VOICES of Mexico

CISAN • UNAM

The Upcoming U.S. Elections Views from Mexico
Articles by Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla and José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

Organized Crime's Impact On Mexican Business
Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera

Mexico's Gastronomical Culture
Gina Bechelany, Gloria López, Nicolás Alvarado, Sol Rubín de la Borbolla, Ricardo Muñoz Zurita and José N. Iturriaga

The Contemporary Mexican Architecture Of Ricardo Legorreta
Juan Ignacio del Cueto

Pre-Hispanic Funeral Rites
Carlos Serrano Sánchez

The Mexican Debate On Oil and Electricity
Articles by Roberto Gutiérrez R., Sergio Suárez, Irma Delgado, María Fernanda Campa-Uranga, Rosío Vargas and Heberto Barrios, Gian Carlo Delgado, and Francisco Carrillo and Mario Galicia

94
7 52435 50329 7

ISSUE 94 AUTUMN 2012 MEXICO $50 USA $12.00 CANADA $15.00

VOICES of Mexico™

ISSN 0186 • 9418

Voices of Mexico is published by the
Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN (Center for Research on North America) of the
Coordinación de Humanidades (Office of the Coordinator of Humanities), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,
UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico).

Address letters, advertising and subscription correspondence to: ***Voices of Mexico***, Torre II de Humanidades, piso 9, Ciudad Universitaria, Coyoacán, 04510, México, D.F. Tel: 5623 0308. Electronic mail: voicesmx@unam.mx. Annual subscription rates: Mexico Mex$140; USA US$30; Canada Can$40; other countries US$55, prepaid in U.S. currency to **UNAM. Opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily represent the views of *Voices of Mexico***. Publicación cuatrimestral, año veintisiete, número 94, otoño 2012. ISSN 0186-9418. Certificado de Licitud de Contenido núm. 2930 y Certificado de Licitud de Título núm. 3340, expedidos por la Comisión Calificadora de Publicaciones y Revistas Ilustradas. Reserva al uso exclusivo del título núm. 04-2002-060413383000-102, expedida por el Instituto Nacional del Derecho de Autor. Correspondencia nacional de segunda clase. Registro 0851292. Características 220261212. Correspondencia internacional de segunda clase. Registro Cri D F 002-92. Preprensa e impresión en QuadGraphics, Democracias 116, Col. San Miguel Amantla. C.P. 02700, Azcapotzalco, México, D.F. Impreso en Offset.

VOICES of Mexico™
Issue 94 Autumn 2012


Allen Vallejo
Labyrinth of the Sciences and the Arts Museum.

Cover
Labyrinth of the Sciences and the Arts Museum, by Ricardo Legorreta (Photo courtesy of the San Luis Potosí State Government)

Backcover
Monterrey Central Library (Mexico City, 1994).

Museums

Cultural Anthropology

Literature

Special Section

Reviews

Our Voice

Since Mexico's elections, the new presidential team headed by Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has been readying itself to take office December 1. According to Federal Electoral Institute official figures (see www.ife.org.mx), more than 50 million votes were cast, 38 percent of which went to the victor, followed by 31.6 percent for Andrés Manuel López Obrador, backed by the different left organizations, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the Labor Party (PT), and the Citizens' Movement Party (PMC).

Undoubtedly, the incumbent National Action Party's plunge to third place on the national spectrum with 25.4 percent of the votes has been a debacle that has led its leaders to talk about the need to reorganize the party from the bottom up. After heading the democratic transition for the last 12 years, spiking violence in Mexico and the government strategy for fighting organized crime determined the citizenry's decision to make the elections a referendum on the PAN, represented by Felipe Calderón.

It is necessary to underline that the presidential election returns were emphatically questioned by the left parties, organized together in what was called the Progressive Movement, which used every legal mechanism at their disposal to nullify the vote. López Obrador himself called on his followers to engage in civil disobedience, arguing the purchase of votes and fraudulent practices, and even questioning the legitimacy of electoral authorities, demanding the nullification of the elections.

As a result, July and August were tense nationwide until the Federal Electoral Tribunal ruled that the elections had been valid; in addition, the new federal legislators took office last September 1, with a very favorable position for the left parties that, taken together, became the second-largest congressional caucus.

Pressure began to drop particularly when López Obrador announced his intention of creating a new party, the Movement for National Regeneration (Morena), yet again sowing a seed of political division in the ranks of the country's progressive forces. In this context, Fernando Dworak's article in this issue allows us to look more closely at the characteristics of the political culture that permeate the way legislators behave in Mexico. Particularly outstanding is his criticism of legislators' short-term vision and the enormous mistrust of the citizenry that make this branch of government rather more symbolic than effective in efforts to take the nation forward.

Considering the influence that civil society organizations have acquired as agents of change, Mike Aiken's article contrasts the experience of two particularly distinct political milieus: that of Anglo-Saxon countries and that of Latin American nations. Noting formal democracy's incapacity to respond to the public's needs, Aiken reviews several interpretations of the concept of civil society, discussing its capacity for generating a civic culture that can build a decisive bridge to representative democracy.

This issue's "Society" and "Economy" sections move through the consequences violence continues to have in our country. Hilda García, in "Society," characterizes the Caravan for Peace headed by poet Javier Sicilia as a praiseworthy effort to raise awareness in the United States about both

nations' co-responsibility for dealing with drug use and the growing empowerment of organized crime. She notes that Mexican civil society seeks to warn about the war conditions in several parts of the country, something not recognized as such despite the human tragedy they have brought about. The scant response to the caravan's tour speaks to a palpable indifference in the United States that obliges social activists to persevere in opening up new channels in their search for solidarity.

For her part, researcher Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera displays her experience with the issue of organized crime. She sketches us a paradox: although the number of victims of the so-called "war against drugs" continues to rise, economic indicators show that Mexico continues to grow. Her analysis recognizes the dramatic events in different parts of Mexico's North, and she narrates the diversification of the cartels' activities, now operating like multinational corporations.

Of course, we could not ignore the issues that will have an impact on the U.S. presidential elections, since the outcome will undoubtedly have repercussions for Mexico. Two CISAN researchers examine this unprecedented scenario in which the gap between Obama and Mitt Romney has closed significantly during the weeks of the presidential debates. José Luis Valdés-Ugalde underlines the impact of globalization on this process, as well as the effect of the emergence of the Tea Party inside the Republican Party, representing its extreme right wing. He considers that this has disrupted the GOP's capacity to build the internal equilibrium needed to win the election. His analysis incorporates variables of internal and external politics that are undoubtedly decisive in this setting. Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla's article is also obligatory reading for completing reflections on this issue, since she deals with the importance of the Latino vote and the dilemma of the pending immigration reform.

Mexico's cuisine is particularly significant for this issue, taking up a substantial part of our "Art and Culture" section, celebrating the fact that in 2010, the UNESCO included it on its List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Through five exceptional contributions, we invite our readers to familiarize themselves with the diversity and capability of our gastronomy to build bridges between Mexico's history, tradition, and identity markers.

In addition to this spectrum of specific themes that this issue of *Voices of Mexico* offers for your consideration, the importance that energy has acquired globally and regionally led us to dedicate our "Special Section" to its meticulous analysis. Coordinated by Rosío Vargas, as we move through its pages, we are alerted to the choices Mexico faces in the domain of oil production and electricity generation, as well as the need to strengthen new alternative forms of energy and to understand the strategic mark that geo-politics stamps on this sphere of activity.

I conclude adding my voice to that which Irma Delgado expresses in her article: our oil belongs to the people of Mexico. From my standpoint, it is completely impossible to build a future in my country based on equity, inclusion, and social justice if we renounce this cornerstone of our sovereignty.

Silvia Núñez García
Director of CISAN

Universidades

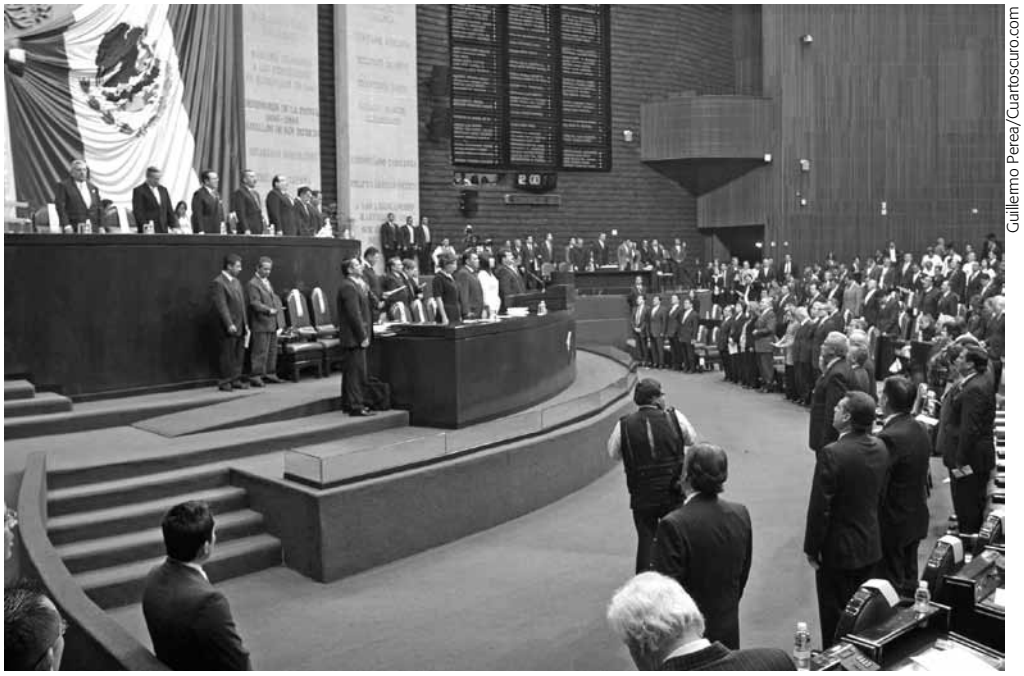
Año LV · Nueva Época · n. 54 · julio-diciembre · 2012

Nuestro *dossier* temático:

Aparece trimestralmente
y se puede consultar a texto completo
en la página web de la UDUAL
http://www.udual.org

Guide for Understanding Mexico's Sixty-second Congress

Fernando Dworak*



Guillermo Perea/Cuartoscuro.com

The first day of the inaugural session of Mexico's Sixty-second Congress.

It seems that since 1997, politics has been divided into two large cycles. The first, called "*trienio*" or three-year term, marks the beginning, development, and twilight of a legislature; the second, the "*sexenio*," or six-year term —which used to be the unit by which all political time was measured—, spans two of the aforementioned *trienios* and begins when each president is sworn into office. We could say that this is the contemporary version of the Mayan calendar, and, just like in the case of that pre-Hispanic people, each stage includes a series of predictable, cyclical events, although their accurate interpretation depends, in turn, on understanding them correctly. Ignorance in this area leads politicians and some "opinionologists" to play with our expectations or our guts by propagating the idea that politics is a cosmic clash between "the good guys" and "the bad guys."

Citizens and politicians see these years as cycles, although with different meanings. The public welcomes the beginning of the first three-year period with certain skepticism and hope; this attitude gradually turns to cynicism as it comes to a close, but at the end of a six-year term, once again expectations emerge about who will win power . . . and so on.

On the other extreme are the legislators of the *trienio*, the deputies, whose first year, as they themselves say, is spent figuring out where the bathrooms are in the San Lázaro Congressional Palace where they meet; the second year is spent learning more or less what their work is all about; and the third, looking for a new job, preferably in the public sector.

As mentioned above, we have to recognize some of the events in each cycle if we truly want our democratic history

*Analyst and political consultant, fer_dworak@hotmail.com, @FernandoDworak.

By starting from zero in each three-year term, the cycles have predictable results: positions are assigned according to party quotas. Sometimes they go to experts, sometimes not.

to be continuous. The following are some of the events that we will be witnessing during the upcoming Sixty-second Congress (2012-2015). Some have already happened and others will come in the future.

Presiding Committees.[1] Even though we imagine a congress to be something like a battlefield, these bodies do the arbitration needed so that when confrontations happen, they take place with at least minimal civility. In almost all legislative bodies, membership in these committees is assigned according to the trust certain officials manage to earn among their colleagues, but that requires interaction over a certain medium-term period. In Mexico, where everything starts over from the ground up every three years, the solution has been to allow each party to take charge of the committee for one year.

One recurring problem is that the parties do not always see the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) as a reliable partner for leading the sessions, particularly considering the fact that the president of the Presiding Committee has the faculty to call in the forces of order if he/she deems it necessary. Can you imagine, let's say, the Mexican Electrical Workers' Union (SME) bursting into a plenary session because no security forces were there to prevent it? This is why the parties have almost always divided the year that the left has the helm into three periods, leaving the "yellows" —yellow is the PRD color— the Permanent Commission. The exception was the Sixtieth Congress (2006-2009), when they had to be given the second year because of their political clout. At that time, the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies was handed over to Ruth Zavaleta, who behaved according to the institution's needs, and therefore was expelled from her party. Today, the left parties are once again the country's second legislative force. What will happen in 2013? I reserve my opinion.

Commissions. These are the bodies that carry out the analysis and specialized discussion of bills submitted to the Chamber of Deputies. This is so important that in several countries, a legislator can make a career inside these commissions, which allows him or her to rise to leadership positions. After comparing certain criteria, I think there should be just as many commissions as there are ministries in the executive branch. Any smaller number would make specialization difficult, and a larger number would make their functions overlap and create costs of opportunity for legislators to be able to give them the attention they deserve.

By starting from zero in each three-year term, the cycles have predictable results: positions are assigned according to party quotas. Sometimes they go to experts, sometimes not. Some of the deputies were elected through the proportional representation list, which generates a system of political accommodation more than one that creates specialization. In fact, the number of commissions has increased with each Congress: in the Chamber of Deputies, they went from 28 commissions in 1997 to 44 in 2009 and 51 in 2012.

Recycling the Budget Laws. The recently passed political reform makes it possible that, if a new expenditures budget has not been passed when the time limit runs out, the proportions of the previous one, with adjustments, are put in place until an agreement is reached. For some, this will create certainty regarding this delicate issue; however, others think that if the outcome is already known, negotiation is discouraged. Soon, we will see just how appropriate this measure was, especially in years three and six of the presidential six-year term, when confrontation wins out over agreements.

Implementing the Political Reform. This reform has some elements that have an impact on the functioning of the legislative branch. With regard to its relationship with the executive branch, the latter has a new tool, the preferential bill, which allows the president to present two bills that must go through the commissions and be voted on in plenary within a certain period. In terms of relations with the citizenry, the consultations with the public, independent candidacies, and citizens' propositions were included in the Constitution. Will they work?

The preferential bill implies that the legislature can take a stand on an issue and not necessarily pass it. That is, if the president decides to use this measure to present a polemical bill, even if important, he is opening himself up to the possibility of it being rejected with the resulting damage to his image as first executive, and therefore, we should not expect big surprises from this measure. It could be used, however, in matters in which a lot of intense work has already been done in terms of positioning and convincing society.

We can say that the effect of participatory mechanisms is more symbolic than real. Consultations are exceptional mechanisms if you do not want them to become an instrument for

demagoguery. An independent candidate can only hope to be competitive locally and that is forbidden by the Constitution. And a citizens' proposition would not necessarily be technically solid, and its proponents could lobby for it anyway. By 2015, we might discover that what has been approved is actually a botch job.

PAN and PRD Leaderships. Both the "yellows" and the "blues" (members of the PAN) are starting out in this Congress with a silent crisis. Flying the banner of "refoundation," the PANistas are fighting for control of their party, and Calderón's followers want to hurry the process along while they still have public funds. The PRDistas, on the other hand, are caught between following the hard line of Andrés Manuel López Obrador or betting on parliamentary negotiations. This is important given that legislators' careers depend on whoever can give them a post, which makes them agents of extra-parliamentary leaderships. The best example of this was in April 2008, when the left parties were held hostage by the dictates of a leader who held no public post, except his claimed "legitimate" title to the presidency, to block the courts and prevent debate around the energy reform.

In the case of the National Action Party (PAN), in December 2013, it will change its leadership bodies (National Executive Committee and National Political Council), which may imply rotating parliamentary leaderships. How will this impact the cohesion of the caucus? What kind of conditions of trust must exist among the coordinators of the legislative caucuses to maintain and respect agreements? This will certainly be one of the main events of next year.

Structural Reforms and the Myth of Ineffectiveness. Certainly, expectations are centered on this issue. Two problems exist, however: first, it is not possible to seriously advance in this since it would imply the dismantling of the Party of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) as we know it today.

In our country, electoral coalitions and even legislative coalitions are common practice. By contrast, government coalitions are an unexplored possibility that politicians must study and consider.

Can we imagine a new labor law that would make the labor market flexible? It would put an end to the monolithic unions we have today, and that is just one example.

On the other hand, if nobody interacts longer than one term and until the next election, and therefore changes are not given any medium-term follow-up, everything that is passed is only a stopgap measure to deal with immediate problems and not to provide real solutions. This does not depend on the party that is in office nor the support it might have in the two chambers of Congress: it is built into Article 59 of the Constitution.

Thus, "quantitative" analyses will abound trying to measure Congress's effectiveness based on the number of bills it passes instead of the most sensible way: evaluating the quality of the legislation passed. However, for the moment, we will have outgoing deputies who will go somewhere else, and our hopes will be renewed by another group of candidates. That is, as long as we don't know how to read the problems in their true dimension. VM

Notes

[1] Mexico's congressional leadership is a Presiding Committee in each chamber; the Permanent Commission is made up of senators and deputies who are in charge when Congress is not in session; bills are considered in commissions; and the yearly budget is divided into two separate bills, one for expenditures and the other for revenues. [Editor's Note.]

REVISTA DE LA
Universidad de México

NUEVA ÉPOCA | NÚM. 104 | OCTUBRE 2012 | UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO | $40.00 | ISSN 0185-1330

Silence on Fire
A Mexican Protest in the United States

Hilda García*

The whole world is . . . on fire./ The stones/
burn, even the stones they burn me./
How can a man be still/ or listen to all things burning?/
How can he dare to sit with them/ when all their silence is on fire?
Thomas Merton

Alejandro Piña Godoy/Cuartoscuro.com

Mexican activist Javier Sicilia confronts Joe Arpaio about his position on undocumented immigrants.

Thomas Merton's words marked the end of 10 000 kilometers traveled by Javier Sicilia and his followers on his "Caravan for Peace" in the United States. Along the route, which began in San Diego and ended in Washington, D.C., stopping in 25 cities, activists and those mourning the loss of loved ones and friends gave speeches and staged symbolic acts to make the United States and its civil society aware of their link to Mexico in the so-called war on drug trafficking. On the one hand, our neighbor to the north is the world's largest consumer of drugs and, at the same time, the leading provider of weapons to criminal groups in Mexico. An estimated 90 percent of arms in Mexico come from U.S. gun shops.

Since 2006, some 70 000 have been killed as a result of this fight against drug trafficking, a war closely tied to turf disputes between rival gangs; but however much this conflict only "between them," it also sucks in citizens without any is connection to crime, caught in the crossfire during their daily

*Mexican journalist; digital content director in Impremedia.

Alejandro Piña Godoy/Cuartoscuro.com

The Caravan for Peace during a rally in New York.

When Sicilia began mourning, he decided to go into battle: he would fight to be heard and to give a voice to those affected by violence in Mexico.

lives by a stray bullet or *levantados* (literally, "picked up," a euphemism for kidnapped) in a case of mistaken identity or simply because *they were in the wrong place at the wrong time*.

Felipe Calderón, Mexico's president who declared this war on organized crime, is nearing the end of his six-year term. We must now take stock of the situation. No one is arguing against the importance of offering greater security for citizens, especially not since it is a guarantee that the government must provide, but both the strategy as well as many of the decisions made to put an end to drug trafficking are more than questionable —decisions not only by the Mexican government, but even involving U.S. federal agencies, as evidenced by operations such as "Fast and Furious" or "Wide Receiver," which allowed arms to be to taken to Mexico in order to follow the trail of the drug traffickers who bought them. The result? Over 70 percent of these arms were lost track of, and ended up in the hands of criminals in Mexico; arms are called "weapons of extermination" by the Caravan for Peace activists in the United States.

Apart from the fact that this kind of operation could have equipped an entire army, according to declarations made by federal agents during inquiries carried out in the United States, part of the "collateral damage" is that we as citizens feel increasingly vulnerable and insecure. We are terrified of going out, of letting our children play on the street as we used to, out of fear of an "express" kidnapping, extortion, or violent assault. In other words, the general public we call civil society is paralyzed by fear, and yet no one appears that concerned.

Amid the placards bearing the photographs and names of dead or missing family members, Javier Sicilia uses verses by poets and speaks of the "silence on fire, of the silence of those killed in a war that is on fire"; and he asks that "we act to stop it, and name the victims out of the love, peace, justice and freedom that we owe them." These words are born of his own pain, but also that of an entire society that is suffering, angry, and afraid.

Javier Sicilia is just one of the countless Mexicans who have lost a child, a nephew, a father due to the war on drugs and between drug traffickers in Mexico. The poet represents the pain felt by those who have not been given a response to the thousands of murders over these past six years. Here is a writer, a Catholic, a political activist who has had enough; he opens his speeches with verses by Thomas Merton or Bob Dylan. With his grey beard and glasses, this 56-year-old man has the look of an academic who, dressed in his trademark fisherman's waistcoat and explorer's hat, shares the pain of being the father of a murdered young man, just 22 years old, killed along with six others one early morning in March 2011, allegedly by members of the Beltrán Leyva cartel. Their bodies were abandoned in a car in the state of Morelos.

At the same time as Sicilia began mourning, he decided to go into battle: he would fight to be heard and to give a voice to those affected by the violence, driven by a feeling of impotence of seeing that justice was not being served anywhere, and that the judicial authorities or politicians lacked compassion and understanding. Therefore he decided to begin the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity. Various activists joined this cause, as well as many other fathers and mothers who shared his concerns and desire for justice.

Sicilia led the March for Peace that started in Cuernavaca, Morelos, on May 5, 2011, and went to Mexico City, where he was granted an audience with Felipe Calderón one month later, when the president met with victims of the violence. At that time people spoke of 40 000 victims, but now some estimate the figure to be closer to 70 000. Sicilia challenged Calderón: "You must admit the Mexican state's debt to the victims and their families." His advocacy led to nothing, even after the president heard heart-rending stories of mothers, fathers, brothers who suffered directly from the real impact of the violence.

Just over a year later, Sicilia and his movement decided to travel 10 000 kilometers through different parts of the United States. They crossed over the border to the world's leading consumer of drugs to demand what our authorities keep quiet. Meanwhile, the Mexican government maintains that the war on drugs has delivered good results. During his last annual report to the nation, President Calderón even highlighted the increase in numbers of federal police agents, as well as pay hikes for soldiers and sailors.

During this outgoing administration, the number of Mexican federal police has risen from 6 489 in 2006 to 36 940 today. But even with such a large investment, they have not been able to arrest the man most wanted by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Joaquín Guzmán Loera, alias "El Chapo." Even the much-publicized capture of his son, "El Chapito," proved to be a mistake: they got the wrong person. And yet the president said in his sixth report, "Mistakes have been made and in some cases some individuals have committed abuses, but these are the exceptions to the rule, and far from trying to hide them, I have always taken action against those responsible. But these cases cannot be used to judge the institutions and the thousands of women and men who risk their lives every day to defend Mexican citizens."

Members of the Calderón administration travel frequently to Washington to make press statements asserting how the U.S. and Mexico support each other, without mentioning anything about failed operations or the so-called *non-strategy* of the war on drugs. Enrique Peña Nieto will take over as president in December, and he has declared his firm intention of opening up a new dialogue with the United States to define a new strategy. According to his statements made during a recent tour of Latin America, his model will be Colombia. Speeches aside, no statements are about civil society: the victims, those who leave their houses afraid of falling prey to extortion, kidnapping, being "disappeared," or not returning home. And this fear is by no means ungrounded. The latest report by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reveals that 50 Mexican citizens are killed due to the violence every 24 hours. According to the organization, the number of drug-trafficking-related murders has "increased dramatically" and added that around 1 250 people receive medical treatment every day and 100 more suffer some kind of disability due to the spiraling violence. These are the numbers seldom mentioned.

