To the indigenous activists,
who are changing their worlds.
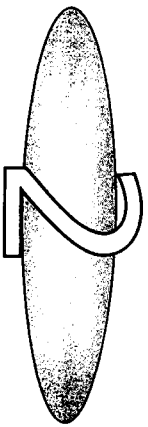
To Nelle Fuller,
who has always believed in the justice
of Native American causes.

The Struggle for
Indigenous Rights
in Latin America

Edited by
Nancy Grey Postero and Leon Zamosc

From Indigenismo to Zapatismo

The Struggle for a Multi-ethnic Mexican Society

Gunther Dietz

Over the past decades, and particularly since the mid-eighties, an "ethnic revival" (Smith 1981) has been recorded in Mexico as in almost every other part of the world. Newly emerging or re-emerging "ethnic groups" or "units" (Elwert 1989) challenge national institutions by claiming political and territorial autonomy while demanding more than just linguistic and cultural privileges granted to indigenous peoples by nation-state governments. Now, in Mexico as well as in other Latin American countries (Urban and Sherzer 1994, Santana 1995), the privatization of indigenous land and the rapid monetarization of their subsistence-oriented economy threaten the territorial and social foundations of native groups.

Responding to these tendencies, new supra-local ethnic organizations have emerged over the last twenty years, and indigenous organizations and movements[1] have arisen on the local, regional and national level. Mexico is an important site for study not only because of the overwhelming presence indigenous movements have acquired there during the last two decades, but also because of the current political transition from authoritarian rule to representative democracy (Cornelius 1996). This offers important insights into the contribution of ethnic movements to democratization and political participation.

This chapter analyzes the evolution of indigenous movements in twentieth-century Mexico and their struggles for recognition of indigenous rights. After framing indigenous claims within the history of state-society relations and Mexican nationalism, I analyze and compare the two basic frameworks within which indigenous groups have raised demands since the Mexican Revolution: the *agrarista* (agrarianist) tradition of state-dominated land reform and its impact on rural corporatism and peasant social organization, and the *indigenista* (indigenist) tradition of implementing particular development and integration policies for ethnically-identified regions and communities.

The central focus of this chapter contrasts the contents and organizational forms achieved by the main indigenous actors who have emerged since the 1970s in response to the failure of both *indigenismo* and *agrarismo* to resolve the "Indian Question" in Mexico. Both state-sponsored and independent, class-based and ethnically defined organizations are compared in the course of their struggles *vis-à-vis* the nation-state and *mestizo* society. Since the 1990s, in the course of the neoliberal retreat of the state from development and integration policies, state-society as well as minority-majority relations are being redefined by new ethnic actors, of whom the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) is only the most visible. The process through which these innovative coalitions of communities and alliances of highly heterogeneous social actors appeared, first in the regional and then in the national arena, are illustrated with examples from different Mexican regions.

Finally, the EZLN phenomenon and the zapatista movement are analyzed as platforms of articulation and of convergence of old and new indigenous claims. This case study shows how contemporary struggles for territorial autonomy, decentralization, and the democratization of Mexican society are redefining the meanings of community, belonging, participation, and citizenship.

The National Historical Framework of Indigenous Mobilization

In Mexico, the persistence of ethnically differentiated populations represents the continuity of contradictory processes of colonization and resistance, whose origins date back to the beginnings of European expansion in the Americas. Throughout these processes, autochthonous social structures and institutions were reduced to a local level of organization, through their forced inclusion into a bipolar system of *castas* (racial categories).[2] The logic of this system distinguished between "us" and "them," between Europeans and "Indians," between the rural and locally confined *república de indios* (republic of the Indians), on the one hand, and the urban and increasingly cosmopolitan *república de españoles* (republic of the Spaniards), on the other hand. Willingly or not, the establishment of

the colonial caste system and the simultaneous forced re-settlement of entire populations transformed the comunidad indígena (indigenous community) into the central identity marker of its inhabitants (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1976, Varese 2001), while all supra-local entities were reduced to "broken memories" (Florescano 1999), which were precariously retained as weak regional ethnic traditions.

Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Indigenous Community

Throughout the colonial period, the segregational bipolar system was maintained despite increasing economic and infrastructural integration of the subsystems of haciendas (large land holdings), mining industries, and other extractive exploitations (Gibson 1964, Lockhart 1992). This colonial system was not challenged by the new criollo (American-born Spaniards) elites who consolidated political power throughout the independence wars. Instead, in the nineteenth century, the nascent Mexican nation-state further threatened the position of the indigenous community via three policy axes: administrative "modernization," privatization of collective land tenure, and agricultural industrialization.[3]

In order to gain minimal local political control, the criollo elite deepened administrative reforms already initiated by the late Bourbon regime. Nearly all mestizo villages situated in indigenous regions become cabeceras, or head towns of the new municipal governments, while the indigenous communities were classified as tenencias (possessions), which depend directly on their respective municipal governments. As a result of this politics of "municipalization" and "re-municipalization," which in different Mexican regions were expanded and continuously updated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the colonial mestizo enclaves emerged as a main pillar of the nation-state's presence in the countryside. Consequently, the bipolar colonial system was reinforced by the structural asymmetry established by the cabecera-tenencia dichotomy (Hoffmann 1989, Aguirre Beltrán 1991 [1953]).

As the empowerment of the mestizo enclaves did not succeed altogether in dissolving indigenous communal identities and forms of organization – still shaped by the customary communal ties – the urban elite, strongly influenced by political as well as economic liberalism, tried to impose the nation-state's sovereignty and "positive law" upon the outstanding "remnants" of colonial corporatism: the corporate land held by the Catholic Church as well as by indigenous communities.[4] The privatization of collective land tenure was officially promoted by the Leyes de Colonización (Laws of Colonization, 1824), which dispossessed the indigenous communities of their so-called tierras baldías (empty lands), and by the Ley de Desamortización (Law of Entailment, 1856), which

directly dissolved the corporate nature of the community by canceling its legal basis.[5] In reaction to the political and judicial resistance exhibited by the communities against these step-by-step privatizations, these so-called "extinguished communities" were no longer legally able to fight against the parceling and privatization process. Passive resistance became the only way of obstructing these processes.

In its effort to combine privatization and industrialization, the Porfirio Díaz administration expanded the abilities of outside companies to demarcate and acquire indigenous lands beginning in 1876. The new Leyes de Colonización (1875 and 1883) allowed private companies to demarcate and sell all parcels of land which lacked formal, individual ownership. Thus, the only way in which communities could legally defend their land was by demarcating and distributing the collective land among the comuneros (members of indigenous communities) themselves. This legal process not only produced conflict inside the indigenous communities, but it was also very expensive. Consequently, by the end of the century most indigenous communities had lost the largest and most productive parts of their formerly collectively-owned lands and remained highly indebted to external agencies and/or companies.

