurt to anger and back again. This emotional involvement further cultivated the narrative of antagonism between ‘the government’ and ‘the people’—aka the teachers in their representation—and the corruptness of the SNTE, as it had accepted the Educational Reform despite such, apparently obvious, violation of workers’ rights.

The reform further nurtured the narrative as it strengthened neoliberal tendencies—as opposed to socialist ones—, disregarding the apparent wish of the people, as well as the nation’s heritage—and supposedly even attempting to destroy the latter. This impression was supported by the ostensible lack of consideration for the great disparity in the country: While in some regions the reform might certainly have the desired benefit, many areas in Oaxaca are not developed to the level the reform begins at. As Fausto Rivera states, technology and ‘pushing a button’ on a computer would not bring digitization to areas that do not even have electricity.¹⁴⁶ A reform, hence, should tackle the great inequality in the country, and respect and support the great variety of cultures. Instead,

144 Jornada de Concientización a los Trabajadores de la Educación para el Diálogo con Padres de Familia

145 CEPOS 22, “Jornada de Concientización a los Trabajadores de la Educación para el Diálogo con Padres de Familia.”

146 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

it attempted to create one homogenous mass, defined by the rules of international capitalism.¹⁴⁷

It is next to impossible to establish the effects of the Educational Reform in Oaxaca due to the scarcity of information and statistics, additionally deterred by the administrative resistance exercised by the Sección 22. Maestro Rodrigo in 2018 states that where the reform was implemented, it had no effect on the statistics of illiteracy or school attendance and that, had it been introduced under different circumstances, there might have been other results.¹⁴⁸ The OECD in a report at the end of 2014, however, sees great potential in the reforms of the Pacto and states that they “will boost growth if fully implemented.”¹⁴⁹ What is possible to say is that for the national or state government to influence education in Oaxaca, it is necessary to have the teachers of the Sección 22 on board; the movement’s protective measures over its teachers, while laying much responsibility for the educational content on the shoulders of the educators, also provides them with a great amount of protection. Estrada Saavedra comprehends the position of the Sección 22 rather fittingly:

Paradoxically, its greatest success (the co-government over the state educational system) transforms it, in the long run, into a (subordinated) part of this system and, after the alternation of power in 2010 [the election of a non-PRI governor for Oaxaca], maybe into an obstacle to the democratization of Oaxaca.¹⁵⁰

Consequently, as long as the antagonism between the two parties and the position of power created and occupied by the Sección 22 remain, a smooth and complete implementation of such a reform and, in the end, its success, are doubtful.

147 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 59, 82; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

148 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018.

149 OECD, “OECD Economic Survey Mexico: January 2015, Overview” (2014), 4.

150 “Paradójicamente, su mayor éxito (el cogobierno del sistema educativo estatal) lo transformaría, a la larga, en parte (subordinada) de dicho sistema y, después de la alternancia de poder en 2010, quizás en un obstáculo de la democratización en Oaxaca” (Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 463).

6.3 Struggle of Power: IEEPO Reform 2015

The next incident confirming the dissident Sección 22 in their narrative was the “*decretazo*”¹⁵¹ in 2015, a decree that was to reform the administrative relationship between the Sección 22 and the Secretariat of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública; SEP).

In Oaxaca, the SEP is represented by the State Institute for Public Education in Oaxaca (Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca; IEEPO), founded as an organism of decentralization as a consequence of the ANMEB in 1992. As such, it keeps an eye on public education in the state, the compliance with laws and guidelines, and, to this end, proposes and establishes programs and projects. It also supervises human resources, the material, and the financing of the state’s education.¹⁵² In these functions, it is, hence, in close contact with the teachers of the educación básica—primary, secondary, and preparatory school. Since it is bound to the SEP and not to a union, the IEEPO is concerned with matters of all teachers, independent of their union adherence.

There are regional representations throughout the state that can be considered the direct link to the state IEEPO. Maestra Maria of the IEEPO in Puerto Escondido explains that they join all the information in one bigger package, which they then send to the IEEPO in Oaxaca.¹⁵³ These representations are concerned with the administrative concerns of the teachers, such as illnesses or pregnancies, as well as the distribution of educational material. Before the decree in 2015, the IEEPO was furthermore in charge of the salary checks—since 2015, the teachers receive their payment directly. However, the IEEPO in Puerto Escondido in 2018 still received about 9 million pesos to distribute to teachers that had not picked up their card—part of the protest of the IEEPO decree in 2015. In case of problems, the teachers bring the issue directly to the IEEPO on the state level in the City of Oaxaca.¹⁵⁴

151 The word derives from the word ‘*decreto*,’ ‘a decree.’ The ending *-azo* suggests a shock to it, as if one was being hit. Another example is the ‘*gasolinazo*,’ the sudden and rapid rise of the gasoline price after the Energy Reform.

152 IEEPO, “Funciones,” accessed August 5, 2020.

153 Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

154 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

As mentioned earlier, the teachers at first obstructed the introduction of the ANMEB in 1992. However, the terms were negotiated and eventually led to a pivotal agreement: While education was decentralized through the creation of the IEEPO, the Sección 22 was recognized as the representation of the teachers in the state and all its faculties—at the time being the only section—, making bilateral negotiations possible and leading to a period of relative tranquility in the relationship between the state and the Sección 22. The government's recognition of the section's significance for the education in the state led to a further vital concession in the agreement: The Sección 22 was bestowed with the ability to appoint certain leadership and management positions in the newly created IEEPO.¹⁵⁵ As Estrada Saavedra states, “the conditions were created for the Oaxacan teachers to colonize the institute.”¹⁵⁶

The Educational Reform in 2013 had already shaken the teachers to the core due to the perceived threat against the stability of their employment in form of the evaluation and the apparent attempts to privatize education. In July 2015, governor Gabino Cué Monteagudo issued a reform to the IEEPO decree of 1992¹⁵⁷ with the objective for the state government to “regain the rectoría of education for the sake of the Oaxacan children, and for the teachers of the state to have the support they need to fully carry out their task,”¹⁵⁸ in line with the Educational Reform of 2013—according to Cruz Villar, the reform to the decree was, in fact,

155 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 155; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 66.

156 “se crearon las condiciones para que el magisterio oaxaqueño pudiera colonizar el instituto” (Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 114).

157 Decreto.-que Reforma el Decreto No 2, Publicado en Extra del Periódico Oficial del Gobierno del Estado, de Fecha Mayo 23 de 1992, que Crea el Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca., Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca (July 20, 2015), accessed March 24, 2021.

158 “recobrará la rectoría de la educación por el bien de la niñez oaxaqueña y a fin de que los maestros del estado tengan el respaldo que necesitan para cumplir cabalmente con su tarea. El Gobierno de la República reconoce, respalda, y acompaña esta decisión del gobernador Gabino Cué, con la que inicia una etapa crucial para el fortalecimiento de la educación pública en Oaxaca” (CencosSección22, “Audio Modernización Del IEEPO Decreto Gabino Cué 21 De Julio De 2015,” accessed March 24, 2021).

instated because Oaxaca was the only state not implementing the Educational Reform.¹⁵⁹

The decree effectively created a new IEEPO. The director of the old organism was allowed to continue in the position in the new one, yet the other positions—less than before in the attempt to make it more efficient—were assigned according to merit and suitability, with the condition that the person was not associated with the Sección 22 or any political party. This new IEEPO would henceforward be in charge of salary—halting payments to those refusing to work—, as well as placing graduates and teachers in positions across the state according to merit and the results of the evaluation exams instead of union activism. It was also reaffirmed, among others, that the electricity bills for the schools would be paid not by the municipal authorities or the parents, but by the Federal Electric Commission, that salaries will be paid with an electronic system, and that the textbooks will still be free of charge.¹⁶⁰

Anticipating the reaction of the Sección 22 to this implication, Cué asserted that, to avoid deeper rifts, his government respects the right to free expression as well as the human rights and was negotiating with ‘the teachers’ about how to implement the reform without affecting their labor rights. However, he clarified that he was referring to the labor rights “in the context of the national Educational Reform,”¹⁶¹ and emphasized—perhaps warned—that the priority was working for the quality of education, that “the education of boys, girls, and youths [came] above any other interests,”¹⁶² and that the “Educational Reform in Oaxaca advances and will not be detained.”¹⁶³

159 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

160 Maestra María, Interview on August 21, 2018; NSS Oaxaca, “A Un Año Del Decreto Histórico Avanza Oaxaca En La Consolidación Educativa En Favor De La Niñez Y La Juventud De La Entidad: Gabino Cué,” NSS Oaxaca, accessed March 30, 2021; Redacción, “Nuevo Instituto De Educación En Oaxaca Tendrá Al Mismo Director Del IEEPO,” Alcaldes de México, accessed March 30, 2021.

161 “en el contexto de la reforma educativa nacional” (CencosSección22, “Audio Modernización del IEEPO Decreto Gabino Cué 21 de julio de 2015”).

162 “educación de niños, niñas y jóvenes encima de cualquier otro interés” (CencosSección22, “Audio Modernización del IEEPO Decreto Gabino Cué 21 de julio de 2015”).

163 “reforma educativa en Oaxaca avanza y no se detendrá” (CencosSección22, “Audio Modernización del IEEPO Decreto Gabino Cué 21 de julio de 2015”).

For the Sección 22, this reform was a double betrayal. First, Gabino Cué was the first non-PRI governor in Oaxaca and had enjoyed the support of the Sección 22 during the elections, leading the teachers to have high hopes for what felt like a new era for the marginalized state, as well as to concessions in the educational areas.¹⁶⁴ However, already in 2012 the dissidents showed disappointment with the governor: In the X Precongreso, the representatives claimed that he was a traitor, “was selling Oaxaca to transnationals [companies]”¹⁶⁵ and that their demands were still unanswered.¹⁶⁶ The alleged reasons for this betrayal vary and even leave room for Cué’s loyalty to the Sección 22: Carlos Sanchez claims that the state’s budget was conditioned on the endorsement of the Educational Reform and Cué had delayed his response until he was the last—at that point it had apparently already been ratified.¹⁶⁷ However, with the majority of the Oaxacan congress being PRIistas, Cué had no possibility of supporting the dissidents without losing his stance.¹⁶⁸ Fausto Rivera sees a similar issue, hinting at problems in Cué’s government that forced him to side with Peña Nieto.¹⁶⁹ Hernández Navarro claims that Cué had lost contact to the Sección 22 and had handed too much power over to the PAN party. Additionally, Peña Nieto wanted to hide his own failings and, to this end, conducted a *Blitzkrieg* against the Sección 22—this version of events acquits Gabino Cué of any blame whatsoever.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, after the reform to the decree, Cué lost his standing with the dissidents.

The second betrayal was the allegation that the Sección 22 was in control over the IEEPO. Maestro Rodrigo emphasized that those officials appointed by the Sección 22 had never been in charge of the

164 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

165 “vende Oaxaca a transnacionales” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 96).

166 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 96.

167 The first state to approve the reform was Chiapas; apparently, the congresses in Oaxaca and Michoacán never actually voted as teachers of the Sección 22 and the Sección 19 occupied the building and successfully inhibited the vote (Pedro Hernández Morales, “Reforma Educativa: La Guerra Contra El Magisterio,” *profelandia.com*, accessed June 12, 2021).

168 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

169 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

170 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 450; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 110.

program, funding, or projects, and that the director of the IEEPO was in charge of them. He even contested the legal order since the State Law of Education should apparently have been modified according to the national Educational Reform first, and the decree creating the IEEPO adjusted afterwards, yet in this case it happened the other way around¹⁷¹—the State Law of Education was reformed on April 9, 2016.¹⁷² Even the secretary general of the Sección 59, Victoria Cruz Villar, states that the positions in the IEEPO appointed by the Sección 22 were not the directors but those tending to schools and teachers.¹⁷³

However, the decree did in all its appearance aim at diminishing the system of power the Sección 22 had created. On the one hand, this showed in the new mechanism for training teachers and distributing positions that excluded syndical participation, also uprooting the corruption and nepotism that had allegedly influenced the process, above all in the administrative positions in the IEEPO, and had led to the infamous *aviadores*—thousands of positions paid yet not worked in. Graduates would hence not be required to join a union in order to be assigned a workplace. On the other hand, it showed in the new significance of the IEEPO for teachers and parents where formerly the union structure had attended them: They could now appeal directly to the IEEPO on any matter.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, as says Cruz Villar, this can be rather inconvenient for parents since it involves travelling to Oaxaca City, as well as for teachers as it deprives them of the protection and support provided by a union.¹⁷⁵

171 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018.

172 Congreso del Estado Libre y Soberano de Oaxaca, “Ley De Educación Para El Estado Libre Y Soberano De Oaxaca,” accessed March 30, 2021.

173 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

174 Ahmed and Semple, “Por qué la reforma educativa en México ha desatado oposición y violencia”; CencosSección22, “Audio Modernización del IEEPO Decreto Gabino Cué 21 de julio de 2015”; Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 114; NSS Oaxaca, “A un año del decreto histórico avanza Oaxaca en la consolidación educativa en favor de la niñez y la juventud de la entidad: Gabino Cué”; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 66.

175 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

Allegedly, due to the decree, “the Sección 22 is persecuted and is stigmatized.”¹⁷⁶ According to Maestro Rodrigo, the reform to the decree is even more harmful to the Sección 22 than was the Educational Reform, as the former practically ignores the union. Apparently, after 1992, Oaxaca was not the only state to reach an agreement between the government and the union section, yet with the reform in 2015, the decentralization even negated this relationship in its attempt to improve education.¹⁷⁷ Fausto Rivera claims that “[i]t refuses us all rights. It brings down all the conquests we had achieved with other governments and declares the Sección 22 to be outside the law.”¹⁷⁸ Apparently, to the end of reclaiming the rectory over education, even the accounts of the section were frozen.¹⁷⁹ As the *brigadeo* in 2018 reads, the Sección 22

suffered a heavy, but not lethal, blow[.] [W]ith the *decretazo* of the spurious Gabino Cué began a campaign of persecution, harassment, repression, and arbitrary arrests of the *compañeros* representing us[.] [W]ell, the state tried to show society that with this decree the sección XXII would be finished, believing that, in this form, the so-called Educational Reform would advance on the national level.¹⁸⁰

The teachers of the Sección 22, according to Rivera, woke up from the slumber the election victory of Gabino Cué had put them in, and ‘the struggle’ resurged.¹⁸¹

176 “la Sección 22 es perseguida y es estigmatizada” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

177 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018.

178 “Nos niega todo derecho. Echa abajo todas las conquistas que habíamos logrado con otros gobernadores y declara fuera de la ley a la Sección 22” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018).

179 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 22; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 155; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

180 “sufrió un golpe fuerte pero no letal[.] [C]on el decretazo del espurio Gabino Cué, comenzó una campaña de persecución, hostigamiento, represión y detenciones arbitrarias contra los compañeros que nos representaban[.] [P]ues el estado intentó mostrar a la sociedad que con dicho decreto la sección XXII sería exterminada, creyendo que de ésta forma a nivel nacional la mal llamada Reforma Educativa avanzaría” (SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Brigadeo Estatal Rumbo a la Jornada de Lucha 2018,” 17–18).

181 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

Anticipating the reaction of the dissidents, the day the reform to the decree was announced, the police and military forces in Oaxaca City were increased drastically.¹⁸² As was expected, protests ensued and “[f]rom one day to the next, [the governmental strategy] converted an educational conflict into a conflict of public security. It transformed a political issue into a military-policing matter. It made out of a regional conflict a national dispute.”¹⁸³ As had been the case before, the actions and reactions of government and dissidents fueled the other’s. Apparently, political leaders of the Sección 22 were detained and arrested without warrants, some even transferred to penitentiaries in other states to avoid their release on the grounds of nepotism.¹⁸⁴ Ostensibly for reasons of safety, the street Armenta y López in the center of Oaxaca City, where the headquarters of the Sección 22 are located, was permanently blocked¹⁸⁵—still in 2018, street vendors sold educational material as well as fruit and vegetables to passers-by behind the wooden fence the teachers had erected.

In Puerto Escondido, the building of the IEEPO—always one of the first locations for the dissidents to express their discontent—was vandalized once more and the employees hindered from entering. Maestra Maria, who was working there at the time as one of the officials on a higher level, stated that teachers of the Sección 22 attempted to set her house on fire, even though she herself had been a teacher before and was only a representative organ in the IEEPO. She explained that the decree put her in an uncomfortable position, somewhere between the local teachers and the SEP, yet was by the former perceived as belonging to the latter and, hence, the party they fought against.¹⁸⁶

The Sección 22 had been badly hurt by the reform to the decree: Massive protests took place in July and August, but the threat of discharge

182 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 110; Redacción, “Nuevo Instituto de Educación en Oaxaca tendrá al mismo director del IEEPO.”

183 “[d]e un día a otro convirtió un problema educativo en un conflicto de seguridad pública. Transformó un asunto político en una cuestión policiaco-militar. Hizo de una pugna regional una disputa nacional” (Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 112).