"When governments lose the clarity of focus that enables a dialogue between two countries to stay on course, as has happened in Mexico-U.S. relations, the civil societies of both nations must develop a citizen's diplomacy that can build bridges of understanding, alternative mechanisms of solidarity and a bi-national agenda to find a way out of the blind alley that has been created with the military-police approach to the war on drugs, imposed by the governments of our two countries,"[1] said Javier Sicilia on starting the caravan off in Los Angeles.

And how right he is. Since last year, Mexico and the U.S. have been absorbed by their presidential races, and bilateral issues, in particular the drug war, have been excluded from their agendas. For example, Mexico has turned HSBC's money laundering activities or the U.S. operations in Mexico (carried out without Mexico's knowledge) into mere anecdotes. Felipe Calderón himself stated that he first heard about "Fast and Furious" from the press, and that he would not lodge any complaints because it was part of the United States' domestic policy. Official figures on the numbers of those killed or disappeared during the government's six-year period as a result of the war on drugs are no longer even published.

According to Sicilia, the Caravan for Peace made it possible to organize a new "citizen diplomacy" working agenda with the objective of assuming shared responsibilities. At the end of his long tour, the leader of the movement indicated in a review, "For the first time, citizens and U.S. and Mexican organizations are getting to the heart of a bi-national agenda."[2]

> "Civil society must develop a citizen's diplomacy that can build bridges of understanding, alternative mechanisms of solidarity, and a bi-national agenda."
>
> *Javier Sicilia*

Few people joined the caravan. It got little press coverage. The civil society agenda is hardly ever addressed in the media. We know that many argue that the war on drugs has been positive because it was already impossible to live in certain places where the violence had taken control of the area, the institutions, and society. But it is equally true to say that with another type of strategy, we would have found ways to reduce the violence. Other countries fight drug traffickers and the levels of violence are not the same.

It seems like, since we are in freefall, nothing really matters. The Caravan for Peace in the United States has reported the facts of those who have suffered from the violence brought about by this war, of those who have been paying the price; it has sought to make both Mexican and U.S. citizens realize that both countries and societies have shared responsibilities. It has awakened civil society to the need to understand the phenomenon of consuming drugs and selling arms as markets that affect Mexicans in their daily lives, and not only in the places and regions where the illegal transactions take place. Undoubtedly the work by Sicilia and his followers has been insufficient, and the movement has not achieved its final objective. It has had virtually no impact on U.S. public opinion. Raising awareness is going to be a long process, and it is only just beginning.

Hopefully, the Caravan for Peace will serve to make people aware of the importance of changing tack, to keep struggling against drug trafficking, money laundering, and the violence that the industry generates, but now by other means. Although one can recognize the government's good intentions in its struggle against organized crime, civil society must make itself heard and demand that bilateral diplomacy be readjusted and focus on making it a priority for people to be able to live their daily lives in peace. We do not want a Mexico engulfed in a silence of fire any longer. VM

Notes

[1] Speech given on August 14, 2012 at Los Angeles City Hall, http://movimientoporlapaz.mx/es/2012/08/14/javier-sicilia-en-el-city-hall-la/. [Editor's Note.]

[2] "Llama Sicilia a EU a detener la venta de armas de exterminio," *La jornada* (Mexico City), September 10, 2012. [Editor's Note.]

Civil Society's Support for Formal Democracy How Realistic Are Expectations in Mexico, the U.S. and the UK?

Mike Aiken*

Introduction

Both Mexico and the United States have been in the grip of presidential elections in 2012. The outcomes of these formal democratic contests are vital for the citizens of both countries, but another important dimension for sustaining representative liberal democracy is often invoked: civil society. This essay asks why it is seen as important in Latin American and Anglo-Saxon contexts, and if it can meet the expectations placed upon it. The argument is that civil society has roots in three different traditions that can play complementary roles to formal democracy. However, governments need to be aware that these traditions cannot be conveniently translated into state purposes. In addition, civil society has no immunity to the forces afflicting the political culture in which it is situated.

Isaac Esquivel/Cuartoscuro.com

Why Is Civil Society Important for Representative Democracy?

Why should civil society be of interest to representative democratic governments in Mexico, the U.S. or elsewhere? J. S. Mill, writing in 1861, understood that the "political machinery does not act of itself" but needs from citizens "not their simple acquiescence, but their active participation" and requires a force from "*outside* the machinery." Today we would see civil society as one of these forces. Let us look at four reasons given for the importance of civil society to formal democracy.

First, there has been a slow realization of a crisis amidst the "mature" democracies. There is, in short, a *decline in formal participation* in representative democracy. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, voter turnout continues to fall. In U.S. presidential elections, little over 60 percent of the electorate has voted since the turn of the century. In the UK, since 2000, voter participation has fallen to similar levels after averaging 75 percent a decade earlier. In Canada, the participation of young people in elections has been only half that of older age groups according to Pammet's "Election Canada." Meanwhile, political party membership is declining. In the UK, according to NCVO's *Almanac*, the Conservative Party's 1.2 million members in 1970 had declined to around 200 000 by 2008. In contrast,

* Visiting research fellow at the Co-operatives Research Unit, Open University, Milton Keynes and currently undertaking research in Mexico into civic action, mike.aiken@open.ac.uk.

other organizations, particularly single-issue campaigns, grew enormously: Friends of the Earth's membership increased from 1 000 in 1971 to 100 000 by 2011. On-line social forums have also proliferated.

A second concern has been the *decline in trust* in politicians and public service. This has traditionally been low in Latin American countries and Anglo-Saxon populations appear to be following. Trust in governments and public institutions has fallen in nearly all the major industrialized countries since the mid-1990s and, according to Blind's research from 2007, "plummets when it comes to Latin America." Similar surveys, however, show leaders of civil society organizations enjoying high levels of public confidence only outstripped by doctors.

A third reason lies in the *growing complexity* of modern industrialized countries and the increasing individualization of needs. This means that the implementation of social, economic, or environmental policy should be adapted to take account of the particularities of geography, demographics, and culture. Recruiting citizen groups to co-design and co-implement policy holds the promise of building co-responsibility, local ownership, and efficiency in social delivery.

A fourth reason is connected to *social innovation*, which may emerge from deliberation and debate far removed from centers of traditional policy making. Environmental issues, gay and lesbian rights, and indigenous people's concerns might never have originated in the programs of major political parties.

Civil society is celebrated as an important player in these issues but politicians are often hazy on the means by which it will interact with formal processes. Barack Obama, whose roots were in social action projects, provided an idealistic description of civil society at a Russian forum in July 2009. He spoke of how

> the best ideas and solutions come from ordinary citizens who become involved in their communities and in their countries . . . by mobilizing and organizing and changing people's hearts and minds. . . [to] change the political landscape. . . [,] a vibrant civil society. . .[1]

He included "the freedom of people to…speak their minds, to organize peacefully" and emphasized the underpinning institutions such as a free press, fair administration of justice, and accountable government. Nevertheless civil society was rarely mentioned by the president for domestic audiences in recent state of the union addresses.

Civil society is celebrated as an important player in some issues, but politicians are often hazy on the means by which it will interact with formal processes.

In Mexico, the term usually appears in policy in relation to civil society *organizations*, although there are appeals to society in general. The outgoing president, Felipe Calderón, was not unusual in saying little directly about civil society. Nevertheless many state and federal forums relating to crime and drug trafficking seek the participation of civil society organizations. Calderón's "state of the union" address in September 2010 talked of the power of government, media, and the entire society to use their strengths in a manner of co-responsibility; and he urged "civil society organizations to work shoulder to shoulder" with Congress to control crime. The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) exhorts daily that "what makes a great nation is the participation of the people," although formal processes are emphasized. Meanwhile, the emergence of student protests during the elections in 2012, under the label #YoSoy132, and the role of activists in the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity, appeared to provide examples of the hand of civil society directly interacting with the formal process.

Three Traditions of "Civil Society"

Before proceeding, it is important to ask: what do we mean by civil society? This essay identifies three contrasting traditions which infuse our current use of the term: the organizational, the deliberative, and the civic.

The *organizational tradition* has its clearest exponent in Tocqueville's studies of U.S. associations in the nineteenth century. For him, they encouraged social mixing, provided training in political organization, and offered a parallel structure whereby local concerns could be advocated to formal democracy from a membership base. This tradition emphasized developing cohesion among individuals and groups or, in Robert Putnam's contemporary terms, "building social capital."

The *deliberative tradition* originated in Aristotle's *Treatise on Government*. He saw civil society as rooted in government searching for "the good" and discovering common purposes

aimed at "justice" for all citizens. Different ideas about the "good" would be reconciled by a "deliberative council" that was not an organ of power but rather resembled a team of doctors offering diagnosis and treatment to realize the "good." Modern versions draw on Hegel, who saw civil society as a *mediator* between the individual, family, and the state. Hence, Gramsci and Habermas envisaged a *deliberative space*, while Fred Powell, writing in 2007, spoke of a public space where "debate is still possible in a peaceful, ethical, and democratic form."[2]

A *civic tradition,* an idea popularized recently by Adalbert Evers, focuses on the "civic culture" that is enacted in institutional and group settings. This includes the behavior of politicians, civil servants, and citizens, plus the values and ethical standards of professional practice. Civicness includes a "disposition" to do just deeds for the community. These activities help reproduce a civic tradition. Such ideas are closely linked to Almond and Verba's research in the 1960s (revisited in 1989), which examined the "civic culture" of Mexico, the United States, and the UK. They argued that stable democracies needed a civic culture in which citizens were "active and involved" in "informed, analytic, and rational" ways, but these entailed specific sets of beliefs, feelings, and values.

Can Civil Society Meet the Expectations?

How far can these traditions contribute to addressing the challenges faced by formal democracies?

First, it may be partially true that civil society action can feed an involvement in formal political processes. Barack Obama's professional career, which encompassed the *deliberative* and *organizational* traditions of civil society, led him to the presidency. Nevertheless, we need to be cautious about drawing a straight arrow between civil society activity and engagement in formal politics. For some people, the informal engagement in civil society activities without specific or instrumental political aims is a direct alternative to formal politics. Citizens may seek debate and critique, but still have little inclination to engage in representative democracy.

In Mexico, the role of activists in the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity provides examples of civil society directly interacting with the formal process.

Second, civil society organizations can build trust and increase the social glue in localities —but not always. Veenstra's Canadian research in 2006 suggested that meaningful participation was "significantly related to . . . social trust"; however, involvement in a "breadth of civil society organizations" could increase *social*, but not necessarily *political*, trust.[3] A lack of social trust and civic tradition in Latin American countries may present a pre-existing barrier to mobilizing that undermines both formal democratic *and* civil society engagement. Meanwhile, in Anglo-Saxon countries, neighborhood associations may sometimes mobilize homogeneous groups and so entrench social divisions against the "other" rather than contribute to social cohesion.

Third, some international institutions have sought to build civil society in emerging democracies, believing that a large number of independent organizations will provide collaborative partners for social delivery and indicate a "vibrant civil society." There are two points to make here. On the one hand, the numbers game oversimplifies the organizational tradition. It would imply that Chile or East Germany in the 1980s had no civil society because they lacked a specified number of constituted associations. Yet, a state lacking a Cat Protection League may still have strong deliberative or civic traditions. On the other hand, if we are interested in civil society's role in co-designing local policy, it is vital to understand the types of associations, what they do, and who runs them, rather than how many exist. To take the extreme example, narco gangs and the Ku Klux Klan could claim to be organizations between the state, market, and family with a set of values and actions to promote. Would we welcome their role in sustaining representative democracy and co-designing local policy?

Furthermore, while an urban neighborhood group might not claim to represent all local interests, an over-hasty public agency may claim that collaboration with them is equivalent to one true voice of local civil society. The co-design of local policies can lead to other difficulties. In Mexico, we might ask if civil society groups have been "captured" in a clientelist regime. In the U.S. and the UK, we could consider if groups have been subtly co-opted by state or market as deliverers of public services in competitive contracting environments. Indigenous councils, farmers' organizations, and round tables in Mexico along with community development and regeneration partnerships in the U.S. and the UK have had to confront the complex issues of their own legitimacy in co-design.

Fourth, in Latin American contexts, where clientelism and cronyism persist, any deliberative processes may lead to formulaic discussion and pre-determined outcomes. Collusion with a complex mix of patronage including municipal departments, public sector agencies, and trade unions may produce conventional rather than innovative solutions. In Anglo-Saxon countries, collaborations between state and civil society organizations have also faced dilemmas. Unequal power relations and differential expert knowledge can result in decisions strongly steered by the state, or translated by administrative procedures that squeeze out inspiration.

Conclusion

There are clear shortcomings in simplistic views about how civil society can complement formal representative democracy in Latin American or Anglo-Saxon contexts. We do not need to minimize civil society's contribution but to complicate it. The organizational, deliberative, and civic traditions have much to offer but in negotiated ways: there is no simple virtuous circle between individuals, civil society, and representative democracy. The existing political culture will also infuse those relations differently in various country contexts. Civil society may be aspiring —in a myriad of idiosyncratic and muddled ways— to the "just" in society and so represent a social good in its own right. However, without a trusted civic culture in public and professional life, alongside institutional frameworks including accountable government, equal justice, and a free press, civil society will find it hard to flourish. Although it cannot be "operationalized" in any straightforward way by the state apparatus, it may need to be better understood and nurtured by governments. Paradoxically, its fluid nature does not pre-dispose it to capture by state —or market— machinery without disfigurement. VM

Notes

[1] Barack Obama, "Remarks at the Parallel Civil Society Summit in Moscow, Russia," July 7, 2009, http://csis.org/event/president-obama-joins-us-russia-civil-society-summit, accessed April, 21, 2012.

[2] Fred Powell, *The Politics of Civil Society: Neoliberalism or Social Left?* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007), p. 22.

[3] P. K. Blind, "Building Trust in Government in the Twenty-First Century: Review of Literature and Emerging Issues," paper presented at the 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, June 26-29, 2007, Vienna, pp. 6 and 13, http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN025062.pdf, accessed April, 21, 2012.

A Business Perspective On Violence and Organized Crime

Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera*

Iván Stephens/Cuartoscuro.com

Violence in Mexico has reached shocking new levels, particularly since Mexico's president, Felipe Calderón, decided to tackle organized crime head-on by involving the armed forces. The so-called "war on drugs" has brought about the death of tens of thousands of people —by the end of September 2011, the figure stood at 45 515, according to official estimates. And yet the economy continues to grow despite the severely negative impact felt by some sectors.

In light of this situation, this article sets out to identify the regions and business sectors that have been hit hardest in Mexico. I also include a diagram that aims to give a better understanding of the local workings of organized crime, understood for some time now as a multinational corporation with various departments that are not only engaged in drug trafficking but also in money laundering, contract killings —hit-men are commonly called *sicarios*—, extortion, kidnapping, people trafficking, and other activities.

Mexico: Investment and Business Development in a Violent Context

In Mexico's current context we would expect to find organized crime impacting Mexican and foreign companies by increasing their costs, harming investments and national economies. But these effects are not at all clear. For example, foreign direct investment (FDI) figures do not reveal a noticeable down-

* Professor-researcher and director of the Department of Government, University of Texas in Brownsville.

In Mexico's current context, we would expect to find organized crime impacting Mexican and foreign companies, but these effects are not at all clear.

ward trend. The number of victims of the so-called "war on drugs" continues to grow, but so, too, does the country's economy. In 2011, for example, GDP increased by four percent. Some official statistics even show that the flow of foreign direct investment to Mexico's regions with the highest levels of violence has increased or remained constant over the past decade. Indeed, recent data shows that Mexico continues to be an attractive option for investors. For example, between 2006 and 2010, Mexico received over US$115.58 billion in investments, according to data released by the Ministry of Economy's National Register of Foreign Investment. In 2010, Mexico received just over US$20 billion and despite the narco violence, in 2011, it still attracted over US$19.55 billion.[1]

Even with these indicators, organized crime continues to pose a serious threat for these investments, according to various experts who agree that although Mexico has not *yet* lost international investments due to the blight of drug trafficking, alarm bells are already ringing. For example, Jeff Dayton-Johnson, head of the Americas Desk for the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), points out that "[at a] macroeconomic level, Mexico has probably not suffered from foreign investors changing their focus. [They continue] investing in Mexico but they're afraid that the problem is getting worse and that investments are no longer viable."[2] In his opinion, drug trafficking exerts a strong negative pressure on the economy of those living in areas with high levels of violence.

José Juan Ruiz, Santander bank's chief economist and director of strategy and analysis for Latin America, admits that "drug trafficking is the fundamental threat now facing Mexico,"[3] and, although he emphasizes that he has no information to prove that this scourge has frightened off foreign investors, he thinks it is clear that organized crime "creates political costs and makes investments less attractive."[4] And for the United States' former ambassador to Mexico, Carlos Pascual, "The main threat facing investment and the creation of new companies in Mexico now comes from the violence generated by the drug trafficking cartels."[5] Pascual believes this has increased the cost of doing business, and that this "may dissuade companies from setting up their business in Mexico."[6]

In corroboration of these statements, José Luis Hachit Rodríguez, chairman of the Mexican Council for Foreign Trade (Puebla Division), points out that this scenario is driving some foreign companies from Mexico. Hachit Rodríguez revealed, for example, that "a Dutch company suspended an investment of €3 million in the construction sector due to the war on drugs."[7]

Battles between government forces and organized crime groups occur with increasing frequency, resulting in "the exodus of businessmen going north across the border to the United States, businesses closing, sales falling, investments being cancelled, tourism declining, companies going elsewhere, and freight carriers being fearful of using certain routes, and all this is becoming routine. Violence is hitting the Mexican economy in many ways, a phenomenon found all across Mexico."[8]

The American Chamber of Commerce (Amcham) conducted a survey that revealed that one in every ten companies is the victim of kidnappings and 60 percent of those interviewed reported employees who had been assaulted or threatened in 2010. Nowadays it seems that in Mexico, companies factor in payments to organized crime groups as part of their operating costs. As a result, only half of the U.S. companies interviewed recently by Amcham said that they would be going ahead with plans for new investments in Mexico, and several have announced that they will set up new factories in places that were not initially planned, for security reasons.[9]

Truck and train robberies are also widespread and increasingly frequent. According to the Alianza Nacional de Transporte Multimodal (National Alliance of Multimodal Transport), these robberies cost companies around US$700 million in 2010, a 40 percent increase in the past three years. It was also reported that, in 2010, "entire trailers carrying recently assembled cars were stolen on main highways in the states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Morelos and Sinaloa."[10] In this context, "some truck drivers refuse to drive through dangerous areas, including Ciudad Juárez, where they say that criminals usually extort them and ask for about US$70 for letting them through safely."[11]

The violence mostly affects the smallest companies and those located in the North of Mexico. The lack of security causes more damage to small and medium-sized producers, businesspeople, and storekeepers because organized crime

"finds it easier to get to them than to senior executives of big companies who usually work outside Mexico."[12]

In the North, violence has intensified in recent years, particularly in the border states, whose economies have clearly suffered as a result. In 2010, only 23 companies opened in the North of Mexico (in Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas), a figure that contrasts to the over 3 000 created in the three previous years.[13] The National Chamber of Restaurants and Prepared Foods (Canirac) reported that in 2009 and 2010, 20 percent of their member restaurants in Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas closed their doors due to insecurity.[14]

Other figures tell the same story: in Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez Chamber of Commerce's membership fell from 600 to 400 in 2010; many of those who withdrew are now in El Paso, Texas. In Monterrey, Nuevo León, meanwhile, 60 percent of storekeepers who are local members of the National Chamber of Commerce have reported extortions.[15] The tourism sector in Tamaulipas is experiencing one of its worst-ever crises due to the very high levels of violence observed since early 2010, the year when hotel room occupation in the state fell by between 30 and 35 percent compared to 2008, with occupation rates at below 32 percent.[16] Other business reports refer to "investors' decisions to withdraw plans for an ethanol plant worth US$100 million [and] the maquiladora companies and cold meat packers leaving Sonora and heading for the southern U.S. to export to Mexico what they previously produced right here."[17]

Official statistics show that the flow of foreign direct investment to Mexico's regions with the highest levels of violence has increased or remained constant over the past decade.

A Business Vision of Organized Crime

In general terms, we can conclude that the violence related to organized crime has not driven away all foreign direct investment; however, Mexico's extremely delicate situation has affected some specific areas and above all small companies and border states. But evidence does not point to investments plummeting as we might expect on observing the high levels of violence in Mexico since the so-called "war on drugs" was declared. What we do not know, as political analyst Leo Zuckermann says, is "whether we would have more [investments]

DIAGRAM

A Business Vision of Organized Crime

Violence related to organized crime has not driven away all foreign direct investment; however, Mexico's extremely delicate situation has affected specific areas.

had there not been so many criminal acts (extortions, kidnappings, murders) in some Mexican cities."[18]

Despite the financial losses incurred as a result of the drug-related violence and organized crime's new *modus operandi*, "most U.S. companies already operating in Mexico say that they have no plans to leave a place where workers are paid three dollars an hour, environmental regulations are lax, with tax incentives and a very convenient location due to its proximity to the U.S. Indeed, every day imports and exports worth over US$1 billion cross the border and provide hundreds of thousands of jobs in the United States and Mexico. Over 18 000 U.S. companies have operations in Mexico."[19] But some consider that these figures could be higher, since some foreign companies have already stopped investing in the region. For example, Gabriel Casillas, JP Morgan's chief economist for Mexico, estimates that in 2010 organized crime cost Mexico US$4 billion in terms of FDI that did not reach Mexico.[20]

It is worth making a final observation: organized crime could also be considered —or rather analyzed— as an enormous multinational company, as we will see below.[21]

Analysts, politicians, and journalists often attribute the current situation exclusively to drug trafficking. In fact, most argue that organized crime and drug trafficking are virtually synonymous. However, this approach seems less useful as a means of understanding the problem and offering proper solutions to it. Mexico's problem is certainly related directly to groups —or "companies"— that traffic drugs, and the federal government's strategy has been to fight those who traffic drugs. However, we should not forget that drug trafficking is not the only type of illegal business or, rather, the only type of organized crime.

Moreover, as mentioned above, the final piece of the puzzle that we must find in order to understand this complex phenomenon is that Mexican organized crime is structured and operates like a multinational corporation involving divisions and key areas such as drug trafficking (purchases and sales), money laundering (finance), people trafficking, contract killings (a form of marketing as a way of spreading terror and sending messages to different people to be able to negotiate with or threaten them), and a new division that specializes in extortion, kidnapping, protection rackets, etc., in reality a ramification of the traditional activities of the so-called drug cartels. VM

Notes

[1] Secretaría de Economía, Dirección General de Inversión Extranjera (figures as of March 31, 2012).

[2] EFE News Agency, "El narco en México 'amenaza' la inversión extranjera, advierte la OCDE," *Excélsior* (Mexico City), December 13, 2010, http://www.excelsior.com.mx/index.php?m=nota&id_nota=696271.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Report, "Violencia frena la inversión en México: EU," *El Universal* (Mexico City), April 20, 2010, http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/674143.html.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Staff writers, "Por guerra contra narco se va inversión extranjera: IP," *SDP Noticias*, June 1, 2011, http://www.sdpnoticias.com/local/puebla/2011/06/01/por-guerra-contra-narco-se-va-inversion-extranjera-ip.

[8] "La economía mexicana, golpeada por la violencia," *seguridadydefensa.com*, December 15, 2010, http://www.seguridadydefensa.com/informes/la-economia-mexicana-golpeada-por-la-violencia-22657.html.

[9] "Violencia en México, frena inversiones de empresas de Estados Unidos," *El informador*, May 18, 2011, http://www.informador.com.mx/economia/2011/293495/6/violencia-en-mexico-frena-inversiones-de-empresas-de-estados-unidos.htm.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] See "La economía mexicana, golpeada ," op. cit.

[13] The creation of companies has shifted from the North to Central Mexico. In contrast to the 23 companies created in the North of Mexico, in 2010, 1 193 companies were set up in Mexico City's Federal District, the State of Mexico, Guerrero, and Morelos. In previous years, it was the other way around. In 2007, for example, 1 946 businesses were opened in Central Mexico and 3 437 in the North. See Verónica Gascón and Nallely Ortigoza, "Abren en el Norte menos empresas," *Reforma* (Mexico City), March 7, 2011.

[14] See "La economía mexicana, golpeada ," op. cit.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Efraín Klerigan, Mario Prieto, and Benigno Solís, "La inseguridad se llevó al turismo," *conexióntotal.mx*, February 6, 2011.

[17] See "La economía mexicana, golpeada," op. cit.

[18] Leo Zuckermann, "¿Afecta la violencia a la economía?" *Excélsior*, October 11, 2011, http://www.excelsior.com.mx/index.php?m=nota&id_nota=773994.