The Mexican Revolution and the Ideology of Mestizaje

It was precisely in these indigenous regions where participation in the Mexican Revolution was highest. Local indigenous actors engaged in the armed struggle either to re-gain communal land and from mestizo outsiders and from community neighbors who succeeded in monopolizing individual land tenure, or from neighboring communities, which claimed the land because of overlapping and conflicting demarcation procedures. In contrast to impoverished mestizo day-laborers, who actively participated in the Revolution in order to have access to land for the first time, in most of the indigenous regions, the Mexican Revolution is characterized more by its restorative than its revolutionary nature (Tutino 1986). Due to this basic aim of defending and reestablishing the "sovereignty" of the indigenous community against external intruders, the officially proclaimed agrarian revolution often was limited to local rebellions.[6]

With regards to the degree of communal decomposition suffered inside indigenous regions during the nineteenth century, two kinds of actors can be distinguished (Knight 1998): uprooted communal peasants and landless day-laborers who fought for a state-led redistribution of land, and the still locally integrated indigenous comuneros who struggled for formal recognition of their communities and the restitution of their former collective property. As a consequence, two models of agrarian reform emerged.[7] First was the state-dominated model of top-down dotación (land grant), in which the nation-state concedes the usufruct of land to a particular

group of landless peasants or former day-laborers. Second was the communalist model of bottom-up *restitución* (restitution), in which the community is acknowledged as a "free confederation of agrarian communities" and the basic entity of the post-revolutionary state.
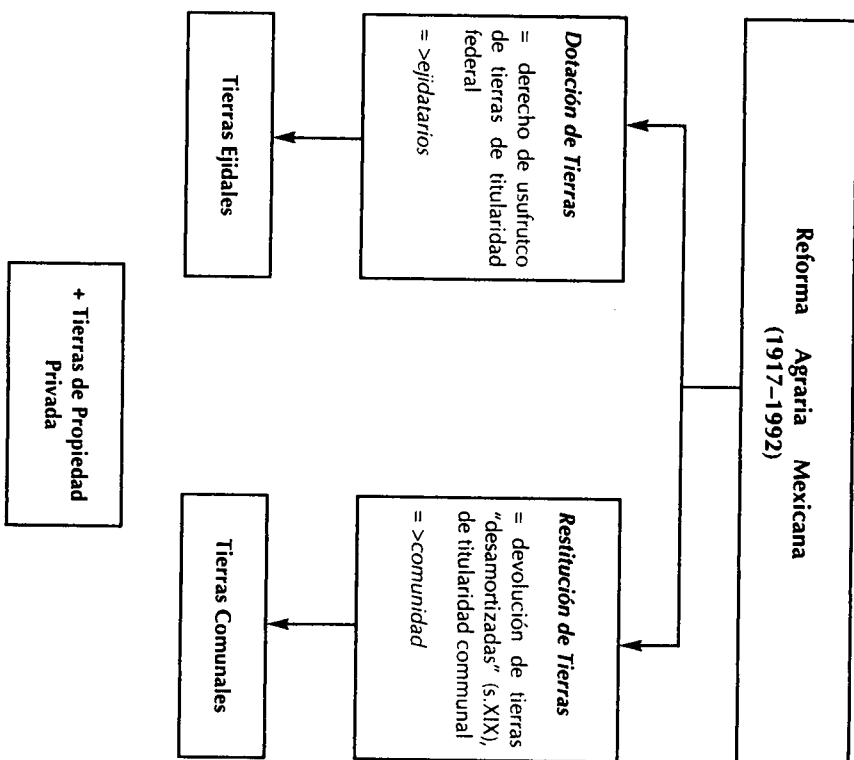
Reforma Agraria Mexicana
(1917–1992)

Dotación de Tierras
= derecho de usufructo de tierras de titularidad federal
= >ejidatarios

Restitución de Tierras
= devolución de tierras "desamortizadas" (s.XIX), de titularidad comunal
= >comunidad

Tierras Ejidales

Tierras Comunales

+ Tierras de Propiedad Privada

Figure 1.1   The Mexican Agrarian Reform (Dietz 1999:156)

The military defeat of the Zapata's army during the Mexican Revolution symbolized the formal victory of the state-led model of agrarian reform over the community-based model. As indigenous communities continued struggling for recognition within a post-revolutionary framework, the agrarian reform process was accompanied by a campaign of "ideological penetration" (Corbett and Whiteford 1986) by the nation-state in the communities. Under the influence of the *Ateneo de la Juventud* (the Atheneum of Youth), a pre-revolutionary group of urban intellectuals

engaged in re-defining the "national project," the exclusive and Eurocentric *criollo* nationalism of the postcolonial elites (Anderson 1988) was substituted by an integrationist nationalist discourse, according to which the emerging Mexican nation would be a merger of pre-colonial indigenous, colonial European, and *criollo* elements. The resulting *mestizo*, who until then had only been perceived as the illegitimate result of the forbidden crossing of boundaries between the segregated *república de españoles* and *república de indios*, was no longer seen as a "biological bastard," but as a new "cosmic race" (Vasconcelos 1997 [1925]), the seed and symbol of the new, post-revolutionary nation.

This ideological turn, which was already prepared by nineteenth-century precedents,[8] was made official through institutional processes undertaken in the 1920s. In 1921, General Obregón chose José Vasconcelos, one of the central figures of the Ateneo movement and main theorist of the *mestizaje* ideology, to be founding minister of the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP – Secretary of Public Education), the emblematic Ministry of Education conceived by Vasconcelos as an avant-garde institution that would bring the revolution to the countryside. In political terms, the project of national *mestizaje* implied specific measures for "integrating" into the *mestizo* nation-state those groups which did not identify as *mestizos*, i.e. the indigenous populations of Mexico (Maihold 1986). Ideological *mestizofilia* (Basave Benítez 1992) was thus turned into integrationist politics.

It is in this domain of integrationist post-revolutionary politics in which Mexican indigenous struggles must be situated. An analysis of the emergence and evolution of indigenous dissidence in rural Mexico during this century allows for an evaluation of its national impact. Two factors have been decisive for the step-by-step emancipation of Mexican indigenous struggles from their post-revolutionary institutional tutelage: the crisis of agrarian corporatism and of the governing state-party, and the failure of *indigenismo* to homogenize and integrate the Mexican indigenous populations.

Agrarismo *and the Limits of Rural Corporatism*

Since the end of the armed conflict and until the late 1960s, the model conceived by president Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940) of a "corporate state" had successfully accomplished its dual function: to institutionally tie up the vast majority of Mexicans as a rural and urban "base" for the state-party, and to open up channels to articulate the claims and necessities of this base and to absorb the sporadic expressions of its opposition and dissent.

This corporatist model was expanded toward indigenous regions as well. In this case, however, the post-revolutionary state did not succeed

in creating a closely-knit network of powerful and loyal regional *caciques* (local "chiefs"). This failure was due to the persistence of corporate communal structures of local politics, and the omnipresence of Lázaro Cárdenas who acted as personal mediator between the *mestizo* state and the indigenous communities in land reform and other procedures (Friedrich 1981, Becker 1987).

In those indigenous regions which opposed state-run agrarian reform, Cárdenas and Vasconcelos started ambitious educational campaigns that sent *maestros agraristas* (agrarian teachers) out to educate the "stubborn peasants" and convince them of the merits of institutionalized revolution (Gledhill 1991, Vaughan 1997). Although public schools were finally accepted in most communities, local resistance was mainly directed against agrarista teachers as representatives of the state-dominated agrarian reform project. Resisting the agrarian reform project, communities still claimed the alternative "utopia" of community-controlled land tenure in which "the subject of the land is neither a ward of the state nor an individualist entrepreneur, but a member of a rural collectivity with significant autonomy in the administration of its lands" (Nugent and Alonso 1994: 246).

This position contrasted sharply with the regime's interpretation, codified in Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which acknowledged the nation-state's original ownership of all lands, which it could transfer by way of *dotación* or *restitución* to any given community (Warman 1984). Cárdenas and the *agraristas* generally favored the *dotación ejidal* (granting of communal lands) alternative, as it created the new administrative entity, the *ejido*, which offered opportunities for intervention in local affairs through the selection of loyal beneficiaries as *ejidatarios* (members/owners of communal lands) and through mediation of the decisive broker figure of the *comisariado ejidal* (ejido commissioner).