184 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 22; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 155; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

185 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

186 Maestra María, Interview on August 21, 2018.

after an unexcused absence of three days inhibited any prolonged manifestation. The general spirit and willingness to participate plummeted, and major mobilization always resulted in administrative consequences by the authorities with many teachers losing their position and providing cases that needed to be defended and solved by the juridical department of the Sección 22. So instead of solely manifesting on the streets, the Sección 22 decided to express their dissent on a different level: They installed an administrative resistance, refusing to deliver any data to the new IEEPO regarding schools, teachers, or students. The Sección 22 took some time to regroup and organize the next *jornada de lucha*—the period of struggle—in 2016. On the national level of the CNTE, however, Oaxaca was weakened to the extent that Chiapas took over the spearhead of the protest while the Sección 22 was reassembling.¹⁸⁷ Perhaps as a consequence to the decree, more than 3,000 teachers went to take the evaluative exam at the end of 2015.¹⁸⁸

The reform modifying the IEEPO in 2015 depicts the issue Estrada Saavedra indicates regarding the power structure of the Sección 22: The movement has become a strong factor within the very system it is fighting. As a result, the movement itself might become an obstacle to efforts of democratization undertaken by the government—Estrada hints at a possible restructuring of the IEEPO, yet his analysis ends before the reform to the decree was published.¹⁸⁹

It further shows the limitations of the Sección 22 in narrative and credibility: The decentralization efforts and the ensuing creation of the IEEPO in 1992 were protested against supposedly due to concerns regarding the power over education in the hands of the state government. However, the dissident teachers managed to integrate their movement in the newly created institution and extend their influence within and through it. So when the Educational Reform was to centralize education again in the alleged attempt to improve it and, in consequence, the lives of many, the Sección 22 feared a loss of power and a dismantling

187 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

188 NSS Oaxaca, “A un año del decreto histórico avanza Oaxaca en la consolidación educativa en favor de la niñez y la juventud de la entidad: Gabino Cué.”

189 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 463.

of the structure it had created, and countered with a narrative that revolved around neoliberal intentions, including the standardization of society, the privatization of education, and the attack on workers' rights—toward a more 'moral economy.' Opposition was fruitful until the state government modified the framework by reforming the IEEPO to curtail the influence of the Sección 22 on the administrative level and advance the attempts to improve education the way it saw fit. The Sección 22, in response, claimed a neoliberal attack against their role as the workers' representation and a degradation of their knowledge concerning the necessities of the state educational system.

This chain of action and reaction creates an environment that, on the one hand, is increasingly tense, and, on the other, once more nourishes the narratives of antagonism of both sides. Just one year later, the conflict escalated again.

6.4 Creating a Memory Place: Nochixtlán 2016

The events of June 2016 produced yet another memory place: a location, the name of which is associated with historic events.¹⁹⁰ The Educational Reform and the reform to the IEEPO decree had fomented subdued unrest over the months of winter and spring, and by the traditional struggle period, the Sección 22 was again ready to take to the streets. On May 15, 2016—Teacher's Day—the CNTE called for nation-wide strikes and blockades—Oaxaca, Chiapas, Michoacán, and large parts of Guerrero as usual making up the strong core of the protests.¹⁹¹

On the national level, yet for Oaxacan protesters in particular, the year 2016 also had a special significance: It was the ten-year anniversary of the *desalojo* and the founding of the APPO, and to the dissidents' eyes, justice had still not occurred—Hernández Navarro even states that the protesters in 2016 carried the Virgin of the Barricades and the Holy Child of the APPO,¹⁹² both fashioned in the conflict in 2006 and

¹⁹⁰ For more information on memory places see Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989).

¹⁹¹ Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 123, 126.

¹⁹² Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 127–28.

combining, in the popular Mexican fashion, deep-set religion and current necessities.¹⁹³ Once more, the parents were involved in the protests: On the one hand, the Sección 22 had requested their approval of the teachers' remaining absent from the classroom for more than three days; on the other, the section sought the parents' active participation in the mobilization.¹⁹⁴

Both in Oaxaca and Chiapas, the protest quickly grew to become a social mobilization, comprising, again, various parts of society in addition to the dissident teachers, and displaying the readiness of the people in both states to participate in social uprisings. At the end of May, the government threatened with the dismissal of about 1,400 teachers, which, while meant to intimidate, only spiked anger, resentment, and solidarity. Further aggravating the protests and nourishing the allegation that the government was criminalizing social protest, the secretary general of the Sección 22, Rubén Núñez, and the secretary of organization, Francisco Villalobos, were arrested in early June and brought to a detention center in Sonora—the grounds are also unclear, including corruption and property damage, as well as other undisclosed charges. Even church representatives and municipal leaders openly supported the dissident teachers in their cause and called for solidarity. For other parts of society, the teachers' movement was, yet again, an opportunity to demonstrate their own discontent regarding various political and social factors, such as the government's corrupt practices and rising prices, particularly following the structural reforms. Above all the latter led many to believe that the state and its population were being driven further into marginalization instead of out of it.¹⁹⁵

193 Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 256–75.

194 Maestro Rodrigo, interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 127–128, 137–138.

195 Ahmed and Semple, “Por qué la reforma educativa en México ha desatado oposición y violencia”; “Masacre De Nochixtlán, Oaxaca,” Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, accessed April 8, 2021; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 128–129, 134, 139, 161; proceso, “Líderes De La Sección 22 Serán Encarcelados En El Penal De Hermosillo,” accessed April 13, 2021; Vigilante en Nochixtlán, interview on August 10, 2018.

Following the incarceration of the section leaders, the protestors, aided by parents¹⁹⁶ and other parts of society, erected barricades and fortified roadblocks at strategic points throughout the state of Oaxaca, severely inhibiting the flow of goods on the national level and, once more, creating what appeared to be a war zone, this time, however, involving the entire state. As was mentioned before, the primary intention behind the roadblocks was to restrict the transport of merchandise from transnational companies that supposedly hurt the local markets—apparently, the blockades caused a loss in revenue of tens of millions of dollars and food and gasoline shortages.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, the reinforcement of police forces was impeded considerably. On June 16, the police attempted to clear blockades in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec with tear gas and rubber bullets, yet the attack once more provided support to the narrative of the state's criminalization of protest and led to more solidarity and eventually to the successful defense of some of the blockades.¹⁹⁸

However, in light of possible shortages, the government decided to act with more force, leading to a further entry in the cultural memory of the Sección 22 and the people of Oaxaca, as well as providing yet another example for the juxtaposition of the narrative of the government and that of the Sección 22.

June 19 was a Sunday and traditionally the market day for the village of Asunción Nochixtlán, located about one hour to the north of Oaxaca City on the highway to Puebla. Roadblocks had been erected on May 17¹⁹⁹ at the entrance to the village where the highway weaves between the

196 Maestro Rodrigo remembers a mother that distributed *brigadeos* and travelled throughout her region to spread the word and mobilize society in solidarity (Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018).

197 Patrick J. McDonnell, "Protesters Say a Massacre Took Place in This Mexican Town. Now It's Become a Rallying Cry Against the Government," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 2016, accessed April 8, 2021.

198 Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, "Masacre de Nochixtlán, Oaxaca"; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 162–65; McDonnell, "Protesters say a massacre took place in this Mexican town. Now it's become a rallying cry against the government"; Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C. EDUCA, "Genealogy of the Nochixtlán Massacre: An Emblematic Case of the Decline of Human Rights in Mexico," accessed April 8, 2021.

199 According to the mayor of Nochixtlán (in Comisión de Seguimiento a los hechos ocurridos en Nochixtlán, Oaxaca el 19 de junio de 2016, "Informe," 84).

rocky red mountains of the Sierra. The people of Nochixtlán are, as is common in the region of the Mixteca, mostly farmers, merchants, or worked in the mining industry. As in many other parts of the state, they did not all agree with the protests of the Sección 22, seeing that their children were missing large parts of the schoolyear because their teachers were on strike.²⁰⁰ However, they did agree with the teachers on the rejection of governmental policies, especially the structural reforms, which, in the case of Nochixtlán, targeted not only education but also the mining industry and the rights to it. Consequently, the people protested in solidarity or used the blockade as an opportunity to present their own demands.²⁰¹

On the morning of June 19, about 50 people—apparently mostly non-teachers—were manning the highway blockade when, at around 7 a.m., 400 state and 400 federal police forces as well as 50 elements of the State Agency of Investigation arrived on site without prior warning²⁰² to lift the blockades and enable the free flow of traffic as a part of the ‘Operation Oaxaca’²⁰³—it seems that PEMEX had warned about possible explosions if oil was not brought to the refineries soon.²⁰⁴

The version of events of the next hours depends on the narrator, just as did the events in Oaxaca a decade prior. According to the protesters—and supported by photographic and video evidence—, they were

200 According to an article in the New York Times, in the seven years prior to the event, one entire schoolyear was lost (Ahmed and Semple, “Por qué la reforma educativa en México ha desatado oposición y violencia”).

201 Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, “Masacre de Nochixtlán, Oaxaca”; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 166; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Emma Landeros Martínez, *Nochixtlán: Un Domingo Negro* (Ciudad de México: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial, S.A. de C.V., 2018), 36, 66, 101, 136; McDonnell, “Protesters say a massacre took place in this Mexican town. Now it’s become a rallying cry against the government”

202 According to the information collected by Emma Landeros Martínez, the town had already experienced warning signs in the previous days, such as the stationing of federal police forces in a nearby ranch and an alleged electricity failure in the cemetery, and the people were hence already alert (Landeros Martínez, *Nochixtlán*, 36, 66).

203 Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, “Masacre de Nochixtlán, Oaxaca”; Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C. EDUCA, “Genealogy of the Nochixtlán Massacre.”

204 Comisión de Seguimiento a los hechos ocurridos en Nochixtlán, Oaxaca el 19 de junio de 2016, “Informe,” 87.

attacked by the police with firearms and teargas without having been given the chance to evacuate the blockade by their own volition. Terrified by the sheer number of police forces apparently attacking with live bullets, the protesters quickly withdrew to the village, effectively freeing the highway. Seeing that instead of merely lifting the blockade the police pursued the protesters into town, the church bells were rung to call the people for help. Since it was market day, there were more people in the village than usual, and seeing that the protesters were attacked and chased back into the village, those previously uninvolved or even opposing the blockade joined the protesters and stood against the police—a guard in Nochixtlán emphasized that the teachers had families in the village: “[E]veryone that is a teacher here has nephews and nieces, cousins, it’s pure family! How can you let them be massacred?”²⁰⁵ The protesters, supported by many previously not engaged, managed to regroup and started defending themselves against the forces on the ground as well as the newly arrived helicopters—some claim that their weapons were comprised only of sticks and rocks, yet pictures also show the assembly of Molotov bombs. Apparently, they even managed to push the police force back to the highway, on which the people, reinforced in number through solidarity, were looking down upon from the roadside hills, basically intimidating the police forces by position and number and locking them in. The police’s response was, ostensibly, coined by more direct violence.²⁰⁶

The version told by the protesters differs from the official one mostly in two aspects: who began the fight and what weapons were used. Official accounts claim that, if not the teachers themselves, infiltrators—

205 “[T]odos los que son maestros aquí tienen sobrinos, primos, ¡es pura familia! ¿Cómo vas a dejar que los masacren?” (Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018).

206 Animal Político, “Los Enfrentamientos En Nochixtlán, Oaxaca, Narrados Con Fotografías Y Videos,” accessed April 8, 2021; Animal Político, Nochixtlán. ¿Quién Emboscó a Quién? (2016), accessed April 8, 2021; Aristegui Noticias, Hablan Los Pobladores De Nochixtlán (2016), accessed April 8, 2021; Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, “Masacre de Nochixtlán, Oaxaca”; El Universal, “Prácticamente Vivimos Una Emboscada En Nochixtlán: PF,” accessed April 15, 2021; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 168; Landeros Martínez, Nochixtlán, 66; McDonnell, “Protesters say a massacre took place in this Mexican town. Now it’s become a rallying cry against the government”; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; SomosElMedioTV, ¿Qué Pasó El 19 De Junio En Nochixtlán Oaxaca? (2016), accessed April 8, 2021.

among them radical leftist groups—in the ranks of the protesting teachers ‘fired the first shot,’ and the police were only seriously armed as a precaution of self-defense, and, depending on the narrator, after the protesters had regrouped and had started using arms and powerful fireworks. Furthermore, some official versions of the events do not make a distinction between teachers of the Sección 22 and formerly uninvolved ‘civilians,’ but only attest to protesting teachers or radical groups.²⁰⁷

Discrepancies exist both in the dissidents’ versions as well as in the official ones, and both parties perceive themselves as the victim acting in pure self-defense in light of the other’s aggression. However, while in other instances it was difficult to uncover the correct version of events, the question of the weapons was answered quickly by a picture that went viral of a policeman holding a rifle, kneeling in front of a store and aiming directly at the people at a distance. The picture had been taken before the people had had time to regroup and lead a possible counterattack. While this is the most prominent picture, it is only one piece of evidence alongside a large number of video footage and pictures documenting the equipment of both parties.

The demonstration of solidarity with the protesters in Nochixtlán went beyond the town limits: Allegedly, people in communities two hours away reacted to the call for help, apart from those in the closer vicinity and those already in town for the market—even the indigenous Triqui are said to have come in solidarity. Those not actively participating in the battle took care of the protesters by offering drink and food.²⁰⁸ As Maestro Rodrigo states: “The people join in. When there’s injustice, they join to defend the most vulnerable.”²⁰⁹ In neighboring towns, people blocked the highway to impede the transit of police reinforcements.

207 Ahmed and Semple, “Por qué la reforma educativa en México ha desatado oposición y violencia”; Animal Político, Nochixtlán, ¿Quién emboscó a quién?; El Universal, “Prácticamente vivimos una emboscada en Nochixtlán: PF”; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; McDonnell, “Protesters say a massacre took place in this Mexican town. Now it’s become a rallying cry against the government”; Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C. EDUCA, “Genealogy of the Nochixtlán Massacre”

208 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 168; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018.

209 “La gente se suma. Si hay injusticia, se suma a defender al más débil” (Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018).

They eventually managed to force the police to retreat to Oaxaca in the afternoon, yet the same protesters that had already attempted to prevent the forces from travelling from Oaxaca to Nochixtlán in the morning again put up a battle, most notably in San Pablo Huitzo, Hacienda Blanca, and Viguera.²¹⁰

The anger of the people of Nochixtlán, while being primarily directed against the police forces, also turned against the local government: Apparently, the PRI officials had been notified beforehand and had left town a week before the blockade was to be lifted.²¹¹ Furthermore, according to the protesters, the hospital staff was prohibited by threat of dismissal from seeing to the wounded, causing still more resentment against the authorities. The injured were instead treated by private doctors and in the church, among other places. Inside the town, cars, trailers, and even buildings were set on fire—again accounts vary as to the instigating party.²¹²

The exact number of injured, dead, and disappeared or detained fluctuates as well: According to the guard in Nochixtlán, twelve died, eight disappeared, and more than 100 were wounded.²¹³ Other accounts generally set the number of those killed between eight and ten—the discrepancy might, however, also arise if the battles in Viguera and Hacienda Blanca were included, where apparently at least one person died. What furthermore varies is the composition of those injured, similar to the composition of the general protesters: Some state that no teacher was among those injured or killed, other accounts include at least one teacher. Equally unclear is whether or how many of the police force were injured, yet it seems that a helicopter arrived on site to transport the wounded. Apparently, many children were traumatized by the

210 Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, “Masacre de Nochixtlán, Oaxaca”; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018.

211 Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018.

212 Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, “Masacre de Nochixtlán, Oaxaca”; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 168; *La Izquierda Diario México*, “Sobrevivientes De La Masacre De Nochixtlán Rompen El Silencio,” accessed April 8, 2021; McDonnell, “Protesters say a massacre took place in this Mexican town. Now it’s become a rallying cry against the government”; Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018.

213 Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018.

arrival of the forces in arms and the sounds of the battle.²¹⁴ The most trustworthy account—though contested by the protesters and victims in its portrayal of the events²¹⁵—is perhaps that of the National Commission of Human Rights: It sets the numbers of killed at eight—which, by now, seems to be the correct one—, 103 injured, and 46 affected by tear gas, of which about two thirds were minors, as well as property damage. The report also states that the conflict lasted roughly nine hours, and condemns the excessive force employed by the police forces in San Pablo Huitzo, Hacienda Blanca and Trinidad de Viguera, as well as arbitrary executions.²¹⁶

Following the conflict, a group of people from Nochixtlán travelled to the national capital to demand justice.²¹⁷ A commission installed by the government met with the various parties involved and collected the reports, though acknowledging difficulties in establishing communication with the non-official ones—presumably due to mistrust. This collection reinforces the impression already provided in the reports mentioned above that one party blames the other, with the police apparently acting according to protocol against armed attacks, and the protesters uniting in self-defense. What can be seen in the reports, however, is that the conflict increased in severity as the hours went by and both sides kept augmenting their defense and attack, as well as receiving more reinforcements.²¹⁸

214 Ahmed and Semple, “Por qué la reforma educativa en México ha desatado oposición y violencia”; Animal Político, Nochixtlán, ¿Quién emboscó a quién?; Aristegui Noticias, Hablan los pobladores de Nochixtlán; El Universal, “None of the Dead in Nochixtlán Were Teachers: Governor,” accessed April 15, 2021; El Universal, “Prácticamente vivimos una emboscada en Nochixtlán: PF”; Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 166; Gabriel Huerta, Interview on September 2, 2018; *La Izquierda Diario México*, “Sobrevivientes de la masacre de Nochixtlán rompen el silencio”; Landeros Martínez, Nochixtlán, 101; McDonnell, “Protesters say a massacre took place in this Mexican town. Now it’s become a rallying cry against the government”; Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C. EDUCA, “Genealogy of the Nochixtlán Massacre”

215 Landeros Martínez, Nochixtlán.

216 Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, “Masacre de Nochixtlán, Oaxaca.”