[19] "Violencia en México. . . , " *El informador*, op. cit.

[20] Ibid.

[21] This discussion originates from a conversation I had in August 2011 with businessman Eloy Garza, CEO of Grupo Dickens, S. A. de C. V., a firm headquartered in San Pedro Garza García, Nuevo León.

The Mexico Agenda
The Battle for the White House

Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla*

Jonathan Ernst/ REUTERS

We are a couple of months away from the U.S. presidential election. One way of looking at the November voting is to examine two types of indicators, but they will give us different results. If we look only at the golden rule of U.S. elections, according to which its citizens vote "their pocketbooks," given that there is eight percent unemployment and poor economic growth, we can conclude that the winner will be Republican Mitt Romney. There's another rule that says, "He with his hand on the tiller has the advantage," which means that the incumbent is the probable winner, leading us to think that President Barack Obama is likely to come out on top. It should be noted that both rules actually ignore certain circumstances, which is why what will happen is not that predictable. The United States is going through one of its biggest crises since the 1929 crash, and the world is facing an overall recession or at the very least, extremely low growth.

The polls have offered changing results, and, while at times the gap between the contenders narrows, most surveys put President Obama in the lead. The August 24 CNN network poll gives him 49 percent of the votes and Romney, 47 percent. However, since the difference is only two percent, they can technically be considered tied. The conventions had their effect, though, and in the September 2 polls, Obama maintained his 49 percent and Romney dropped to 44. Undoubtedly, William Clinton's speech had a positive effect on prospective voters.[1]

It is interesting and revealing to analyze how the vote breaks down demographically. While Obama is expected to get 54 percent of women's votes, Romney can only expect

*Researcher at CISAN.

42 percent. This has been particularly influenced by a statement by six-term Republican Congressman and senatorial hopeful Todd Akin from Missouri, who is close to conservative Christians; in an interview, he said that women had the natural physical capacity to avoid pregnancy when being raped, in the case of "legitimate rapes." He added that under no circumstances was he in favor of a woman's right to abortion, a position that is far from that of the average American: 83 percent of the public agrees with the right to abortion in cases of incest, rape, or when the life of the woman is in danger, and only 15 percent think abortion should be illegal in all cases. Also, up to 35 percent of people think that it should be legal under all circumstances.

Among the Latino population, Barack Obama has a 35-percent lead on Romney. In the last elections, he received a historic 67 percent of the Latino vote. It should be remembered that President George W. Bush had obtained 44 percent of that vote, which was a very high number for the time. The very hard, conservative position of the Republicans and Romney himself has caused the Latinos who supported Bush to distance themselves from his party. At the Republican convention, Romney talked about making the lives of undocumented immigrants so difficult that they would voluntarily return to their home countries. He also talked about reinforcing and strengthening the fence along the southern U.S. border.

Undoubtedly, the Tea Party, the ultra-conservative wing of the Republican Party, has had a negative effect on the Republicans' position. The economic crisis causes people to take extreme ideological positions, and, for the time being, the Republicans' position has chased away Latino voters, two-thirds of whom favor Obama, although it has broadened its conservative base.

All this is happening, naturally, in the anti-immigrant atmosphere prevailing among the general public because of the economic crisis. Arizona's SB1070 is a clear example of this, by criminalizing undocumented migration and authorizing local police to ask anyone for migratory documents if any doubt arises about their migratory status. The law authorizes the police to act based on a supposed ethnic "profile," giving them the right to ask anyone for identification based only on his/her physical appearance, which is clearly discriminatory. President Obama took the case to the Supreme Court in an attempt to have it declared unconstitutional, because if Arizona applied this law, it would be assuming a prerogative reserved for the federal government, that of dealing with immigration. The court's decision was divided and unclear, to the extent that it stated

The very hard, conservative position of the Republicans and Romney himself has caused the Latinos who supported Bush to distance themselves from his party.

that, while that task does fall to the federal government, the local government can regulate the behavior of local authorities when it has a "reasonable" suspicion that the presence of these individuals is illegal.

While Obama did not spend his efforts and political capital on achieving immigration reform —he preferred to use them for health care reform— and his government carried out almost 400 000 deportations in 2011, he has managed to pass some compensatory measures, like the Dream Act. This legislation, which temporarily suspends deportation of people under the age of 30 without criminal records, was enthusiastically received by many Latinos, who stood in long lines to present their applications.

It is clear that Romney intends to ignore something undeniable: that to be competitive, the U.S. labor market requires young, cheap labor in certain sectors like agriculture, construction, and tourism. Barack Obama, on the other hand, has made speeches in which he clearly recognizes this link based on the needs of both Mexico and the United States, without recognizing the existence of a transnational labor market. He does not ignore the problem of having 12 million undocumented immigrants in the country, but he knows that it is neither possible nor desirable to repatriate all of them.

The problem is very complex and taking some concrete measures, albeit partial, is a good start. Another fact is that the U.S. population is aging, and it is very important, as they say, "to seek to build bipartisan consensus on a smart immigration policy that takes advantage of immigrants' skills at both the high and low ends of the employment ladder."[2]

The Republicans have accused Obama of taking these measures to increase his Latino vote and that is why there was no way they were going to support immigration reform. It is true that the decision to not deport young people is tinged with the election process, but the Republicans could already have proposed a similar intelligent measure to the same end. The vacuum of viable responses by them has facilitated that the Hispanic community commit itself more deeply for the time being to President Obama.

Even though during previous elections, analysts talked about the Latino vote only in terms of its potential, since then it has become indispensable for winning. It is now the job of Latino leaders to know how to make their political clout felt, above all in swing states like North Carolina, Florida, New Hampshire, Ohio, Iowa, Colorado, Nevada, and Virginia, whose votes at the Electoral College come to 85 of the 270 needed to be elected president.

On the other hand, we understand that developing the appropriate discourse is no easy task for the Democrats either. They can no longer talk about hope, or mobilize people the way Barack Obama did with his old liberal discourse. Therefore, the president's speech at the convention was not full of promises, but rather underlined the need to continue working hard to achieve the changes required to build a more egalitarian society and climb out of the crisis, since the majority of the population does not see improvement in their current circumstances. The two big achievements the Democrats point to are the death of Bin Laden and job creation, although not in the numbers required. They argue that the crisis created by President George W. Bush has made for a lot of work and that they are moving ahead in the right direction. However, 63 percent of the population thinks that the country is going in the wrong direction.[3]

It should be underlined that Republicans are more enthusiastic today about going to the polls (35 percent) than Democrats (29 percent). This contrasts with the two-thirds of Democratic voters who participated in the last elections, which undoubtedly was fundamental for giving Barack Obama the win, since, historically, Republicans vote more than Democrats.

On the other hand, the recent Republican convention did not have the desired effect. Seemingly, voters' intentions did not increase in their favor as expected, while at the previous convention, John McCain achieved a five-percent jump.

Undoubtedly, picking several Latinos as speakers, like the mayor of San Antonio, of Mexican origin, and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villarraigosa's opening the Democratic convention and presiding over it were good strategies for consolidating the Latino vote. It should be underlined that, after the Republican convention, Obama has a five-point lead in Ohio, a state that the last 10 presidents have won. He also has the advantage in eight of the nine swing states, except North Carolina. In several of these states, unemployment is lower than the national average. To date, Obama seems to have 221 Electoral College votes against Romney's 191. This puts the latter at a clear disadvantage because it means that he would have to win all the swing states, which is unlikely.[4]

Foreign policy is not important to the candidates except when the country is at war or when other countries are in crisis. The crime and violence in Mexico does not come under that heading for them.

Other Numbers to Consider

In addition to Republicans' historical tendency to vote more, 48 percent of possible independent voters support Romney, while 45 percent favor Obama. Another significant number is that 50 percent of people over 50 would vote for Romney, while 45 percent would cast their ballots for Obama. Fifty-three percent of men support Romney, against the 43 percent who prefer Obama. Lastly, the Afro-American vote continues to lean fundamentally toward Obama. With all this, the polls offer us a still uncertain panorama at the time this article was written.

The issue of the gay community has been handled well by President Obama, who has expressed his support for marriage between same-sex couples. Nevertheless, he has made it very clear that the states will make the final decision on this issue. In 2010, he signed the repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" law on sexual orientation both for men and for women in the armed forces.

Obama has tried to present his health care reform as a success, although it is precisely for this reform that the Republicans criticize him and mobilize to try to get the Supreme Court to declare it unconstitutional, which they still have not managed. In their opinion, the reform makes health insurance mandatory. What the Republicans are really worried about is that two scenarios can arise from this: that businesses will have to pay workers' insurance, or that taxes will have to be raised to be able to insure everyone.

On the other hand, the auto industry bailout has been a success. However, the Republicans accuse Obama of being a socialist for intervening so much in the economy. The fact is that Vice-president Joe Biden was applauded when in his acceptance speech for the nomination for reelection he said that, if he had to ask whether America was better off now, he would respond that it is better off: "Bin Laden is dead and General Motors is alive."[5]

We have to pay attention to the economy because there are indications that it is starting to improve; if that continues, Obama will undoubtedly have better prospects, although we cannot ignore the visible clash between the Democratic and Republican Parties. In his book *The Age of Austerity: How Scarcity Will Remake American Politics*, Thomas Edsall states that the Republicans are afraid immigrants and their children are literally changing the face of the U.S. electorate, and the "black" and "brown" minorities are reaping the benefits. The response has been for the Republican Party's counting on continuing to win by remaining a party for white people, despite the growth of the minorities.[6]

The Mexico-U.S. Bilateral Agenda

Now, we have to ask ourselves what would happen to the bilateral agenda between Mexico and the United States if one or the other candidate wins. First of all, we have to put to one side two notions: one, that we are necessarily better off with the Democrats, and two, that bilateral relations play a part in the campaign.

It is true that Democrats are less hard-line on issues that interest us like immigration, but there is no causal relationship between Democratic presidents and Mexico being better off. We cannot forget that, given big union support for the Democrats, traditionally, Democratic presidents are more protectionist than Republicans, and this closes markets to our products and services. It was precisely during the presidency of the first President Bush when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed, which required negotiating and signing parallel environmental and labor agreements to get through the ratification process in Congress. Undeniably, NAFTA helped increase trade and investment. As a result, trade between Mexico and the U.S. has more than tripled since 1994 and investment has increased six-fold, plus the creation of a dispute-resolution system that replaced the old system based on the whim of the moment.[7]

We have also faced important situations when Democrats have been in the White House, like what has been called the "error of December" in 1994, when President William Clinton used his presidential prerogative to open up a line of credit to Mexico for US$20 billion, of which more than US$11 billion were spent, earning more than US$500 million for the U.S. Treasury. This sparked a lot of criticism both in the United States and in Mexico for having offered a loan of that size, and, in the case of Mexico, for having accepted the harsh conditions. However, the fact was that our country was in crisis, and it was President Clinton who, despite Congress's opposition, offered the bailout —guaranteed, it should be pointed out, by Mexico's oil revenues. Clinton sent the world a clear message: the United States was not going to let Mexico sink, so he helped us get out of the crisis before anyone thought possible.

About the second belief, that Mexico is fundamental for the United States and that their relationship with us is central to their campaigns, nothing could be farther from the truth. Even though Mexico is the country that most affects Americans' daily lives, paradoxically, it is ignored by their campaigns.[8] If we look at other issues like the economy, we can see that Barack Obama has a much more protectionist attitude than Mitt Romney. The president's policy is to create incentives for the big corporations to return to the U.S. and create jobs there; on the other hand, however, as already mentioned, his position on immigration is more realistic and recognizes the benefits of young, abundant labor for competitiveness, which is why he looks for better alternatives to the problem.

In general, foreign policy is not important to the candidates except when the country is at war or when other countries are in crisis. Fortunately or unfortunately, the crime and violence in Mexico does not come under that heading for them despite the fact that, for example, high-power weapons that are flooding into Mexico come from the United States. The borders are too porous to be able to think that violence and organized crime are just going to stay on our side.

With regard to arms trafficking, we can say that Obama has kept his eye on the problem. That is no easy task given that the two countries have very different laws regarding the possession of weapons. Romney's position is consistent with the Republican Party's and the big gun lobbies, who maintain that neither the sale nor the possession of weapons should be limited. "Over 90 percent of the arms used by the Mexican cartels —from pistols to assault weapons to military-grade

We cannot forget that, given big union support for the Democrats, traditionally Democratic presidents are more protectionist than Republicans, and this closes markets to our products and services.

Security is seen very differently, although both candidates are interested in the issue of terrorism as a matter of national security, and this is where they seek cooperation with Mexico.

grenade launchers — are purchased at sporting good stores and gun shows on the U.S. side of the border and then smuggled south."[9]

Security is seen very differently, although both candidates are interested in the issue of terrorism as a matter of national security, and this is where they seek cooperation with Mexico. By contrast, Mexico's security priority is drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime.

Regarding drug trafficking, which does so much damage to Mexico —that is where its importance lies—, the candidates have opted to not touch on the issue. Pressure will resume once one of the two is sworn in. What is more, I believe the trend will be to deal with "drugs" not only as a criminal matter, but also as a health issue. Hopefully, Mexico will also look at it in the same way, broadening out its view in order to have more tools to fight and come up with a more effective strategy to handle this complex issue.

With the change in administrations in Mexico, the opportunity arises for broadening out, deepening, and intensifying the anti-drug strategy with less violence and efforts put into health and education to put a dent in consumption both here and in the United States. In any case, the fundamental thing is that there be cooperation between the two countries in the field of intelligence to prevent and not only counterattack as has happened up until now.

An important attempt at cooperation in this field has been the partial —or rather, unilateral— measure, the Mérida Initiative. It has even caused conflicts over money among the ministries involved. Although the goal of sharing the responsibility for drug trafficking and organized crime with Mexico has not been reached, this initiative has made Mexico better equipped and created certain bases for useful exchange.[10]

What definitely interests both countries is getting out of the crisis. Unfortunately, party interests very often prevent politicians from coming up with the most appropriate solutions. The United States has not had a statesman in office with sufficient vision to see Mexico as an opportunity. The answer is not in Europe, which is also in crisis, or in China, which at the end of the day is the United States' biggest competitor. Seeing how our economies can complement each other can help both the United States and Mexico resolve the situation. "Due to the geographical proximity and a key of complementarities, economic cooperation with Mexico is one of the best ways for the United States to improve its global competitiveness and defend American industry."[11]

While the agendas of the two countries would seem not to have anything in common, looking more closely at the problems, considering both perspectives, would make it possible to find ways of dealing with them since, whether we like it or not, they are shared, and therefore require joint solutions. VM

Notes

[1] Ashley Killough, "Obama Expands Advantage over Romney," political tocker.blogs.cnn.com, accessed September 9, 2012.

[2] Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., CSIS Commission on Smart Power, "A Smarter, More Secure America" (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2007), p. 54, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/071106_csissmartpowerreport.pdf.

[3] See http://www.realclearpolitics.com/.

[4] Antonio Caño, "Obama cobra ventaja tras las convenciones," *El país* (Americas edition), September 11, 2012, p. 5, and *Real Clear Politics*, September 12, 2012, http://www.realclearpolitics.com/2012/09/12/team_obama_has_post-convention_glow_289882.html.

[5] See http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-57505234-503544/biden-we-are-better-off-bin-laden-is-dead-and-general-motors-is-alive/. [Editor's Note.]

[6] Paul Krugman and Robin Wells, "Getting Away with It," *The New York Review of Books* vol. 59, no. 12, July 12-August 15, 2012, p. 9.

[7] Andrew Selee, *More than Neighbors: An Overview of Mexico and U.S.-Mexico Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Mexico Institute-Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, n. d.), http://www.statealliancepartnership.org/Resources/Mexico.More%20Than%20Neighbors3.pdf.

[8] Pamela K. Starr, "Mexico and United States: A Window of Opportunity?" A Pacific Council on International Policy Special Report, April 2009, http://www.pacificcouncil.org/document.doc?id=35.

[9] Ibid., p. 18.

[10] Clare Ribando Seelkey and June S. Beittel, "Mérida Initiative for Mexico and Central America: Funding and Policy Issues," CRS Report for Congress, July 6, 2009, p. 13, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/127288.pdf.

[11] Christopher E. Wilson, "Economic Ties between the United States and Mexico" (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, November 2010), p. 14.

Elections and Power in The United States 2012, an Unforgettable Contest

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*

Brian Snyder/ REUTERS

The United States is entering the 2012 electoral contest, perhaps the most fascinating in recent years, amidst international tumult. Since 1989, the complex globalization-imposed opening placed it in a position of relative fragility on the international scene *vis-à-vis* its closest competitors like China and the Russian Federation, and its allies and opponents in the European Union and other regions around the globe. It is a time when Washington is readjusting in order to recover its hegemony or to consolidate it. Both planes, the domestic and the international, have been directly and indirectly affecting the tone and content of the political debate since 2011.

In this article, I will analyze some of the events and issues that have been transcendent and impacted public debate in the United States, underlining that this election, perhaps like no other since the 1970s and 1980s, is a watershed in the political process and ideological debate. It would seem to be the cause of a major crisis in the Republican Party, more than the Democratic Party, since the presence of a *de facto* force like the Tea Party, has made emotions boil over internally and destroyed its decision-making equilibrium, basic for any political party that hopes to survive. Not even in the times of Republican first- and second-generation neo-conservatism had it shifted as much to the extreme right of the political spectrum and forgotten so soon the idea of "compassionate conservatism" that distinguished the era of Ronald Reagan and the two Bushes.

*Researcher at CISAN.

This election, perhaps like no other since the 1970s and 1980s, is a watershed in the political process and ideological debate.

The Politics of Infamy

Amidst the plethora of Republican reproaches to Barack Obama is the accusation that the president has not exercised a foreign policy in accordance with the neo-imperial bases that have been the *raison d'être* of the United States. During the Republican primaries, Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum, and Newt Gingrich talked about his supposed weakness *vis-à-vis* Iran, the military withdrawal from Iraq, the lukewarm defense of Israel, and lastly, the weakening of U.S. might and the reduction of Pentagon spending. These last two issues were a direct consequence of the 2008 economic crisis and the budget that the Republicans in Congress barely helped pass. Romney has said,

> Another of President Obama's presuppositions is that America is in state of inevitable decline. He seems to believe that we have entered the "post-American world" predicted by Fareed Zakaria's best selling book of that name. The perspective is shared by many in the foreign policy cognoscenti, and apparently by the president himself. He therefore sees his task as somehow managing that decline, making the transition to post-superpower status as smooth as possible, helping Americans understand and adjust to their new circumstances.[1]

All of this is at the expense of the wise counsel of analysts and the empirical evidence showing that the United States is weakening.

For his part, Obama has consistently reaffirmed his "smart power" strategy. First and foremost, Obama has come out in favor of his uncomfortable ally, Israel, including the possibility of a concerted attack on Iran if it continues its rather unclear uranium-enrichment process. According Israel's prime minister, that process would allow Iran to build an atomic bomb within a few months. This refers to the so-called "red zone," where the production of nuclear weapons is irreversible. In this matter, for reasons of both need and political survival, Obama has become a "hawk by coercion," and could end up being made vulnerable by the historically weakest U.S. foreign policy issue at the high point of his bid for reelection.

This pressure —although he would also say conviction— led him to say before the U.S. main Israeli lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC),

> I have said that when it comes to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, I will take no options off the table, and I mean what I say. That includes all elements of American power: a political effort aimed at isolating Iran; a diplomatic effort to sustain our coalition and ensure that the Iranian program is monitored; an economic effort that imposes crippling sanctions; and, yes, a military effort to be prepared for any contingency.[2]

This is clear, unequivocal support to Israel, whose prime minister seems to have underestimated Obama. Despite this, Romney has not stopped insisting that Obama has abandoned Israel, which "is among America's greatest allies, a true and faithful friend, one that has made real sacrifices for peace."[3] Despite this insistence, different mainstream academic and journalist analysts have taken care to reveal the truth. This is the case of Haim Saban, who wrote in *The New York Times* that,

> Romney claims Mr. Obama has "thrown allies like Israel under the bus," but in fact the president has taken concrete steps to make Israel more secure —a commitment he has described as "not negotiable." . . . His support for Israel's security and well-being has been rock solid: as president he [provided] full financing technical assistance for Israel's Iron Dome short range anti-rocket defense system. . . . In July he provided an additional $70 million to extend the Iron Dome system across southern Israel. That's in addition to the $3 billion in annual military assistance for which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed deep personal appreciation.[4]

Ideological delirium and lies embroider the Republican discourse. Obama had to respond to the moment's pressure and has been trapped between two politically and morally uncomfortable ways forward: either protect and guarantee his ally's security and shut the Republicans' up or continue to be the "smart power" president and keep emphasizing diplomatic pressure to avoid what is clearly a predictably catastrophic military adventure against Iran. He is divided between a military option —more over Israeli than U.S. priorities— and a diplomatic route that would lead to a place of relative peace.[5]

Romney is another case of unscrupulous speculation, or "casino capitalism," that to a great extent was the cause of Black September 2008 and still has the United States mired in a recession that has complicated Obama's administration.

Obama Launches Missiles and Romney Is Left Swinging in the Wind

As the campaigns progress, Obama has taken Romney's measure on several issues and is letting him swing in the wind. His website "Obama for America" levels grave charges at Romney as a 1980s and 1990s businessman whose enormous fortune, estimated at about US$300 million, was made in part at the expense of the workers that he and his partners laid off. In a video featuring former GST Steel, Dade Behring, and clothing store Stage Stores workers, Romney is denounced for purchasing their companies through his subsidiary Bain Capital, inflating their stocks on the market, and selling them off when they topped out, making millions, and then leaving them to their fate so they had to go into bankruptcy and lay off their employees.[6] The victims of these operations report that more than 9 000 workers were laid off from the three firms, with no severance or insurance of any kind.

This is one more case of savage capitalism, which displays no business ethics and the terrible management that Tony Judt exposes in his book *Ill Fares the Land*.[7]

Based on these data, Romney, as an aspiring head of state, is another case of unscrupulous speculation, or "casino capitalism,"[8] that to a great extent was the cause of Black September 2008 and still has the United States mired in a recession that has complicated Obama's administration and the lives of most U.S. Americans.

This background draws a picture of a frivolous, arbitrary politician who could well be turning into a liability for the Republicans, like Sarah Palin when she ran with John McCain in 2008. Based on Romney's business background, we can speculate about why moderate Republican were fearful that he might win the nomination, since he lacked the moral authority to denounce Obama's handling of the economy.

So, his argument that he's a good bet because he was a successful businessman is falling apart, deepened by his disrespectful, plutocratic, and unforgettable statement about the 47 percent of Americans who "consider themselves victims," who are "in debt," and "pariahs" dependent on the welfare system, which, truth be told, he himself built up when he was the governor of Massachusetts from 2003 to 2007.[9] Krugman writes that this statement

> reflects the extent to which the GOP has been taken over by an Ayn Rand-type vision of society, in which a handful of heroic businessmen are responsible for all economic good, while the rest of us are just along for the ride. . . . It was a window into the true attitudes of what has become a party of the wealthy, by the wealthy, and for the wealthy, a party that considers the rest of us unworthy of even a pretense of respect.[10]

On another front, Obama has also begun what can only be considered an original offense. On May 10, he stated in an interview that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry.[11] This position, which according to *The New York Times* still has no legal repercussions, and may not get much media play among the public, is, however, very audacious in addition to historical. It is the first time a sitting president takes a position like this on such a polemical issue. Merely an electoral move or not, it forced Romney to come out radically against, saying that marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman.[12]

It was a risk Obama took to set up his opponent: first, it aims to corner Romney in his own ideological corral imposed by the Tea Party's extremism and force him to refuse legitimate civil rights to the large gay minority, which has the sympathies of the majority of the population (51 percent of women, 63 percent of young people, 68 percent of liberals, 56 percent of moderates, and 47 percent of non-Latino whites). Secondly, the idea is to expose his extreme right-wing intolerance because he does not recognize that this is a civil rights issue for a minority that, although socially accepted, has insufficient legal guarantees. And thirdly, Barack Obama, as a representative a racial minority, puts himself once again at the center as a lightening rod for the debate, forcing Romney to retreat, or at least show himself to be insensitive, an actor unfamiliar with the gender issue in the twenty-first century. By contrast, Obama reaffirms himself as a sensitive, open person, little by little becoming immune to Romney's slander. It would seem that on issues like the handling the economy and civil rights, the Romney campaign will fall apart, since there is more than enough evidence up to now that shows him to be a smooth-talking, insensitive politician, scarcely qualified to become a statesman.