Any procedure of agrarian reform affecting indigenous communities was thus perceived by the local population as a negotiation process between the nation-state and the community. By actively participating in this negotiation, indigenous communities started integrating into the national project – they participated asymmetrically, but independently. Agrarian reform was perceived as a social contract, a bilaterally binding agreement between the state and the community. This post-revolutionary social contract was often identified with and embodied by the figure of Lázaro Cárdenas (Spenser and Levinson 1999: 245).[9]

The post-revolutionary state thus succeeded in institutionalizing agrarian reform for state formation purposes by integrating the peasant population into the vertical state-party structure: the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC – National Peasant Federation), the "peasant sector" of the PRI, soon obtained a monopoly in negotiating *ejido* concessions with state agencies. Already under the Cárdenas presidency, all communities that struggled for land distribution had to integrate into a
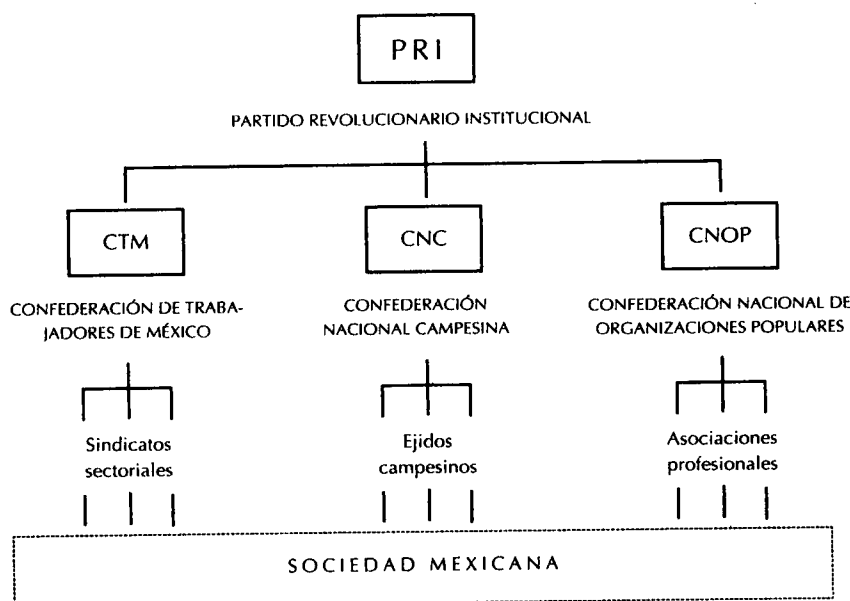
Figure 1.2   The Corporatist State in Search of Mexican Society (Dietz 1999:172)

local *Liga Agraria* (Agrarian League) which was a member of the CNC (Reitmeier 1990). Once the land was distributed, the *comisariado ejidal* would form the last link in the chain of state-society intermediation (Huizer 1982, Warman 1984). These local brokers acted as "hinges" between state and party interests on the one hand, and local demands and needs, on the other.

Figure 1.3   The Vertical Integration of the *Ejido* (Dietz 1999:177)

This system of rural corporatism has been functioning for decades under two main conditions: first, the official role of the state party in deepening the process of agrarian reform throughout the *ejido*; and second, the political will of state agencies to promote rural development initiatives aimed at small-holder *ejidatarios* (Piñar Alvarez 2002). Since the neoliberal turn at the beginning of the 1980s, neither condition is being fulfilled. Nevertheless, the corporatist agrarian regime came into crisis even before this due to two different actors who were never successfully integrated into the vertical scheme of corporate control. First were the landless day-laborers who never received any land, and,

second, indigenous communities, which resisted the *dotación* option of agrarian reform.

In the first case, despite Cárdenas's efforts to abolish large estates and redistribute former hacienda land among its former *jornaleros*, in many Mexican regions agrarian reform was never implemented for political reasons. For example, if a large estate was owned by members of the "revolutionary family" of former generals of the Mexican Revolution or by members of the victorious faction of the post-revolutionary civil war, neither *devolución* nor *restitución* were ways of gaining title to the disputed land. In those cases, the landless peasants were encouraged to occupy newly exploitable – and often economically unattractive – land as *colonos* (settlers). Since the 1970s, both the landless laborers and the marginalized *colonos* have contributed to rural dissidence (Canabal Cristiani 1983, Astorga Lira 1988).

The second source of rural dissidence is tied directly to contemporary Mexican indigenous movements. Those communities which after decades of negotiations and contentious mobilizations finally succeeded in resisting state-led agrarian reform through *restitución* were frequently marginalized by rural development agencies, since their local representatives often resisted integration into the CNC hierarchies (Aguado López 1989, Dietz 1999). The local authorities maintained the control of local politics even after the agrarian certification procedure ended. Then, new institutions headed by officials called the *representante de bienes comunales* (communal land representative) were integrated into the pre-existing system of customary, rotating posts and responsibilities, called *cargos*.[10] Accordingly, the indigenous communities which maintain communal control of their land distinguish themselves from the *ejido* communities by their lesser degree of political integration into the corporatist system of governance. Their frequent marginalization by public development agencies constituted a major point of departure for innovative independent mobilizations at the margins of the corporatist system.

The Legacy of Indigenismo

As a response to the limited integration of indigenous groups into national *mestizo* society, the post-revolutionary state developed a second set of integration policies specifically targeted at the indigenous communities: *indigenismo*. All development projects implemented since the thirties in the indigenous regions of Mexico were part of this approach. The strategy, aimed at "mexicanizing the indian" (Cárdenas 1978 [1940]), aimed to integrate the indigenous population socially, culturally, and ethnically into Mexican society by means of "planned acculturation," and to "modernize" the local and regional indigenous economy through the forced opening toward the market economy.

These policies, inspired by the principle of "integration through acculturation," were applied by governmental agencies such as the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (INI – National Indigenist Institute) and the Ministry of Education, SEP.¹¹ The INI coordinated socio-cultural as well as economic policies. Its programs were elaborated outside of indigenous regions, with headquarters in Mexico City, and were then implemented through local projects carried out by trained bilingual "indigenous promoters." The emphasis of these projects lay in educational programs and economic development schemes (Dietz 1995, 1999). With regard to *mestizaje*-inspired educational policies, indigenismo experimented with pioneer literacy and bilingual education projects beginning in 1939 that for the first time viewed indigenous language – with the gradual substitution of Spanish – as a "key" for the hispanization of indigenous children in primary education. Economic measures were aimed at overcoming the supposed "under-development" of indigenous agriculture and crafts by means of industrializing the peasant mode of production. Peasants were inserted in cooperatives supervised by urban *mestizo* "experts" who taught industrial methods and production techniques. Access to credit and subsidies was conditioned for decades by compulsory participation in these cooperatives. Simultaneously, the indigenous regions were opened to the outside world through the development of roads and communication infrastructure, which encouraged the establishment of agro-industrial and timber-producing enterprises.

In the vast majority of indigenous regions, indigenismo failed on both respects. Instead of promoting *mestizaje* through free access to education, the educational policies profoundly divided the local population into a small minority that actually succeeded in getting a secondary or high school education in the provincial cities located outside indigenous regions, and the majority of the regional population who either barely finished or abandoned primary school. Thus, a limited number of indigenous peasants were individually "acculturated" and emigrated to the large urban sprawls, while most of the indigenous population acquired only the basic skills necessary for dealing with *mestizo* society. Access to these skills, however, did not influence their ethnic identity (Dietz 1999). On the other hand, indigenismo also failed in its attempt to "open" communities and "proletarize" indigenous peasant units. Without exception, each of the "co-operatives" and production-schools established in the regions collapsed as a result of the local population's unwillingness to participate.