217 *La Izquierda Diario México*, “Sobrevivientes de la masacre de Nochixtlán rompen el silencio.”

218 Comisión de Seguimiento a los hechos ocurridos en Nochixtlán, Oaxaca el 19 de junio de 2016, “Informe,” 63–77.

An interesting detail in the report—also showing the difficulty of finding ‘the truth’—is provided by the hospital staff: The protesters had explained that the staff refused to treat the wounded, as already mentioned. In the report, however, the staff explained that they were obligated to close the main entrance to the hospital due to the tear gas entering the building. If necessary, it was nevertheless still possible to enter through these doors since they were not barred, as well as through the emergency entrance on the side of the building.²¹⁹ Considering the environment of profound distrust between the authorities and the people that had been forged already prior to the teachers’ protests, this discrepancy in the version of events clearly shows both the possibility that the hospital staff lied or the report was biased or not thorough enough—as was claimed by victims²²⁰—, as well as the protesters misunderstanding the closed doors as an indirect attack on them by the authorities.

However, despite the commission installed by the national government, the conflict was not resolved. In representation of the victims and their families, the town founded the Committee of Victims for Justice and Truth June 19 of Nochixtlán,²²¹ yet a resolution of the conflict is still not in sight—López Obrador, showing his readiness to aid the people of Nochixtlán, stated in 2019: “Justice takes time but, in the end, it comes when there’s a will.”²²² Apparently, compensation that was offered covered the costs of the medicinal treatment of the victims.²²³ A guard in Nochixtlán emphasized, nevertheless, that the people did not want money as compensation—which would have solved the issue rather quickly; they wanted justice, done, among others, to the municipal president that refused to protect his people by denying the police forces the entrance to the town, and had instead fled days before.²²⁴

219 Comisión de Seguimiento a los hechos ocurridos en Nochixtlán, Oaxaca el 19 de junio de 2016, “Informe,” 126.

220 Landeros Martínez, Nochixtlán.

221 Comité de Víctimas por Justicia y Verdad 19 de Junio de Nochixtlán

222 “La justicia tarda pero llega cuando hay voluntad” (infobae, “No Se Van a Repetir Actos De Represión En Nochixtlán, Promete El Presidente López Obrador,” accessed April 19, 2021).

223 Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México, “Masacre de Nochixtlán, Oaxaca”; Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C. EDUCA, “Genealogy of the Nochixtlán Massacre.”

224 Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018.

The events of June 19 had far-reaching effects: While the town of Nochixtlán went into mourning, news of the battle went viral, nationally and internationally. The response of the government to the protests suggested to many that the narrative of the teachers of the Sección 22 might contain some truth, even if only in the claim that a tyrannical government wants to oppress the people to benefit its own interests and further marginalize the region. In this sense, by violently clearing the blockades, the government only provided evidence for the dissidents' narrative. Many that had formerly not taken a position in the educational matter now reconsidered and openly supported the Sección 22 and the CNTE in light of governmental repression.²²⁵ When, in November that year, the UN analyzed the protection of human rights in Mexico, the case of Nochixtlán provided an example of state repression and violence, apparently as a tool to implement structural reforms.²²⁶

In congruence with this line of thinking, a guard in Nochixtlán explained that the government had only wanted to set a nation-wide example, warning about the consequences of rebellion—again tying in with the narrative that the government was criminalizing social protest. Apparently, they had even received threats beforehand. Yet on this particular day, “[t]he government saw that we wouldn’t let ourselves [be treated this way], and even less in Oaxaca. [...] There is still blood of Benito Juárez, of fighting,”²²⁷ even though they generally consider themselves to be “people of peace.”²²⁸ Maestro Rodrigo adds that it is only natural for a people to unite in solidarity with the teachers of their town if they see that the latter are being attacked by police forces. He further explains that the police, first, did not calculate with the townspeople supporting the teachers, second, were not accustomed to people defending themselves in the clearing of a blockade, and, third, were on unfamiliar territory, causing insecurity and, as a result, heightened

225 Ahmed and Semple, “Por qué la reforma educativa en México ha desatado oposición y violencia”; SomosElMedioTV, ¿Qué pasó el 19 de junio en Nochixtlán Oaxaca?.

226 Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C. EDUCA, “Genealogy of the Nochixtlán Massacre.”

227 “[y]a vió el gobierno que no nos vamos a dejar, y menos en Oaxaca. [...] Hay sangre de Benito Juárez todavía, de lucha” (Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018).

228 “gente de paz” (Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018).

readiness to interpret events in such a way as to justify increasing levels of protection, defense, and counter-attack.²²⁹

According to the guard in Nochixtlán, the show of solidarity aided the people in their grieving process as “the whole world saw it. The whole world understood.”²³⁰ Furthermore, the events made the people of Nochixtlán more active in their own defense: Apart from installing a constant people’s watch, they only accept the presence of police forces if the latter understand that they are in town to protect the people, not to protect the officials from the people or watch the people, since it is the people that pay their salary.²³¹ However, the town in itself also does not seem to have found peace as there is still aggression towards the victims and their families as well as the organizations working to resolve the matters, which shows that the people of Mexico are not as united as the protesters would like to think.²³²

The events converted the town in Oaxaca into a memory place: The name of the town, for many, immediately connects to the conflict in June 2016.²³³ The place itself maintains and reinforces this connection: Upon approaching the town on the highway, spray-paint on the bridges already hint at the proximity of the memory place. In Nochixtlán, the bridge over the highway where the massacre took place is painted with images of corrupt politicians as well as slogans such as “Out, military of Oaxaca, assassins of the people,”²³⁴ “Justice for Nochixtlán,”²³⁵ or Emiliano Zapata’s “If there is no justice for the people, let there be no peace for the government”²³⁶—an unambiguous connection to the Revolution. The store closest to the highway and the gas station is now marked by the image of the police officer with the rifle firing at the

229 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018.

230 “todo el mundo lo vio, todo el mundo entendió” (Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018).

231 Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018.

232 Igavec, “Vandalizan Monumento a Los Caídos En Asunción Nochixtlán: Víctimas Culpan Al Gobierno,” accessed April 19, 2021; Landeros Martínez, Nochixtlán, 2283; Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C. EDUCA, “Genealogy of the Nochixtlán Massacre.”

233 A similar example for a memory place is the Alamo.

234 “fuera ejercito [sic] de Oaxaca asesinos del pueblo”

235 “Justicia para Nochixtlán”

236 “Si no hay justicia para el pueblo, que no haya paz para el gobierno”

people—resembling the shadow of the figure. Perhaps most impressive, however, are the carcasses of the cars, busses, and trailers that had been burned the day of the conflict: That of a car had been moved to the bridge to be visible to passers-by; the others are guarding the entrance to the town. Apparently, the local PRI government had tried to move them, yet the people, seeing that justice had still not been done, obstructed the maneuver.²³⁷

Additionally, a monument was erected at the height of the cemetery, just at the entrance to the town—the sculptor had offered his work for free to the grieving townspeople yet was, apparently, even threatened and hindered in his work by people in opposition.²³⁸ It depicts the eight fallen heroes, each with their left fist raised in resistance, accompanied on both sides of the monument by the carcass of a burned-out car. Further reinforcing the importance of Nochixtlán as a memory place, marches, demonstrations, and *calendas*—celebratory processions—are being held in commemoration of the conflict, drawing in many people in solidarity, in honor of the fallen and wounded, and as a reminder that ‘justice has still not been done.’

For the Sección 22, the conflict in Nochixtlán in 2016 was yet another occasion providing evidence for its narrative: The government wanted to implement structural reforms, further marginalizing the already marginalized and benefitting only the neoliberal elites. Many of those still in doubt about the righteousness of the teachers’ cause were enlightened when the protesters were attacked by police forces, effectively criminalizing social protest. They joined in solidarity to fight for the common good of the people in light of perceived injustice and the anger caused by it, drawing on the cultural memory of the people’s uprising in the Mexican Revolution. That the line between non-teachers and teachers affected by and involved in the conflict is blurred only reinforces the Sección 22 in the righteousness of the cause since the teachers were, to all intents and purposes, fighting in the defense of the people’s good.

On the anniversary of the battle in 2020, the Sección 22 published an entry on its website, confirming its narrative and the impression of

237 Vigilante en Nochixtlán, Interview on August 10, 2018.

238 Landeros Martínez, Nochixtlán, 2156.

two parties: the teachers with the people on one side—the victims—, and the government on the other—the aggressor. The message reads that since the decree of the IEEPO in 2015, Oaxaca’s governor Gabino Cué had turned his back on the state and had succumbed to the corrupt practices of the national government, now aiming to dismiss all the teachers in the country. Consequently, the teachers of the Sección 22 were forced to take to the streets in the defense of an equal and free public education. The reaction of the government, including dismissals, incarcerations, and assassinations, merely provided evidence for the righteousness of their cause. “For this reason,” they state, “four years after the massacre, we demand of the new federal government, called the fourth transformation, that the responsible officials are summoned and pay with prison for the use of the public force and arms against the people defending a just cause.”²³⁹ The hint at the fourth transformation carries particular weight as it depicts the expectations toward the López Obrador administration and its active role in the second wave of the double movement towards a more ‘moral’ economy.

Ever since the battle, the verse at the end of the documents published by the Sección 22 is complemented by the phrase “Justice for Nochixtlán!” or “Justice for our fallen comrades in Nochixtlán!”²⁴⁰ In this manner, the dissidents make sure to implant the events of June 2016 in the cultural memory of the Oaxacans—just as much as the victims on site in the town of Nochixtlán do, where one of the worst yet still unresolved conflicts in Mexico in the 21st century took place.

239 “Por tal motivo, a cuatro años de la masacre exigimos al nuevo gobierno federal denominado de cuarta transformación que los funcionarios responsables sean llamados a juicio y paguen con cárcel por el uso de la fuerza pública y armas en contra del pueblo que defendía una causa justa” (CENCOS 22, “¡19 De Junio, a 4 Años De La Masacre En Nochixtlán La Cuenta Está Pendiente!” Sección 22, accessed April 8, 2021).

240 “¡Justicia para nuestros compañeros caídos en Nochixtlán!”

7 Globalization vs. Tradition: Movement Identity in Crisis

“Tenemos un problema, que es un problema coyuntural, incluso hasta estratégico. Nuestros cuadros, [...] nuestra base magisterial, ha perdido pertenencia de clase. [...] Se desprenden de la tela, de su clase social, y son hilachos al viento.”¹

In its official narrative, the Sección 22 positions itself as part and defender of the people against a tyrannical government that has deviated from its original purpose, as dictated by the Revolution. In any endeavor of this kind ‘nothing unites more than a common enemy;’ however: How can an alleged enemy, such as neoliberal globalization, be perceived as such if, on the one hand, society is more and more divided, and, on the other, the ‘enemy’ entails many conveniences in other areas, rendering resistance inopportune? Can the Sección 22 claim to represent ‘the people’ if society is divided and does not agree entirely on neoliberal globalization being the enemy? And how can the movement survive, prevent the same divide in its own ranks and, on top, evolve without resorting to the methods employed by this enemy and its disciples, or the original enemy, the SNTE and the government? The 21st century raises new questions for the dissident movement, ringing in ‘the crisis of the Sección 22.’²

7.1 By the People, for the People? Opposition from Society

In the beginning stages of the movement, the Sección 22 managed to rally the people behind its cause, yet over the decades of its existence,

1 “We have a problem, which is a pertinent, even strategic. Our cadre, [the leaders] [...] the magisterial base, has lost class membership. [...] They detach from the fabric, from their social class, and are strands in the wind” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018).

2 During the First State Workshop for Politicization, an entire panel was dedicated to “The current crisis of the Sección 22 and the CNTE”—“La crisis actual de la Sección 22 y de la CNTE” (CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización”).

the movement started experiencing increasing difficulty. The clear positioning of two parties—Sección 22 and the people against a tyrannical government—has become a more triangular constellation with an increasingly pronounced part of society detaching from the Sección 22, while not joining the supporting ranks of the government. This estrangement might in some cases be influenced by the narrative of the government and private companies in the media, claiming that dissident teachers stand in the way of progress. However, the lack of societal support not only shows in the schools of public education led by the Sección 22; it is also reinforced by the conditions prevailing there.

The problems in the schools start with education supposedly, according to Article 3 of the Constitution, being free of charge. We will take the primary school “Adolfo López Mateos” in Puerto Escondido as an example and estimate of the cost of education for the parents: Upon registering a student in a school, an inscription payment is due, in this case to pay the salary of the IT teacher, the dance teacher, and the English teacher. In 2018, this amounted to 500 pesos,³ and the payment only needed to be made once per family. Over the course of the school year, school attire (the formal set as well as the set for physical education) needed to be acquired—the government only issued one voucher per student per annum and per set. Additionally, a ‘cooperation’ or ‘voluntary fee’—the term ‘voluntary’ is misleading as it is by no means voluntary and can even generate interest—is raised on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to cover the expenditures for the school’s maintenance⁴ and for copies or other material for the class. The amount due is set by the parents committee. Any additional charges that arise during the school year, such as, for example, the renovation of the gardens or the building of a new classroom, are usually and if possible discussed and voted on in the assembly of parents—in this way, the Sección 22 maintains the shrine of democracy. The sum of these fees causes parents to claim that public schools are essentially already private schools as

3 To set this into a contextual framework: It was not unusual for a worker during that time to earn only 2,000-3,000 pesos in a fortnight, if at all.

4 According to the director, it is the parents covering the maintenance of the school, not the government (Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018).

the parents cover all costs.⁵ In a case Maestra Maria of the IEEPO in Puerto Escondido recounts, a father refused to pay the ‘contributions,’ upon which the teachers refused to hand out his daughter’s certificates. Apparently, he eventually went to the IEEPO in Oaxaca where they gave him the required documents.⁶

Further charges arise that can be traced back to the dissidents’ narrative against neoliberalism: They claim that the books distributed at no cost by the government exhibit neoliberal and capitalist opinions and have erased the history of Mexico before the colonization as well as indigenous customs, traditions, and stories.⁷ “*No sirven*”—they are no good. Consequently, the parents might be required to buy additional books or collections of copies, ordered in a copy shop. Additionally, and in contrast to the usually traditional narrative of the dissidents, however, many teachers also request expensive booklets of high quality—an attitude that the Sección 22 itself condemned, among others in the pre-congress of 2012, as it puts more burden on the parents while benefiting private companies.⁸

To make matters worse, these charges do not translate into the school year running smoothly and without further obligations for the parents. Regular meetings, either in the class or for the entire school, are held throughout the year. Parents are obligated to send at least one person—parent or registered ‘tutor’ of the student—to these meetings. If they fail to do so, they are fined, even if the reason for absence is based on work commitments; once the meeting starts, the doors are closed and no one is allowed to enter. In an assembly with the parents to elect the new parents committee on a Sunday morning in August 2018, one of the first items on the agenda was to determine the amount that absent parents are to pay—needless to say, the early hours of a Sunday did not make the parents present at the event more charitable and drove the fee up to 500 pesos (the event lasted four hours in total).

5 Among others: Luis Peña, Interview on July 27, 2018.

6 Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018.

7 Among others: Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

8 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 42; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 7, 2018.

The nature and circumstances around this meeting also display an ideological conundrum existing between the parents and the teachers in a school located in a bigger town: In the traditional concept of *tequio*, the teachers expect community work and engagement by the parents in the education of their children, for example in the form of cleaning or repairing the classrooms or helping in the kitchen—again, if they fail to do so, there is usually a fine. Furthermore, and particularly for children in primary schools, the nature of the homework given by the teacher often necessitates the help of a second person, turning homework into a family project. However, on the one hand, it is not always possible for the parents to tend to school issues in the middle of a workday. On the other, there is increasing resistance among the parents. One parent explained: “If my workshop is dirty, I don’t ask my customers to clean it up for me—I have to do it myself. Why does a teacher ask me to clean up his workplace?”⁹ This attitude demonstrates a difference in the understanding of the role of the school: The teachers see the school in the center of the community, according to the traditional ideas and values of *tequio* and *comunalidad*; the impression that arises from the parents and their behavior, however, shows that they see the job of educating primarily with the teachers and the school purely as a place where their children acquire said education in order for them to climb the social ladder.

This disparity in the opinion of the purpose of a school and their politicization also shows in other examples. Francisco Ramirez¹⁰ relates that his son was once punished with a bad grade because he did not hand in a homemade *piñata*. Ramirez explained to the teacher that his son had had English class in the afternoon, which he considers more valuable since he does not want his son to become a *piñatero*—the bad grade was not withdrawn.¹¹ This anecdote demonstrates the fact that for many parents in Oaxaca, public education means that the

9 “Si mi taller está sucio, no puedo pedir a mis clientes que lo limpien para mí —lo tengo que hacer yo. ¿Por qué me pide un maestro que le limpie el suyo?” (Francisco Ramirez, Interview on October 15, 2016, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca).