Goodbye Hegemony?

Since September 11, 2001, the long-announced decline of U.S. power around the globe has been debated in academia and the public sphere. This is by no means an idle debate since, as Fred Halliday says, it is about the future of modernity in the capitalist, democratic world of the West, where Washington tries to be at the cutting edge. Halliday maintains that the terrorist attacks were a "global event," which in turn precipitated a "global crisis" that could take 100 years to get out of.[13] In any case, the most transcendental thing about that historic moment is that it is the product of modernity itself.

Both politically and economically, since 2001, the United States has been going through an unending crisis. George W. Bush's schizoid invasion of Iraq in March 2003 —which Romney wanted to repeat— radicalized and accelerated the decline of the United States and catapulted its global disrepute. The same thing happened with the 2008 crisis, which detonated a time bomb in Obama's hands that shook U.S. capitalism to its foundations as well as those of global financial and economic stability.

For U.S. allies like the European Union and Japan, and even for emerging, powerful China, that instability has exposed their own instability, impacting their long-term economic equilibrium and sustainability. For some like Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz, the United States is going through an economic depression —its third— as a result of a deflationary process (negative growth), given which the rational analysis of that country's practitioners seems to have been uncommonly affected. For example, Krugman states that not even fiscal austerity is enough to provide the indispensable steps required to climb out of the hole. In addition, the economic bailout measures proposed by Obama today have been hijacked by the political clash that began with the Republican primaries and will certainly negatively impact the U.S. economy until November of this year.

Given the magnitude of the crisis the United States is dealing with today, some analysts affirm that the decline is a fact, while others argue that there is no such decline and therefore, it certainly will not be consummated. It is common for there to be a perception that, in the face of the emergence and economic growth of China, Brazil, India, and Turkey, among others, the United States will have to give up spaces of hegemony that it had never had to share before. However, and despite this loss of power, we must understand, as Joseph Nye suggests, that the decline is always relative to the power that the others hold, and, in absolute terms, how it is based on domestic changes. In short, Nye suggests that since the Peloponnesian Wars, the emergence of Athens, and the crumbling of the British Empire, there has been no single model of comparison to understand the collapse of the great powers, much less that of the United States as a single power.[14] The growing power of other global actors does not necessarily mean that the United States has weakened to the degree of no longer being hegemonic. As a result, it is probable that even for the rest of the twenty-first century, we will continue discussing whether the world is entering a post-U.S. order or not.

Burke's Dilemma

You can never plan the future by the past.
Edmund Burke

At the risk of simplifying something transcendental, that even Edmund Burke, the father of conservative thought and inspiration to the Republican Party, could today be debating with concern, we could say that in general, Obama seems to be the charismatic, predictable candidate, and Romney, the one who sparks irremediable mistrust, the one who does not end up convincing with either his rhetoric or his image. One is the candidate of rational discourse and actions, with a strategic, statesmanlike vision, and the other, the candidate of duality and programmatic schizophrenia, the grossly opportunistic former governor. One, the liberal with a progressive profile, more pragmatic since taking office; the other, the candidate of conservative, even reactionary, frivolity, who changes tune according to the melody the Tea Party is playing. One, a former humanist, multicultural activist with a vision for social cohesion; the other, the remote millionaire, the shark of financial speculation, the candidate of power for money and money for power.

My concluding argument is that the Republican Party no longer knows how to proceed without betraying the principles

The emergence and economic growth of China, Brazil, India, and Turkey, among others, creates the perception that the United States will have to give up spaces of hegemony that it had never had to share before.

The president's proposals to deal with the crisis are coherent for their time, particularly since the Republican Party has lost its compass and is betraying its conservative roots.

of the common good —thus, my allusion to Burke— that even Ronald Reagan was faithful to when attending to the concerns of the Chorus and that are at serious risk since it put its aspirations to the presidency in the hands of a grey, ambiguous candidate, held hostage by the right's extremism. The Republican Party is terrified of not being able to win the presidency at a historical moment, and, because of its obsession with winning it at all costs, it fears losing it —and for a very long time— amidst a social base (which it considers despicable) that is already mistrustful of its rejection of fundamental, unavoidable issues of social cohesion like employment, economic well-being, immigration, cultural diversity, health, and education. During the primaries, the party went into a self-destructive spiral that seems unstoppable.

November 6 will be a historic election that poses two fundamental questions. The first is how is it that the Republican Party allowed a figure like Romney to slip in as its presidential candidate, personifying as few others could the excesses of casino capitalism, whose most conspicuous representatives are paying for his campaign? The second question is whether Barack Obama will be able to get reelected in the purest Roosevelt style, with less money, but with the best thought-out proposal for modernization through reforms similar to those that FDR implemented beginning in 1932.

Those were the times of the New Deal, and just like today —perhaps with a few minor adjustments—, times of economic crisis that demanded profound transformations in the regulatory system. The Republican Party has spent more than 50 years trying unsuccessfully to dismantle the Roosevelt-era normative framework. Today, given the urgency of the moment, it is trying small-mindedly to destroy Obama's alternative program. The president's proposals to deal with the crisis are coherent for their time, particularly since the Republican Party has lost its compass and is betraying its conservative roots, all of which will mean that it will arrive to the November balloting weakened and fragmented.

The Republican drama is that Mitt Romney will very probably not be up to overcoming Barack Obama's citizens' proposition. In this context of conservative decadence, Burke would probably be much more optimistic about Obama's vision of the future than about the vision of the past that Romney is dragging along behind him. VM

NOTES

[1] Mitt Romney, *No Apology. The Case for American Greatness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010), p. 28.

[2] See "Remarks by the president at AIPAC Policy Conference," March 4, 2012, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/03/04/remarks-president-aipac-policy-conference-0.

[3] M. Romney, op. cit., p. 26.

[4] Haim Saban, "The Truth about Obama and Israel," *The New York Times*, September 4, 2012.

[5] Amidst all this turmoil, Obama's insistence on making it clear to the Muslim world that the United Status has not been nor will be at war against Islam should be taken into account. See his June 4, 2009, speech in Cairo at "Remarks by the president on a new beginning," www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09.

[6] See http://my.barackobama.com/Romney-Economics.

[7] Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (London: Penguin Press, 2010).

[8] Robert B. Reich, "Mitt Romney and the New Gilded Age," *The Nation* (double issue), July 16-23, 2012.

[9] These statements were revealed by a secret recording scooped by *Mother Jones* magazine, www.motherjones.com/.../09/secret-video-romney-private-fund-raiser.

[10] Paul Krugman, "Disdain for Workers," *The New York Times*, September 20, 2012.

[11] Interview with Jeff Mason, May 10, 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/10/us-usa-campaign-obama-gaymarriage-idUSBRE84818Y20120510. [Editor's Note.]

[12] Paul Ryan, Republican vice-presidential candidate, has proponed a constitutional amendment to define marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman, which, if passed, would legally eliminate the constitutional right of a minority.

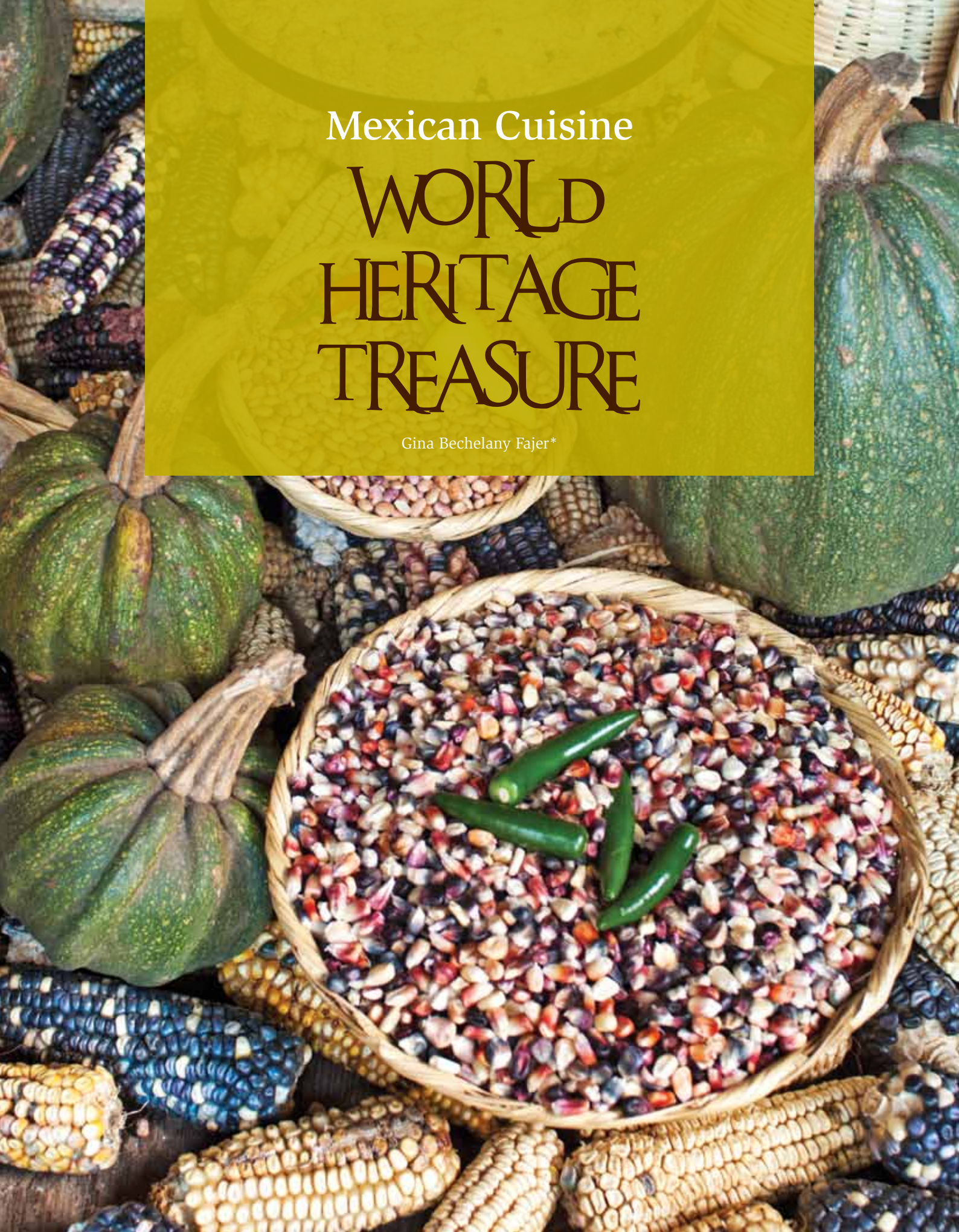
[13] Fred Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World* (London: Saqi Books, 2002).

[14] Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

Achiote, used in Mexican food.

After many years of being enjoyed almost exclusively inside our borders, Mexican cuisine is today increasingly prominent on the international gastronomical stage. It has even been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In a series of articles in this issue, penned by experts, and an interview with a well-known master of Mexican cuisine, we pay tribute to Mexican gastronomy as a reflection of a culture rich in flavors and specific ingredients, born of the country's immense biodiversity, as well as ancestral traditions and techniques, which, although passed down from generation to generation, are no barrier to exploration and innovation.



Mexican Cuisine
WORLD HERITAGE TREASURE

Gina Bechelany Fajer*

Guasmole, a dish made using the legume called *guaje*.

Mexican cuisine has been influenced by the land where it has developed. Mexico is a region of huge biodiversity, a place where various elements combined to encourage original ways of preparing food.

Food has long transcended its purely nutritional function and has become an essentially social activity. Ingredients, preparation techniques, utensils, and choices of diet all form part of people's cultural make-up and identity, both on a community and an individual level. In Mexican culture, large and small social events take place around the table: wedding banquets, communions, baptisms, birthdays, farewells and reunions, and official receptions; get-togethers are always spiced up with food-related codes.

Mexican cuisine has been influenced by the land where it has developed. Mexico is a region of huge biodiversity, a place where various elements combined to encourage original ways of preparing food. We can trace back the diet and culinary traditions to pre-Hispanic times, and three items in particular: corn, chili peppers, and beans, which constitute the axis of the cultural identity and unify Mexico's various regions. However, with the arrival of the Spanish came a rich new gastronomic exchange, a blending of both cultures during the colonial period's 300 years. This melded the indigenous with the Spanish, especially in the regions such as the Maya, Zapotec and Aztec, where highly complex cultures flourished. This is the root of what we now call Mexican cuisine, based on the ancient Mesoamerican culinary tradition, fused with the flavors and rich knowledge brought by the Moors to the Iberian Peninsula, with Asian condiments courtesy of the Nao galleons' voyages from China, all stirred together with ingredients of Spain's own cuisine.

*Editor, gbechelany@gmail.com.

Photos by Adalberto Ríos Szalay and Adalberto Ríos Lanz.

Ingredients for making *mole* sauce.

A Two-Way Culinary Chat

A well-laid table is not only about food. It also creates the right atmosphere for a nourishing conversation between two people: Gloria López Morales, president of the Conservatory of Mexican Gastronomic Culture (CCGM) and writer Nicolás Alvarado, who talked about traditional dietary practices within the framework of a globalized gastronomic model and obviously referring to traditional Mexican cuisine's place on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Gloria López Morales is an internationalist and diplomat who has held positions in Paris, for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and in Havana, where she began to take an interest in developing cultural tourism, with an emphasis on gastronomy. Writer and communicator Nicolás Alvardo has worked for various print and electronic media, including style and travel magazines, and he states that tasting food is a type of cultural experience. "When we talk about a trip, apart from the actual places we visited, we almost always refer to where we eat," begins Nicolás. Then Gloria adds, "It's precisely a country's food, its cuisine, that says so much about who we are as a society."

Originality and Technique

Gloria López Morales (GLM): A cuisine is born and supported especially by what is grown in the place in question. Mexico's gastronomy has been determined by the domestication of corn. We have three ancestral products that are the core ingredients all across the country: corn, beans, and chili peppers. These are the backbone of our cuisine."

Nicolás Alvarado (NA): But technique is also crucial.

GLM: For sure, but that takes us into the realm of culture, since the domestication of corn is a cultural phenomenon . . .

NA: I agree. In terms of agriculture, for example, you would expect the British Isles to have much more to offer, but the techniques simply hadn't developed for the creation of a more complex gastronomy.

We have to consider the technique a core element of gastronomic development. It is precisely technique that enables a shift from subsistence to pleasure or to art —by which I mean artifice— and from nature to culture.

The generosity of nature and of peoples with a great cultural tradition has been the recipe for a high level of gastronomic development.

GLM: That's probably true, although the British Isles do not have the same biodiversity as Mexico . . .

NA: There's sea, there are flat fields, there are varied climates, and . . .

GLM: And they still eat raw herrings!

NA: They still eat raw herrings because of a lack of technique, because they didn't develop methods . . .

GLM: Probably. Some historians and scholars maintain that culinary tradition comes from a combination of two major factors: biodiversity and agriculture's ability to transform products.

NA: But I insist. We have to consider the technique as a core element of gastronomic development. It is precisely technique that enables a shift from subsistence to pleasure or to art —by which I mean artifice— and from nature to culture. Biodiversity does not make for a cuisine; though under the right conditions it might lead to agriculture. Cuisine is about culture: human inventiveness, capacity for abstraction and dexterity to develop tools and techniques. . .

GLM: Yes, of course creativity is fundamental, but we can see that the great culinary traditions of the world are clustered around the tropics: China, India, Mediterranean peoples, and, in the case of the Americas, part of Mesoamerica and the northern reaches of the Andes. The generosity of nature and of peoples with a great cultural tradition has been the recipe for a high level of gastronomic development.

Grinding on a *metate* mealing stone, an ancestral utensil.

Heritage of Humanity

In the 1990s a meeting took place with a multidisciplinary group of specialists, whose goal was to safeguard the knowledge and practices of Mexico's traditional culinary system, to preserve the roots, identity, continuity, and promotion of our gastronomy. And so the CCGM was born. This non-governmental organization set out, among other things, to inscribe traditional Mexican cuisine on the UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list, a goal they achieved in 2010.

NA: Did the Conservatory set out principally to get Mexican cuisine listed as cultural heritage treasure of humanity?

GLM: To a large extent, yes. As we all know and recognize, gastronomy is one of the

Two-colored tortilla, made from both blue and white corn.

By obtaining this distinction, we are making a commitment to the UNESCO to preserve and promote our gastronomy, not just in Michoacán but throughout Mexico.

pillars for any culture. It's something that defines and identifies it. Nowadays we are at the mercy of globalization. Every country around the world is being swept along by this phenomenon, driven by rapid technological development that demands a constantly evolving society. It is a reality that in some countries traditional cuisine has already begun to be eroded. We have seen this with the proliferation of fast-food outlets, not just in the big cities but also in small cities and towns.

NA: However, although I consider that our cuisine has a lot going for it and is better than many, a lot of other countries also have delicious cuisines and deeply rooted culinary traditions. So why was Mexican cuisine singled out specifically for this distinction?

GLM: There's no doubt about it, plenty of cuisines could be on the list. The French cuisine, for example. In fact, they tried but did not meet the protocols. In my view, they missed a great chance to compile a comprehensive file on their cuisine, which has so much merit. But the Mexican cuisine, by which I mean its traditional cuisine, is the only one to receive the distinction. The file we prepared together with the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), the United Mexican States National Committee for the UNESCO (Conalmex), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE), was entitled *Traditional Mexican Cuisine — Ancestral, Ongoing Community Culture, the Michoacán Paradigm.*

NA: It only refers to one state, yet Mexican cuisine is hugely diverse. What happened to the gastronomical traditions of the Yucatan, Puebla, Monterrey and all the others?

GLM: The UNESCO explicitly asked us to present a specific case, where concrete actions had been taken to preserve an area's cultural heritage. We chose Michoacán's cuisine because we had been running a program between 2004 and 2010 called "Cooks from Michoacan." A group of women from that state made a film that showed their direct involvement with their

experiences and as bearers of the traditions that they wanted to safeguard. That was how traditional Mexican cuisine was listed by the UNESCO in November 2010.

NA: What has been the importance of this declaration of Mexican cuisine as an Intangible Heritage Treasure of Humanity?

GLM: First of all, it recognizes the fact that the traditional cuisine is authentic and still very much alive. By obtaining this distinction we are making a commitment to the UNESCO to preserve and promote our gastronomy, not just in Michoacán but throughout Mexico. And especially the continued use of its main elements, chili peppers, corn, and beans, since these are found in Mexican homes both in rural areas and in cities. Culinary traditions remain at the core of Mexican culture and have crossed borders with the migrant population now living in the United States and Canada; and most importantly, its development continues to be linked to the original customs.

NA: That's a good point. The fact that our gastronomy is recognized as an intangible heritage of humanity gives us a great opportunity to raise international awareness of our entire culture through our cuisines. It will shine a spotlight on Mexico, and as a result it won't be so easy to avoid the commitment of developing public policies to preserve, support, and promote it.

Culinary Tradition Now

NA: Even with the Cultural Heritage declaration, it's impossible to make a cuisine stand still, because it's constantly evolving, changing, and fusing with different elements, products, and techniques used in other regions of the world. You just need to look at the creations and developments made by leading international chefs from Mexico like Enrique Olvera and Ricardo Muñoz Zurita, who have made groundbreaking new dishes by adding an ingredient or two to the *milpa* crops: corn, chili, and beans.

GLM: I completely agree; cultural manifestations are never static and cannot be carved in stone. That's why it's a living culture in constant evolution. Placing traditional Mexican cuisine on the UNESCO's intangible heritage list does not at all mean inhibiting its natural and unavoidable

Roasting over an open wood fire is a lasting tradition.

"It's vitally important that a living culture is preserved, but what concerns me most is that we might think that our cuisine is better than others. Mexican cuisine is extraordinary, but it doesn't need to struggle against others to stay alive."

NICOLÁS ALVARADO

evolution. As you say, the world's various gastronomies have been in contact with each other and products and techniques have been exchanged. Evolution takes place on its own, so what we must safeguard are the roots, fundamentally traditional Mexican cuisine's collective nature. I explained this in detail to three French chefs who did not understand how Mexican cuisine had been chosen.

NA: I don't think that one way of cooking, whether individual or collective, can be superior to another. . . . Individual creativity throughout history has been the source of all artistic creation and of course collectivity is the source of artisanal and traditional creation. It's vitally important that a living culture is preserved, but what concerns me most is that we might think that our cuisine is better than others. Mexican cuisine is extraordinary, but it doesn't need to struggle against others to stay alive.

GLM: No, that isn't the idea at all. Cuisines from all around the world must be in a dialogue, but protecting what is yours *vis-à-vis* others must be done to the same degree.

A Dialogue between Cuisines

NA: Obviously no one cuisine is superior to another, but you can argue that some traditions have richer traditions, such as Mexico, France, and China, and many others, too. I don't think that cultures need to compete with one another. I'm worried that today there seems to be this absurd rivalry, and that everything is given an ideological slant, and you can begin to detect a whiff of politics. I find this troubling because it's very hard to think of one culture being better than the others.

GLM: A question people always ask me, one which really irritates me, is whether Mexican cuisine is really in third place after the French and the Chinese. What we're trying to do is value what we have, for our own sake. But what I do emphasize is that few cuisines can be compared to what we have in Mexico given its originality, character, diversity of products, and preparation methods. But we are letting it all slip through our fingers. The trend of globalization and free trade has eroded our healthy, varied diet; today in Mexico we face a big problem of obesity brought about by changing dietary habits.

NA: Perhaps we have adopted new diets but the problem is not about having free-trade agreements or being open to outside influences; it's a question of education. If we ate fried tortilla *garnachas* every day instead of hamburgers we'd still have health problems and obesity. The problem is that we must learn how to eat. I'm not so worried if the ingredients or

preparation methods are Mexican or not; in that sense, the Conservatory's work strikes me as highly valuable. But the alarm bells of chauvinism are going off in my head, and that's something that makes me panic culturally speaking. I wouldn't like to live in a country that makes eating a Mexican diet a matter of public policy. For me what's essential is for a culinary and cultural dialogue to exist with every possible country.

GLM: Supporting one culture does not necessarily mean denigrating another, but that does not preclude mounting a defense against impositions. Our project has been warmly welcomed by cooks, chefs, students, restaurateurs, and small- and large-scale producers alike. Perhaps we have not made a big enough impact on public policies. It would be wonderful if we had a policy that not only protected Mexico's culinary traditions but also our farmers.

Renewed Tradition

People are truly concerned, including members of the Conservatory, that the culinary system is in danger and in need of protection. Traditional recipes and techniques run the risk of being lost if they are not recorded, and this could entail the loss of delicious dishes. However, that does not mean closing the door on exploration and innovation to enrich Mexican cuisine. Prestigious Mexican chefs such as Ricardo Muñoz Zurita, Enrique Olvera, and Daniel Ovadía have explored new trends and promoted gastronomic development in Mexico based on the use of international culinary techniques to produce creative and innovative new recipes using traditional Mexican ingredients. These masters have not only brought new value to the tradition but have also rescued many forgotten products from oblivion. Their traditional cuisines have been updated and our gastronomy now has a multicultural flavor while retaining its authenticity and splendor. VM

Making *pulque* bread in a wood-burning oven.

Mexican Cuisine

An Entire Cultural System

Sol Rubín de la Borbolla*

Many people ask why, beyond the ritual or festive aspects of certain customs, a historian or an anthropologist would be interested in the way food is prepared and served. This interest is born of a broader definition of what culture is and how different peoples have dealt with the effects of globalization. The definition includes the way in which inhabitants in a given region resolve their day-to-day problems, how they procure the food they need to eat, how they build their homes, use the environment, dress, and communicate among each other. And, of course, it involves their inner world, the spiritual world: the way they celebrate important events like birth and death, the way they explain the origin of the world and humankind, their relationship with nature, and also their art.

The culture of a people, region, or country also includes the way the inhabitants recognize each other as part of a group.

* Director of the Daniel Rubín de la Borbolla Documentation and Information Center, solrubin@gmail.com.

Photos by Adalberto Ríos Szalay and Adalberto Ríos Lanz.