Despite these obvious and often criticized failures,¹² indigenismo unintentionally provided an important platform for the emergence of new ethnic actors and for the articulation of indigenous struggles. Since the beginning of indigenismo, the nation-state perceived the need for a specifically trained group of "culture promoters" and bilingual teachers who came from the regions and who would be in charge of carrying out the

different literacy campaigns. These "promoters" of national mestizo culture, for example the bilingual teachers, were to fulfill a double task: teaching children within the formal school system, and carrying out diverse out-of-school activities in the areas of adult education and community development (Aguirre Beltrán 1992 [1973]).

By the 1970s, however, the failure of indigenous teachers in accomplishing both tasks became evident. In the school context, the allegedly bilingual character of primary education frequently turned out to be fictitious. The indigenous language was hardly ever really taught or used at school. The reason for this failure had to do with the shortcomings of the bilingual teachers who viewed the indigenous language as a temporary tool for achieving final hispanization (Ros Romero 1981). These teachers also failed in their community development responsibilities, since they were actively resisted by the local populations and particularly by the traditional village authorities, who perceived them as intruders sent by the indigenismo agencies (Dietz 1999).

The Stakes in the Classic Struggles for Indigenous Rights

Two different forms of indigenous organization prevailed in nearly every indigenous region until the 1980s. On the one hand, the bilingual teachers and other indigenous civil servants who gained positions inside the institutions of indigenismo created their own pressure groups such as the *Consejo Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas* (CNPI – National Council of Indigenous Peoples) and the *Alianza Nacional de Profesionales Indígenas Bilingües* (ANPIBAC – National Alliance of Bilingual Indigenous Professionals). Although these lobbying groups of emerging indigenous intellectuals achieved considerable influence inside the government's educational and cultural institutions, their representation within their own communities of origin remained limited (Mejía Piñeros and Sarmiento Silva 1991). In addition to these lobbying associations, regional and national peasant organizations were formed in response to the promise of agrarian reform and later to the gradual retreat of the state from rural areas. Forged around leaders of urban origin, these peasant organizations specialized in channeling claims for agrarian reform and agricultural development (Reitmeier 1990). Despite their often revolutionary ambitions, however, these organizations depended heavily on the benevolence of governmental institutions in their day-to-day operations. Until recently, the struggle for indigenous rights in Mexico has still reflected this sharp division between peasant movements holding onto the old promises of the Mexican Revolution, on the one hand, and ethnic movements struggling for recognition and participation inside cultural and educational institutions, on the other.

Toward an "Indigenous Intelligentsia"?

In order to increase grassroots participation in their projects and to prevent failures such as those mentioned above, beginning in the 1970s, indigenist institutions started to complement their economic, infrastructural, and educational activities with the creation and/or promotion of indigenous organizations. For example, state and party institutions promoted and oversaw the formation of a *Consejo Supremo* (Supreme Council) for each ethnic group in Mexico. Similar to the sectoral pillar of the CNC inside the PRI, these Supreme Councils were designed to articulate local indigenous interests inside party and state institutions through loyal and reliable intermediaries.[13] These councils were promoted at the first meeting of independent indigenous organizations in 1974 in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, and again one year later at the "First National Congress of Indigenous Peoples" in Pátzcuaro, sponsored by INI and other state institutions. As a result of this second congress, the *Consejo Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas* (CNPI – National Council of Indigenous Peoples) was created to represent the diverse Supreme Councils of indigenous groups. From its founding in 1975 onward, the CNPI has struggled with the problem of a lack of local representation. Beginning at the Pátzcuaro congress, a division occurred among indigenous delegates between those directly appointed by local authorities and those sent as institutionally-loyal INI and SEP representatives. Consequently, the CNPI subsisted for decades at the margins of local organizational processes.

The formation of the already mentioned ANPIBAC, the *Alianza Nacional de Profesionales Indígenas Bilingües*, was a second attempt to create indigenous organizations which were at the same time both locally rooted and loyal to state and party hierarchies. From its foundation in the late 1970s, ANPIBAC was designed as a lobbying organization for bilingual indigenous teachers used as culture brokers in the indigenismo projects. In its negotiations with the Ministry of Education, ANPIBAC evolved into a sort of trade union for the emerging indigenous intelligentsia employed at higher levels of the INI and SEP agencies. By skillfully counseling and advising government institutions in their attempt to avoid the frequent failures of their educational projects, ANPIBAC was officially acknowledged beginning in the 1980s as an "expert organization" directly collaborating with the educational authorities in improving bilingual education.[14]

Bilingual and Bicultural Indigenous Education

As an official reaction to the many failures and to the increasing criticism expressed by communities as well as teachers who felt dissatisfied with

their role as agents of acculturation, in 1979 the SEP re-organized its activities in indigenous regions and updated its teacher-training and primary school curricula. An intimate and fruitful collaboration emerged as a result between the Ministry and ANPIBAC. The product of this convergence of interests was an alternative program of bilingual and bicultural education which sought to abolish the use of bilingualism to hispanicize the children and develop instead a genuinely bicultural curriculum (Gabriel Hernández 1981: 179). Given that this process of "bicultural-izing" all those who were taught in the primary schools required the active and permanent participation of highly prepared and culturally hybrid actors, the Ministry was forced to open its internal hierarchies to an increasing number of teachers and academics of indigenous origin beginning in the 1980s (Guzmán Gómez 1990).

Although the bicultural education program proposed by ANPIBAC was rightly considered to be a crucial achievement of the indigenous intellectuals working inside the SEP, in reality it exhibited the same shortcomings of its monocultural *mestizo* predecessor: the superficial and inadequate training of its bilingual teachers, a lack of teaching materials and infrastructural support, a clientelistic method of allocating teachers to regions and communities according to the interests of the monopolistic and party-loyal Mexican teachers' trade union, and the resulting controversy over the role of the bilingual teachers inside the community (Dietz 1999).

In this context, the indigenous teacher was reduced to "a transmitter of some basic knowledge of national education, a handbook technician of the indigenous language and a manager of material services for the community" (Calvo Pontón and Donnadieu Aguado 1992: 172). Overburdened with multiple roles of educational, cultural, and economic intermediation (Vargas 1994), many of the bilingual teachers additionally perceived a profound conflict of loyalty between the indigenismo institutions and their local beneficiaries (Varese 1987: 189).

The Limits of Trade Unionism

As representatives of the nascent indigenous intelligentsia, both ANPIBAC and the CNPI ultimately failed to carry out their objectives. In order to counter their lack of local representation, both organizations were gradually forced to project the interests, demands, and initiatives issued by their communities to the national level. Thus semi-official indigenous organizations were forced from below to emancipate themselves from their institutional patronage, becoming the voice for indigenous communities. In 1981, the CNPI split into two factions when its president overtly and officially criticized the José López Portillo government's visible shift toward cost-effectiveness as the main criterion for agricultural development policy. As a reaction to this criticism, López

Portillo immediately sacked the whole CNPI executive and forced its new leadership to integrate directly into the CNC structure. Although dissidents created an alternative and independent organization, the *Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indios* (the National Council of Indian Peoples), this organization also lacked real grassroots representation (Sarmiento Silva 1985).