10 Ramirez is a welder in Puerto Escondido. His son attends the primary school “Adolfo López Mateos” in Puerto Escondido.

11 Francisco Ramirez, Interview on January 20, 2017.

children's teachers are affiliated with the Sección 22 and its narratives, and the children will hence receive alternative education, oriented around traditional values rather than towards integrating the child into the globalized world.¹² As Maestro Daniel noted sarcastically: "In the past, you counted with numbers. Now you count with corn."¹³

Luis Peña, a member of a former parents committee, recounts another issue that shows the politicization of the teachers and the functioning of the schools: Apparently, the director at the primary school had received an offer from a foundation for computers in return for copies of his credentials. He refused, seeing the latter as an attempt to register him as a voter for the PRI. He was then offered the computers in return simply for a signature as an acknowledgment of receipt. The director again negated.¹⁴ At the parents' meeting mentioned above, the issue of the computers was raised and the director questioned as to his intentions. He justified his decision, stating that it had been the municipal president (of the PRI) that had made the offer and that he did not want any affiliation with the party despite the school needing the computers.

Peña further claims that the teachers in the primary school "Adolfo López Mateos," and particularly the director, manipulate the parents—the dissidents would surely not interpret this as 'manipulation' but as 'conscientization' of society for current circumstances. In the end, Peña states, they believe him and do not ask further questions. In this manner, when a government official wanted to schedule a meeting with the parents committee to inform about Escuelas al CIEN, the director informed the parents that by way of the program, the government intended to appropriate itself of the school's grounds. Even if it were like that, Peña asserts, the grounds already belonged to the government anyway. At another time, Peña proposed an earthquake training for

12 While it is, of course, possible to state that homework is obligatory no matter the content, the argument gains in weight when examined in the specifically Oaxacan context: Pressured by the economic outlook for their children in the state, many want to place emphasis on the capacities that are, apparently, required for the globalized world.

13 "Antes contabas con números, ahora cuentas con maíz" (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

14 Luis Peña, Interview on July 27, 2018.

the children, led by firefighters or officials from Civil Protection. He wanted to ask them for a cost estimate, yet the director immediately determined that the parents would have to come up with the payment, a fact that Peña interpreted as further manipulation through unnecessary integration of the parents.¹⁵ To make matters worse, many parents fear that openly disagreeing with the teachers would lead to a disadvantage for their children—the teacher might give worse grades or punish unjustly.¹⁶ This circumstance, according to Mary Miller,¹⁷ leads parents to accept tasks such as joining in the protest marches when teachers make it a requirement for their signature on scholarship documents.¹⁸

This claim of manipulation finds justification in a further issue that was raised during the above-mentioned meeting: A teacher had fallen ill, but instead of notifying the IEEPO so the government could send a replacement, the director searched for a replacement by himself and charged the parents of the two groups with the teacher's salary. The parents had not been consulted previously. At the meeting, the director maintained that the IEEPO would take weeks to send someone else—a claim Maestra Maria negated¹⁹—and so, for the children to keep receiving education, he had made this choice, but, if the parents wanted, the children would instead have no class for the time of the teacher's absence. The parents, presented with the choice to either pay a teacher's salary or have their children miss class, voted for the latter.

This leads to a further, and maybe the most prominent, reason for the parents to oppose the cause of the Sección 22: The number of days their children actually spend in school. A school year in Mexico usually spans 200 days of class. However, with teachers frequently going on strike, blockades, or marches, and usually ringing in a larger absence from school in mid-May, this number shrinks drastically. Consequently, the parents are obligated to take over the education of their children in

15 Luis Peña, Interview on July 27, 2018.

16 Among others: Francisco Ramirez, Interview on October 15, 2016; Luis Peña, Interview on July 27, 2018.

17 Mary Miller is Professor Emerita at a renowned university in the USA and a frequent tourist in Oaxaca. Due to considerations of security, she preferred to be named under a pseudonym in this investigation.

18 Mary Miller, Online Interview on August 27, 2020.

19 Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018.

this period—otherwise the children would not learn the required material at all. And even if the children are in school, the class contents are occasionally far from the desired: Maestra Maria states that in one case, the children received 49 lessons of math in a period of eight months.²⁰ In the case of Ramirez’ son, even though Ramirez had paid the English teacher, the book he had bought for the class did not show any signs of advancement over the course of one entire school year.²¹ Needless to say, this circumstance supports the narrative of the government claiming that the dissident teachers are lazy and prefer going on strike over going to work—Hernández Navarro even claims that some teachers break the parents’ trust by lying about their going to an activity when they are actually staying at home.²² Moreover, against this background, the slogan “The protesting teacher is also teaching” for many appears to be rather a poor excuse for the missed classes.²³

A further claim that finds occasional evidence in the educational reality is that regarding a lack of the teachers’ education and general knowledge. Maestra Esmeralda,²⁴ a French teacher for secondary school, complained that English was treated as if it were a language spoken all over the world,²⁵ which shows the limited international experience of the teacher and hints at a rejection of the language on the basis of anti-globalization rhetoric. Miller adds that the English teachers she got to know did not even speak the language, leading her to conclude that the Sección 22 refused to do the evaluation exams because they were well aware of their limited abilities.²⁶

Apart from this allegation, the question of the teachers’ role model function and whether they fulfill it is raised also on mere observation of daily practice: The handwriting displayed in class does not testify to the teachers’ having received any training in proper lettering to serve

20 Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018.

21 Francisco Ramirez, Interview on October 15, 2016.

22 Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 127.

23 Among others: Francisco Ramirez, Interview on October 15, 2016.

24 In 2018, Maestra Esmeralda was an assistant in the juridical department of the Sección 22. She also had a pending arrest warrant on the grounds of property damage—apparently, she disabled a camera during a demonstration.

25 Maestra Esmeralda, Interview on August 9, 2018, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca.

26 Mary Miller, Online Interview on August 27, 2020.

as an example for children in primary school. Moreover, in the material I have collected, the handwritten notes raise doubt as to whether the teacher was writing regularly at all—for example: the small-letter ‘p’ within words was written on the same height as the capital-letter ‘P’. Messages sent on WhatsApp in the groups as well as material distributed by the higher organizational levels of the Sección 22 display errors in grammar, orthography, and punctuation—particularly astounding in the former is the abbreviation of the word ‘*que*’ into the colloquial ‘*k*’ by the teacher used in communication with the parents. Some also lack a sense of orderliness, which shows, for example, in the Sección 22 calling the members to respect the union building in the state capital²⁷—in 2018, the floors showed political messages, murals were decorated with petitions, and in apparently every open space someone sold CDs, DVDs, and educational material.

The cost, the missed days of school, plus the questionable quality—if one wants to use this contested term—of the received education leads many parents to send their children to private schools if they can afford them in any way.²⁸ One private primary school in Puerto Escondido, for example, charged 1.200 pesos per month, and is a joint project with a partner school in Canada, leading to an emphasis on the impartation of English—something that many parents consider important for the future success of their children. Adding all the costs of public education and the nuisances the parents experience despite it, this school and private education seem like the better option for many.²⁹ In fact, Victoria Cruz Villar states that the private schools are the big winners of the struggle of the Sección 22 in Oaxaca.³⁰

However, the dissidents not only started losing the support of the parents but also that of the larger society. While Miller, among others,

27 CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 17.

28 In the schoolyear 2019-2020, 89% of inscribed pupils attended public schools, the rest attended private institutions (statística, “Distribución Porcentual De La Población Inscrita En Alguna Institución Educativa En México Durante El Ciclo Escolar 2019-2020, Por Tipo De Escuela,” accessed December 30, 2021).

29 Among others: Mary Miller, Online Interview on August 27, 2020; Francisco Ramirez, Interview on January 20, 2017.

30 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

asserts that in Mexico to be heard, it is necessary to take to the streets,³¹ the protests of the Sección 22 and particularly in the state's capital have caused serious alienation of the people due, above all, to the frequent disruptions of their daily lives. The fact that, during the time of a blockade, I was mocked by a teacher yelling "Haha! You cannot go to Chedraui!"³² did not particularly warm my heart either. The protests hence result rather counter-productive in the rallying of support.

Furthermore, some of the benefits already achieved by the union struggle causes hostility by the parts of society that do not have these benefits. One example is the impression that the teachers always demand an increase to their salary despite already earning more than large parts of the population, which, again, nourishes the allegation that the dissidents want more money despite neglecting their duties in the classroom.³³ Another is the fact that inside the Sección 22 the workplaces are sold or even inherited from parents, spouses, or direct family members, a supposed 'right' that the section is defending vehemently.³⁴

Some react aggressively to the blockades—the secretary general of the Delegación 025 relates that, occasionally, the people passing the blockades insult them³⁵—while others give up, take alternative routes, or, as Fausto Rivera reports, put up their hammocks and wait for the blockade to be over.³⁶ Maestra Lupe, a secondary school teacher from Puerto Escondido, explains that she prefers not going out on the streets during protest measures as people who know her associate her with the inconveniences caused by the Sección 22 or ask her why she is not participating—she does not always agree with the demands of her union section, severely dampening her motivation (a condition that will be analyzed in more detail shortly).³⁷

31 Mary Miller, Online Interview on August 27, 2020.

32 Chedraui is a supermarket chain in Mexico.

33 Among others: Mary Miller, Online Interview on August 27, 2020.

34 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático," 148; Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 356, 363–364; Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018; Luis Peña, Interview on July 27, 2018.

35 Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

36 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

37 Maestra Lupe, Interview on March 14, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

Occasionally, antagonism can also be expressed directly against a specific teacher: Maestra Angélica³⁸ recalls one occasion when the Sección 22 was blocking the local garbage dump. In that period, Fausto Rivera, her neighbor, was very active in the protest, and, one day, she woke up to find the contents of an entire garbage truck against Rivera's house, inevitably also spreading to hers and covering the wall up until the first floor. While understanding that her neighbor's political actions might provoke people to take action, she could not fathom why someone would draw the family and neighbors into the conflict.³⁹

Either way, the regular strikes and blockades now seldom provoke the intended reactions of curiosity or solidarity in the people anymore—only if the conflict escalates, such as, for example in 2016 in Nochixtlán—, and the pressure on the government appears to lose its force as well.⁴⁰ In most cases, the measures rather cause antagonism or outright aggression. The Sección 22 is aware of these developments and traces the lack of support partly to the government's campaign against the teachers, yet also places the blame on the teachers themselves: On the one hand, parents and society are often not informed about the reasons of the measures undertaken by the dissidents. On the other, and despite the effort made by some, most classes missed in consequence of the section's protests are never made up for.⁴¹

This leads the Sección 22 to conclude that a revision of the protest measures is in order as mobilizations do not have the same effect they had in the early days of the movement. One of the proposed changes, for example, would be to not have the struggle period at the same time every year since everyone is already expecting the teachers to go on permanent strike starting mid-May. Furthermore, the changes in national and state politics need to be included in the selection of the protest measures

38 Maestra Angélica is a retired primary teacher of the Sección 22 in Puerto Escondido.

39 Maestra Angélica, Interview on March 27, 2018, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca.

40 Among others: CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 16; Maestra Angélica, Interview on March 27, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

41 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII," 30; CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 10, 13–15; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

and the elaboration of the plans of action to increase the effects of the measures and adapt the movement to current political circumstances.⁴²

In this sense and despite the radical rhetoric displayed in the open, on the inside the Sección 22—and moderate members—acknowledges that those most affected by the struggle of the dissident teachers are those making up the reason for their profession—the students in the classrooms.⁴³

7.2 A Shattered Base: Between Convenience and Ideology

The campaign against the workers in education has produced an image of them as lazy, corrupt, abusive, ignorant, and apathetic. The stereotype is wrong and undignified. Anyone who knows the democratic teachers at all knows this.⁴⁴

Despite the conviction displayed by Hernández Navarro in this statement, the Sección 22 itself, when scrutinized more closely, and even Hernández Navarro himself provide proof for the crisis inside the movement. While the conveniences of globalization and the anti-union rhetoric of the government are also blamed for the lack of support by society, the dissidents identify a further issue that not only results in the alienation of society but, exacerbating the crisis, threatens to destroy the movement from within: a lack of ideology in its own base.

This issue apparently reveals itself in the form of a generational conflict: Whereas the members that have already participated in the movement in the 1970s and 1980s are deeply politicized due to the intense period of struggle for democratization, and have aided in the creation of

42 CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 14; CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 13,15, 19.

43 CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 10; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

44 “La campaña contra los trabajadores de la educación ha fabricado una imagen de ellos como flojos, corruptos, abusivos, ignorantes y apáticos. El estereotipo es falso e indigno. Cualquiera que conozca mínimamente a los docentes democráticos lo sabe” (Hernández Navarro, *Cero en Conducta*, 425).

the movement's narrative out of conviction, the younger generations⁴⁵ have not lived through such a period of profound conscientization and auto-education, and are instead reaping the benefits achieved by the earlier generations without much effort of their own.⁴⁶ As was declared in the X Pre-Congress, "our Sección XXII is sleeping in its history."⁴⁷

This dynamic shows in various ways that to a certain extent influence each other. The first is what Fausto Rivera, among others, laments as a lack of class consciousness: Many have lost their sense of belonging to the working class and instead behave rather like *petit bourgeoisie*.⁴⁸ While this certainly derives from the benefits of decades of struggle by the general union as well as the dissident movement, Rivera also traces the issue back to the position of the teacher in the community: They are part of the people, yet despite identifying with the peasantry, they have a steady salary and do not need to work in the fields to survive, resulting in a slightly elevated position, above the peasantry. As a consequence, new teachers do everything in their power to not take the traditional path promoted by the Sección 22, starting their career in schools in remote areas, and instead transfer directly to a preferential area.⁴⁹ That some, particularly those not having worked in remote communities, might have a sense of belonging to a class higher than the peasantry also shows in a circumstance explained by Hernández Navarro: Apparently, rather the teachers that have not inherited the teaching position from their parents participate in protest measures.⁵⁰

Another issue caused by as well as triggering a deficiency of ideology and class consciousness is the younger generations' lacking ambition to auto-educate themselves by reading more demanding contents

45 It is, of course, necessary to keep in mind that there are always exceptions to the rule, and that these tendencies do not concern all newly instated teachers but a visible majority.

46 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII," 9; CEPOS 22, "Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización," 13; CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 14; Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

47 "nuestra Sección XXII se está durmiendo en su historia" (CEPOS 22, "Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático," 40).

48 CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 15, 23; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

49 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

50 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 50.

or watching educational documentaries instead of *telenovelas* or soccer games, or spending time with social media—according to Morales, *telenovelas*, soccer games, and social media are designed by the government to draw the people in and entertain them with content that does not make them think.⁵¹ Doing the former instead of the latter would lead to a greater extent of conscientization and consequently to the members participating with more integrity and purpose in the protest measures of the Sección 22.⁵² Maestra Maria also recounts that the *plantonos* in earlier days resembled cultural events where poems were read, while today, they only serve the purpose of defending the workplace.⁵³ The lacking motivation to auto-educate themselves leads Luis Peña to the conclusion that the modern teachers do not choose their profession out of vocation or a sense of a calling.⁵⁴ While to some extent this is, of course, the choice of the individual, the Sección 22 nevertheless also acknowledges the lack of information coming from the structure to the base, including the historic developments of the MDTEO and the CNTE, information on recent developments and the plans of action in reaction to them, and current processes inside the Sección 22 and the CNTE.⁵⁵

As a consequence of the missing conscientization, be it through own means or through the union, the Sección 22 is discerning a lack of motivation, leading to a loss of discipline, corruption, and other related factors. This manifests, above all, in a general disinterest regarding the union, its demands, as well as its claims, or, as with Maestra Lupe, in disagreement. As a result, many attend the protest measures—or the *tequio*, for that matter—only for personal benefits, such as a promotion or a relocation, attained with the points acquired through syndical participation, or out of obligation if a delegation uses negative reinforcements as motivation, such as fines. Others do not participate at all, or even pay someone else to go to the activity for them—as Fausto Rivera

51 Enrique Morales, Interview on February 24, 2018.

52 CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 12; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

53 Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018.

54 Luis Peña, Interview on July 27, 2018.

55 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 93, 102–103; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 9; CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 12; CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 11, 14.

explains: “We are human beings. Some have greater social commitment than others.”⁵⁶ In these cases, members are apparently not aware of the reasons behind the protest measure or the activity they are attending and participate without a solid conviction for the cause.⁵⁷ Even the documentation of the State Workshop of Alternative Education in 2014 displays that the participants of the workshop held in the previous year had not been motivated to learn new contents, and had not actively employed critical thinking.⁵⁸ This is in line with a recollection of Miller: She once asked protesters of the Sección 22 at a blockade in the City of Oaxaca about their demands. They, not sure exactly why they were there, sent her to the *jefe* for better information.⁵⁹

The lack of class conscience supposedly aids the government, as the teacher hence only reproduces the material and contents provided without having thought about them critically.⁶⁰ According to an appeal to the teachers during the X Pre-Congress: considering

that the necessity of emancipation of the original people is a priority; otherwise, we will remain in the historical process of subordination[,] of remaining victims of formalism, the official normativity and thereby: of the bureaucracy, the routine, the educational simulation, and discrimination.⁶¹

56 “Somos seres humanos. Unos sienten mayor compromiso social que otros” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018).