Natural Diversity

Mexico is one of the world's regions richest in plant and animal diversity. Several biological inventories rank it fourth worldwide in terms of the number of species it is home to: this is a mega-diverse country, a category only open to countries that are home to between 60 and 70 percent of the world's entire biological diversity. Indonesia, India, Australia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Brazil are the other nations that share this description. This natural diversity has made it possible for these peoples to have a rich, varied diet. It is sufficient to look at current recipe books, which mention the products needed to prepare a dish from the states of Chihuahua, Jalisco, Chiapas, or Campeche, to see our great variety of flora and fauna: cultivated and gathered plants, seasonal or perennial; animals that are fished for, hunted, collected, or raised. To give just a couple of examples, the shrimp from Sinaloa do not taste the same as those from Campeche or the little ones from Oaxaca; Mexican pepperleaf lends a special flavor to food in a large part of the country's South but is practically

Mexico is one of the world's regions richest in plant and animal diversity. Several biological inventories rank it fourth worldwide in terms of the number of species it is home to.

unknown in the North and Central Highlands. This immense biological variety is due, among other reasons, to the topography, the variety of climes, and a long, long geological, biological, and cultural history —we human beings have also contributed to changing the landscape and therefore, also the natural resources.

Mesoamerica is a concept cultural and archaeological scholars use to define a geographical space in which, down through the history of pre-Hispanic times, different societies shared cultural expressions and established a communications network. That space is bounded on the north by the states of Sinaloa, Jalisco, and Veracruz, and to the south by parts of Central America, including the northern part of Costa Rica. Corn is the best example of this shared history; for more than 10 000 years the inhabitants of Mesoamerica have improved and diversified its cultivation. Today there are more than 400 varieties, which, from the natural point of view, represent great biological wealth. But, in addition, from the gastronomical-cultural perspective, each of these varieties has its own specific use: for making tortillas, tamales, roughly milled

Pulque bread, baked in a wood-burning oven.

fresh corn pancakes called *toqueras*, the thick beverage *atole*, and for preparing ritual, holiday, or medicinal foods.

A Concert of Ethnic Groups and Cultures

The different groups that have inhabited for thousands of years what is now Mexico have left a very important mark. When the Spaniards arrived to these lands in the sixteenth century, a large number of peoples lived beyond what is known as Mesoamerica; to the north, south, and east there were human settlements with different degrees of economic and social development. Some oral versions of pre-Hispanic cultures were set down in the colonial codices, books the first evangelizing missionaries contracted indigenous chroniclers and painters, or *tlacuilos*, to write, and have also been rendered in writing at ceremonial centers and burial sites. However, little recovery work and study have been done of family and residential spaces. Nevertheless, ceramics, painting, and a few textiles and pieces of basketwork or woodwork found in archaeological explorations help explain their use. Some of these pieces are comparable to certain objects that are still to be found in the markets of rural and indigenous towns.

Settlements dating from after the conquest, above all those linked to mining, raw materials, and animal husbandry, attracted immigrants who came with their own cultural tradition:

Typical view of a *tianguis*, or open-air market.

From the mix of cultures also arose an infinite number of utensils adapted to the uses and fashions of each era; many of them have even lasted for hundreds of years because of their usefulness and beauty.

Traditional Michoacán wood-burning kitchen.

Corn *atole* in clay mugs.

Spaniards with their Arabic heritage, Jews, and groups who came as slaves from different parts of Africa. They all brought with them new products, culinary customs, crafted items, and other ways of explaining the world. To this was added the exchange through the Manila galleon trade with Asia, and the trade with Spain and its other colonies through the royal fleet during the entire viceroyalty. Later, starting in the nineteenth century, the growing trade was enriched with the presence of immigrants from countries like France, Germany, Italy, England, and Lebanon, among others, which gave rise to innovations in the way of eating, preparing, serving, and storing food.

All these changes were less evident among the indigenous peoples; but in urban and mestizo areas, the transformation was much greater given that in Mexico, the mix of the different groups took place in all spheres of life. The Spanish brought the lathe, enamel ceramics, colonial looms, new textile fibers like wool and fine silk, iron, glass, and numerous techniques and tools for production and household use.

Popular Art and Gastronomy

From the mix of cultures also arose an infinite number of utensils adapted to the uses and fashions of each era; many of them have even lasted for hundreds of years because of their usefulness and beauty and because they are part of the

identity of a region or a social group, whether indigenous or mestizo, from the countryside or the city. Just like with gastronomy, many of the transformations in folk art associated with the cuisine came about because of regional differences. In Mexico's South and Southeast, in indigenous areas, pottery maintains some of its original forms: little boxes or plates, large earthen jars for liquids, clay jugs and pots that are smoothed and burnished until they are waterproof. Baskets are used to store grain, placed above the hearth on lofts to preserve it. In Central Mexico, the most common kind of ceramics are enameled or glazed until they are vitreous, and baskets are still used to transport food; spoons and kitchen furniture like dish-holders, spoon-holders, and chests are carved from wood. Tablecloths are woven on colonial looms or embroidered in cotton in a wide variety of colors.

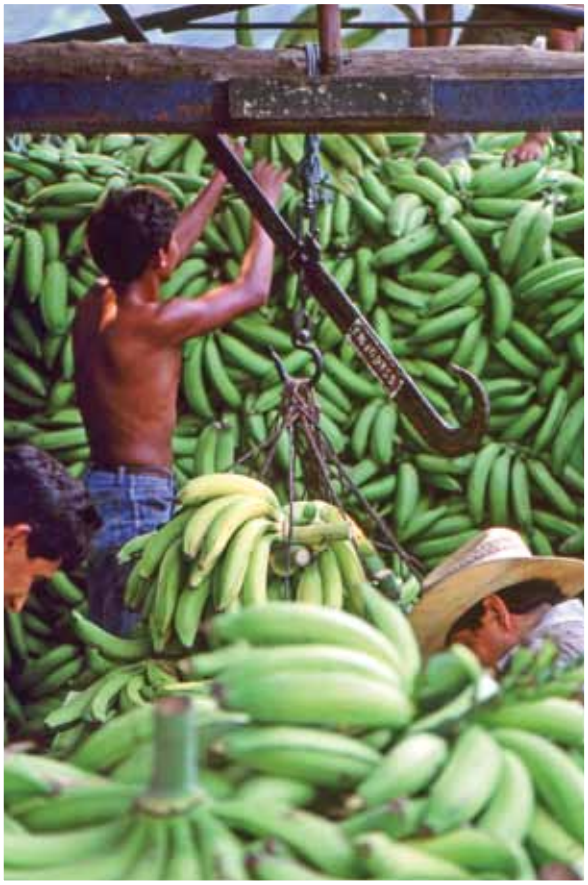
Knife sets are another of the important part of folk art linked to gastronomy. Although produced in many places, outstanding examples of knives are made in Oaxaca and, particularly, Michoacán, where perfectly tempered steel is combined with rare wood handles, and hammered copper pots are used to make caramel and fruit candy or to deep-fry the famous pork *carnitas*.

Volcanic rock is used to make water filters; mortars and pestles for grinding seeds and spices and to prepare a wide variety of salsas; mealing stones to grind *nixtamal* (corn cooked in a mixture of quicklime and water to make tortillas), cacao, and other products.

Grinding cacao on a *metate*.

Volcanic rock is used to make water filters; mortars and pestles for grinding seeds and spices and to prepare a wide variety of salsas; and mealing stones to grind *nixtamal*, cacao, and other products.

Gastronomy is undoubtedly an element for establishing identity in which the vast majority of Mexicans recognize themselves, as are all the tools and utensils used for cooking, storing, transporting, or serving food.



Today, it is not unusual to find a volcanic rock mortar and pestle next to an Osterizer in a Mexican kitchen, whether in the city or the countryside, or clay pots next to pewter or Teflon. Hot chocolate continues to be hand-beaten with turned wooden whisks, and millions of Mexicans drink coffee or other hot beverages in clay mugs.

Mole sauce, in all its regional variations, continues to be the most popular dish for family celebrations, which is why the huge clay pots continue to be produced in different states throughout the country like Puebla, Tlaxcala, Michoacán, and the State of Mexico. In contrast, the blown and pressed glass glasses typically used in the past to drink *pulque*, a fermented drink made from cactus sap, have practically disappeared and become collector's items since the beverage itself is not consumed as much today as before.

Gastronomy is undoubtedly an element for establishing identity in which the vast majority of Mexicans recognize themselves, as are all the tools and utensils used for cooking, storing, transporting, or serving food. And these are all intimately linked to the country's different cultural regions. This means that the different dishes that make up daily, ceremonial, family celebratory, or religious meals correspond to diverse artisanal pieces. This means it is not unusual to find in most homes a clay pot used exclusively for making *mole* for parties, even if it is only used twice or three times a year; clay pots used for making rice are often reserved exclusively for that; the pots for cooking beans are usually not used to cook other foods; and it is often common to find other implements

The appropriation of products, techniques, and ways of preparing and serving food has made Mexico's cuisine a lively, dynamic manifestation of its culture.

In a collective cuisine, everyone takes part.

like pots, tablecloths, mats, clay pots, cut tissue-paper decorations, among other things, reserved for special use for festivities and ceremonies.

Of course, these variations are closely linked to the cultural practices that endure in Mexico, as well as other factors like buying power, ethnic and social groups, and geographical regions.

From Mexico to the World

The concept of patrimony or heritage involves the value placed on a series of inherited goods, knowledge, and histories that, with the passage of time, are transformed by the generation that inherits them, which in turn, leaves them to those who come after. This is why, when the value of these goods is lost, their classification as patrimony is lost.

Traditional cuisines are considered the patrimony of a society because they are made up of a series of original or imported products that with the passage of time are naturalized by the country that adopted them; a series of processes carried out to transform and use the raw materials, like *nixtamalización* or using the cacao bean in the case of Mexico;[1] techniques for preparing food, like those used to make tortillas, to wrap tamales, to preserve certain meats, among others; rituals, like the ceremonies to pray for a good crop; objects, utensils, tools, and recipients that satisfy certain needs like the *metate* or mealing stone, the *molcajete* or stone mortar and pestle, the *molinillo* or turned wooden whisk for beating chocolate, the river nets and traps for fishing, the baskets for transporting and storing products, etc.; and oral histories through which knowledge and wisdom are transmitted. Using these parameters, certain criteria have been developed that characterize traditional cuisines and Mexico's fulfills all of them:

Originality. Mexico's cuisine emerged in its own territory. Its strength was born of a long historical process of more than 10 centuries of experimentation and the development of cultivation, use, and domestication of the local wild flora and fauna, of preparation techniques, and of ways of serving and sharing food. From pre-Hispanic times until today, it has been enriched by contributions from other cultures.

Diversity. Natural diversity is measured by the variety of species, and cultural diversity by the number of living languages in a specific territory; using the latter indicator, Mexico takes third place worldwide, after China and India.

Historical continuity. The most recent archaeological finds show that, since the humans inhabiting Mesoamerica began domesticating corn, their basic foodstuff, 10 000 years have passed. Therefore, the development of the body of knowledge and techniques for the use of local products has taken all that time.

Authenticity. The appropriation of products, techniques, and ways of preparing and serving food has made Mexico's cuisine a lively, dynamic manifestation of its culture. Since pre-Hispanic times, the trade routes and relations for conquest and tribute determined that products would travel from one territory to another. Today, the contributions from other cultures can still be traced without eliminating the basis for indigenous nutrition: corn, squash, beans, and chili peppers.

Identity. Food is present at all celebrations in Mexico: from birth until death, in civic and religious fiestas. In addition, it is a factor for social cohesion because of the community significance it embodies, from the cultivation of the products to the way the table or altar is laid out.

* * *

Examples confirming why Mexican cuisine is part of the country's cultural patrimony are all around us: the recipes we inherit from our grandmothers have family value as a heritage, but they also reproduce the forms of preparation and flavors that are close to us and our surroundings. What family, civic, or religious fiesta does not bring to mind a certain dish or special way of preparing it? Suffice it to think of *esquites* (corn cut from the cob and flavored with the pungent *epazote* herb) at a fair, or tamales on the Day of Our Lady of Candelaria. And even, day-to-day, who can resist that delicacy, a tortilla with salt just off the griddle? We have food patrimony at hand every day: the originality, authenticity, historical continuity, diversity, and identity of Mexico's cuisines accompany us in all spheres of life. It is our responsibility to preserve them. VM

Notes

[1] The process of *nixtamalización* is used to prepare corn for making tortillas by slaking corn kernels with water and calcium oxide, or quicklime, to soften them.

Making a *corunda*, a kind of tamale.

Tortillas fresh off the griddle.

Traditional cuisines are considered the patrimony of a society because they are made up of a series of original or imported products that with the passage of time are naturalized by the country that adopted them.

A Yet Undiscovered Cuisine

Innovation and Tradition in Mexican Cuisine
Interview with Chef Ricardo Muñoz Zurita

Courtesy of Ricardo Muñoz Zurita

Ricardo Muñoz Zurita was one of the pioneers in putting the best of traditional Mexican cuisine on the table. He has spent more than three decades researching our country's culinary traditions. Together with his great talent, this work has crystallized in a series of books and in his celebrated Azul y Oro (Blue and Gold) restaurants.

Ricardo Muñoz Zurita is the author of the books *Los chiles rellenos en México* (Stuffed Chili Peppers in Mexico) and *Salsas mexicanas: 100% México* (Mexican Salsas: 100% Mexico), among others. He is the chef and owner of Mexico City's Azul y Oro restaurants: one in University City; the Azul Condesa, in the the Condesa neighborhood; and the Azul Histórico, in downtown Mexico City's historic center.

Voices of Mexico **(VM):** How did you get interested in Mexican cuisine?

Ricardo Muñoz Zurita (RMZ): My childhood was full of food. I'm from a family originally from Tabasco that settled in Veracruz. This meant that we had the best of the two gastronomical universes: sometimes we ate food from Veracruz and sometimes from Tabasco. This meant that at a very early age, I could distinguish the big differences between the two culinary traditions, without really even knowing that they were part of a regional Mexican cuisine; I learned that later on. When I started studying gastronomy, I was very surprised that the school only taught European cuisine, as though Mexican cuisine had no value. That unfortunate omission led me to become interested in Mexican cooking from the very beginning of my career.

Photos by Adalberto Ríos Szalay and Adalberto Ríos Lanz.

VM: Did you see a need for placing renewed value on Mexican gastronomy?

RMZ: Focusing on Mexican cuisine is no novelty nowadays. But you have to take into account that I had that idea more than 30 years ago. For a start, in the 1980s, there were no cooking schools; secondly, the only thing that was taught was European. At that time, Mexican gastronomy was relegated to homes, little neighborhood restaurants, taverns, and diners, but it wasn't considered part of great world cuisine. In culinary terms, 30 years ago, we were living in the Middle Ages. And then, at the end of the 1980s, something I really didn't like began to emerge: so-called *nouvelle cuisine*

mexicaine, which was nothing but Mexican cooking using French techniques, or French cooking using Mexican products. This whole trend was very insipid; the proof is that nobody remembers that fad.

I would like to emphasize one point: it now seems commonplace to talk about places serving traditional cuisine, like my restaurants. But 30-some years ago, that was unthinkable. I shouldn't toot my own horn, but, to be fair, I think I was the first one to serve large-format classical cuisine, sticking to tradition. But I wouldn't want to underestimate the work of many other chefs who came before me and did great work, like Patricia Quintana or Alicia Gironella, among others. They made very good Mexican cuisine that still exists today; however, it's not classical cuisine since their creations include a little fusion, great Mexican cuisine with contemporary touches. In contrast with theirs, my cooking is absolutely classical. Perhaps this doesn't sound novel anymore, but thanks to my work and what we've done in recent years, people have awakened; our traditional gastronomy has taken on new value.

VM: What you did that was so important was to also situate Mexican cuisine in its proper place on an international level. But, what's next? Where does the tradition run its course? Or does it? Does it evolve?

RMZ: No, it doesn't run its course because, despite the fact that we're experiencing a good period in Mexican cuisine, we could say, a resurgence, what we are really seeing is only the tip of the iceberg. There is still much left to do and find out. To put it in numerical terms, of the whole, we have only explored five percent of what's possible: that's how powerful I think it is. For example, in the case of mescal, which is daily positioning itself more and more, we only know of very few kinds. Almost nobody talks about *raicilla*, *bacanora*, *lechuguilla*: all these other varieties of mescal from different regions. It's not that our advances have been poor; the thing is that our land and our culture are infinitely rich.

Much is left to be done, like recover corn, recover certain varieties of chili peppers that are already almost extinct, reutilize many kinds of vegetables and herbs, especially all the ones from the *quelite* family, and much, much more. In addition to these concrete tasks, another thing that is needed is for Mexicans to recognize our culture, identify with it, and feel that being Mexican is elegant. Fortunately, this mentality is seeping into many people's consciousness.

VM: How should we deal with certain snobbishness that has emerged around Mexican cuisine recently?

RMZ: Right now, snobbishness is in our interest (laughs). It's in our interest because it has contributed to making Mexican cuisine fashionable, not just in our country, but worldwide. And making our gastronomy known leads to new value being placed on it. And then, people in general are smart; what might begin with snobbishness in the end creates a process of natural selection: what's good remains and what's bad is left by the wayside. So, right now a little snobbishness is by no means a bad thing for us.

VM: What about innovation? How much? Up to what point? At what point do you stop? How can you innovate without corrupting the essence of Mexican gastronomy?

RMZ: After the beginning of this trend with me 10 or 15 years ago, a group of very talented young people came along whom I personally admire and respect very much. They have contributed new flavors, new techniques; they're doing very interesting things. There are new figures in Mexican cuisine who are doing very interesting work that is very worthwhile, and there's a great deal of terrain left to be covered. I think we have to watch these young chefs' new trends very closely. I'm an admirer of many of them; the only thing I think is that that shouldn't become our only possibility; I think what they're doing is wonderful, but not everything can be contemporary. The classical has to have its place. I think that in the not-too-distant future, the tendency will be the harmonious co-existence of classical places with others that are very modern. Because no matter how much I love and defend tradition, the younger generation also has to have its own space; besides, tastes change, too. I see this innovation as very positive, as long as we don't forget the traditional.

VM: What are new chefs putting the accent on? Ingredients? Techniques? The combination of flavors?

RMZ: I think that in addition to exploring and experimenting, to a large extent they're setting their sights on the ingredients and Mexican products, and, of course, they're using fewer salsas; they use much better quality meats, fish, and seafood; and they also use vegetables and other organic products. That's great; I love what Édgard Núñez, Enrique Olvera, Daniel Ovadía, and Jorge Trejo are doing, and not just them, here in Mexico City; outside the capital are Roberto Solís, Aquiles Chávez, Alejandro Ruíz, José Manuel Baños, Óscar Carrizoza, Pilar Cabrera, and Antonio Delivier, just to name a few. The list is enormous.

VM: Is there still a lot left to discover?

RMZ: Yes, an enormous amount. I was one of the first to start serious research. Before, lots of cookbooks were written, but very superficially. For example, the recipes weren't substantiated. . . .Doing serious research means going to the place, doing fieldwork, being with people, talking to them, observing, understanding how they eat the food, in what context. In my books, all the recipes have an introduction, because I'm not interested in just giving a recipe without an introduction that testifies to my experience, how I lived it, how important the recipe is for the people who eat this or that dish, when they make it, for a wedding, to celebrate a birth, for a wake; Mexican food is intimately tied to the nation's day-to-day culture.

As I said before, there is much left to be done in Mexican cuisine, but we can continue with the tranquility born of knowing that we have started off on the right road. We're moving ahead just fine. VM

Traditional Popular
Mexican Cuisine

José N. Iturriaga *

The Mexican cuisine included on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is not just any Mexican cuisine: concretely, what is recognized is *traditional* Mexican cuisine.

This is the mestiza cuisine still valid today, with its diverse roots: to pre-Hispanic indigenous cooking first of all were added culinary customs brought by the Spanish, which in turn incorporated elements from Asia, Africa (particularly Arab traditions), and other countries of Europe. During the viceroyalty, the direct influence from Asia increased through the goods, particularly spices, brought by the Nao galleons from China and Africa at the cost of slave labor. Throughout the nineteenth century, European influences continued, particularly from France, because of the immigration beginning in the 1830s, the armed intervention of Napoleon III and the ill-fated Maximilian of Habsburg in the 1860s, as well

* Writer and gastronomic researcher.
Photos by Adalberto Ríos and Adalberto Ríos Lanz.

To pre-Hispanic indigenous cooking were added culinary customs brought by the Spanish, which incorporated elements from Asia, Africa (particularly Arab traditions), and other countries of Europe.

as the curious "Frenchification" under Don Porfirio Díaz at the end of the century, with his black frock coat and top hat, he who as a young man in his native Tuxtepec had been a shoemaker and carpenter.

From nineteenth-century France, we received dishes, techniques, and terminology. Among them are the words "restaurant," "menu," "chef," "buffet," "consommé," "mayonnaise," "champignon," "omelette," "vol-au-vent," "crêpe," "canapé," "mousse," and "soufflé." The gastronomical term "*haute cuisine*" is very debatable when applied to our culinary tradition, since, while in France it has a clear, precise meaning that applies to the food of the rich as distinct from that of the poor, in Mexico, it only confuses matters.

The fact is that traditional Mexican cuisine is the food of the people, the kind recognized by the UNESCO, and that is the highest gastronomical form because of its authenticity, antiquity, constancy, current relevance, territorial and demographic coverage, day-to-day use, and also its festive character. To accept something else as Mexican *haute cuisine* would be to accept that the popular cuisine is *baisse cuisine*; more than an injustice, this would simply be completely untrue. When the best and most luxurious authentic Mexican restaurants and the most privileged private dining rooms in the country serve real Mexican food, they are actually decking themselves out with the country's most common popular dishes: *mole* sauces, *adobo* marinades, pit-roasted meat, braised pork *carnitas*, a long list of other dishes, and, of course, tortillas. Any restaurant in Mexico, from Tijuana to Tapachula, even if its specialty is international cuisine or any other, will include enchiladas or *chilaquiles*, the most pristine expression of the poorest tables, on its breakfast menu. Mexico's *popular* traditional cuisine is the kind that adorns and is boasted of at genuine Mexican aristocratic and plutocratic banquets.

Quite another matter is fusion cuisine —frequently "confusion" cuisine— or what is called "signature cuisine," which uses Mexican ingredients or dishes as a starting point. The supposed connoisseurs call it *haute cuisine* and even Mexican *nouvelle cuisine*. But our authentic traditional cuisine, the highest, is popular cuisine, and that is what the UNESCO recognized.

However, the advances of the new trends in Mexican cooking should be recognized, and when they are happy advances and on the mark, they may one day become part of traditional cuisine. All traditions, even the most ancient, had to be born sometime. Quite a different thing is snobbery,

passing fads, and a love for the spectacular that sometimes perverts traditional cuisine.

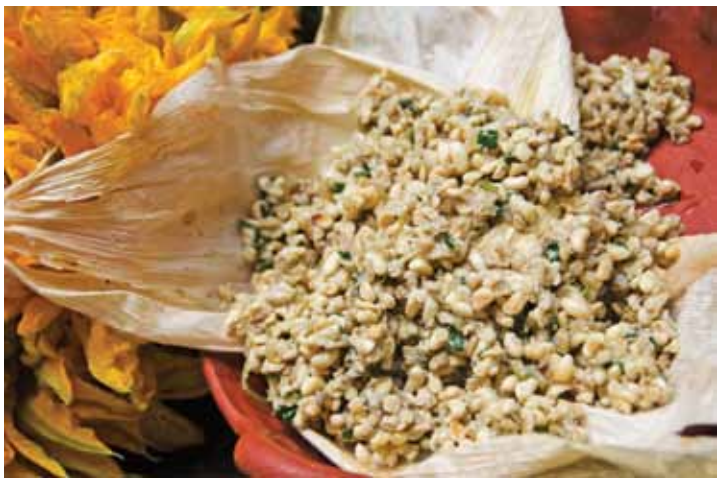
* * *

Just as it is not advisable or fruitful to try to look for apples in a pear orchard or French food in Namibia, but rather in an apple orchard or in Paris, we should keep in mind that the natural habitat of traditional Mexican cooking are the most ordinary places like neighborhood, hole-in-the-wall eateries, markets, and those endless street stalls on the sidewalks, on corners, and at people's front gates, where the fact that they are modest does not necessarily mean they are unhygienic.