ANPIBAC, on the other hand, was excluded from institutional participation precisely when their leaders started engaging in non-educational activities in their communities of origin. Through its participation in struggles over the control of communal land, ANPIBAC diversified its agenda, until then limited to educational and cultural demands (Hernández Hernández 1988). Again, as in the case of the CNPI, this new dynamic ended up dividing the organization into two groups. On one side were the teachers and educational planners who remained loyal to the regime and who limited their activities to the sphere of educational and cultural programs. Although the members of this group lost their local links to their own communities, they gained privileged access into new institutional spaces as part of the urban intelligentsia within the SEP and INI hierarchies. On the other side were the teachers who remained in their communities and participated in local political activities, effectively renouncing any possibility of upward mobility within the institutional hierarchy. While some of these teachers limited their non-school activities to their local arena, others maintained the remnants of their ANPIBAC contacts to create an informal network of teachers working in different regions. In order to exchange experiences of grassroots mobilization and participation between different regions, they created the journal *Etnias* (Ethnicities), produced and distributed among bilingual teachers mainly from Oaxaca, Chiapas, Michoacán, Veracruz, and Guerrero.

The evolution of both organizational frameworks illustrates a further failure of indigenismo in its attempt to integrate the nascent indigenous elites into the corporate apparatus of the state-party. Today, those parts of the semi-official organizations which have survived the periodic waves of factionalist division lack any representation and thus can no longer control or mediate any of the contemporary struggles of the indigenous peoples of Mexico. Throughout the 1990s, they have been substituted by organizations which have opted for open dissidence and which have collaborated in the slow erosion of the corporatist heritage of the CNC and PRI institutions.

Indigenous Participation in Independent Peasant Organizations

Beginning with the first "neoliberal" administrations of the late 1970s and early 1980s, indigenous dissidents began to express their demands through organizations and movements which emphasized their common

peasant condition as opposed to their distinctively ethnic identities. The main advantage of these newly emerging organizations resided in their structural and programmatic flexibility, in contrast to the rigid, single-issue orientation and external dependence of ANPIBAC and the CNPI. This allowed them to adapt easily to the structure of the indigenous community.

The struggle for recognition of communal land tenure through the *restitución* variant of agrarian reform evolved completely outside corporatist hierarchies. As the communal claims-making process took years and even decades, several communities united and went together to force their state capital or to Mexico City in order to force the *Secretaría de Reforma Agraria* (the Secretary of Agrarian Reform) to carry out its promise. However, because this process was politically dangerous and judicially complicated, local authorities began seeking support starting in the late 1970s from the generation of urban dissidents, the "survivors of Tlatelolco" (the 1968 army massacre of the student movement), who began emigrating from Mexico City to the countryside. The organizations of these urban dissidents, in particular the Trotskyist *Línea Proletaria* (Proletarian Line) and the Maoist-inspired *Línea de Masas* (Line of the Masses), started searching for a non-urban "revolutionary subject" among the Mexican peasantry (Harvey 1990). The subsequent encounter between indigenous communities and their new "external advisers" generated new alliances such as the *Unión de Comuneros Emiliano Zapata* (UCEZ – Emilio Zapata Union of Communities), founded in 1979 in Michoacán among Purhépecha and Náhñu communities, and the *Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata* (OCEZ – Emilio Zapata Peasant Organization) active since 1982 in Chiapas among different ethnic groups.[15] Although the ideological content of these new organizations is openly revolutionary and socialist in orientation, their actual activities have focused on the old Zapatista promise of community-based agrarian reform.

As the nation-state is the primary target of indigenous peasant claims for agrarian reform, the regional peasant organizations quickly created national representations (Canabal Cristiani 1983). Two national frameworks for independent peasant organizations appeared at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. On the one hand, the mainly indigenous communities struggling for the restitution of their lands participated as communities in the *Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala* (CNPA – Plan of Ayala National Council), created in 1979 to struggle for fulfillment of the original version of the agrarian reform as presented by Emiliano Zapata in the 1911 Ayala manifesto (Flores Lúa, Paré, and Sarmiento Silva 1988). On the other hand, those peasants who completely lacked any land tended to participate in the *Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos* (CIOAC – Independent Federation of Agricultural Workers and Peasants), which specialized in political and legal representation of laborer and *colono* claims-making (Harvey 1990;

cf. above). Both organizations work closely together as they often share the same legal advisers in Mexico City and the same ideological orientations.

The main weakness of both organizations, and of the other independent Mexican peasant movements of the 1970s and 1980s, resulted from their overwhelming emphasis on agrarian reform and on legal-political issues. The communities only participated in the movement until they obtained the claimed land titles, returning to their daily business as family-run peasant production units once this was achieved. This localist attitude was in sharp contrast with the revolutionary program adhered to by their external advisers.

The Struggle Over Control of Peasant Production

The shift toward emphasis on production perceivable since the 1980s among Mexican peasant movements resulted both from external governmental policy changes and from reactions to the structural weakness of the peasant organizations mentioned above. Under the administration of López Portillo, and still under the CNC umbrella, *ejidatario* peasants were officially encouraged to form producers' alliances in order to jointly acquire resources and market products as means of increasing peasant productivity (Otero 1990, Martínez Borrego 1991). Agricultural productivity came to dominate the official rural development policies implemented by subsequent administrations starting in the late 1970s through the last PRI presidency of Ernesto Zedillo (Piñar Alvarez 2002). The priviledged forms of organization became the *Uniones de Ejidos* (Unions of Ejidos) and *Asociaciones Rurales de Interés Colectivo* (ARIC – Rural Associations of Collective Interest), local or regional groupings of family-based peasant production units, which now received support and legal recognition.[16]

In practice, however, these organizations are only accessible to the so-called *campesinado medio* (middle-class peasantry, García 1991), peasant groups specializing in externally marketable products as opposed to subsistence crops. A wide range of analysts, politicians, and "external advisers" of peasant organizations encouraged traditional indigenous peasants to turn to this new kind of "modern production" as a means of increasing income (Marion Singer 1989, Salazar Peralta 1994). A major reasoning behind this push was that in order to maintain their continuity and political independence, the peasant organizations had to strive for economic autonomy as well. They had to fight not only for access to communally owned land, but also for control over the entire process of production. By this logic, cooperatives and collective production units should substitute the peasant household as the basic unit of production, distribution, and marketing of agricultural, cattle, timber, and craft prod-

ucts (Cruz Hernández & Zuvire Lucas 1991). This profound re-structuring of local economies was strongly resisted by indigenous peasant households, since it implied an indirect "proletarization" of their workforce which seemed rather similar to the original and long-abandoned *indigenismo* projects of "modernizing" indigenous economic activities (Dietz 1999). However, in those regions where certain marketable products such as coffee and timber had created nearly monocultural situations, sectoral organizations of producers emerged. In 1982, they formed the *Unión de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas* (UNORCA – Union of Regional Autonomous Peasant Organizations), a national association representing their particular entrepreneurial interests in contrast to the agrarista interest of the older independent peasant organizations.[17]

This new generation of peasant organizations distinguished itself from its predecessors not only by the wider scope of their demands – access to public credit schemes for their peasant enterprises, state support for entering external markets, limitations on private (coyote) monopolies of intermediation etc. – but also by their attitude toward government agencies. These producer organizations targeted the state institutions as an increasingly professionalized lobby and not as an intrinsic enemy. Direct negotiation and collaboration, particularly with the Salinas de Gortari administration, turned UNORCA and other producer associations into officially acknowledged partners. As a consequence, inside these new organizations there is a widespread fear of being "co-opted" by the state-party regime's attempt to legitimize its neoliberal policies (Harvey 1993). As in the case of the ANPIBAC and CNPI lobbying organizations, these political alliances with the state-party resulted in internal polarization, dividing and paralyzing these producer organizations in face of the debate over neoliberal privatizations of the Mexican countryside (see below).