57 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 86, 100; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 9, 10; CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 12; CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 7, 13–14; Osorno, Oaxaca Sitiada, 29; Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018; Francisco Ramirez, Interview on October 15, 2016; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018; SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Resolutivos V Congreso Político del MDTEO,” 8.

58 CEDES 22, “TEEA 2014–2015,” 44.

59 Mary Miller, Online Interview on August 27, 2020.

60 CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 15, 24; Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

61 “que la necesidad de emancipación de los pueblos originarios es prioritario; de lo contrario seguiremos en el proceso histórico de subordinación[,] de seguir siendo víctimas del formalismo, la normatividad oficial y por ende: del burocratismo, la rutina, la simulación educativa y la discriminación” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 141).

This impression is seconded by Maestro Daniel who states that many teachers, while affirming that they want to implement the PTEO, lack the necessary motivation for the extra work that the alternative education requires and, in the end, welcome the books provided by the government that facilitate the workload as they even include a monthly educational plan. As a result, the teachers place themselves exactly in the position that the protesters in the 1980s attempted to divest themselves of: the simple transmitter of information, from the government to the people.⁶²

Tying in with Luis Peña's allegation that teachers today do not choose their profession on the basis of a sense of vocation anymore—which undoubtedly also connects to the claim that the modern teachers have lost affiliation with the proletariat—Maestro Daniel laments that the teaching profession has by now obtained the reputation of being relatively easy work with a stable salary.⁶³ This impression is probably enhanced by a reduced number of workdays due to the frequent protest measures. As Fausto Rivera explains, these new teachers lack ideology and hence stop asking questions and fit themselves into the system. They “do not want to fight together with the peasantry. They do not want to fight against poverty, against the marginalization with their students.”⁶⁴

As mentioned above already, however, the educational realities on site are occasionally more demanding than the job's reputation accounts for, and the manner of coping with this fact demonstrates the dedication and sense of vocation of the teacher. Maestra Eva, who has about 20 to 30 years of experience as a teacher, relates that the *compartencia* of the PTEO project—which she considered justified and necessary—required her and her colleagues to work late over the last week, often until 9 p.m., even though they had families at home. She furthermore explains that the expectations of the government regarding the educational level often stand in stark contrast to reality: The children are supposed to be able to read and write already upon entering primary

62 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

63 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

64 “[y]a no quieren luchar junto al campesino. Ya no quieren luchar contra la pobreza, contra la marginación con sus alumnos” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018).

school. As this is often not the case, the educational backlog starts here. Apart, she describes that the teachers needed to modify the educational plans and programs to fit the age of the children; as a model they used the plan of 2005/2007.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Francisco Ramirez talks about a teacher in his family who had only recently begun his career and whose workplace is in a very remote community. As this is rather uncomfortable for him, he starts the weekend early, usually on Thursday at the latest, to come into town and be with his parents and girlfriend.⁶⁶ These two contrasting examples show both the effects of the differences in ideological alignment and conviction, as well as the generational conflict above mentioned.

The ideological issues and their consequences mentioned in this chapter also build the foundation for the obstacles of alternative education enumerated during the First State Workshop of Politicization in 2003: It was explained that, among others, teachers were not implementing alternative education because they were not accustomed to reading, that they were scared of change, development—also their own—, information, and innovation, that they did not want to spend extra time, that they lacked the appropriate knowledge or resources, perhaps also due to the location of the school or because of a lack of support from the union section.⁶⁷ At the same event, they further identified missing discipline and even active resistance as factors inhibiting the advancement of alternative education.⁶⁸

On top of these internal factors, the IEEPO decree in 2015 furthermore added a dimension that triggers a still bigger problem for the Sección 22 in the form of a perceived loss of purpose: Why participate if the effort does not lead to benefits anymore, such as promotion or relocation? Maestro Rodrigo sums up the attitude of some: “If the union does not have any value anymore, why do we participate? Then we don’t participate anymore.”⁶⁹ Others, needless to say, see the decree

65 Maestra Eva, Interview on March 23, 2018.

66 Francisco Ramirez, Interview on January 20, 2017.

67 CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 39.

68 CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 12.

69 “¿Si ya no tiene valor el sindicato, para qué participamos? Entonces ya no participamos” (Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018).

as a provocation and find new motivation to fight in light of the government's measure.

Since the movement structure is made up of the base, the lack of enthusiasm for the union struggle emanating from the base also permeates the statutory and non-statutory organs of the Sección 22 and, formerly, the positions in the IEEPO. As a consequence, the Sección 22 identifies a 'structural crisis' that not only affects the function of these organs but also the relationship to the base.⁷⁰ Apparently, for many teachers, the principal reason to participate in the structural organs of the movement is for a personal benefit: the possibility of reaching a position higher up in the structure or formerly in the IEEPO, from which they can exert influence, or any other kind of advantage that comes with a position of power—including deals with private companies or political parties.⁷¹

This attitude presents itself in two major areas within the exercise of such a position: the attendance of gatherings and the treatment of the represented. Regarding the behavior during assemblies and other events, the documentations and material distributed exhibit a number of occasions during which the attendees were reprimanded for irresponsible behavior, such as arriving late, not presenting any proposals, not accepting and complying with agreements made, or even bullying *compañeros* that defend a different (political) opinion⁷²—apparently, delegates that dare to bring forth an opinion contrary to that of the majority are victims of intimidation and are called '*charros*' to imply their adherence to the undemocratic SNTE.⁷³

Furthermore, as happens during protest measures, participation during assemblies and workshops is low. In the First State Workshop for Politicization, very few attended, even from the CES.⁷⁴ As reasons

70 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII," 9, 27; CEPOS 22, "Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización," 11–13; CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 13; SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Resolutivos V Congreso Político del MDTEO," 6.

71 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII," 9; CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 10; Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

72 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII," 10, 11, 20, 29; CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 11.

73 CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 14.

74 CEPOS 22, "Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización," 9, 11.

for this behavior, the attendees of the Second State Workshop for Politicization not only identify the generally acknowledged lack of conscientization, but also a kind of boredom in light of routine tasks, such as the participation in assemblies or the *consulta a las bases*.⁷⁵ Maestro Daniel remembers a defining moment during a struggle period: The building of the IEEPO and the city center of Oaxaca were guarded by police forces. In the reunion they were holding to discuss the plans of action, of 160 constituents only 14 were present. Not sure exactly what to do, but reinforced in their sense of purpose by the lack of support from their *compañeros*, they acted according to their ideology: “[R]esistencia. That’s what we know how to do. Because for this we were born.”⁷⁶ For Maestro Rodrigo, the lack of conviction of many representatives was particularly visible when the accounts of the section were frozen and suddenly half of the elected leaders disappeared.⁷⁷

Instead, meeting attendees voice demands that raise doubts as to the true purpose and ideology of the Sección 22 and attest rather to irresponsibility and a lack of ethical and moral values:⁷⁸ In the X Pre-Congress in 2012, for example, the representatives asked for a bonus on Mother’s Day for all the female teachers with child. They also requested that families of a teacher be relieved from paying any contributions for the schools. Furthermore, they rejected the use of a check-clock to control their working hours. The most interesting demand, however, manifested itself in the form of a chant during the pre-congress: The delegates wanted money as compensation for their attendance. When the speaker offered them less than the amount requested, the chants and consequent boycott of the event continued until the speaker finally gave in.⁷⁹ Other demands, while less scandalous, include the reinstatement of the benefits through participation—the so-called *escalafón*, or

75 CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 13–14.

76 “resistencia. Lo que sabemos hacer. Porque para eso nacimos” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

77 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018.

78 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 9.

79 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 49, 51, 148, 149.

ladder, which had been inhibited by the IEEPO decree in 2015—and the reactivation of scholarships for teachers' children.⁸⁰

Concerning the behavior of the representatives towards the base, the allegations include a general lack of transparency, as well as the disregarding of agreements with or wishes of the base. Apparently, on occasion, representatives have even decided against them.⁸¹ The allegations further entail the infringement of workers' and syndical rights⁸²—Maestra Maria remembers an occasion when a pregnant teacher was told to pay her replacement just so that the IEEPO would not get her data.⁸³ Consequently, the representatives are charged with a 'neocharist' attitude, introducing measures into the movement that allegedly characterized the methods inside the SNTE—the *charros*—, which was the reason why the MDTEO had arisen in the first place.⁸⁴

A further issue identified by the Sección 22 within the structural problem is one of politics and groups inside the MDTEO. The movement has been made up of members with different political ideologies ever since its founding—with a clear tendency towards the left, yet varying in the degree of radicalism.⁸⁵ However, as mentioned already, the members appear to not seem to accept different opinions in the spirit of democracy anymore and accuse each other of corruption and acting out of self-interest. It is even more discomfoting for the section when these groups are affiliated with political parties and attempt to enforce their political agenda inside the movement—which is, technically, also prohibited by the Principios Rectores. Allegedly, there are even groups acting in the interest of the government—whether they are actively engaged by the government or act out of personal conviction is often uncertain.⁸⁶

80 SOPI-CEPOS 22, "Resolutivos V Congreso Político del MDTEO," 8, 23.

81 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII," 10–11; CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 13.

82 CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 13.

83 Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018.

84 CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 12.

85 Cf. Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 141.

86 CEPOS 22, "Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII," 10; CEPOS 22, "Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización," 12–13; CEPOS 22, "Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización," 10–14.

The disregarding of the role model function a position in the structure and the CES holds, demonstrated, among others, by the violation of the Principios Rectores many types of behavior of the representatives pose and the apparent acting out of self-interest, has led to a general lack of credibility and polemic by the base, as well as society: Luis Peña asserts that “[u]nions are mafias,”⁸⁷ and Maestra Maria simply states: “Everything is politics.”⁸⁸ The prevalence of different political positions inside the Sección 22 aggravates this circumstance further and causes distrust in the movement organs. Maestra Angélica explained when talking about Enrique Morales and Fausto Rivera: “And so, what should I believe? They are politicians! I don’t believe anything from either one!”⁸⁹ Needless to say, these issues decrease the enthusiasm for participation and ideological education, taking the Sección 22 into a downward spiral.⁹⁰ As Maestro Rodrigo states: “The problem of every [struggle] period is when the base distrusts.”⁹¹

7.3 Movement Rupture: Founding of the Sección 59

Particularly the existence of and the animosity between the different currents were visible in one of the most serious escalations of the crisis inside the Sección 22: the founding of the Sección 59.

Apparently, already by the election of Enrique Rueda Pacheco as secretary general of the Sección 22 in 2004, the two major political currents had been battling for the control over the section. The election of Rueda Pacheco constituted a change in power, which, needless to say, the

87 “[s]indicatos son mafias” (Luis Peña, Interview on July 27, 2018).

88 “Todo es política” (Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018).

89 “Así que, ¿qué le voy a creer? ¡Son políticos! ¡No le creo nada a los dos!” (Maestra Angélica, Interview on March 27, 2018).

90 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 99; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 9; CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 13; CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 10, 12; Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

91 “La problemática de cada periodo es cuando la base desconfía” (Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018).

outgoing secretary general and his supporters did not take lightly.⁹² The fact that negotiations in the *jornada de lucha* in May 2005 ended after only five days with concessions on all demands further reinforced the opposition in its belief that the Rueda Pacheco committee was somehow in the cahoots with Ulises Ruiz, who had only just the year before boasted that there would be no mobilizations or *plantones* in this six-year term.⁹³

According to Victoria Cruz Villar, secretary general of the Sección 59 from 2015 to 2019 and sectorial representative at the time of its founding, the conflict escalated during the Pre-Pleno in November 2005, when the representatives in the organs of the Sección 22 were to give an account of their actions and plans.⁹⁴ A Commission of Honor and Justice had been created earlier to investigate allegations raised, among others, by the secretary of finance, Erika Rapp Soto, against Rueda Pacheco and the technical secretary, including not only sexual harassment of female teachers and staff—in the case of the secretary general—but also of corruption, involving at least one car,⁹⁵ benefits for family enterprises, and unauthorized transactions. That Rueda Pacheco and his supporters had demanded the removal of the director of the IEEPO, who had supposedly provided the detailed accounts for the accusation, only added insult to injury.⁹⁶

Cruz Villar states that the meeting lasted until late in the night and until 2 a.m., Rueda Pacheco appeared to be guilty, which would imply the application of the Principio Rector 20, meaning his expulsion from the movement. She asserts that the majority of the delegates present did

92 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 112; Stephen, *We are the Face of Oaxaca*, 76; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 67.

93 Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 112–14; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 67–68.

94 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

95 Myths revolve around this car: According to Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 114, there were various luxurious cars. Cruz Villar, who participated in the event and states that Rueda Pacheco even arrived in it, as well as Martínez Vásquez speak of a VW Jetta (Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Martínez Vásquez, “Crisis política y represión en Oaxaca,” 50).

96 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 114; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Martínez Vásquez, “Crisis política y represión en Oaxaca,” 50–51; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 68.

not belong to any of the battling groups and were convinced by the facts pointing to his guilt. However, she explains that the group supporting Rueda Pacheco also counted with the backing of the Ulises Ruiz government, and by 5 a.m., the tables had turned and despite all evidence, Rueda Pacheco was found innocent.⁹⁷

Incredulous as to the obvious corruption inside the very core of the Sección 22, the animosity between the two groups soared. The delegates who had accused Rueda Pacheco were called ‘traitors’ and ‘*charros*,’ and Cruz Villar relates that from about 1.100 delegates present, around 250 left the event at this point, many from the organizations building the opposition group inside the section. She states that usually, when a delegate threatened to leave their position in the CES, the others attempted to solve the conflict. This time, however, there were no such endeavors.⁹⁸ Instead, the secretary general was declared innocent⁹⁹—according to Maestro Daniel, it was necessary to keep Rueda Pacheco as ‘the lesser of two evils’ since the opposition party had only wanted to gain control over the movement.¹⁰⁰

Cruz Villar explains that the animosity had, on occasion, already surfaced before. Particularly when the group she belonged to had brought forth the proposal to change their struggle measures in order to affect the children less, hostility, bullying, and allegations of belonging to the SNTE erupted.¹⁰¹ Due to this deep rift inside the section, hopes had been high for the new CES to achieve a rebirth of the movement and to solve the crisis, and to this end, the Second State Workshop for Politicization as well as meetings throughout the year were to provide the groundwork. However, in light of the developments around the CES, the dissidents inside the original dissident movement, drawing on the traditional methods, founded a Central Struggle Committee (Comité Central de Lucha; CCL) within the Sección 22 to demonstrate their dis-

97 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

98 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

99 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensayo la Revolución*, 114; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 68.

100 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

101 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

agreement with the undemocratic processes inside the section—the same reason that had set off the movement about 25 years earlier in the first place.¹⁰²

As a last attempt to solve the conflict, the Sección 22 held the First Political Congress in the beginning of April 2006 to finally overcome the crisis. However, despite the good intentions to reunite the movement in itself and with the people of Oaxaca—represented by various organizations that later also participated in the founding of the APPO—the event commenced with the resignation of the secretary of finance, Erika Rapp Soto, who had presented the financial reports of corruption against Rueda Pacheco in the Pre-Pleno. She resigned on the basis of not having received the necessary financial resources as well as for not having been informed about an account supposedly in the name of the Sección 22 with a balance of two million pesos. With the technicalities around the resignation resolved shortly after, the animosity again showed when the congress proceeded:

Once the renunciation was presented to the plenary, this congress determined its political position, denouncing the opportunist, *charril*, and traitor attitude of the teacher for performing actions that threaten the union of the movement.¹⁰³

The documentation of the event further reads that, in light of the attempt of the government and the SNTE to divide the teachers' movement, the delegates of the CES, the CETEO and the auxiliary organs were asked to ratify

their commitment to the combative struggle for the democratic movement, to the base, to the agreements and Principios Rectores, against cor-

¹⁰² Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 114–18; Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018; Yescas Martínez, “Movimiento magisterial y gobernabilidad en Oaxaca,” 68–69.