In every city in Mexico, when a local middle-class family wants to have a good meal of the regional delicacies, they do not go to fashionable "Mexican" watering holes —where what predominates is mainly their decoration and the prices more than their cooking— but to traditional places. The following is an itinerary of obligatory stops if you want to taste regional delicacies, known as Mexican *antojitos*:

Roast suckling pig *tortas*, or sandwiches on a roll, at the Santa Ana Market and shredded pork in *pibil* sauce (*cochinita pibil*) at the central market in Mérida; seafood cocktails at Ensenada's little carts; tostadas at the Coyoacán market and beef shank tacos at the San Cosme Market in Mexico City; iguana or mussel tamales at the Pinotepa Nacional Market; drained *pozole* soup and juicy brain tacos at Colima's evening diners; *tortas "de la barda"* in Tampico; thin, crunchy *chalupita* tostadas and a spicy *chileatole* corn beverage bought at stands set up at people's front gates in downtown Puebla, and a *torta* served on a sesame seed *cemita* egg roll at the same city's Carranza Market; water-based hot chocolate served with egg-yolk bread at Oaxaca's main market; spicy *birria* meat stew and *tortas ahogadas*, dipped in sauce and fried, at Guadalajara's "nine corners," and beef-stomach stew (*pancita*) at the city's Central Market; the seafood restaurants at Cancún's Mercado 28 and Playa del Carmen's seafood cocktail stands; the tacos at Ciudad Victoria's train station, as well as the pig's head tacos at 16th, Juárez, and Zaragoza Streets in the same city; the seafood tacos in downtown La Paz and the sailfish tacos in Manzanillo, both sold from carts; the green tamales with cumin on a corner in Real del Monte, and the deep-fried maguey worm (*gusanos de maguey*) tacos sold in local neighborhood hole-in-the-wall eateries in Pachuquilla; the miniature deep-fried tacos served in sauce in evening diners in

Traditional Mexican cuisine is the highest form of gastronomy because of its authenticity, antiquity, constancy, current relevance, territorial and demographic coverage, day-to-day use, and also its festive character.



When the best authentic Mexican restaurants serve real Mexican food, they are actually decking themselves out with the country's most common popular dishes.

Culiacán and the crabs sold at stalls in Altata; the soft, thick oyster *sope* tostadas and the Nayarit *pozole* soup in Mexcaltitán; the unborn-calf tacos in the Chiapa de Corzo Market, and the roasted porpoise in Acapetahua; the *cahuamanta* (or faux "sea turtle") broth and, tacos in Ciudad Obregón, and the cheese tacos with smoked marlin in Guaymas; the roasted freshwater gar (*pejelagarto*) in Saloya's neighborhood hole-in-the-wall restaurants and the *pochitoque en verde*, or mud turtle in hot green chili pepper sauce in Nacajuca; the "wrapped" tacos in Cuernavaca's López Mateos Market and the "basket" tacos (*tacos de canasta*) on that city's Nezahualcóyotl Street; the roast suckling pig *tortas* in Acapulco's market, and the braised pork *tortas* in Guanajuato's market, where you can also get pickled pig-ear tostadas at a little cart in the Reforma Garden; the enchiladas *placeras* in Morelia's San Agustín Plaza; the dried-beef broth in Durango; the beef-head tacos in Mexico City's Tizapán; the *tejate con pétalos de rosa y almendra de mamey*, a beverage made from ground maize, cacao, and mammee pits, and scented with rose petals, in Oaxaca's Juárez Market, and the *pozol*, a fermented corn drink, at the Sabines Market in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, both drunk from gourds, of course; the dried spiced beef or pork burritos in Chihuahua and the deep fried *chimichanga* burritos in Hermosillo; the bean and sliced *Poblano* chili pepper tamales and the prickly-pear-flavored maize-based *atole* drink in Aguascalientes's evening diners; the miniature-shrimp cocktails sold at Champotón embankment carts; Torreón's enchiladas with thick yoghurt; the barbequed *obispos*, bone marrow and brain sausages, sold at the Ixtapan de la Sal Market; Nuevo León's finger tamales (*tamales de dedo*); the "virile" cocktails at one Querétaro market; the San Luis Potosí enchiladas at that town's evening diners; the meat cooked in *pulque* at the Huamantla Market; and finally, the apple snail cocktails (*coctel de tegogolos*) on the streets of Catemaco. This apparently prolific list is actually a minimal sample of some of Mexico's traditional gastronomy.

However, if we look more closely at one of the most deeply rooted categories with the most history in our culinary tradition, like tamales, to the three or four we have already mentioned, we have to add another enormous list. A veritable encyclopedia could be written about tamales, but here, it is worth just naming a few additional examples:

In Aguascalientes, they make pineapple tamales with eggnog, pine kernel and barrel cactus tamales, and other sweets made of peanuts. In Baja California there are what they call *güemes* tamales made of pork and chicken, olives, raisins, and olive oil. In Campeche, they make a tamale with *guajillo* chili pepper sauce, annatto, tomatoes, garlic, onions,

and spices; in addition to the corn dough and pork, its filling contains olives, capers, raisins, and almonds. Similar ones are made in Chiapas, adding diced carrot and potato, peas, pepper, and boiled egg. Around the Comarca Lagunera region, they make spinach tamales. In Colima, there are what are called "kingly" or "splendid" tamales for which they add rice and pork ribs to the corn dough. In Chiapas there are *cambray*, chipilín, and "ball" tamales, another kind called pea *padzitos*, and others called "delicacy" tamales, filled with confectioner's custard; there are also tamales made from Mexican pepperleaf using beans, toasted, ground shrimp heads, squash seeds, and *piquín* chili peppers. Chihuahua boasts pig's head tamales prepared with oregano. In the Valley of Mexico, the tasty tamale *torta* is common, and "naked" tamales are also delicious, fried before serving. In Durango they make cream tamales with almonds, pine nuts, and raisins. In the State of Mexico's Zumpango, they make them of pork backbone in green sauce with pungent *epazote* herb and *ayacotes* (those big, purple beans), as well as sweet tamales made of *capulín* cherries. In Guanajuato they prepare ash tamales and also "tamales of the dead," made with blue corn. In Taxco, they make bean tamales with lard that they bathe with green squash seed *pipián mole* sauce to serve, and others made of candied squash; in Teloloapan, there are set-milk tamales, and in Tlamacazapa, they make them of mutton, a rather uncommon choice of meat for making tamales. In the Huasteca region, they prepare the largest known tamale, the *zacahuil*, up to a meter long, and enough for all the guests at a wedding reception; it is made with pig's head and turkey meat. In Jalisco, they make Guadalajara tamales with mixed corn and rice dough. In Michoacán, we have the *corundas* and the *uchepos*, as well as the Tarascan tamales made of corn, beans, and small *charales* lake fish. In Tepoztlán, they make tamales out of the flower from the naked coral tree, and in Nayarit, a corn tamale "soup," a kind of deep-dish tamale. In Oaxaca, in addition to the classic black *mole* sauce tamales, they also make them with six other kinds of *mole* sauces, outstanding among which are the green and yellow *mole*. In Puebla, they make tamales out of purple *ayacote* beans, and others out of fava beans with chili pepper veins and avocado leaves, plus the *pulacles*, tamales with zucchini, beans, and sesame seeds. In Querétaro, there are "canary" tamales with raisins. In Ciudad

Patricia Pérez

Quite another matter is fusion cuisine —frequently "confusion" cuisine— or what is called "signature cuisine," which uses Mexican ingredients or dishes as a starting point.

Patricia Pérez

Hill" tamales, where the corn dough is accompanied by pork, cumin, and *ancho* chili pepper salsa.

The other ubiquitous exponents of traditional Mexican cuisine are tacos. This is not simply a tortilla rolled up with some kind of food inside; rather, they have patterns, that give rise to whole families of tacos, clearly differentiated among themselves. In general terms, these are the braised pork tacos; the barbequed meat tacos; the "basket" or "sweaty" tacos; tacos made out of fried meats (beef shank, goat entrails sausage, cured pork sausage); flute-shaped, golden fried *flautas*; beef-head tacos; tacos made out of different stews; *al pastor* tacos (the only ones with a foreign origin); and grilled tacos —these are actually neo-tacos, invented by those who prefer to order a steak or pork chop taco instead of a pig uterus, cow lung, eye, or pig esophagus taco. We would have to add burritos, or the tacos from the North, made with flour tortillas, and tacos filled with insects, that in more than one family constitute a relationship with regional indigenous customs.

All these delicacies —tamales and tacos, the most day-to-day examples of traditional Mexican cuisine and its *antojitos*— are not something typical of real restaurants, but rather of little hole-in-the-wall neighborhood eateries and markets, corners, and sidewalks. Another reason for this particular kind of venue is that you need neither plates nor cutlery to eat them. *Antojitos* are undoubtedly the most genuine example of traditional popular Mexican cuisine. VM

Ubiquitous exponents of traditional Mexican cuisine are tacos. This is not simply a tortilla rolled up with some kind of food inside; rather, there are different categories.

Valles, they have tamales made of *chilpán* sauce and others of palm heart; and in the capital of San Luis Potosí, they make them out of lime and others out of oranges with *chilacayote* squash. In Sinaloa, they make "bearded" tamales out of shrimp, and others out of pork with sweet potatoes and papaya. In Sonora, there are sweet bean tamales with raisins, and others made with purslane and garbanzo beans. In Tabasco, they make them out of freshwater gar, out of *chaya* leaf, and out of beans and peas. In Tamaulipas, there are dried shredded beef tamales, and others made of squash with shrimp. The list of Veracruz's tamale rainbow is as long as the state itself. The ones that stand out are sweet corn with pork and red sauce tamales; shredded shark-meat tamales; tamales made of corn with green chili pepper and coriander; of squash seeds with beans; of *izote* flowers with pork; pork cracklings with brown sugar; fresh coconut with cream; and, of course, fish with Mexican pepperleaf. In Yucatán, the *muchipollos* or *pibipollos* are traditional, and of course, the *vaporcitos*. Finally, in Zacatecas, no one can pass up the "Bufa

Glossary of Mexican ANTOJITOS

Atole A beverage made from corn sweetened with brown sugar. It comes in chocolate, rice, prickly pear, and other flavors.

Birria Stew prepared with mutton in a broth and a wide variety of spices (pepper, thyme, garlic, oregano, ginger, sesame seeds, marjoram, onion, and red chili peppers). Traditionally, it is roasted in pit.

Burritos From Mexico's North, this variety of large taco is made with a flour tortilla. One typical northern version is filled with *machaca,* or dried, shredded beef cooked in green chili peppers, tomatoes, and onion. Another kind is the *chimichanga*, made the same way, but then deep fried.

Cahuamanta This dish is traditional in Sonora and Sinaloa states. Its name refers to the Spanish word for the loggerhead sea turtle, *cahuama*, and the manta ray. However, since the loggerhead sea turtle is endangered, the dish is now made only with manta ray, which is cooked with chili pepper, green tomatoes, carrots, celery, and spices, and is used to make tacos in flour tortillas.

Cemitas de pata **(Beef or pig feet *torta*)** *A cema* is a kind of crunchy roll made with sesame seeds, which is then filled with avocado, pickled pig's feet or beef feet, string cheese, onions, and *chipotle* chili peppers.

Chalupita Tortilla braised in hot oil, bathed in red or green salsa, and topped with shredded pork and fresh, raw onions.

Chileatole Energy drink made with cacao paste and corn *atole*, seasoned with powdered chili pepper and vanilla.

Cochinita pibil Pork meat marinated in red annatto paste. To cook, the meat is wrapped in a banana leaf and roasted in a pit. The word "*pibil*" refers to this cooking method.

Coctel de tegogolo Sweetwater apple snails gathered from the Catemaco Lagoon in Veracruz, prepared in a tomato sauce.

Enchiladas placeras **("plaza" enchiladas)** Corn tortillas bathed in a sauce made of *guajillo* chili peppers, garlic, and onion, and then grilled and filled with soft, mild, un-aged "fresh" cheese. They are garnished with cubed potatoes and carrots.

Enchiladas potosinas **(enchiladas from San Luis Potosí)** Corn tortillas folded and filled with soft, mild, un-aged "fresh" cheese are dipped in an *ancho* chili pepper sauce, fried briefly in hot oil, and topped with sour cream.

Gusanos de maguey **(deep-fried maguey worms)** Found in the maguey spines, these worms are fried in oil until crunchy and eaten with guacamole and corn tortillas.

Pancita Soup-like stew made with beef stomach and cooked in a broth made of *guajillo* chili peppers, garlic, and oregano to which kernels of white corn are added.

***Pejelagarto asado* (grilled gar)** This freshwater gar, characteristic of the region of Tabasco, is grilled after being marinated in lime juice and chili pepper.

Pochitoque en verde A Herrera's mud turtle from Tabasco is roasted on an open fire and bathed in a thick, spicy green salsa prepared with garlic, salt, coriander, oil, and chili peppers.

Pozol Beverage of pre-Hispanic origins made with corn and cacao. It is served in gourds with lots of ice.

Pozole A soup made of special *cacahuazintle* corn and pork, topped with sliced lettuce and radishes, chopped onion, oregano, and chili powder. It can be served with lots of broth or without broth.

Pulque Drink of pre-Hispanic origins from the fermented sap of the agave or maguey plant.

Sopes Soft, thick corn tostadas, spread with refried black beans, and then topped with ingredients like shredded beef, chicken, or seafood, sliced lettuce, and spicy salsa.

Tacos Corn tortillas rolled and filled with an infinite variety of ingredients like cheese, vegetables, beef, chicken, fish, and seafood, usually accompanied by spicy salsa. They can be prepared on a *comal* (grill) or, rolled into the form of a flute and deep-fried until crisp ("golden" *flautas*).

***Tacos de canasta o sudados* ("basket" or "sweaty" tacos)** Corn tortillas folded and filled with potatoes or stewed beef or chicken, placed in a basket, dribbled with very hot oil, and covered with a sheet of plastic, so they begin to "sweat."

Tamales Corn meal dough wrapped in banana leaves or corn husks and steamed. They can be filled with almost any ingredient, like cheese, vegetables, chicken, beef, seafood, and even iguana meat. Sweet tamales are generally filled with fruit and nuts.

***Tamales de dedo* (finger tamales)** Corn meal dough wrapped in corn husks, mixed with a *guajillo* chili pepper sauce and filled with beans or shredded beef, these tamales owe their name to their diminutive size.

Tejate con pétalos de rosa y almendra de mamey A cold beverage prepared with ground maize, white cacao, and mammee pits, and scented with rose petals.

Tortas Sandwiches made with different kinds of rolls or French bread, filled with roast suckling pig (*lechón*), barbequed beef or pork, ham and cheese, eggs, or a myriad of other fillings.

***Torta ahogada* ("drowned" *torta*)** Made on French bread, this sandwich is filled with pork and dipped in an *árbol* chili pepper and tomato salsa, or "drowned" in it, which is where it gets the name.

Torta "de la barda" These sandwiches owe their name to the place where they were originally sold, near a wall that separated the railroad tracks, the docks, and the customs sheds from the city of Tampico. They are filled with ham, sausage, pig's head meat, yellow or white cheese, avocado, tomato, and onions.

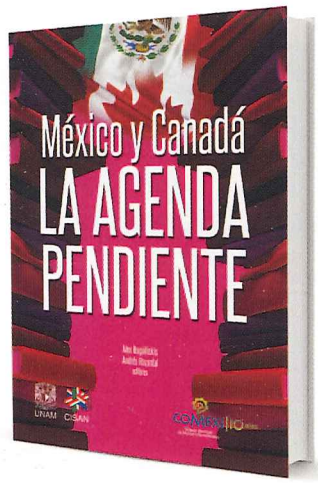
Tostadas Tortillas are fried in hot oil until crisp, and then a veritable tower of flavors is erected on top of them. Traditional tostadas are made of chicken, but an infinite variety of ingredients like fish, seafood, beef, or sausage can be used, to which beans, lettuce, tomatoes, avocado, mild "fresh" cheese, cream, and spicy salsa are added. VM

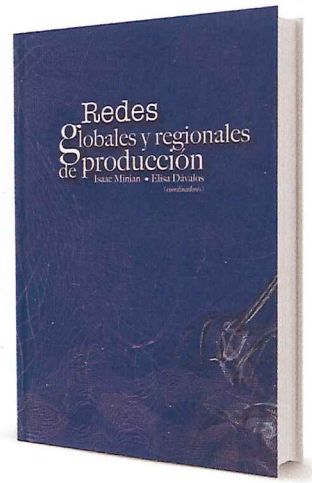
CISAN
publications

México y Canadá. La agenda pendiente

Alex Bugailiskis and Andrés Rozental, eds.

This collective volume explores bilateral relations between Canada and Mexico and their potential if cooperation and the integration of the two countries deepen. The book's contributing authors come from different fields: government, politics, academia, and the media. This means that the topics are dealt with expertly and with inside information, as well as in a style accessible for any reader interested in these issues.





Redes globales y regionales de producción

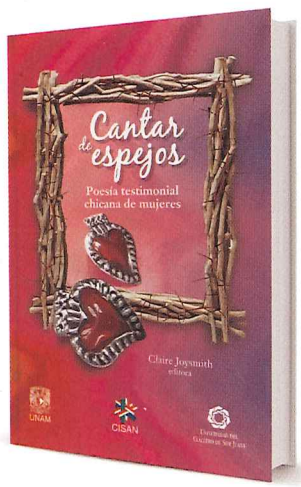
Isaac Minian and Elisa Dávalos, comps.

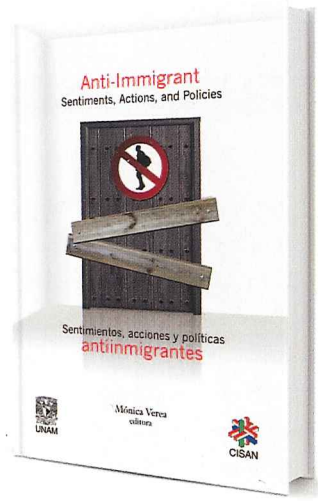
This work analyzes global and regional production chains. Some of the articles explain how and why they are formed, while others study the relations they have with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and China. The new international situation, involving the transformation of international transactions, requires new strategies, also presented here.

Cantar de espejos. Poesía testimonial chicana de mujeres

Claire Joysmith, ed.

These texts, "songs,…hymns to a rich oral and poetic tradition, heritage of a braid of (indigenous, mestiza, American, and other) roots and cultures," build a bridge defined by a complex hybridity that surpasses idiomatic codes. The selection, ranging from the Chicano movement until the twenty-first century, proposes a real and metaphoric cross, in a kind of cultural-linguistic smuggling of the poetics of the feminine Chicana identities.





Anti-Immigrant Sentiments, Actions, and Policies

Mónica Verea, ed.

Over the last decade, certain countries in North America and the European Union have seen the rise of extremely agressive xenophobic movements against unauthorized migrants and an exacerbation of nationalisms because part of the population feels threatened by the "invasion" of other ethnic groups and cultures. Both regions have reacted by applying rigid legislation and implementing stringent police controls. The authors of this book use a comparative focus to reflect on one of the most burning, divisive, and difficult topics facing migrant-receiving nations today.

For further information contact
Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Torre de Humanidades II, piso 9, Ciudad Universitaria, 04510
México, D.F. Tels. (011 5255) 5623 0308, ext. 42001 y 5623 0281 e-mail: voicesmx@unam.mx
www.cisan.unam.mx

RICARDO

▲ Camino Real Hotel (Mexico City, 1968).

Ricardo Legorreta Vilchis, one of contemporary Mexican architecture's most talented, prolific, renowned, recognizable creators, died in Mexico City on December 30, 2011. He had had a particularly intense year: he turned 80 on May 7; on July 18, the Mexico City government paid him well-deserved homage; on September 22, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM); and on October 19, he was awarded the *Praemium Imperiale* by the Art Association of Japan. All these honors were added to the many others he had received over his more than 50-year career.[1]

From a family of prominent bankers, Ricardo decided to break with family tradition in 1948 and enroll in the UNAM's National School of Architecture just after he turned 17. At the same time, he began working as a draftsman in the offices of José Villagrán García, considered the father of modern architecture in Mexico. Ricardo would soon head the workshop, and after he got his bachelor's degree in 1953, he was taken in as a partner by Villagrán. In the early 1960s, he decided to found his own firm, Legorreta Arquitectos, with his colleagues Noé Castro and Carlos Vargas.

* Researcher at the UNAM School of Architecture, juanidelcueto@gmail.com.

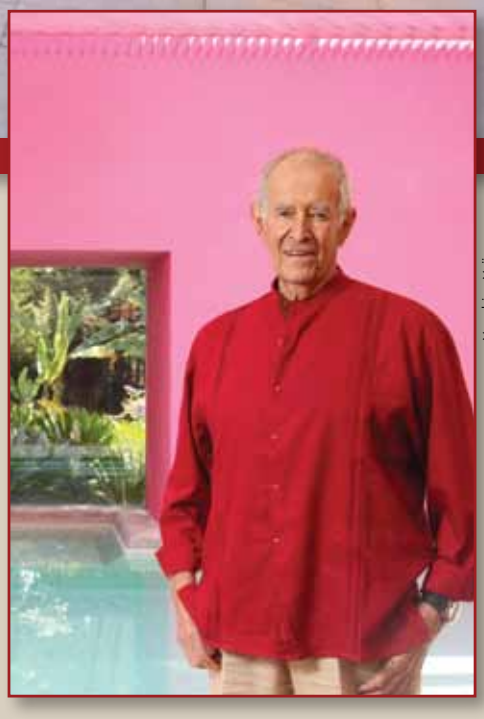
LEGORRETA

An Explosion of Color in Contemporary Architecture

Juan Ignacio del Cueto Ruiz-Funes*

Allen Vallejo

From a family of prominent bankers, Ricardo decided to break with family tradition in 1948 and enroll in the UNAM's National School of Architecture just after he turned 17.



Ricardo Legorreta ▸

Yasuhiro Yajima

L+L Archives

▲ Westin Brisas Hotel, Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo (Guerrero, 1981).

In the course of all these projects and in several private residences that he built at the same time, Legorreta distilled a language of his own, inspired by traditional Mexican architecture.

His first projects as an independent professional were in the world of industrial architecture: the SF de México factory (Mexico City, 1963), the Smith, Kline & French Laboratories (Mexico City, 1964), and the Automex factory (Lerma, State of Mexico, 1964) display his effort to give them an unusual aesthetic quality, also shown at the Guadalajara IBM factory (Jalisco, 1975) and the Renault assembly plant in Gómez Palacio (Durango, 1985).

For the corporate headquarters of Celanese Mexicana (Mexico City, 1968), he tried a novel structural system and created an urban landmark, although few people associate the building with its designer because it is not in the style that made him famous. Legorreta's characteristic language began to show up in the design of his own offices (Mexico City, 1966), and was consolidated in the Camino Real Hotel (Mexico City, 1968): his pattern of low bodies around patios, colorful walls, and generous spaces. This innovative project, which integrates the work of visual artists of the stature of Mathias Goeritz, Alexander Calder, Rufino Tamayo, or Pedro Friedeberg, broke the molds of that period's conceptualization of hotels. For that same hotel chain, he built other successful complexes in Cabo San Lucas (Baja California Sur, 1972), Cancún (Quintana Roo, 1975), and Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo (Guerrero, 1981), all of which are respectfully integrated into the coastal landscape in an inspired way.

The most important commissions in that period, including these hotels, came from the National Bank of Mexico (Banamex). In 1972, Legorreta was asked to remodel the Iturbide

Palace on Madero Street (Mexico City's historic downtown), built in the eighteenth century by baroque architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres, to turn it into the headquarters for Banamex's Cultural Institution. His intervention in the building, simultaneously respectful and daring, restored its dignity and turned it into one of the country's liveliest cultural centers. He was also charged with building headquarters for Seguros América (América Insurance) in Mexico City (1976) and Banamex in Monterrey (1982).

In the course of all these projects and in several private residences that he built at the same time, Legorreta distilled a language of his own inspired in traditional Mexican architecture. The keynote to this was brightly colored walls, in which the solid predominated over openings, generating powerful geometric volumes linked together by patios, wide hallways, and double heights, creating cozy atmospheres of great visual quality where "the real luxury is in the space, not in the materials."[2]

Two Influences, One Language

His work merges two of the most representative trends in modern Mexican architecture, functionalism and emotional architecture, inherited from his great teachers, José Villagrán and Luis Barragán. When asked which of the two had more influence on his work, Legorreta said,

Legorreta was asked to remodel the Iturbide Palace on Madero Street, built in the eighteenth century by baroque architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres.

Jaime Ardiles Arce

▲ Sheraton Abandoibarra Hotel (today Meliá Hotel, Bilbao, Spain, 2004).

Fernando Cordero

▲ Remodeled Iturbide Palace (Mexico City's historic downtown, 1972).