Between Community and Nation-State: New Sites of Struggle

At the end of the 1980s and particularly during the 1990s, both the indigenous teachers' unions and the peasant organizations faced an existential crisis. The Mexican nation-state had officially recognized the failure of indigenismo to ethnically homogenize the rural indigenous population, and declared its neoliberal retreat from former agrarian reform and agricultural development policies. Consequently, both indigenous and peasant movements lost their institutional counterpart and thus their legitimacy with regard to local constituencies. Gradually, new community, regional, and national actors appeared to substitute for these classic organizations of rural Mexico.

From "Indians" and "Peasants" to "Citizens"

In response to the retreat of state agencies and the attempts to privatize communal and ejidal land tenure, in different indigenous regions of Mexico communities began to form political coalitions. More often than not, these coalitions included groups different ethnic origins. These "alliances of convenience" of mono-ethnic or pluri-ethnic composition did not develop into large and centrally structured organizations, but continued to consider the community as its basic unit and the community's sovereignty as its principal claim. The recognition of customary laws and practices would later lead to the struggle for territorial autonomy on the local and regional levels.

A profound rupture occurred during the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–94). In order to mitigate the political consequences of both the regime's obvious fraud in the 1988 presidential elections and to at least partially relieve the consequences of the new government's de-regulation and privatization policies, all existing indigenismo and development programs were substituted by direct assistance. The PRONASOL and PROCAMPO (*Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo* – Program for Direct Aid to the Countryside) programs, which consisted of public funds raised through the privatization of state-owned enterprises, started distributing public resources in cash and in kind beginning in the early 1990s. The strategic importance of these funds had to do with their distribution mechanisms. Parallel to the existing corporatist structures and channels, the money was distributed through so-called *comités de solidaridad* (solidarity committees) newly created local groups of peasants who declared themselves loyal not merely to the old state-party – against which the new neoliberal technocratic elite fights – but also to the president. Thus, highly personalized neo-corporatist channels were promoted which marginalized not only old party-structures, but also the customary *cargos* of indigenous communities.[18]

The second consequence of the 1988 election schism is reflected in the appearance and consolidation first of a socio-political movement and then of a political party which, for the first time since the end of the Mexican Revolution, represented a real political alternative. Although the *neocardenistas*, led by Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, the son of the mythic president of agrarian reform, were the direct victims of the 1988 election fraud, they succeeded in creating a new party which echoed many of the claims made by the dissident indigenous and peasant organizations of the 1980s. The *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD – Party of the Democratic Revolution) promoted alliances with independent producer associations and with the emerging community coalitions, which opened new spaces for political participation at municipal, state, and national levels. Nevertheless, the PRD quickly began to reproduce corporatist practices similar to those of its PRI and CNC antagonists. Controlled from above,

party-faithful peasant organizations such as the *Central Campesina Cardenista* (CCC – Cardenista Peasants Federation) and the *Unión Campesina Democrática* (UCD – Democratic Peasant Union) threatened to close again the new spaces conquered by the independent organizations and movements.[19]

Although these old corporatist practices limited the impact and presence of the new organizations, in the long run the most important consequence of the 1988 events was the confluence of highly heterogeneous social and political actors. Since then, peasant activists and their external advisors, members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights campaigners, faith-based grassroots movements such as the ecclesiastic base communities and political party representatives, as well as dissident indigenous teacher unions jointly perceived the necessity of ending state-party monopoly by following and closely monitoring election processes on the municipal, state, and national levels.[20] Beginning with the municipal elections of 1989, the resulting *Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia* (Convergence of Civil Society Organizations for Democracy) succeeded in publicly demonstrating and denouncing the practice of governmental election rigging (Calderón Alzati and Cazés 1996).

In 1993, an even larger coalition of observer associations, NGOs, and citizen organizations, the *Alianza Cívica* (Civil Alliance) promoted campaigns of "civic education" in order to make voters aware of their constitutional rights. These campaigns proved highly efficient above all in those indigenous regions which traditionally had been subject to fraudulent practices and, since 1988, to violent clashes between local PRI and PRD committee members (Calderón Mólgora 1994, Viqueira and Sonnleitner 2000). The knowledge of specific and enforceable human rights, formally recognized in the 1917 Constitution, was converted into a means of empowerment by the entire local rural population, be they *mestizo* or indigenous, and a common process of *ciudadanización* (citizenship-making) mitigated long-standing tensions between those identifying with indigenist cultural promoters and those struggling for collective land tenure. Nevertheless, as will be shown below, in the indigenous regions *ciudadanización* became quickly ethnicized, and "ethnic citizenship" (de la Peña 1998) based on human rights became an integral part of the predominant struggle to re-conquer the community as a political entity (Kearney 1994: 61).

The Ethnization and Communalization of Indigenous Claims-Making

Despite this process of *ciudadanización*, which is perceivable in different indigenous regions of Mexico, it is ethnicity and not formal, individually

defined citizenship that is the main issue at stake in current indigenous struggles. This is due to the coincidence at the beginning of the 1990s of three factors which together accelerated the "ethnic revival" in the indigenous regions of Mexico.

First, the local population's interest and participation in elections was not significant. Despite the re-integrated teachers' insistence on the importance of expressing dissidence through polls, an increasing number of their *comunero* neighbors were deeply concerned about the resulting internal polarization of the community. Following the spread of violence after the 1991 municipal elections, the indigenous population massively abandoned party politics as a channel of participation. Second, the dissident bilingual teachers and indigenous intellectuals actively participated in the controversial debate which arose over the multiethnic composition of Mexico and its indigenous peoples' right to claim ethnic and cultural difference. Highly aware of their public national impact, these intellectuals painstakingly elaborated a new ethnic discourse aimed at overcoming the traditionally localist and parochial limits of the indigenous identity horizon. Third, the decision taken by the Salinas de Gortari administration to modify the Mexican Constitution's historic Article 27, thereby canceling the agrarian reform process and promoting the individualization and privatization of communal land tenure, led external affairs representatives of indigenous villages to organize massive regional assemblies of communities keen on defending their communal land tenure.

The different local indigenous and peasant actors of the former movements all shared the feeling that they had been abused and exploited as easily mobilizable forces by the national urban and *mestizo* actors. Indigenous teachers and union leaders came to occupy lower ranks in the new opposition party structure, local authorities and *comuneros* were only addressed in election campaigns, and the few indigenous representatives who succeeded in attaining higher-level positions often lost their connection to their former constituencies. This process of disenchantment coincided with the governmental retreat from indigenismo and development policies, and old intermediaries disappeared without being substituted by new ones. Even for members of the indigenous intelligentsia, possible career options outside the indigenous regions were cancelled or limited. Neoliberal reforms widened the gap which had historically persisted between the state and the community. As a result, most of the mediators between the *mestizo* nation-state and the indigenous community were forced to chose between two mutually incompatible alternatives. They could rescue their career opportunities in far away urban centers, thus losing their traditional links and obligations in the community; or they could re-integrate into communal life at the expense of abandoning their external institutional loyalties.