¹⁰³ “Una vez expuesta su renuncia a la plenaria, este congreso fijó su posición política denunciando la actitud oportunista, *charril* y traidora de la Profesora por realizar acciones que atentan contra la unidad del movimiento” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 6).

ruption and those that, by means of the CCL, attempt to found another section and appoint a sectional committee. They also acknowledge that ever since they were appointed by their base, they were clear in their democratic commitment and will always keep on fighting for the unity of the movement.¹⁰⁴

Cruz Villar relates that she did not see herself capable of swearing loyalty to “a movement that calls itself democratic and demonizes those that do not think the same, it does not even listen to them. And furthermore, the corruption is institutional now. [...] So I do not agree.”¹⁰⁵ She further recalls that upon rejecting to swear loyalty, “[t]hey start to yell at you. And for that reason, I submit my resignation. And when you get off the platform, they start throwing things at you, to yell at you.”¹⁰⁶ According to the documentation of the event, from 151 members asked to confirm their commitment, only three—among them Cruz Villar—rejected, and presented their resignation “as an act of political dignity in light of the events happening in the Sección XXII and to show solidarity with [the] former incumbent of the Secretariat of Finances.”¹⁰⁷

On May 5 and 6, the CCL met to elect a democratic committee. Cruz Villar emphasizes that at this point, they were not yet thinking about founding their own union section, but wanted to fight for democratization from inside the Sección 22: “There was more emphasis on the educational aspect, to redeem the role of the teacher, to regain the trust of the parents, and [...] simply fulfilling our mission, doing an effective

104 “su compromiso de lucha combativa a favor del movimiento democrático, con las bases, con los acuerdos y los principios rectores; en contra de la corrupción y de los que pretenden a través del CCL, formar otra sección y nombrar un comité seccional. Reconocen también que desde que fueron nombrados por sus bases, tenían claro su compromiso democrático y seguirán luchando siempre por la unidad del movimiento” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 8).

105 “un movimiento que se dice democrático y que sataniza al que no piensa igual, ni siquiera lo escucha. Y además ya la corrupción ahora es institucional. [...] Entonces, yo no estoy de acuerdo” (Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018).

106 “Pues, te empiezan a gritar. Y por lo tanto presento mi renuncia. Y ya cuando bajas del estrado, pues te empiezan a votar tantas cosas, gritarte” (Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018).

107 “como un acto de dignidad política ante los acontecimientos que se dan en la Sección XXII y para solidarizarse con [la] ex titular de la Secretaría de Finanzas” (CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 8–9).

job in the classroom.¹⁰⁸ However, the Sección 22 was already preparing for the traditional struggle period and the prolonged strike, which immediately raised the question in the CCL of whether they would participate or not—especially against the background that they had brought the issue of the children’s missing education to discussion before. So when the Sección 22 suspended classes, the CCL inside its mother-section, conscious of the recently affirmed mission, decided to remain in the classrooms and complete the school year.¹⁰⁹

As the events of 2006 unfolded, the rift between the Sección 22 and the CCL grew more pronounced and apparently insurmountable. When the school year ended, the CCL solicited the CES of the SNTE for the authorization to become a separate union section, which, as there were already 58, would be the 59. The SNTE, however, did not react immediately and so the uncertainty and animosity in Oaxaca continued. In August, while the Sección 22 was battling in the streets of Oaxaca, the teachers that had joined the CCL returned to the classrooms to begin the new school year—for many in the Sección 22, such as, for example, Maestro Rodrigo, the CCL appeared to adhere to the call of Ulises Ruiz to return, and to want to boycott the demonstrations,¹¹⁰ yet, according to Cruz Villar, they had chosen this path already beforehand with their commitment to the children’s education. Still, she states, many resumed classes also because they were PRIistas, and as many of those that returned faced difficulties with the Sección 22 afterwards for having abandoned the struggle measures, some of them, too, joined the CCL. The rift deepened further still when Ulises Ruiz dismissed the directors of the IEEPO appointed by the Sección 22, an act that could be interpreted as support for the CCL.¹¹¹

The communities, in turn, did not altogether react favorably to the offer of education. Not only did the teachers associated with the CCL

108 “Donde está más énfasis era en el aspecto educativo, re-dignificar el papel del maestro, recuperar la confianza de los padres de familia, y cumplir [...] simplemente con nuestra labor, haciendo un trabajo efectivo en el aula” (Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018).

109 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

110 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018.

111 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

take up classes again, Ulises Ruiz furthermore offered recent graduates positions in the schools, albeit without the official affiliation to the IEEPO. According to Cruz Villar, communities tended to welcome the change depending on the degree of remoteness: In urban areas, the CCL experienced great difficulties, yet in communities still governed by *usos y costumbres*, the people felt more associated with and responsible for the school, and often ruled for their children's education over union struggle. Where the teachers of the CCL were not supported by schools and communities, it was not seldom that the parents denounced them and, with the help of the Sección 22 and sometimes with violence, ran them from the schools.¹¹²

Cruz Villar asserts that, at least in the beginning, they were not pursuing the idea of schools made up entirely of teachers from the CCL, but wanted to work alongside the Sección 22 in the same school—as do different sections in other states.¹¹³ However, this type of cooperation appeared to be impossible:¹¹⁴ First, it is highly unlikely that, considering the position of power of the Sección 22, they would have accepted any other parallel section in any case. Secondly, the ideological differences that have led to the separation in the first place provoked the fighting spirit of the Sección 22 as well as a perceived necessity of defending public education in Oaxaca against those apparently representing the SNTE and its ways of corruption and conspiracy with the government. In the end, the CCL opened their own education centers where the parents refused to have them in the already existing schools.¹¹⁵

In the fall of that year, the speculations around Secretary General Rueda Pacheco again gained momentum. As mentioned in the chapter on the events of Oaxaca in 2006, the Sección 22 reached an agreement with Ulises Ruiz that led to 'the betrayal of the Sección 22 of the APPO'—according to Cruz Villar, the agreement comprised not only the return of the teachers to their classrooms, but also the removal of those teaching there at the moment—meaning the CCL—, as well as the returning

112 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

113 It is necessary to keep in mind here though that sections in the same state usually differ in the source of their funding, state or federal, and not in their ideology.

114 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

115 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

of the positions in the IEEPO to the union section.¹¹⁶ The same instant, however, again raised doubts regarding the intentions and character of the section leader since he had, allegedly, entered into the agreement without having consulted the base and had, as a result, left the APPO without the support of its major organization.

Carlos Sanchez explains that the Sección 22 “is not a very punitive movement; that is why it is easily betrayed.”¹¹⁷ He further confirms that Rueda Pacheco “sold the movement,”¹¹⁸ and that the latter told Ulises Ruiz how the protests could be dissolved¹¹⁹—this claim is supported by Cruz Villar who states that Rueda Pacheco knew about the *desalojo* on June 14 and still did not inform the *compañeros*.¹²⁰ Hernández Navarro also asserts that Rueda Pacheco had been ‘bought’ by Vicente Fox.¹²¹ Both Enrique Morales and Maestro Rodrigo, on the other hand, see the fault rather in the group forming the CCL: Morales states that “also in the CNTE there are many traitors,”¹²² which, while not intended, could also refer to the secretary general, and Maestro Rodrigo identifies the opposition teachers inside the Sección 22 as ‘agents’ of the state, working in the interior and trying to find mistakes and provoke disunion since “in the union, the state has always interfered.”¹²³ Either way, Rueda Pacheco resigned a few months later and went to Canada¹²⁴—Cruz Villar suspects that he still receives payments for the deals closed during his time as secretary general.¹²⁵

In September 2006, associates of the CCL in Jamiltepec in the region of the coast already organized the first march as Sección 59, yet the

116 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

117 “no es un movimiento muy punitivo; por eso es fácil de traicionar” (Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018).

118 “vendió el movimiento” (Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018).

119 Carlos Sanchez, Interview on April 4, 2018.

120 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

121 Hernández Navarro, *La Novena Ola Magisterial*, 20.

122 Enrique Morales, Interview on March 12, 2018.

123 “en el sindicato, siempre ha intervenido el estado” (Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018).

124 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018; Octavio Velez Ascencio, “Dimite Rueda Como Líder Del Magisterio Oaxaqueño,” *La Jornada*, February 18, 2007.

125 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

new union section was not officially born until December 22 that year during a national meeting of the SNTE. According to Cruz Villar, the new section was registered with 1,000 members—500 more than was the official requirement for the founding—as a section funded by the federation. The preliminary executive commission was headed by Erika Rapp Soto—the first Constitutive Congress would be held in 2011 and vote for Joaquín Echeverría Lara to be the first secretary general until 2015 when Cruz Villar would win the election.¹²⁶ Maestro Rodrigo states that, since that moment, the opposition group openly conspires with the state.¹²⁷ Maestro José adds that, also resulting from this affiliation, the members of the Sección 59 receive a number of benefits, such as credits, cars, houses, and that their children even have easier access to scholarships.¹²⁸

Some communities, apparently particularly in the region of the Sierra, openly claimed their affiliation with the new section and asked them to send teachers to their schools. If necessary, they obligated teachers already working there to change ‘sides,’ if they did not decide to do so by themselves. In some schools, parents apparently also ran teachers from the Sección 22 from their schools. On other occasions, if the Sección 22 refused to give up the school, the teachers held classes in the home of someone or created alternative spaces so that the children would not miss out on education.¹²⁹

According to Cruz Villar, this effort relates to the basic consideration that children cannot be the ones affected by political opinions. She states that in Oaxaca there is no order, that every year there are problems with the handing out of certificates, and sometimes the children do not get their documents until the beginning of next year, which is especially harmful for those finishing school and applying elsewhere. Concerning the marching cry “The protesting teacher is also teaching,” she asserts that the only thing they are teaching is that public education in Oaxaca is not working and is driving the parents to send their kids to private school. She further states that the Sección 22 seems to

126 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

127 Maestro Rodrigo, Interview on August 9, 2018.

128 Maestro José, Interview on March 22, 2018.

129 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

not consider the effects of this fact: If the number of children in public education decreases, so will the overall number of teaching positions.¹³⁰

The recruitment to the Sección 59 happened in various ways. During the protests in 2006, teachers from the communities without official relationship to the IEEPO assumed the posts in the classrooms and affiliated themselves with the CCL or the Sección 59. Apart, teachers that had similar ideological issues with the Sección 22 changed to the new section, as well as those pressured by parents. Apparently, there are even communities that explain to newly arriving teachers that their schools 'belong to' the Sección 59 and that they either affiliate themselves with the section or leave altogether.¹³¹

The recruitment of members to the Sección 59 was facilitated in the aftermath of the Educational Reform in 2013—whereas the Sección 22 opposed the reform, the new section, while not actively defending it, respected its implementation. On the one hand, the wave of protest by the CNTE caused a number of teachers to change sections. On the other hand, the Sección 59 benefitted from the recruitment of the *idóneos*—those having passed the exams with the best results. As the Sección 22 refused to accept them into their schools, they were placed in the schools of the Sección 59. Apparently, the first generation arrived in 2014/15 and from 53 graduates, 49 stayed with the section; the others had been trained in the dissident ideology of the CNTE and rejected the workplace—Cruz Villar mentions that from those 53, the majority had not attended an *escuela normal* but had qualified in a different manner, for example with a degree obtained from university.¹³²

She further relates that in the schoolyear 2015/16 after the reform to the IEEPO, the *idóneos* were located by the latter. However, while this put some in schools of the Sección 59 right away, many more joined afterwards because the schools of the Sección 22 had rejected them. The following year, the director of the IEEPO directly placed the majority of the graduates in the newly found *escuelas institucionales*—without affiliation to either section—or with the Sección 59, while only a small

130 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

131 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

132 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

minority was sent to schools of the Sección 22. That same year, the director of the IEEPO also promised the exchange of community teachers with teachers that had the proper affiliation with the IEEPO—resulting in a large number of graduates from *escuelas normales* with the corresponding ideology as well as graduates without union affiliation (even though the contribution was deducted from their salary) being located in schools of the Sección 59. Either way, according to Cruz Villar, in the political landscape of Oaxaca, where open affiliation with the Sección 59 could entail major consequences for any political figure or party, the most important supporters have always been the parents that demanded education for their children.¹³³

She emphasizes that the Sección 59 does not ‘defend’ the Educational Reform but respects it as law, also in light of the fact that “Oaxaca is not an island.”¹³⁴ Even considering the great disparity between the rural and urban areas, students may need the training as well as the paperwork if they change schools or go abroad and cannot be negated this opportunity on the basis of the existing disparity in Oaxaca. She explains that the *clubs* for specialization introduced by the reform allow the students to try out different areas and learn skills that are necessary for the globalized world—going, for example, from simple mechanics, which were taught before, into mechatronics. She explicitly condemns the educational attitude of the teachers of the Sección 22 that seems to limit the children in their future prospects—which finds support in the story mentioned above by Ramirez’ son who was reprimanded for not having finished a *piñata* due to his English class. Furthermore, regarding the teachers, she does not see herself in any position to deny them the opportunity to increase their salary and improve their situation by taking the evaluation exam on behalf of an alleged ‘common good.’¹³⁵

Regarding the programs introduced by the reform, she speaks of mixed success: She explains that, from the 500 schools they tended to (in 2018), about one fifth participates in the programs provided by the reform, and that in the past year, 71 schools received equipment for

133 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

134 “Oaxaca is not an island” (Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018).

135 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

improved infrastructure. She does, however, also assert that the funds do not cover all the requirements, and that it is necessary to be insistent throughout the entire process. As a result, the schools still rely on small fees from the parents to the parents committee for basic maintenance. Additionally, while the contents of education, in her opinion, include all the crucial skills, the teachers lack the training required. She considers that it would take one entire school year of capacitation in the afternoons for the teachers to fulfil the requirements.¹³⁶

This leads to one major issue the Sección 59 shares with its mother section: The lack of motivation displayed by the teachers to auto-educate themselves. Cruz Villar relates the story of a fellow teacher confessing to her that he has not attended a single training in the two decades since he has left school. For this reason, she explains, the SNTE has created a structure of accompanying training that can be completed by the teacher if they, for example, plan to do the evaluation exam to apply for a promotion. Still, she states, many reject the offer because of either technological issues or, in general, the inconvenience a training poses in contrast to simply carrying on with the routine—she also explains that the inconvenience of required training posed by the *clubs* is what provokes the teachers of the Sección 22 to impede their implementation. Apparently, however, when members of the Sección 22 do make the effort to auto-educate themselves and start asking questions, many end up ‘converting’ to the new union section, if not due to conviction than because of bullying and exclusion from other members.¹³⁷

Coming from the Sección 22 and being accustomed to its practices and narratives, Cruz Villar further explains that the transition to the Sección 59 as a section not related to the CNTE but only to the SNTE requires some readjustment. For one, it is the omission of the non-statutory structure—the assemblies, the consultations of the base, etc. Moreover, the regular calls for strikes, marches, and blockades are reduced to a very bare minimum and only if the rhythm of regular class can be maintained. Apparently, however, the most prominent issue is that of the ‘ideological chip.’ Cruz Villar describes that having been

136 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

137 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

indoctrinated for years that affiliates of the SNTE are *charros* and traitors, and even shout it in their faces when they come to confirm the elected section committees at the congresses, it is difficult to see the flaws of this chip, get rid of it, and acknowledge, for example, that corruption does, indeed, permeate both union sections—to the extent that Maestra Maria emphasizes that the Sección 22 and the 59 are basically the same.¹³⁸ Still, she explains that the chip is persistent and that there was occasionally a voice, usually dormant, that charged her with the betrayal of the Sección 22. She nevertheless goes on to say that she could mostly silence this voice with her conscience and particularly the argument that many members, despite telling the parents that they are participating in the mobilizations, simply stay at home and hence harm the children and the parents as well as the movement.¹³⁹

Needless to say, the founding of the Sección 59 did not decrease the already existing hostility between the two groups, and the Sección 22 has been doing everything in its power to obstruct the spreading and the functionality of the former. This is organized on various levels: The first reaction was to attack them directly at the schools and to attempt to run them from there, which, in some instances, worked. Another, and with more far-reaching consequences, was the institutional obstruction, affecting both teachers as well as students: As the Sección 22 held much power in the IEEPO until 2015, it was able to, on the one hand, retain salaries from teachers affiliated with the Sección 59 for prolonged periods of time, or even discharge them—as Cruz Villar states, “for working. This only happens in Oaxaca!”¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, the Sección 22 refused to issue the certificates for the students at the end of the school-year, causing severe problems, particularly during changes of school or upon graduation—the delay in the handing out of documents reduced gradually until they could be delivered on time when Oaxaca finally implemented the electronic grading system in 2017.¹⁴¹

The problems also manifested on the political landscape of the state: Gabino Cué—who was, as mentioned, openly supporting the Sección 22

138 Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018.

139 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

140 “por trabajar. ¡Eso solo pasa en Oaxaca!” (Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018).

141 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

at first—bade the CES of the national SNTE to eliminate the Sección 59 in 2011. Apart from the deals that might have been struck, Cruz Villar sees the reason for this affiliation between the state government and the Sección 22 also in the inconvenience the Sección 59 poses to the former: “[E]ducated people are not convenient for any state because they know how to demand things, how to argue. It is convenient for the state to have people that are condemned by society. We are more harmful, more dangerous to the state even if they say that we are the opposite.”¹⁴² Despite the allegations that they were working with the state government or even created by it, Cruz Villar hence asserts that this was not the case at all, that their only support was the parents demanding that they stay in the schools to educate their children. Due to the variety of these problems, she states, the only task in the first five years of the existence of the section was that of survival, which is why it took the executive commission so much longer to create the conditions for a constitutive congress than is usually the case.¹⁴³

The Sección 22, however, also boycotts and even directly attacks the institution of the Sección 59 and its members—the alleged *Vanguardia Revolucionaria*.¹⁴⁴ This begins at the search for the latter’s offices: They cannot put up a sign at their buildings because of possible attacks—as Maestro Daniel states: “Where they put one [an office], we close it.”¹⁴⁵ Fausto Rivera adds that “they cannot be out in the open so that we can come and destroy their building. Or that there is a full-out fight, which they will lose. It would be like handing it [the section] over to us on a silver platter.”¹⁴⁶ In line with this statement, Cruz Villar asserts that she has to be careful when visiting the center of Oaxaca, that she is even warned by friends and allies when the Sección 22 is planning to attack

142 “a ningún estado conviene gente educada porque sabe cómo pedir cosas, como argumentar. Le conviene gente que anda por ahí porque la sociedad la repudia. Somos más dañinos, más peligrosos para el estado incluso aunque cuando digan que somos el contrario” (Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018).