If I had to assign professional parentage, I would be inclined to divide it evenly between the two. . . . [Villagrán] had a solid influence on me; his teachings have been the basis and foundation of my architecture: he taught me, among many other things, the seriousness of work, the transcendence of professional ethics. . . . I met Barragán a long time later, and I was not his pupil, . . ., but his friend. He was the antithesis of my teacher who, together with my father, handed down to me the rigor and discipline that point to everything I did in my life. My approximation to Barragán gave my creativity wings. But, without Villagrán's principles, I would have achieved little, very little.[3]

And he adds, "The least of what Luis talked to me about was architecture. . . I was inspired by the quality of his life, his perfectionism, his immaculate proportions, his refinement."[4]

We would have to add to these influences, that of painter Chucho Reyes, "the master of color, the one who

Polychromy became one of the most recognizable characteristics of Legorreta's work, although his greatest merit was knowing how to transport the concept of "emotional architecture" into the monumental scale.

Yona Schley

▲ Student Center (Education City, Qatar, 2011).

Lourdes Legorreta

▲ San Antonio Central Library (Texas, 1995).

Lourdes Legorreta

▲ Fort Worth Museum of Science and History (Texas, 2009).

L+L Archives

▲ Ricardo Montalbán's house (Los Angeles, 1985).

taught us everything."[5] Polychromy became one of the most recognizable characteristics of Legorreta's work, although his greatest merit was knowing how to transporting the concept of "emotional architecture" into the monumental scale, which in Barragán had not transcended the sphere of the home.

Export Quality

The crisis unleashed by the bank nationalization decreed by outgoing President José López Portillo in 1982 had big repercussions on the firm's upward climb. For the rest of that decade, it only built one more project in the country, the Renault plant in Durango. The lifesaver for the architect came from the neighboring country to the north, hand in hand with Ricardo Montalbán, the successful Mexican actor settled in Hollywood. Montalbán asked Legorreta to build "a house in Los Angeles that would represent Mexico in a modern, but not ostentatious way."[6]

Montalbán's home (Los Angeles, 1985) was Legorreta's first project outside Mexico, and its spectacular "Mexicanness" opened professional doors to him in the United States, where he received so many important commissions that in the end they came to more than 30. The first were the master plan for Solana (Texas, 1985), an enormous complex of offices, hotels, and stores spread over 650 hectares; the Rancho Santa Fe (New Mexico, 1987); and the Children's Discovery Museum in San Jose (California, 1989). But his unstoppable international expansion, which led him to build on four continents, came when Víctor Legorrerta became part of the firm as partner and project leader. The 1990s were beginning and Legorreta Arquitectos was on the rise.

Lourdes Legorreta

▲ Metropolitan Cathedral of Managua (Nicaragua, 1993).

From the Local to the Global: Legorreta+Legorreta

In 1990, Gustavo López Padilla, an insistent, shrewd critic of our architecture, published a sentence in one of his journalism articles that probably influenced the architect's career: "The challenge Legorreta is facing is enormous, since he could get worn out and lose his freshness —and there are a few indications of this— or he could find a different vein to pursue that would give him new impetus."[7] We do not know if Legorreta read this comment, but it is the case that around that time he found that new vein, very close to him, that gave him new impetus: his youngest son, Víctor, born in Mexico City in 1966, had just finished his bachelor's in architecture and joined the firm.

During the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), Legorreta once again received large commissions in Mexico, outstanding among which are the MARCO, Contemporary Art Museum (Monterrey, 1991); the *Papalote* (Kite) Children's Museum (Chapultepec Park, Mexico City, 1993); the Autonomous University of Nuevo León library (Monterrey, 1994); and the master plan for the National

His work merges two of the most representative trends in modern Mexican architecture, functionalism and emotional architecture, inherited from his great teachers, José Villagrán and Luis Barragán.

Katsuhisa Kida

▲ Legorreta+Legorreta offices (Mexico City, 1966).

Lourdes Legorreta

▲ MARCO Museum (Monterrey, Nuevo León, 1991).

Center for the Arts (Mexico City, 1994), for which he also designed the school of visual arts, the research tower, and the building for shared services. Internationally in those years, he designed the new Pershing Square (Los Angeles, 1993) and the Metropolitan Cathedral of Managua (Nicaragua, 1993), which was one of his favorite projects and his only experience in religious architecture.

After this boom, a new national crisis struck in December 1994, and the firm managed to weather it with projects like the Televisa Corporate Headquarters (Santa Fe, Mexico City, 1998) and several private residences, but above all with the work done in the United States: the libraries in San Antonio (Texas, 1995) and Chula Vista (California, 1995); the San Jose Tech Museum of Innovation (California, 1998); the Santa Fe Visual Arts Center (New Mexico, 1999); university centers (Stanford, 1997; UCLA, 1998; and Chicago, 2001); and several private residences in California, New Mexico, Nevada, and Hawaii. At the end of the 1990s, his stamp traveled to the Far East with a home he built in the city of Zushi (1998) on the shores of Japan.

With the new millennium, Legorreta Arquitectos became Legorreta+Legorreta, when his son Víctor took over as GEO and the head of design, turning it into a dynamic business bringing in new partners (Adriana Ciclik, Miguel Almaraz, Carlos Vargas, and Miguel Alatriste) and a staff of 70 architects. Since then, it has been unstoppable, almost frenetic.

The Mexican Pavilion at Expo 2000, the World Fair in Hannover (Germany, 2000) is the work that marked the turning point in the firm's development and detonated an explosive decade with over 50 projects built, more than half abroad.

Katsuhisa Kida

▲ Private residence (Zushi, Japan, 1998).

Lourdes Legorreta

▲ National Center for the Arts (Mexico City, 1994).

Lourdes Legorreta

▲ Mexican Pavilion at Expo 2000 (Hannover, Germany, 2000).

The BBVA-Bancomer Tower, a twenty-first-century architectural landmark, will be the posthumous legacy that Ricardo Legorreta will leave to the city of his birth and that he declared himself to be fervently in love with.

Cristiano Mascaro

▲ Matão Hacienda (São Paulo, Brazil, 2005).

The Mexican Pavilion at Expo 2000, the World Fair in Hannover (Germany, 2000) is the work that marked the turning point in the firm's development and detonated an explosive decade with over 50 projects built, more than half abroad: in the Americas (the United States, Central America, Brazil), Europe (Germany, England, Spain, Greece), Africa (Egypt), and Asia (Israel, South Korea, Qatar). In Mexico, the works commissioned in this period include the Santa Fe campus of the Monterrey Institute of Higher Learning (ITESM) (Mexico City, 2001) and the San Luis Potosí Labyrinth Museum (2008). But undoubtedly, the most important is the Juárez Complex (Mexico City, 2003), whose two powerful towers housing the new headquarters for the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Federal District Superior Court and interior plaza with its magnificent sculpture-fountain by Vicente Rojo, changed the urban landscape surrounding the Central Alameda.

Legorreta's health began to fail in the last years of his life. After receiving the *Praemium Imperiale*, he had a relapse that forced him into the hospital in Kyoto. He returned to Mexico to spend his last days with his family; early on New Year's Eve 2011, the sad news of his death was announced. One of the last works he saw finished was the building for the Graduate Studies Department of the UNAM School of Economics (University City, Mexico City, 2010), built on the outskirts of the University Cultural Center. At his death,

Allen Vallejo

▲ UNAM Graduate Studies Department building of the School of Economics (Mexico City, 2010).

Barry Iverson

▲ BBVA ejecutive office tower (Mexico City, currently under construction).

he left 20 or so projects underway; the most important, undoubtedly, is the BBVA-Bancomer Tower now under construction on Reforma Avenue in Mexico City, a project done in partnership with well-known English architect Richard Rogers, his great friend. This twenty-first-century architectural landmark will be the posthumous legacy that Ricardo Legorreta will leave to the city of his birth and that he declared himself to be fervently in love with. VM

Notes

[1] Outstanding among them are the gold medals awarded by three of the world's most prestigious architectural associations: the International Union of Architects (1999), the American Institute of Architects (2000), and the Pan-American Federation of Associations of Architects (2005).

[2] Miquel Adrià and Jose Castillo, *El verdadero lujo está en el espacio. Últimas entrevistas con Ricardo Legorreta* (Mexico City: Arquine, 2012), p. 25.

[3] Ana Terán, *Tras los pasos de Ricardo Legorreta. Dime por dónde andas y te diré qué ver* (Mexico City: AEditores, 2012), p. 99.

[4] Ibid., p. 269.

[5] Adrià and Castillo, op. cit., p. 21.

[6] Cecilia Durán, "Considera Ricardo Legorreta que arquitectura hay una sola: la buena," "Cultura," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), December 2, 2007.

[7] Gustavo López Padilla, *Arquitectura mexicana contemporánea. Crítica y reflexiones* (Mexico City: Designio, 2008), p. 108.

La Catrina, engraving on lead plate, black and white.

Courtesy of the Aguascalientes Cultural Institute's José Guadalupe Posada Museum.

José Guadalupe Posada
Strokes of Life and Death

At the same time that the José Guadalupe Posada Museum is celebrating its fortieth anniversary in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico's most famous *calavera*, or skull sketch, the *Catrina*, is celebrating its first 100 years after being created by one of Mexico's most renowned illustrators.

The traditional neighborhood Encino, also known as Triana, was the first place people settled in what became the city of Aguascalientes. An area covered with orchards in its early days is now the heart of the city. In the priest's quarters next to the church of Our Lord of the Encino (or Holm Oak) is the José Guadalupe Posada Museum. It is a colonial-style house, sober, but splendid, which boasts a permanent collection of the illustrator's vast body of work. Posada knew how to read and use his pain-, humor-, and irony-laden pen strokes to face down social injustice and the sometimes tragic events of early twentieth-century Mexico. While the best known parts of Posada's work are the *calacas* (skull-headed figures) that are today part of the country's folk art associated with the celebration of the Day of the Dead, this artist's pen also used these figures to portray tragic events and day-to-day grotesqueries, sometimes with natural causes and other times sparked by political and social injustices.[1]

In addition to housing Posada's work, the museum has very special meaning since it was the first art museum in the city of Aguascalientes. From that time on, it has been home to many cultural projects involving engraving: from a workshop to the recently announced José Guadalupe Posada International Engraving Biennial.

The museum's collection includes more than 3 000 pieces, the majority by Posada and his fellow illustrator Manuel Manilla. Also included are works by others, from Mexico and abroad alike, such as José Fors, Rufino Tamayo, and Mimo Paladino. Any visit to this museum must include time spent in front of its true leading character: that national icon, the Catrina.

This work was created in 1912, but for unknown reasons was published 10 months after Posada's death, in 1913. In the words of the architect José Guillermo Saucedo, the museum's director, "It is curious that this *calavera* would be published posthumously; at the time, it was no more than one of the many that Posada did at the request of his editor, Antonio Venegas Arroyo, to illustrate the literary *calaveras* written year after year as part of the celebrations for the Day of the Dead."[2]

Revolutionary *calavera*.

The Kiss or *The Farewell*.

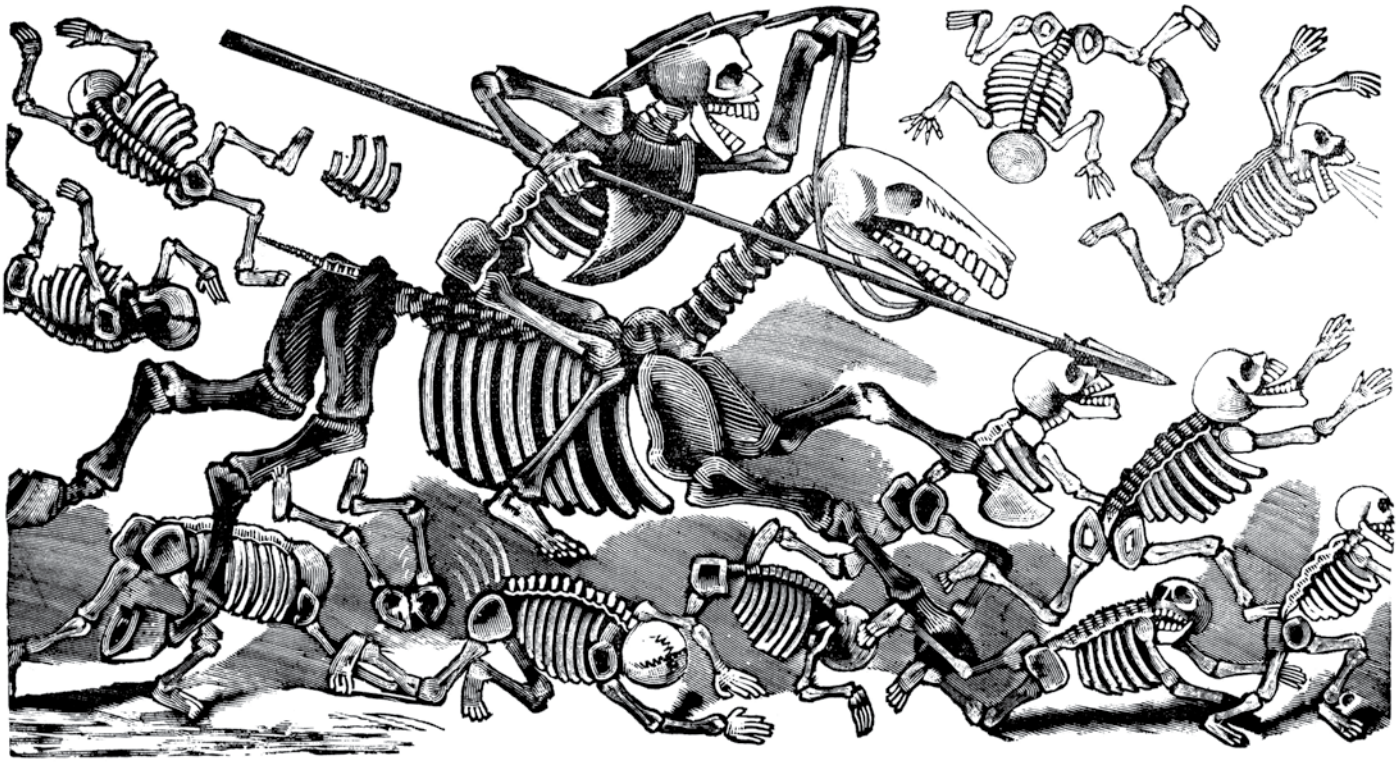
Any visit to this museum must include time spent in front of its true leading character: that national icon, the Catrina.

Confusion generally reigns about the origin of the Catrina: most people believe he created the figure as a criticism of the aristocrats of his time, but actually, it is a satirical view of domestic workers, who, on their days off, would go out dressed up to try to look like members of a social class they did not belong to. This is borne out by the title of the *calavera* poem that went with it: "Auction of Happy, *Sandunga*-dancing *Calaveras*," and, below, in a kind of introductory verse, he indicates who the poem is dedicated to: "Those women who are today dusty *garbanceras* [garbanzo-eaters]

will end up being deformed skeletons." In Mexico, house servants or domestic workers were not usually called *garbanceras*. But in his book *Posada*, Agustín Sánchez González explains, "The *garbanceras* were indigenous women who ate garbanzo beans and who despised their own social class, wanting to be like their Spanish employers. In that engraving, like in most of the engravings he did, José Guadalupe Posada was making a social critique of those who despised their own Mexican-ness." And the text of the *calavera* poem itself reads, "There are beautiful *garbanceras* wearing corsets and high heels/But they must be *calaveras*, *calavera*-skeletons just like all the others."

During Posada's lifetime, the image was one of his many illustrations alluding to a specific sector; however, since the printers did not throw the plates away and usually reused them, in 1924, the image of the Catrina reappeared in a leaflet, illustrating the verse "El panteón de las pelonas" (Graveyard of Bald Women), which now had another meaning: "Thou hast past on the other day, my little bald love, leaving my soul stricken with enormous pain." This indicates that the image of this celebrated *calavera* had begun its path to immortality. In 1930, scholars discovered Posada's work, underlining his great contribution: a new language that enriched the discourse of national visual arts. Among these artists was Diego Rivera, who would re-create the Catrina in his famous mural, *Dreams of a Sunday Afternoon at the Central Alameda Park* (1948), giving her a body and dressing her in fancy clothing, because the Posada's original Catrina was merely a sketch of the bust, and Diego Rivera drew her entire body, as she is known today.

In most of the engravings he did,
José Guadalupe Posada was making a social critique of those
who despised their own Mexican-ness.



Quijote-like *calavera*.

More about Posada's life

Posada and his son, Juan Sabino.

José Guadalupe Posada was born in Aguascalientes, Mexico, February 2, 1852, at a time in which epidemics, famines, and floods were a constant. His father was a baker, a trade that did not make him enough money to support a family of nine. José learned to read, write, and draw thanks to his brother Cirilo, a teacher. At 15, he began his career as a graphic artist when he enrolled in the Aguascalientes Municipal Drawing Academy. After mastering some basic notions, in 1868 he joined the "El Esfuerzo" lithographic print shop, apprenticed to José Trinidad Pedroza, where he learned engraving, photography, and book-binding techniques. In 1871, he began publishing political cartoons in the newspaper *El jicote* (The Wasp), which only put out 11 issues before it was closed by the censors. After that incident, both teacher and apprentice were forced to leave Aguascalientes. Pedroza set up his workshop in León, where José illustrated books and made other engravings, but in1875, Pedroza returned to Aguascalientes, leaving the workshop to the young illustrator. However, with the great flood of 1888, he lost everything and moved to Mexico City, where he began working with other techniques, like engraving on metal plates, with Antonio Venegas, celebrated printer and publisher of broadsheets. Posada began using the symbolism of the *calaveras* for political satire. In 1912, Posada created the celebrated Catrina, which would be used later by muralist Diego Rivera, making it an icon of Mexican art and the popular imaginary. On January 20, 1913, José Guadalupe died in total poverty. However, 20 years later, painter Jean Charlot rediscovered him and re-published his work. Since then, Posada has been on the front line of Mexican visual art. VM

Madero-follower *calavera*.

What Posada achieved with this new graphic art was to create a language through which people who couldn't read or write could understand what was going on around them.

José Guadalupe Posada Museum.

Calaveras selling broadsheets.

Even before the creation of this "skeletal young lady," the images of "living skeletons" were Posada's favorite expressive vehicle, not because he had a particular penchant for the theme of death, but because he lived in a century in which death was a constant. In everything from the plague, floods, and the 1910 Revolution, death roamed the country.

However, in addition to answering the requests of his editors, Posada managed to infuse his *calaveras* with many characteristics, some real and others mere stereotypes of Mexicans. We can see in his *calaveras*, for example, more than manifestations of pain or sadness, a festive spirit, and that is what our celebration of the Day of the Dead has finally turned into, which obviously is a reflection of a particular conception of death, as a reminder of our dead loved ones that paradoxically celebrates life and death simultaneously.

In an up-to-date assessment not only of the emblematic Catrina, but of all the illustrator's creations, José Guadalupe Posada Museum Director Saucedo, underlines the significance and importance of his work: "What Posada achieved with this new graphic art was to create a language through which people who couldn't read or write could understand what was going on around them. That is, he created a graphic alphabet through which people could visually read about the events of their time." This contribution was very significant for creators who followed him, above all the Mexican muralists. VM

Teresa Jiménez
Editor

Notes

[1] The exact date each engraving reproduced here was made is unknown. It is known, however, that all are from the first decade of the twentieth century. None of the illustrations exceed the size of a standard broadsheet, since that is what they were made for.

[2] Literary *calaveras* are humorous verses alluding to death and dedicated to an individual, not necessarily to anyone dead. They are traditionally written in November to celebrate the Day of the Dead.

Funeral Rites in Pre-Hispanic Mexico

Carlos Serrano Sánchez*

Mictlantecuhtli, Lord of Death.

Infant buried in a crouched position.

Since the dawn of time people have been obsessed with death. Society has found a remarkable range of responses to the biological fact of the end of life. Studies have produced a vast literature on the topic, in areas as varied as anthropology, sociology, psychology, biology, philosophy, and others, revealing the continued fascination with death in modern society.

Since time immemorial, funeral rites and customs bear witness to the belief that man survives the experience of death, corresponding to each culture's world vision. These perceptions, reflected in funeral rituals and systems, reveal to us the ideological viewpoints and social lives of human groups in the past. Archaeological research, together with written texts and ethnographic information, amplify and detail this knowledge, and also underscore the complexity of the cultural patterns expressed in funeral practices.

Evidence exists on the death rituals performed since prehistoric times. Neanderthals, and later the peoples of the Upper Paleolithic, buried their dead with food, ornaments,

*Researcher at the UNAM Institute of Anthropological Research, cserrano@unam.mx.

Unless otherwise specified, all photos are by the author.
Photos reproduced with permission of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, Conaculta, INAH Mexico.

and implements, which implies their belief that human beings had another existence in store for them after their death, and that their needs would be similar to those during their lives. This social behavior took on highly elaborate expressions over time; we find, for example, in approximately 3000 BC, a tradition of funerary architecture that, having developed from basic sarcophagi and simple tombs, culminated in the building of the Egyptian pyramids, the Taj Mahal, and Lenin's Mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square. Death and the disposal of the dead bodies is doubtless a matter of profound interest for cultures all around the world.

Burials in Mesoamerica

Some archaeological data on the treatment given to the dead among pre-Hispanic peoples in Mesoamerica show that burials and cremations were characteristic rituals in the region. The burial of the dead has a long history in Mesoamerica and it was the most widespread practice; even cremated bodies were buried afterward. Different funeral processes can be distinguished, according to how the body was prepared for its burial: its position, orientation, and offerings and other component parts of the ritual.

The oldest burials found in this area correspond to the pre-agricultural peoples who had not yet settled in permanent villages; they date from 6500 to 2500 BC and are located in the caves of Coxcatlán and Texcal (Valsequillo) in the state of Puebla. Subsequently, among the peoples living during the formative or pre-classic eras (1500BC to AD100) burials took place out in open land and often below the floors of living areas. The dead person was placed in underground cavities, sometimes without any attention paid to their position and without a specific orientation; generally they were stretched out flat and, less frequently, curled up in a crouching position. During this period, offerings were often added: crockery, stone, or bone implements, anthropomorphic figurines, obsidian knives, and other such objects, generally depending on the status, age, sex, and occupation of the deceased.

Since time immemorial, funeral rites and customs bear witness to the belief that man survives the experience of death, corresponding to each culture's world vision.

In Tlatilco and Cuicuilco, and in many other sites outside the Valley of Mexico, burial sites have been found in "truncated cone formations," bell-shaped underground excavations that were probably originally used as a granary or storeroom, of varying sizes and some of which were inter-connected, and then reused as tombs. In Tlapacoya, State of Mexico, by this time tombs already appear with stone walls and slab roofs, and in which the dead person was placed along with many offerings. Tombs were also built in the Olmec area, demarcated with carved stones and slabs, giving an idea of the complexity of the funeral ceremony.

Wrapping a body in a shroud. Florentine Codex (fragment).

Traces of human sacrifice can also be found in the frequent finds of simultaneous burials that combine adults of both sexes, adolescents, and infants, as well

Traces of human sacrifice can also be found in the frequent discoveries of simultaneous burials that combine adults of both sexes, adolescents, and infants, as well as in "radial" burials.

Burial of people who were sacrificed.

as in "radial" burials, where bodies are arranged in a circle with their feet meeting in the middle, as found in Chupícuaro, Guanajuato. Another indication of sacrifices can be found in the body parts being used as offerings, evidence of which appears to have been found in the Coxcatlán cave in Puebla, where multiple burials showed signs of skeletal parts having been removed and placed into baskets, as well as the incineration and intentional breakages of some bones. Such human sacrifice was found in agricultural communities; it formed part of their elaborate religious system and was an essential expression of the Mesoamerican world view.

During the classic era (AD100-900), a period noted for the growth of urban centers, magnificent tombs were used for the funerals of important individuals, as can be observed in the funerary monuments at Mitla and Monte Albán, in Oaxaca, or the famous burial chamber in the Temple of Inscriptions in Palenque, Chiapas. This was contemporary to the city of Teotihuacan's funerary complex, which deserves special mention.

Death in Teotihuacan

Mortuary practices in Teotihuacan between AD100 and AD650 showed a greater level of systemization and ritualization. As a large, multi-ethnic city, evidence has been found of various funerary customs. Apart from the local inhabitants, there were neighborhoods of people of different origins who developed their own funerary rites; for example in the Tlailotlacan neighborhood, where the presence of Oaxacan culture is clear, tombs were found similar to those in Monte Albán.