The national and continental debates surrounding the Quincentennial of the "Columbus discovery"[21] temporarily postponed this decision for

these mediators. The debates went beyond academic circles to encompass political issues of national importance. The question at stake was the identity and self-definition of Latin American nation-states, and their relation to the original peoples inhabiting their territories (Díaz Gómez 1992, Ce-Acatl 1992). For the first time since the externally enforced rupture of ANPIBAC and CNPI, a common platform emerged between indigenous intellectuals who remained loyal to the regime and worked in urban individgenist institutions, and returned indigenous dissidents who reintegrated into their communities (Baudot 1992, Sarmiento Silva 2001).

Although ephemeral, the resulting *Consejo Mexicano 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena* (The Mexican Council for 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance) succeeded in re-establishing a dialogue between pro-governmental and oppositional indigenous representatives. The common ground for their re-encounter was shared ethnicity. The re-indianization of the claims and struggles of semi-official as well as independent organizations encompassed both educational and cultural demands (promoted by the urban indigenous intelligentsia) and agrarian and political demands (promoted by independent indigenous-peasant leaders and local authorities). Diplomatically and skillfully postponing the debate over the priority of cultural-linguistic vs. communal-agrarian identity markers of Indian-ness, both factions agreed on the necessity of re-conquering political and legal spaces to define concrete expressions of indigenous ethnicity (Dietz 1999).

They immediately focused on the legal framework of the Mexican nation-state. As a result of their efforts, the Salinas de Gortari government was forced to include in Article 4 an official re-definition of Mexico as a nation "of pluri-cultural composition, which is originally sustained by its indigenous peoples" (*Poder Ejecutivo Federal* 1990: viii). This constitutional recognition forced the Mexican state to "respect the traditional rights and customs," but it did not specify what these rights were and how they would be enforced (ALAI 1990). Despite these legal shortcomings, the constitutional reform was a major success of the new indigenous platforms created during the Quincentennial debate, recognizing collective rights for the first time and introducing the criterion of "ethnic difference" as a source of rights (*Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena* 1993: 7).

Community and Communalism

Following the Quincentennial, however, confluences between officialist and dissident indigenous leaders fell off markedly. Given the general retreat of the state, the new indigenous intellectual elite lost its slowly conquered spheres of influence inside governmental indigenismo and its educational and cultural programs. As the indigenismo approach allied itself was increasingly marginalized in the face of neoliberal Mexican policies,

a growing number of bilingual teachers, "culture promoters," civil servants, and trade unionists began to desert the *mestizo* project of the nation-state. Throughout the 1980s a new group of indigenous dissidents thus emerged, renouncing their loyalty to the official national project and consciously reintegrating into their communities of origin. They thus began a move away from an ethnicized discourse of re-indianization, and instead focused on customary local institutions such as the communal assembly and the cargo system of community service as new targets of political engagement (*Coalición de Pueblos Serranos Zapotecos y Chinantecos* 1994: 1).

Instead of introducing externally conceived structures such as political parties, unions, production co-operatives, or peasant organizations into their communities, the returned indigenous teachers, union, and party representatives struggled to recover their often lost status as *comuneros* by fulfilling their local *cargo* responsibilities. Many of the "returned intellectuals" concentrated on writing down customary law and fixing common procedures in *estatutos comunales* (communal statutes, Márquez Joaquín 1988). By reintegrating *cargos*, their main task was to avoid or diminish the internal divisions created by political parties or other institutional factionalism.

An example from a Triqui community in Oaxaca (San Andrés Chicahuaxtla 1994: 1-2) as well as other case studies of Purhépecha communities in Michoacán (Dietz 1999) illustrate that despite the tensions created by the intrusion of external agents of development into the indigenous community during the former *indigenismo* programs and their PRONASOL successors, the communal structure of indigenous peasants' daily life had been maintained. The nuclear family still constitutes the main unit of production, while the village community remains the main unit that shapes its inhabitants' principal economic, social, religious, and political activities. Following one's social status as a member of the community, acquired by birth or by marriage, the individual not only gains access to communal lands, but also becomes an integral part of the social and political life of the community.

According to customary law, the totality of the *comuneros* determines the village's political life. The communal assembly, in which traditionally only married males enjoy the right to speak and/or to vote, distributes the *cargos*, the local posts and offices. Nowadays, these ranks and posts, which frequently imply important amounts of personal spending, comprise both the surviving *cargos* of the civil-religious hierarchy intimately associated with the cult of the local patron saint, and the new administrative offices introduced in the course of the twentieth century by the nation-state, but re-appropriated by the local cargo logic.

The communal assembly, the local authorities designated by the assembly, and the "council of elders" (an institution of consultation and arbitration formed by senior villagers who already have passed through

each rank in the cargo hierarchy) were all rediscovered, revitalized, and re-functionalized by the formerly "lost generation" of indigenous intellectuals who deserted from indigenismo and party politics. Thus, many teachers and civil servants once again started to participate in communal assemblies and hold local *cargos*, hoping to strengthen their communities against external political and institutional agents.

The activities carried out by this newly "re-communalized" indigenous intelligentsia took two different forms. In some villages, young teachers succeeded in occupying the main *cargos*, while elder peasant *comuneros* withdrew to the council of elders; the subsequent divergences and tensions between both groups were handled by the communal assembly, where the older generation still enjoyed considerable reputation and influence. In other cases, however, these initial confrontations resulted in an inter-generational division of work: while the traditional authorities, who were often recognized by their local neighbors as "natural leaders," maintained control over intra-local, domestic affairs, the younger teachers, civil servants, and students were invited to draw on their experiences in dealing with governmental institutions and bureaucratic administrations by dedicating themselves to the village's external relations. Thus, new informal *cargos* emerged to complement the traditional ones without necessarily defying their customary status inside the community.

Once the division of work between internal and external cargos was settled, the holders of the new and the old ranks and offices tended to collaborate intimately in their common goal to strengthen the community and regain its independence from outside agents. In order to achieve this goal, some fundamental traditions of local life were recovered in many villages: the *faena* or *tequio*, compulsory collective work employed especially in public works; the redistribution of economic surplus through financing of communal fiestas; and resurgence of the customary principle of equal participation of the different *barrios*[22] in any community affair.

These attempts to regain and revitalize ancient traditions have been complemented by the introduction of new elements of urban or *mestizo* origin. For example, a few years ago the teachers – many of whom are women or unmarried young men, thus lacking the comunero status – started struggling to enlarge the very concept of the comunero. In many indigenous communities they have succeeded in extending the rights and duties of political participation to the female and unmarried population of the village.

Another internal transformation initiated by the younger teachers affected the prevalent decision-making mechanism of the communal assembly. The customary principle of consensus, which in many villages successfully avoided intra-local polarizations along minority and majority votes and mitigated confrontations between "winners" and "losers," had the disadvantage of turning the assembly sessions into lengthy, tedious and unattractive events. Consequently, the teachers carried through an

internal reform, according to which all minor issues are to be decided by the principle of voting and majority decisions, nearly always taken by acclamation. Nevertheless, all communal assemblies keep the principle of consensus for those decisions which affect central aspects of community life and whose enforcement – for example, against reluctant external agents – also requires participation of the whole village.