143 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

144 Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018.

145 “Donde la ponen vamos y la cerramos” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

146 “[n]o pueden estar a disposición a que nosotros lleguemos si les destruemos sus edificios. O que haya una lucha frontal en que ellos pierden. Sería como servirnoslo en bandeja de plata” (Fausto Rivera, Interview on March 15, 2018).

her.¹⁴⁷ In Puerto Escondido, even though it is far removed from the capital, the offices are in a tiny house next to a football field with the slogan of the local radio station sprayed on it—impossible to find if one was not sent there. Only upon making an appointment is one invited in or even allowed to talk to the teachers present, and the people of the surroundings protect the teachers from assaults as well.

Similarly, the Sección 22 occasionally attempts to ‘recover’ schools supposedly ‘taken’ by the Sección 59¹⁴⁸—Enrique Morales emphasizes that the parents have been manipulated by the teachers of the Sección 59 who are supported by the government.¹⁴⁹ To provide an example: A video, published in 2013 on YouTube, shows the violence of teachers of the Sección 22 and the feeling of righteousness and superiority in the attempt to retake the rectory of a primary school that was ‘under control’ of the Sección 59.¹⁵⁰ Mary Miller also recounts incidents of members of the 59 being beaten up by teachers of the 22.¹⁵¹

The brutality reaches apparently unbelievable dimensions and shows the danger an affiliation with the Sección 59 entails: Cruz Villar and Pedro Caballero Bolaños recount the story of the latter, in whose house the Sección 59 had stored the schoolbooks for the children to be distributed to the schools of the section. The Sección 22 caught wind of the hiding place, waited for him at his house, and tortured him—apparently, apart from beating him up, rampaging through his home, and stealing money and valuable goods, they tormented him with electro shocks, having placed wet towels on his feet so the electrodes would not leave any marks. To ridicule him further, they placed a big *sombrero* on his head and a jacket with the emblem of the Sección 59 on his back, taking pictures of him as a literal *charro*. Moreover, they covered his eyes and forced him to make calls to various authorities to announce the retreat of the Sección 59. Apparently, the police were standing outside his house, hindering his family from entering, and taking him to the hospital only

147 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

148 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 117–18.

149 Enrique Morales, Interview on March 12, 2018.

150 Tucán Oaxaca, *Enfrentamiento Entre Sección 22 Y 59 Por Escuela Primaria En Oaxaca* (2021), accessed May 14, 2021.

151 Mary Miller, Online Interview on August 27, 2020.

after the intruders brought him out.¹⁵² According to Cruz Villar, this was the real reason for the arrest of Núñez and Villalobos in 2016.¹⁵³

A further example for the danger of the affiliation with the Sección 59 is the assassination of former secretary general of the Sección 22, Alejandro Leal Díaz, who had belonged to the opposition group eventually founding the Sección 59 in 2015. Apparently, Leal Díaz had returned to the Sección 22, yet some have not been able to forgive his infidelity, which raised suspicions that he was killed by members of the union section—no one was tried for the murder.¹⁵⁴ Cruz Villar also relates that only two days prior to our interview, news reached her that the president of a parents committee in San Pedro Ixcatlán had been detained because he had requested the teachers of the Sección 59 to lead the school. The municipal president, however, is of the Morena party and supports the latter. Apparently, the father and his defenders were provoked until they reacted and could hence be incarcerated. In general, it seems to happen occasionally that groups break into schools, damage the property, and rob valuables, and that afterwards parents of the committee are charged with the crime.¹⁵⁵

In light of the strength and standing of the Sección 22 in Oaxaca—in politics, public education, and society—the position of the Sección 59 is very fragile and the affiliation with the section dangerous to the members. Despite these difficulties, Maestro Daniel admits that the Sección 59 must ‘have’ about 1,000 schools and about 3,000 teachers.¹⁵⁶ Maestra Maria explains that in Puerto Escondido, the section has four schools, one a pre-school, the other three primary schools.¹⁵⁷ As can be deduced from this fact, the Sección 59 cannot yet always cover the whole basic education of the students. However, according to Cruz Villar, children having completed their primary education in a school of the Sección 59 have a higher level than those coming from the Sección

152 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018; Janet Maza, “Narra Profesor De La Sección 59 Tres Horas De Tortura,” *Quadratin*, accessed May 14, 2021.

153 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

154 Patricia Briseño, “Asesinan a Ex Secretario General De La Sección 22 Del SNTE Y a Otro Maestro,” *Excelsior*, September 24, 2015, accessed May 14, 2021.

155 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

156 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

157 Maestra Maria, Interview on August 21, 2018.

22 upon entering secondary school. Nevertheless, they were working on spreading their range in the state, and in 2017, the first generation of students completed their entire education in schools of the Sección 59. With special security measures in place, the section celebrated its achievements in the heart of the state's capital.¹⁵⁸

7.4 Epilogue

The teachers' movement in Oaxaca has been strong and powerful ever since its founding. However, as the years went by and new generations joined *la base*, the ideological foundation was increasingly lost from sight, and the movement started to experience the members' disinterest on the one hand, and the adoption of methods originally condemned as *charrista* and anti-democratic on the other. The crisis of the teachers' movement of the Sección 22 escalated in 2006 and led to the founding of the Sección 59—which renounces the dissident narrative in light of the corruption inside the former and the damage the struggle methods cause on public education.

Despite the time that has passed since then, in 2018, Maestro Daniel asserted that “until now, we have not been able to get over it.”¹⁵⁹ He remembers the hopes they had for the new CES elected in 2008 and the struggle against the ACE as a potential unifier for the movement. He explains: “We thought we would oxygenate the leadership and the movement.”¹⁶⁰ However, the Sección 22 has still not recovered completely—neither its internal power constituted by the *base* nor its position in Oaxacan politics, which also shows in the rise of yet another union in Oaxaca in 2011,¹⁶¹ the Independent Union of Workers in Education of Mexico (Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Educación de México; SITEM).

158 Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018.

159 “hasta ahorita no lo hemos podido superar” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

160 “Pensamos que íbamos a oxigenar a la dirigencia y al movimiento” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

161 Bensusán, Middlebrook and Celorio Morayta, “El Sindicalismo y la Democratización en México,” 812.

The lack of ideology appears to lie at the core of the instability the *Sección 22* is experiencing, affecting protest measures as well as the section and movement structure. Estrada states that

[i]n line with the analysis that was made, the source of the teachers' crisis was found, in essence, in the loss of the spirit and the democratic and participatory practices of the base, the management, and the leaders, whose apathy, disinterest, and corruption have led to the current situation.¹⁶²

While there are members that only attend and participate in the prospect of obtaining some benefit or when obligated, it would be an exaggeration to assume that the movement is dying out. The earlier, more ideologized generations still participate in the struggle, if not as active teachers, then as part of the retired. Moreover, while some of the young generations lack the desired ideological motivation, others are either educated by family members or close friends in the cause of the *Sección 22* or have engaged with it through their own interest, leading to participation driven by, what the dissidents would call, a 'consciousness.' Then again others, such as Maestra Lupe, disagree with the methods of the section and simply detach as much as possible, some to the extent that they seek affiliation with other sections or unions.

Nonetheless, the secretary general of the Delegation 025 in Puerto Escondido explains that she is experiencing a new dynamic in the assemblies—the teachers appear to be more actively engaged, even asking the members of the CES uncomfortable questions. She further asserts that after the decree in 2015, a position in the CES or in the structure does not have major benefits to offer anymore, so the leaders will have to fulfil their role out of conviction and maybe provide the movement with renewed energy and strength. She considers that, in this manner, the movement gets stronger or disappears all together¹⁶³—either way, it seems to have arrived at a crucial point.

162 “[d]e acuerdo con el análisis que se hizo, el origen de la crisis magisterial se encontraba, en lo esencial, en la pérdida del espíritu y las prácticas democráticas y participativas de las bases, los cuadros intermedios y los líderes, cuya apatía, desinterés y corrupción habían conducido a la situación actual” (Estrada Saavedra, *El Pueblo Ensaya la Revolución*, 118).

163 Secretaria General Delegación 25 Puerto Escondido, Interview on April 10, 2018.

According to Maestro Daniel, the Sección 22 believes that information generates a conscience or awareness, which, in turn generates attitude.¹⁶⁴ Since, as lamented by the Sección 22, this line is already interrupted at its first limb, the movement identifies one major remedy: the active conscientization of the base. As was stated in the First State Workshop for Politicization—a measure in itself—: “It is necessary to raise awareness in the entire base so that they identify the state as the common enemy of the working class and, in particular, of the teachers’ movement.”¹⁶⁵ At the sequel to the workshop, it was further asserted that one cannot expect the teachers to behave according to the Principios Rectores if they do not know them.¹⁶⁶

The crux for the advancement of the movement is hence identified in continuous and systematic political formation of the base—more information and organization are to result in more participation.¹⁶⁷ For the members already actively involved in the profession, the *concientización* is to be achieved, for example, through the Workshops for Politicization or the Workshops for Alternative Education. The responsibility for these events as well as for the continuous education of the base and the organs of the structure through other measures was located primarily with the CEPOS 22. Members just joining the Sección 22 are to participate in an obligatory course, a kind of ‘syndical school’, acquainting them with the history of the movement and its ideology, and creating the desired consciousness. Other measures proposed include a general prohibition of placing new teachers in preferential areas or an increase of the obligation of participation.¹⁶⁸

Maestro Daniel explains that they were currently collecting data, stories, and material from the struggle between 2006 and 2018 to cre-

164 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

165 “Es necesario concientizar a toda la base para que identifiquen al estado como el enemigo común de la clase trabajadora y, en particular, del movimiento magisterial” (CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 14).

166 CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 14.

167 CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 15.

168 CEPOS 22, “Memoria Histórica del X Precongreso Democrático,” 122, 129; CEPOS 22, “Memoria Primer Congreso Político de la Sección XXII,” 10, 22; CEPOS 22, “Primera Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 1, 3, 9, 13; CEPOS 22, “Segunda Jornada Estatal de Politización,” 10, 15; SOPI-CEPOS 22, “Resolutivos V Congreso Político del MDTEO,” 13.

ate the narrative and memory of the period. He states that it was an entire generation of teachers that joined the movement in this period of struggle, however, in 2018, they remained absent from the protest measures.¹⁶⁹ He asserts that the Sección 22 finds itself in an “inertia, a search for what I will do, how we are doing.”¹⁷⁰ As a result, he concludes, the only option they have now is to “go to the people and start anew with the organization in the defense of the territory.”¹⁷¹

169 Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018.

170 “una inercia, una búsqueda de que hago, como vamos” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

171 “irnos con los pueblos, a empezar otra vez a hacer la organización para la defensa del territorio” (Maestro Daniel, Interview on August 9, 2018).

8 Conclusion

“Siempre debe de haber en toda buena obra un villano.”¹

Oaxaca has always held a distinct position in Mexico: Not only is the state among the poorest, its population is also considered to be particularly combative. It therefore does not seem surprising that the state harbors the most prominent and vocal union section of the dissident teachers’ movement. The power and influence of the Sección 22 reach beyond the limits of educational matters and the schools and into state politics, affecting the lives of many Oaxacans. The teachers’ embeddedness in society, above all in rural communities, enables them to quickly organize the people in protest in light of the teachers’ capacity to set their struggle in the context of the defense of the entire Mexican people’s rights. The result is an outstandingly strong social movement, apparently organizing in protest as a reflex against government policies, even when these aim at democratization.

The root of this strength lies in the movement’s narrative, adaptable to appeal to both fellow teachers as well as broader society. In general, it is possible to distinguish between two types of narrative: the master narrative and the personal narrative. The master narrative is usually the one created, maintained, and employed by a group, for example society or, in the case of this analysis, the Sección 22. It is, furthermore, continuously modified so as to fit the meaning and message the group aims to convey. This narrative provides a framework with which the individual can interpret daily events, generate meaning of them, and save them in the form of memory. Through this process of narrative engagement—the acceptance or rejection of the master narrative—the individual forms the story of their lives, the personal narrative. This narrative, in turn, has a decided influence on the person’s identity and their emotions. In a collective, the personal narratives of many then again modify the master narrative, creating a circular process, contributing to the identity of the collective as well as its emotions.

¹ “Every good oeuvre should always have a villain” (Victoria Cruz Villar, Interview on September 1, 2018).

One decisive element of the master narrative of the Sección 22 is cultural memory: society's apparent remembering of historical events, circumstances, and people. As Mexicans have since their infancy been indoctrinated with the meaning of images, personages, dates, and rhetoric figures through stories, commemorations, and other types of events, and, above all, the values they portray and teach, they are able to quickly understand the meaning of the latter's employment in the specific circumstances.

One of the two primary strands in the narrative created and maintained by the Sección 22 is based on the cultural memory of the Mexican Revolution. The Revolution in itself is very complex: It started out as a revolt against the system installed by Porfirio Díaz that stabilized the country after a prolonged period of civil wars and unrests, and managed to integrate it into the international markets. In this endeavor, however, this system acquired dictatorial features and, particularly on the local level, was characterized by nepotism and *caciquismo*, alienating and stirring up the population.

In the democratic opening that seemed to appear in the system in 1910, Francisco I. Madero presented himself as the opposition candidate, ringing in what many associate with 'the Mexican Revolution:' the violent decade. Over the following ten years, various protagonists appeared on the national stage, fighting either for control over the country or for their specific vision of what it should look like after the fighting was over. In this attempt, the allies changed repeatedly, which is one factor making the Revolution so complex.

The cultural memory of the Revolution integrated into the narrative of the Sección 22 contains various levels. First, the Revolution is a memory figure in itself. When employed in the context of the struggle of the Sección 22, regardless of their historical accuracy, symbols and rhetoric pointing to the Revolution are mostly associated with the successful defense of the people's rights against a suppressing force, in this case in the shape of an apparent dictatorship. This notion was implemented in the form of Articles 3, 27 and 123 in the new constitution written in 1917. Furthermore, the revolutionary elites ruling the country immediately after the violent decade made sure to secure its power by institutionalizing the Revolution in the form of a mass party at the end of the 1920s,

which eventually evolved into the PRI in 1946. Here is where we can find the core issue defining the relationship between the Sección 22 and the government—whether PRI or PAN did not make a difference: The PRI is, per definition, the heir of the Revolution. However, the Sección 22 sees itself as the true heir since it defends the people against a supposedly tyrannical government. The perception that the PRI was, in fact, not the defender of the people showed in the manner it treated the student conflicts in 1968, before the dissident teachers' movement had even begun.

The protagonists of the Revolution as well as rebellion leaders of the subsequent decades have become memory figures in the narrative of the Sección 22, utilized to hint at injustice and point out the government as the enemy. Most prominent and unambiguous are Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. The Mexican cultural memory surrounding these two men is very pronounced: Both are remembered for their dedication and service to the Mexican people—Zapata, for example, with his call for 'land and liberty.' Zapata's apparently flawless conviction even resulted in a social movement carrying his name. Ricardo Flores Magón is another memory figure of the period; however, he is not as well-known as the former two, perhaps because he led a less spectacular life and was rather a man of ideology than of action in the battlefield. Still, for many his name is associated with the founding of the Mexican Liberal Party and his fight for anarchy. Legends and myths surround their lives and, above all, their deaths, and have led to various movies and other pieces of popular culture.

Particularly in the context of Villa, Zapata, and Flores Magón, it is necessary to consider the adaptability of the narrative: For these three to unequivocally be heroes, their reputation needs to be flawless. Hence, the national cultural memory only remembers details fitting into their reputation of being social fighters, persecuted by the oppressors. Above all the assassination of the former two as well as the miserable death of Flores Magón in a prison in the U.S. contribute to this impression.

The memory figure of Porfirio Díaz is highly ambiguous in the Oaxacan context—in fact, it would be interesting to investigate his reputation in other Mexican states. On the one hand, he was, of course, a dictator-like figure. However, particularly the city of Miahuatlán, which was named after Díaz, seems to simply overlook this period and remember

him for his heroic behavior in the battle of Puebla. Perhaps due to this ambiguity, the Sección 22 does not make much use of him in its narrative—it is rather the motive of liberation from a faceless oppressor or regime that is drawn from the Revolution in this context. Either way, the memory of Díaz is a perfect example for the adaptability of narrative to the guidelines instated by society.

Further joining the ranks of the unambiguous heroes are the teachers leading movements in the second half of the 20th century, before the CNTE was founded: Othón Salazar, Lucio Cabañas, Arturo Gámiz, Genaro Vázquez, and Misael Núñez Acosta. Their reputation is comparable to that of Villa, Zapata, and Flores Magón, as they have lived modest lives and fought for their convictions regarding the role of the people and how they should be treated. Some even found death because of their cause, doubtlessly contributing to their legacy.