The (Re-)Appropriation of Community Development

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, several indigenous communities abandoned their passive role as mere recipients of externally conceived development projects. As resistance against governmental measures which only benefited a tiny minority of the local population and against external intermediaries was growing in many communities, the local authorities felt it necessary to define their communities' real priorities, specifying their own project proposals including elaborate details on how to carry out and finance them. In order to cope with such a bureaucratic endeavor, the communal assemblies as well as local authorities once again turned to the younger returnees. Thus, in many communities the indigenous intelligentsia was entrusted with the task of writing down the development priorities fixed in the local assembly. As these project proposals specified not only the requested external resources, but also the resources contributed by the community itself through collective *faenas* or *tequios*, the assembly and the elected authorities had to approve the entire project draft before submitting them to external development agencies. As a result of this cyclical process, the community started to participate intimately and permanently in the global procedure of developing a self-managed project. The success or failure of these self-managed projects depended on the tense and often difficult collaboration between the communal cargos, the council of elders, the young teachers and/or agronomists. All these different local actors recognized that the development of their own projects was much more laborious than simply "waiting for the expert from the capital." Nevertheless, a variety of different arts, forestry, educational, and cultural projects in several communities and regions[23] have shown that the community's intimate participation in a project's elaboration will decisively increase its dedication to the project.

Despite these first steps toward recovering control over communal development initiatives, two major problems cannot be solved by this new type of self-directed local development. First, the community lacks formal recognition as a legal entity needed to start, plan, execute or evaluate any communal project. Even those communities that de facto act autonomously cannot officially negotiate their project policies with government or NGO agencies. Second, the recent success of communal development projects threatens to envigorate localist and isolationist

tendencies, subduing the pan-indigenous identities claimed at the national and even continental level.

Agrarian Counter-reform as a Cancellation of the Social Contract

The structural handicaps of community-centered political action became immediately evident during the governmental initiative to reform Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution (Moguel 1992, Piñar Alvarez 2002). Allowing the division, marketing, and privatization of both communal and ejidal lands, this agrarian "counter-reform" was perceived in nearly all indigenous regions as a unilateral cancellation of the original *contrat social* signed between the communities and the nation-state in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. As the counter-reform promotes and encourages the commercialization of collective land tenure, the territorial basis of the indigenous community was threatened (Stanford 1994). This radical shift in state-community relations was countered by local and regional responses, in which coalitions of communities declared the sovereignty, autonomy, and historical rights of the indigenous community and rejected the changes to Article 27 (Nación Purhépecha 1991: 3).

In this environment of generalized concern, anxiety, and upheaval, the re-integrated indigenist culture brokers and intellectuals suddenly gained vital importance as external liaison cargos among communities in a given region as well as in relation to non-indigenous actors. Information campaigns were organized with former peasant advisers and leaders, workshops were held with the support of rural development NGOs, and press conferences were organized with human rights lawyers and activists. These massive mobilizations were initiated by, but not limited to, the indigenous communities. As the privatization of land tenure was implemented by the Salinas de Gortari administration in conjunction with the abrupt liberalization of all agricultural markets – as part of the preparatory measures for Mexico's integration into the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) – even the well-integrated *campesinado medio* was directly affected by the resulting drop in commodity prices and competition with cheap imports coming from highly subsidized US agriculture (Salazar Peralta 1994, Foley 1995). Consequently, and parallel to the communities' movement against privatization, a movement of bankrupt producers appeared in formerly flourishing agricultural regions of central, western and northern Mexico (Conchero Bórquez 1993, UNORCA 1993). Even though the socio-economic positions as well as the identities of these heterogeneous ethnic and political actors were completely diverse and often distanced considerably from one another, most of them sought fulfillment of the "Revolution's promises." Thus, the mythic figure of Emiliano Zapata re-appeared at the turn of the century.

Zapatismo and the Indigenous Issue

The broad range of movements reacting to the unilateral neoliberal cancellation of the heritage of the Mexican Revolution is illustrated by the processes of civil society organization unleashed by the armed uprising carried out in southern Mexico in 1994 by one of the new community-based indigenous organizations, the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation). *El México profundo* (deep Mexico), the indigenous, rural Mexico, in and through which the ancient Mesoamerican civilization persists (Bonfil Batalla 1987), suddenly returned to the national and even international political scene.

On the symbolically chosen date of January 1, 1994, the start of Mexico's integration into NAFTA, the previously unknown EZLN occupied four district towns in Chiapas, declared war on the federal government and demanded "liberty, democracy and justice" for all Mexicans. Although the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, fearing a capital flight of foreign investments and a subsequent failure of its outward-oriented economic modernization project, insisted on the "EZLN phenomenon," it soon proved to be a phenomenon that was entirely Mexican in nature. The neoliberal economic policies driving the uprising affected all of rural Mexico (Burbach & Rosset 1994). Furthermore, the zapatista claims targeted the country as a whole, not only the Chiapas highlands or the Selva Lacandona (the Lacandon Jungle). In its internal structure and discourse, the new armed movement reflected its rooting in a broad range of peasant and indigenous movements (Benjamin 1996, Legorreta Díaz 1998). Accordingly, they were quickly picked up and adopted by organizations and movements from other rural and urban regions as well (Nash 1997).

The new zapatista uprising culminated rural Mexico's coming of age and its emancipation from traditional state and party paternalism. In the contemporary national and international context, the subsequent clash between *el México transnacional* (transnational Mexico), an increasingly liberalized and globalized economy and politics on the one hand, and the re-appearance of *el México profundo*, a rising, mostly ethnically defined social mobilization on the other hand (Zermeño 1994), has created a dynamic which is focused on the struggle over the control of rural Mexico's natural and cultural resources. Thus, the question of local and regional sovereignty and autonomy has become central to the country's political agenda, constituting a turning point in the history of indigenous movements in Mexico.

The "EZLN Phenomenon"

The claims made by the EZLN since its public appearance in 1994 have been dual in nature. On the one hand, they are concerned with the most basic infrastructure necessary to cover the land, housing, health, and education needs of a particular zone of the Selva Lacandona, a region of recent colonization by Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Mam, Tojolabal, and Chol peasants who are landless or who had been expelled from their land in the Chiapas highlands (Ce-Acatl 1994). On the other hand, the political demands issued by the zapatistas are limited to the fulfillment and respect for the Mexican Constitution of 1917, a rather defensive claim, which nevertheless would be revolutionary in its de facto consequences for democratization of rural Mexico as a whole (Dietz 1994).

Thus, the defense of *México profundo* converges with formal democratization of the political and legal system in EZLN's agenda. In their demands, the heritage of classical indigenous and peasant movements is combined with the main features of the new citizens' and NGO movements of the 1990s (Rubio 1994). The EZLN spokespersons always emphasize that their own demands are only part of a broader range of citizenship claims, which should be taken up and refueled by other rural as well as urban movements. This pluralist approach, which is the most strikingly innovative feature of the zapatistas as compared to other, "classic" Central American guerrilla movements, culminated in a *Convención Nacional Democrática* (CND – National Democratic Convention), a massively attended assembly of social movements invited to the Lacandon forest in August 1994 (CND 1994).

Both the CND and the establishment in December 1994 of an alternative "Transition Governor in Rebellion" for the state of Chiapas – promoted by the EZLN, human rights NGOs, faith-based liberation theology groups – definitively challenged the notion of "historical avant-garde," a defining feature of the twentieth century (Dietrich 1994, Esteva 1994a, 1994b). Programmatic plurality thus corresponded with a plurality of internal forms of organization and action (EZLN 1994: 149).

The basic difference with classical guerrillas and the most outstanding commonality with other new ethno-regional indigenous movements lies in the EZLN's organizational structure. Apart from the classic military distinction between trained professional soldiers and the civil population, the EZLN is comprised of a peasant militia which effectively functions as *bases zapatistas de apoyo* (zapatista bases of support) thus allowing for close co-ordination between its military and political branch.[24] The civil and political branch, which has been in charge of all political decisions and negotiations with government representatives sent to the conflict zone since January 1994, is structured according to the pluri-ethnic composition of the Lacandon region. The communal assembly forms the basic