By employing these figures in the master narrative of its struggle, the Sección 22 instructs its members to compare themselves to these heroes and adapt their personal narrative and, hence, their identity and emotions accordingly.

Within the context of cultural memory and narrative, the *escuelas normales*—the teachers' schools—take up the position of transmitting the values the teachers are to display in the future. Particularly the *escuelas normales rurales* in the poorer and remote areas of the country incorporate the legacy of the Revolution, as they, on the one hand, were created to bring education to everyone, and, on the other, commonly include socialist elements in their training. As students from these schools exhibit a heightened readiness to rebel, the institutions are occasionally also considered to be 'breeding-grounds of *guerrilleros*.' The lamentable conditions many of these schools are in and the preference of the schools to admit students from poor and agricultural backgrounds most likely support this tendency.

Seeing that their own union was plotting with the government to the disadvantage of the greater part of the Mexican teachers—particularly showing in the lacking representation of their needs and demands in the higher instances—, various sections of the SNTE started rebelling in the late 1970s. In December 1979, these sections founded the umbrella organization CNTE to better coordinate protest activities.

The sections in Oaxaca and Chiapas, furthermore, quickly managed to enforce democracy in the election process of their sectional executive committees, leading to the latter being constituted entirely of dissidents. Parallel to the section structure provided by the SNTE, the Sección 22 additionally installed a non-statutory structure for their MDTEO that was to ensure democracy at all times, as well as a truthful representation of the needs of all teachers in Oaxaca. Via the organs created in this structure, the transmission of the narrative of the section is facilitated.

The introduction of neoliberalism in Mexico in the 1980s appeared to provide proof for the Sección 22 that the government was now finally renouncing its revolutionary heritage since capitalism and neoliberalism have not been parts of the Revolution—in fact, they appear to be rather the opposite, providing the image of another Porfiriato. In this context, the movement of the Sección 22, which started almost simultaneously to the introduction of neoliberalism, can be considered as the second part of a double movement—the movement instigated by society to protect itself from the free market philosophy, aiming, instead, at introducing a type of ‘moral economy.’ Considering both factors—the apparent return of the Porfiriato and the movement of the Sección 22 against it—the movement itself, hence, appears to be the repetition or a revival of the Revolution—in the sense of the saying: History repeats itself.

While fighting against neoliberalism and its introduction on the streets, the teachers of the Sección 22 have moreover designed an alternative education that is to prevent Mexican society from being placed in the position of a mere producer for international markets, and education from becoming simply an investment. The education the Sección 22 proposes—in the form of the PTEO—aims to teach critical thinking and analysis of a given situation as a counterweight to globalization that provides quick and easy information. This way, the children are to liberate themselves from the oppressor. These attempts are also in line with the ongoing inter-American discussion about the need to free education from neoliberalism, which is, e.g., demonstrated in the conference held online by the Sección 22 with Henry Giroux.

Additionally, education is to be based on the existing conditions in the communities, built from the ground up instead of implementing visions from the top that do not consider the differences of the educa-

tional circumstances on site. This is considered particularly important in a state displaying such discrepancies and marginalization as does Oaxaca. To this end, the children are to be made aware of their roots, of the customs and traditions of their communities by way of the integration of the PTEO in regular classes. In these projects, however, the Sección 22 also integrates its narrative of resistance and rebellion, thus passing the framework on to the next generations of Oaxacans.

The master narrative of the Sección 22—claiming that the government has deviated from its revolutionary heritage and that the union section's movement was the true heir—was further reinforced by a number of circumstances and events in the first two decades of the 21st century. In 2006, the violence of the government's response to the traditional protest period of the teachers, coupled with the frustration that had accumulated in light of the governor's style of politics, led to solidarity by the people with the teachers. What ensued was a street riot between protesters, supported by non-teachers, and police forces deployed to clear the protests. To represent the 'real' people of Oaxaca, on the one hand, and, on the other, better organize the protests, the APPO was founded. For about six months, the organization controlled the city center of Oaxaca's capital by instating a kind of alternative government in the form of an assembly of representatives of the different regions, and defended the center against the attempts of the government to regain control. The Sección 22 left the protests in October—also due to the fact that many had not received any salary for various months—, which was later called 'the betrayal by the Sección 22.' Still, the events of 2006 not only reinforced the section in the narrative that the government is ready to use violence against the people, but also that an alternative government is possible.

The next major controversy the Sección 22 was facing was the passing of the Pacto por México in 2012 and, particularly, the Educational Reform passed one year later. The Reform proposed a number of measures that were to improve the Mexican educational system; the one most consequential for the teachers aimed at ensuring the teachers' qualification. The teachers of the Sección 22—and the CNTE in general—perceived the Reform as an attempt to align education as well as the teachers themselves to neoliberal guidelines, leading, above all, to

employment insecurity. The biggest point of critique were the exams that were to be introduced to evaluate the teachers' suitability: one upon graduation, one for those already working to ensure their qualification and assess the need for further training, and one for every application to a higher position. The teachers of the Sección 22 reacted with renewed fervor against what they perceived and identified as a neoliberal attack on the educational system and their profession. In their narrative, they, hence, included the notion that the government was punishing the teachers for their dissidence, as well as the claim that the government wants to rid itself from all responsibility for education and place it on private companies and the parents.

The active obstruction of the measures that were to implement the Educational Reform in 2013 eventually (two years later) led to a reform to the decree that had established the IEEPO in Oaxaca in 1992. The reform modified the administrative structure of education in the state by remodeling the IEEPO and eliminating the positions formerly staffed by the Sección 22. For the dissident movement, this reform was a double betrayal: First, the teachers had trusted in the support of the governor Gabino Cué; second, they still vehemently negated the claim that they had in any given moment had the rectory of the IEEPO. In fact, the reform disconnected the union from the Secretariat of Public Education entirely: Teachers could now assume a position without union affiliation, and they, as well as parents, could appeal directly to the IEEPO instead of to the union section. This measure effectively curtailed much of the power structure the Sección 22 had constructed over more than two decades. The movement, in turn, used this development to strengthen its narrative with yet another example of the government's apparent attempt to curtail the power of the Sección 22 to punish it and to finally be able to implement neoliberalism unhindered while trusting that the teachers' fear of losing their jobs would lead to anger and renewed engagement in protests.

The second major direct and violent confrontation between the social movement of the Sección 22 and the police forces deployed by the government happened exactly ten years and five days after the violent clearing of the Zócalo in 2006. The teachers had been blocking highways all over the state as a measure to pressure the government to

accept the section's demands. On June 19, police forces attempted to lift the blockade in Asunción Nochixtlán and a riot ensued. Again, the local population joined the protesters—who, in all likelihood, were not only made up of teachers but also of locals protesting other issues—and violence erupted, killing eight and wounding many more. The exact occurrence of the riot is not finally resolved as both sides claim to have reacted only in self-defense to the other's violence and aggression. Apart from strengthening the narrative of an oppressive government, the riot of Nochixtlán also supported the Sección 22 in the claim that it is, indeed, defending all the people and, in turn, is also supported by the people. The events further nourished the allegation of the union section that the government was criminalizing public protest.

However, the Sección 22 has also been experiencing a severe crisis, showing the areas in which the narrative is cracking. The first is the above-mentioned relationship to the parents and to larger society: While in the early years of the movement the protest measures and the social movement itself had received much solidarity, people now rather display annoyance with the repeated disruptions of their daily lives. The fact that many days throughout the schoolyear are cancelled due to protest activities further alienates the parents. Combined with the often lacking 'quality' of the education the children receive when school does take place, private schools seem to be the winner of the protest of the Sección 22.

The crisis furthermore shows the increasing discrepancy between the narrative and the identity of the dissident teachers. Particularly witnessed among the younger generations, members appear to not educate themselves further and engage with the movement's history and values anymore, but, instead, seem to prefer the conveniences and comforts of globalization, and only attend meetings and protest measures when obligated or for personal benefits—putting in extra hours to do a PTEO does usually not happen on a voluntary basis. In this case, the master narrative appears to be too far removed from the individual to contextualize their personal narrative in, and, as a result, cause interest and engagement with the purpose and aim of the movement. Instead, they become passive and fulfil their job without conviction, weakening the movement from within as well as drawing in alienation from without.

So while the identity of a teacher in Oaxaca still includes the rebellious nature, the ideology and emotions behind this identity are faltering.

Furthermore, the lack of conviction and values shows on other examples. On the one hand, members might participate purely for personal benefits—they might, for example, strike lucrative deals with the government or with private companies, or simply enjoy the power of the position they hold. On the other hand, a lack of respect for democracy is witnessed: The Sección 22 has always had groups with different opinions in its ranks; however, it appears that those groups calling for moderation or even a change of direction are regarded as supporters of the government and traitors of the movement's cause. The hostile reaction and outright aggression remind of the allegation of missing democracy that the Sección 22 usually accuses the SNTE of, and display a lack of self-reflection and self-critique regarding the claim of being a pluri-ethnic grassroots movement representing 'the entire Mexican society' and acting according to paternalistic and anti-democratic notions and traditions.

As a result of this alienation, one of the two dominant groups inside the Sección 22 split off in the months prior to the riots in 2006 and, later that year, founded the Sección 59. The new union section—not adhering to the CNTE—hurts the Sección 22 at its greatest weakness: The education children are lacking due to the teachers' protest activities. Needless to say, for many parents their children receiving an education is more important than the teachers' struggle.

The Sección 22 reacts to this new section by declaring it a threat: It supposedly represents the *charrismo* of the SNTE and the union's bond with the government, and hence the very reason the teachers' movement was founded in the first place. As a result, there is open hostility between the two sections, and due to the strength and power of the Sección 22 in the state, the Sección 59 and its members need to let caution prevail in their daily lives.

Alan Riding states: "The past remains alive in the Mexican soul. [...] History, revised and adjusted to suit contemporary needs, is [...] mobilized to maintain the cohesion of modern society. When ancient and modern clash, emotions invariably favor the past."² Albeit in the con-

2 Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 14.

text of the Mexican Revolution, Jonathan Brown furthermore asserts that, intensified by the heterogeneity of society making modifications difficult, “Mexicans attempted to manage change, modernization, or the introduction of things foreign, by rearranging its new social and political relationships according to traditional patterns of behavior.”³ Both notions meet in the narrative of the Sección 22 claiming that the government has lost its claim of being the heir to the Revolution that had freed the Mexican people from an oppressive government.

When Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Morena party was elected president in 2018, the mood in the country changed.⁴ The newspaper *El Financiero* calls the Morena party (Morena standing for Movimiento Regeneración Nacional) the ‘fourth transformation of the PRI’—the first being its founding in 1928, the second its transformation to the PMR, and the third its conversion to the PRI in 1946. The newspaper suggests that the party is the “historical culmination of the Independence, the Reform, and the Revolution,”⁵ and the very name of the party hints at the need of the country for regeneration.

With the transition of the national government from the party that has been dominating since the end of the Revolution to a leftist party representing not the elites but ‘the other parts’ of society, the Sección 22 has suddenly lost one of its two major enemies—only the STNE is left. If the very own government is taking the same direction, the Sección 22 might deviate from its reflex of rejecting government policies and allow for democratization processes to develop with more ease. In this case, the social movement and its members would need to adjust their narratives and, hence, their identities and emotions. Consequently, it remains to be seen whether, after more than a century after the Revolution, being a teacher in Oaxaca will still indicate an identity of rebellion, drawn from the heroes of Mexican history.

3 Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico*, 3.

4 He had run in 2006 and in 2012 for the PRD while founding the Morena party, which split off the PRD.

5 “culminación histórica de la Independencia, la Reforma y la Revolución” (Fernando García Ramírez, “La Cuarta Transformación Del PRI,” *El Financiero*, January 13, 2020, accessed June 17, 2021).

9 List of Acronyms

ENGLISH

GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

SPANISH

ACE	Alianza por la Calidad Educativa (Alliance for the Quality of Education)
ANMEB	Acuerdo Nacional para la Modernización de la Educación Básica (National Agreement for the Modernization of the Basic Education)
ANR	Asamblea Nacional Representativa (National Representative Assembly)
APPO	Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca (Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca)
CCL	Comité Central de Lucha (Central Struggle Committee)
CEDES 22	Centro de Estudios y Desarrollo Educativo de la Sección 22 (Center for Studies and Educational Development of the Sección 22)
CEN	Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (National Executive Committee)
CENCOS 22	Centro de Comunicación Social de la Sección 22 (Center of Social Communication of the Sección 22)
CEPOS 22	Centro de Estudios Políticos Sindicales de la Sección 22 (Center for Syndicate Political Studies of the Sección 22)
CES	Comité Ejecutivo Seccional (Sectional Executive Committee)
CETEO	Coordinadora Estatal de los Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca (State Coordination of Educational Workers in Oaxaca)
CFE	Comisión Federal de Electricidad (Federal Electrical Commission)
CINVESTAV del IPN	Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Avanzados del Instituto Politécnico Nacional (Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute)
CNOP	Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (National Confederation of Popular Organizations)
CODEDI	Comité de Defensa de los Pueblos Indígenas (Committee for the Defense of the Indigenous People)

COMADH	Comisión Magisterial de los Derechos Humanos (Magisterial Commission of Human Rights)
CONAMUP	Coordinadora Nacional del Movimiento Urbano Popular (National Coordinating Committee of the Urban Popular Movement)
CTM	Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Confederation of Workers in Mexico)
ETA	Escuela Técnica Agropecuaria (Agricultural Technical School)
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation)
FECSM	Federación de Estudiantes Campesinos Socialistas de México (Federation of Socialist Peasant Students of Mexico)
FEPAM	Fiscalía Especial Para Asuntos del Magisterio (District Attorney of Magisterial Matters)
FNAP	Frente Nacional de Acción Popular (National Popular Action Front)
FSODO	Frente de Sindicatos y Organizaciones Democráticas de Oaxaca (Front of Democratic Unions and Organizations of Oaxaca)
FSTSE	Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado (Union Federation of Workers in the State Sector)
ICN	Instancia de Coordinación Nacional (Authority of National Coordination)
IEEPO	Instituto Estatal de la Educación Pública de Oaxaca (Institute for Public Education in Oaxaca)
INEE	Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (National Institute for the Evaluation of Education)
ISSSTE	Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado (Institute for Security and Social Services for the Workers of Education)
MDTEO	Movimiento Democrático de Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca (Democratic Movement of Workers in Education in Oaxaca)
MRM	Movimiento Revolucionario del Magisterio (Revolutionary Movement of Teachers)
PAAE	Personal de Apoyo y Asistencia a la Educación (Personnel for Support and Assistance in Education)
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party)
PANAL	Partido Nueva Alianza (Party of the New Alliance)
PEMCEV	Programa Estatal para Mejorar las Condiciones Escolares y de Vida de los Niños, Jóvenes y Adultos de Oaxaca (State Program for Improvement of the Scholastic and Life Conditions of the Children, Youths, and Adults of Oaxaca)

PFP	Policía Federal Preventiva (Federal Preventive Police)
PLM	Partido Liberal Mexicano (Liberal Mexican Party)
PNR	Partido Nacional Revolucionario (Revolutionary National Party)
PRETEO	Programa para el Reconocimiento Educativo de los Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca (Program for the Educational Recognition of the Workers in Education of Oaxaca)
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party)
PRM	Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (Party of the Mexican Revolution)
PRONASOL	Programa Nacional de Solidaridad (Programm of National Solidarity)
PROPCIEEO	Programa Popular Comunitario de Infraestructura y Equipamiento Educativo de Oaxaca (Popular Community Project of Infrastructure and Educational Equipment of Oaxaca)
PTEO	Plan para la Transformación de la Educación de Oaxaca (Plan for the Transformation of Education in Oaxaca)
PUNCN	Promotora de la Unidad Nacional contra el Neoliberalismo (Promoters of National Unity against Neoliberalism)
SEEO	Sistema de Evaluación Educativa de Oaxaca (System of Evaluation of Education in Oaxaca)
SEFPTEO	Sistema de Formación Profesional de los Trabajadores de la Educación de Oaxaca (State System of Professional Training of the Workers in Education of Oaxaca)
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública (Secretariat of Public Education)
SITEM	Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Educación de México (Independent Union of Workers in Education of Mexico)
TEEA	Taller Estatal de Educación Alternativa (State Workshops of Alterative Education)

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The state of Oaxaca has always held a distinct position in Mexico: Not only is it among the poorest, but its population is also considered to be particularly combative. It therefore does not seem surprising that the state harbors the most prominent and vocal union section of the teachers' union SNTE and the dissident teachers' movement CNTE. The power and influence of the Sección 22 reach beyond the limits of educational matters and the schools and into state politics, affecting the lives of many Oaxacans—also due to frequent street blockades and strikes that lead to educational deficits for children. The teachers' embeddedness in society and their narrative of protest sets their struggle in the context of the defense of the entire Mexican people's rights and in the idea of the state's cultural heritage. The result is an outstandingly strong social movement, apparently organizing in protest as a reflex against government policies, even when these aim at a long-necessary democratization.

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