However, in the neighborhoods with residents from Teotihuacan, such as Ventilla, composed largely of artisans, burials were made underneath the floors of rooms, in cavities where the dead body was placed, and wrapped up in a crouching position, facing eastward toward Tlalocan, the place of abundance and joy. This type of burial was the same for both men and women; adolescents and children were buried in a crouching position on their backs; and newborns —of which there were many, due to the high infant mortality rate— were placed in a crouched position in a wide bowl or in large pieces of earthenware, sometimes covered by another vessel as protection, always underneath the floors of rooms and patios and, in some cases, linked to domestic altars.

Cremated remains have also been found, albeit less frequently, within a ceremonial complex, sometimes including remnants of the textiles in which the body had been wrapped, and occasionally forming part of a collective burial. Apart from the usual

offerings, small pieces of mica or decorated slate were also left, as well as ochre and red pigments; the traces of fire clearly indicate a ritual has taken place.

Recent discoveries have confirmed the frequent practice of human sacrifice, including the decapitation and dismemberment of the corpse as well as the use of body parts as offerings, either for individual burial or as part of a religious ceremony. In the Temple of the Feathered Serpent a large burial complex was found with the remains of over 100 bodies, the product of a mass sacrifice made when construction began on the building. Men and women with their hands tied behind their backs were placed in rows in the excavations for the façades. Inside the building 20 more individuals were buried. The males were dressed in elaborate attire, with large ornamental breastplates with human jaws of canids, or simulating these with parts of shells and linked by spearheads. The Pyramid of the Moon was found to contain human skeletons, skulls, and the bones of various animal species (snakes, pumas, jaguars, eagles) and a large number of obsidian objects, shells, and other materials. Studies of these bones showed that the sacrificed individuals were not from Teotihuacán, but came from various regions of Mesoamerica. This striking use of human sacrifice is related to the demonstration of political power and the military hegemony of the Teotihuacan rulers.

Funeral Rites in the Postclassic

After the fall of Teotihuacán (AD900–1521), funeral practices show the elaborate religious framework that governed the lives of Mesoamerican peoples. Although cremation and the use of funeral vessels or urns became more prevalent, burials remained

The Pyramid of the Moon was found to contain human skeletons, skulls, and the bones of various animal species (snakes, pumas, jaguars, eagles) and a large number of obsidian objects, shells, and other materials.

Skulls of the decapitated.

Cremation of the bundled remains. Florentine Codex (fragment).

Prácticas funerarias de la Ciudad de los Dioses, UNAM.

Burial of an adult male.

Burial chamber.

most common. In Cholula, for example, the standard burial practice was to place the dead person in a sitting position facing north, the cardinal point that represented the dwelling of the god of death, Mictlantecuhtli, the destination for the dead.

Sixteenth-century chroniclers had a clearer picture of indigenous peoples' ideas about death at the time of the conquest; their accounts can be correlated to archeological observations. On the whole, the dead were destined for Mictlán, and those who died due to causes related to the rain god, Tláloc (from lightning strikes, drownings, gout, dropsy) went to Tlalocan. Warriors killed in combat went to the House of the Sun, while sacrificed prisoners of war and women who died during their first childbirth, and babes in arms who died were headed for Chichihualcuauhco, the place of the *árbol nodriza*, the nursemaid tree, where they would be fed while they waited for the moment to return to the world.

Chronicles and codices also refer to how bodies were prepared for burial. According to Bernardino de Sahagún, "they tucked up the legs, and then the corpse was bundled with cloths and paper vestments, and tied up tightly," and Francisco Xavier Clavijero indicates that after this preparation, the body was seated on a stool; various codices contain graphic descriptions of this custom.

One of the most interesting aspects of human burials during the post-classical period is the finding of skeletal parts that sometimes show clear signs of cuts at the end of some large bones, made by instruments used to dismember the body. This can only be explained in the context of human sacrifice that, as we have mentioned above, has been identified with the development of Mesoamerican culture since ancient times. At

this particular point, it was practiced vigorously as part of religious rituals, not only as a means of gaining favor with the gods, but also for the dominant groups to enjoy prestige and power to consolidate their authority and ensure their political hegemony.

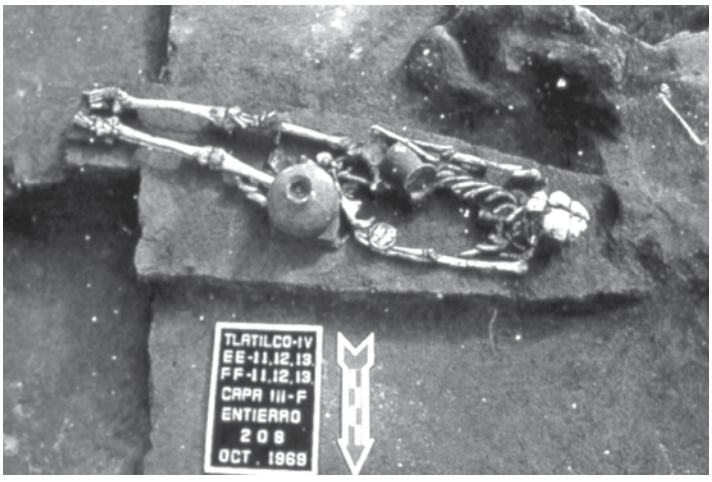
Archaeological evidence of human sacrifice includes elements of decapitation, dismemberment of bodies, partial exposure to fire, the placing of body parts, mainly heads, within vessels, and the close link to religious ceremonial rituals (altars). Various archeological sites such as Cholula, Teopanzolco, Tlatelolco, or the Templo Mayor have revealed information that again coincides with the descriptions given in the written accounts.

The Legacy of a World View

Funeral practices among pre-Hispanic peoples show a strong influence of religious thought and the meaning of death in indigenous society. This has contributed to how concepts and ideas have been shaped in modern-day Mexico, and in many ways also survives within the formal framework of Christian ritual. The rich pre-Hispanic iconography on death seems to reveal Mexicans' taste for representing death-related images: the abundant skulls and skeletons in folk art, the *pan de muerto* bread made for the Day of the Dead, and even the humorous poems in which public figures of the day appear among the dead, plus the respectful and spiritual union with the deceased, as expressed in the Day of the Dead offerings.

Today Mexico is identified with its unique cultural vision of death and its traditional customs connected to the dead. New elements have been dynamically integrated in reaction to the powerful forces of globalization, without the essence of the ancestral customs being lost. Awareness of this process is strengthened by activities organized by educational institutions and cultural bodies to mark the Day of the Dead, reflecting the continued relevance of an ancient culture. VM

Arturo Romano



Burial in a prone, extended position, face up. Tlatilco, State of Mexico.

The rich pre-Hispanic iconography on death seems to reveal Mexicans' taste for representing death-related images: the abundant skulls and skeletons in folk art and the *pan de muerto* bread made for the Day of the Dead.

Witches Flight

Arturo Cosme Valadez*

On March 20, 1650, in Tlalpuxagua, to the north of what is today Zitácuaro, Michoacán, the Inquisition heard the testimony of "a woman named Juana . . ., who havin' given birth and bein' visited by said Agustina, who hovered greatly over the baby, and that night she had suckled her and in the dawn, the baby was all sucked dry and that day it died." This quote from the Inquisition's archives allows us to conjecture that witches were similar on both sides of the Atlantic.[1] Must we accept that they came in droves along with misogynist soldiers and evangelists? Too frequently the term "cultural syncretism" is used to talk about this topic; a careful review shows that different elements that go in to delineating the idea of the witch manifested themselves independently of each other in Europe and Mexico. Without denying the synthesis of the two cultures, it is worth asking why we find things that correlate and are even identical regarding a topic whose development was parallel and uncontaminated until the time of the Conquest.

Herbert James Draper, *The Lamia*, 1909 (oil on canvas).

The Witch in Classical Antiquity

Philostratus of Athens, the second-century biographer of Apollonius of Tyana, attributed to the latter the curious story of Menippus, a young philosopher's apprentice who, less concerned about wisdom than pleasure, could not —or did not want to— escape from the charms of a beautiful, unknown woman who came up to him on the walls of Corinth. At his wedding banquet, the Sophist himself warned the

*Mexican writer and editor.

Christianity, with its delirious idea of a world as the battlefield for the combat between Good and Evil, changed and diversified the old idea of a witch.

Francisco de Goya, *Pretty Teacher,* "Whims" series no. 68, 1799, 21.4 x 15 cm (dry point, burnished etching).

boy that he was marrying a monster. The lamia, unmasked, finally revealed that she had seduced the young man to be able to drink all the blood from his body.[2]

The Greek myth of Lamia —or of the *lamiae*— dates from before the first century when Apollonius lived, and may well be the first known mention of a witch. She was a maiden, the daughter of the nymph Libya and the grandson of Poseidon, who, when she became pregnant by Zeus, awakened the jealousy of Hera; the spurned wife got her revenge by killing Lamia's children. The grieving mother hid away in a cave where pain and envy turned her into a monster; other versions suggest that Hera herself turned her into a witch. In any case, the unhappy Lamia then began to hunt down infants to drink their blood. The *Diccionario de mitología clásica* (Dictionary of Classical Mythology) states that "nurses used this story to frighten children."[3]

Ovid describes the old crone, Dipsas, who in addition to knowing the properties of herbs and the venom of the mare in heat, is able by simple force of will to bring the clouds together and redden the face of the Moon. He writes of her, "I suspect that, transformed into a bird, she flies through the shadows of the night, and that her old woman's body is covered with feathers," adding, "Out of the double pupil of her eyes shine beams and a sparkling light emerges from both eyeballs."[4]

The same author refers to the existence of fearful birds that "fly by night and attack children left helpless by their nurse. . . . They say that they disembowel anyone still breastfeeding and their jaws are full of the blood they drink. They are called *striges*." A few lines further, he wonders "if these birds are born or . . . engendered by the spells of the old women spell-casters."[5]

Propertius and Horace also write of the *strix* or *striga*, who they consider rapacious, merciless, and plumed, giving them a feminine face.

Apuleius narrates the metempsychosis of Pamphilē, who uses an ointment and whispers an incantation to turn herself into an ominous bird: "After an imperceptible waving movement, she points a soft hairy member that she develops on the moment and turns into stiff feathers; her nose becomes beaked and hardens; the nails become powerful talons. Pamphilē is now an owl."[6] This passage is similar to the previous ones, but now the intention is to make the reader laugh: the protagonist applies an ointment, but instead of turning into a bird, she turns into an ass.

The Medieval Witch

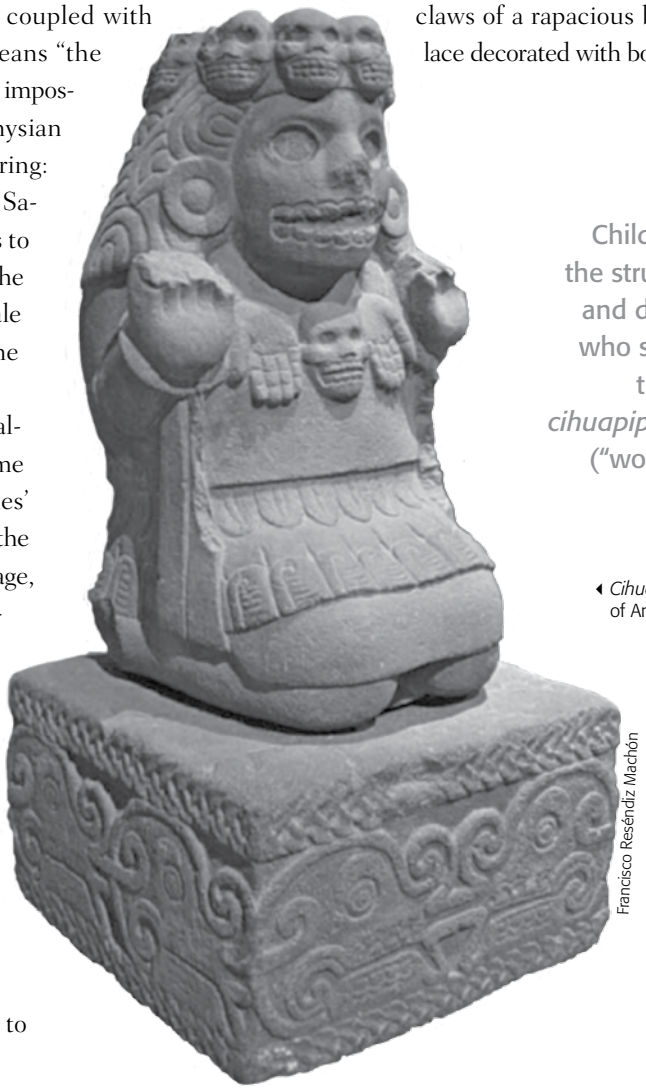
The onset of Christianity, with its delirious idea of a world as the battlefield for the combat between Good and Evil, changed and diversified the old idea of a witch. It transformed it without obliterating it, and accepted that it was rooted in pagan soil. The followers of Bacchus, who in the Eleusian mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus celebrated the fertility of the land and women, served as the basis for the new paradigm.

In addition to drunkenness or "the divine madness," the rites included the consumption of psychotropic drugs, collective, incessant dancing, and the sacrifice of small animals that were eaten raw, covering the celebrants' bodies with blood. Men's participation was forbidden and the place in the forest where the ceremony took place was secret. In addition to the reproduction of grain and humans, the cult sought "enthusiasm," which the initiates coupled with the divinity because the word literally means "the entry of god." This implied blessedness. It is impossible not to note the similarity of the Dionysian rite to the medieval witches' coven gathering: suffice it to replace the pagan deities with Satan, who the witches would give themselves to in the orgy in order to acquire his powers. The representation of the Fallen Angel as a male goat corresponds to the erotic figures of the Satyrs and Pan.

In the deliberate or fortuitous use of hallucinogens like belladonna or henbane, some have sought the explanation of the witches' flight; in its being applied by a broomstick, the genesis of their airborne mount. Add old age, which turns wisdom into the telltale toothless face and warts; the knowledge of hidden herbal medicine, and the secret language to rule the beasts and nightly powers; the vocation for changing the course of love by uniting or separating couples on a whim or for money; the barbaric repair of virgins or the magical restitution of the hymen; the disposition to evil and the capacity to turn oneself into an animal, particularly a black cat, and we have the witch that arrived from Spain to the New World.

The Witch in Mexico

Centuries before the conquest, the Aztecs created a beautiful, bloody religion based on the principle of duality. The noblewomen who died in childbirth of their firstborn were considered deities, comparable to warriors fallen in combat. Childbirth was seen as the struggle between life and death, and women who succumbed during that battle became *cihuapipiltin* ("noble women or ladies"), or *cihuateteo* ("women goddesses").[7] However, while the combatants survived in the form of butterflies, these tragic women had a different fate. They dwelled in the western part of Heaven,[8] and from there they went out to meet the Sun at its zenith to dress it in its *quetzalapancayotl*, the armor given to victorious warriors, and then take it to its lowest point.[9] Then, following a rigorous calendar, the *cihuapipiltin* could visit the earth. Transformed into skeletons with livid faces, the claws of a rapacious bird, and dressed in lace decorated with bones, "these goddess-



Francisco Reséndiz Machón

Childbirth was seen as the struggle between life and death, and women who succumbed during that battle became *cihuapipiltin* or *cihuateteo* ("women goddesses").

◂ *Cihuateteo*, National Museum of Anthropology and History.

Francisco Reséndiz Machón

Mexican bench from the *Templo Mayor* (High Temple) site, National Museum of Anthropology and History.

es flew together through the air . . . and made little girls and boys sick."[10]

The similarity of this passage to the archaic figure of Lamia is clear: in both cases the women fly and attack other women's children after losing their own; in both cases the myth is born of an individual goddess who breaks up without losing herself in the multiplicity of beings: Cihuateteo is simultaneously the goddess of women who die in childbirth and each of them in their plurality, which can also be said of Lamia and the *lamiae*.

Another pre-Hispanic root of the witch is the "*tlahuipuchtli*, a term that means 'the luminous incense burner.' Colonial sources describe it as a kind of witch that frightened its enemies at night by blowing fire through its mouth, like a *nagual* (a kind of mythic sorcerer) with the ability to turn into animals and fire."[11] Its feminine version is called *tlahuelpuchi*, and is still believed in in the Nahua communities in Central Mexico. She is attributed with the ability to fly as a bird (preferably a turkey or owl), and is also represented as an incandescent sphere. To survive, she absorbs the blood of children whose bodies are found at dawn with purplish toothmarks on their necks.

A vast array of legends exists about the *tlahuelpuchi* that vary the motives described above. In many cases, she is an ordinary woman who only at night takes on her demonic form. Frequently her state is ascribed to a curse that forces her to drink blood after her first menstruation and until her death; in other cases, it is supposed that her condition is the product of a rite detailed in oral histories: women kneel before the *tlecuil* (home) and bring their faces and hands close to the fire repeating, "without Jesus and without Saint Mary," until they can put the hot coals on their eyes, offering the same effect as in Ovid. "According to my grandmothers' stories, they could take off their legs and put on turkey legs, or their legs turned into turkey legs and they then flew out the window."[12]

Different elements that go into delineating the idea of the witch manifested themselves independently of each other in Europe and Mexico.

In another strictly indigenous version, the aspiring witch must sacrifice a black hen to the "Owners of the Caves," deities who dominate the natural surroundings, inside a cave destined for their use, and beg to be given the abilities of a witch. That is, the ability to take her head off her body, which during the night rolls into the homes of her victims to suck their blood or breathe "bad air" into them.[13] Other traditions state that the head does not roll, but turns into a bird, usually an owl. Whether by rolling or flying, the head must return and join the body before the dawn or it will never be able to. This is reminiscent of the vampire curse, to which it is undoubtedly related, as is that of the *cihuateteo*, who only can inhabit the earth in the shade of the night. In contrast with the Euro-

Francisco Reséndiz Machón

God of death, National Museum of Anthropology and History.

The *cihuapipiltin* could visit the earth, transformed into skeletons with livid faces, the claws of a rapacious bird, and dressed in lace decorated with bones. "These goddesses flew together through the air . . . and made little girls and boys sick."

pean witches, the *tlahuelpuchis* are almost always married; the stories in which they appear are almost always resolved when the husband realizes his wife's real nature and ensures that her head cannot be joined again to her body, putting salt in her neck or on the empty skin.

Hugo G. Nutini, to whom we owe a detailed study of the topic, observes that the witches' desire for blood increases in times of rain and cold, and that the majority of deaths happen between midnight and four in the morning.[14] This should be taken under advisement: we wouldn't want to have our blood sucked by a witch. VM

Notes

[1] "La bruja y el peyote. Agustina de las Nieves," Enrique Flores y Mariana Masera, comps., *Relatos populares de la Inquisición Novohispana* (Madrid: Gobierno de España-Consejo Superior de Investigación Científica-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2010), pp. 91-94.

[2] Filóstrato, *Vida de los sofistas*, IV, 25, "Biblioteca básica" no. 143 (Madrid: Gredos, 2002).

[3] Constantino Falcón Martínez, Emilio Fernández-Galiano, and Raquel López Melero, *Diccionario de mitología clásica* vol. 2 (Mexico City: Alianza, 1989), p. 373.

[4] Ovidio, *Amores*, I, 8, "Biblioteca básica" no. 66 (Madrid: Gredos, 2001), p. 23.

[5] Ovidio, *Fastos*, VI, "Biblioteca básica" no. 68 (Madrid: Gredos, 2001), p. 207.

[6] Apuleyo, *El asno de oro*, III, 21 (Valencia: Círculo de lectores, 1978), p. 169.

[7] Cecilio A. Robelo, "Diccionario de mitología náhuatl," *Universia*, http://biblioteca.universia.net/html_bura/ficha/params/title/diccionario-mitologia-nahuatl/id/37910367.html, accessed July 2012.

[8] The word for "west" is *cihuatlampa*, or "in the place of women." Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, "Historia General de las Cosas de la Nueva España," Chapter 10, *arteHistoria*, Junta de Castilla y de León, http://www.artehistoria.jcyl.es/cronicas/contextos/10953.htm, accessed July 2012.

[11] UNAM, "Diccionario enciclopédico de la medicina tradicional mexicana/tlahuelpuchi," *Biblioteca digital de la medicina tradicional mexicana*, http://www.medicinatradicional.unam.mx/termino.php?l=1&t=Tlahuelpuchi, accessed July 2012.

[12] "Las brujas de México," *Taringa!, Inteligencia colectiva*, http://www.taringa.net/posts/paranormal/10773301/Las-Brujas-de-Mexico.html, accessed July 2012.

[13] For this topic in general, see Melina S. Bautista, *Leyendas de brujas, duendes y naguales* (Mexico City: Selector, 2003). pp. 9-31; and Enrique Flores and Mariana Masera, op. cit., pp. 40-48.

[14] UNAM, *Apud,* "Diccionario enciclopédico de la medicina tradicional mexicana/chupada de bruja," *Biblioteca digital de la medicina tradicional mexicana*,http://www.medicinatradicional.unam.mx/termino.php?l=1&t=chupada%20de%20bruja, accessed in July 2012.

Through the Looking Glass and Under the Magnifying Glass
Interview with Chicana-Latina Writer Lucha Corpi

Claire Joysmith*

Claire Joysmith (CJ): As poet and fiction writer, Lucha Corpi is fully aware of the highly textured intricacies of poetic language. As a Chicana and Latina writer who resorts to English and Spanish, Corpi has a singular sense of the nuances in contemporary identity politics *vis-à-vis* the usage of English and/or Spanish in her writing. How does she identify as a writer?

Lucha Corpi (LC): I have no trouble calling myself a Chicana poet, a Mexican or a Latina poet, or simply a poet. Each designation is based on a variety of reasons, some cultural and some political. My personal reason for calling myself a "Chicana poet" has to do with my political affiliation with the Chicano Civil Rights Movement in general and, in particular, with causes that aim to fight racism in all its manifestations, that are in favor of employment, gender, and ethnic equality and educational opportunities at all levels for children of color, regardless of ethnicity. I encourage solidarity among the many Mexican and Latino communities toward the achievement of these goals at a national level.

CJ: You are well-known and highly respected for your crime fiction novels in which Gloria Damasco, the protagonist, is a Chicana detective.

LC: I consider myself a writer and a Chicana writer. In the literary hierarchy I'm also considered a "genre" writer because I write crime fiction. Being tagged as a genre writer avails me little opportunity to be considered for awards or fellowships in fiction. By the time I published my second Gloria Damasco crime novel, I knew I was willing to pay the price for doing what I love to do. So far I haven't changed my mind.

*Researcher at CISAN, elaire@unam.mx.

Photo courtesy of Lucha Corpi

CJ: You write poetry in Spanish and narrative in English. What is your relationship to your poetry and your narrative, since each is expressed through different linguistic and cultural codes and optics?

LC: In the creative process of poetry, there is interplay between incongruous elements drawn from the consciousness, the subconscious, and the subliminal (unconscious) mind. When they come together in the poem, they provide its internal rhythms —measure and tone. They may provide the imagery for a lyrical poem or the story for a narrative poem, as well as the structure that supports a poem's emotional weight. It's the emotional content of the poem that to a greater extent dictates my language of choice. Simply stated, the language of feeling

and emotion is the language I learned on my mother's and grandmother's lap, in the midst of Mexican culture. It's the intimate and familial "mother tongue." So, for me that tongue is Spanish in all its linguistic modalities —essentially Mexican Spanish.

English —American English— is the language of my narrative simply because my characters in the novels express their daily thoughts and feelings and describe events in their lives in that language. They speak to me in English and sometimes also in either Mexican Spanish or Chicano Spanish. I have no choice but to try my best to set down their stories in English, my second language.

CJ: Could you tell us more about writing in a second language that you learned, moreover, in early adulthood?

LC: It isn't easy to write in your second language. It requires courage and humility to accept your language limitations and cultural gaps, and still try your best to overcome them, and improve by apprenticing with every new work. But it also requires a certain degree of arrogance, if you will, and single-mindedness of purpose to ignore the inner and outer voices telling you you're not good enough, that you're simply not up to the task you've set for yourself.

In narrative, like any other writer and everyone else engaged in any kind of creative endeavor in the sciences or the humanities, I begin with the famous spark of an idea: the "what-if…?" But all writers must answer to the degree necessary —although in no particular order— six pertinent questions: What? Who? Where? When? Why? How? (Why? and How? being of paramount importance to a crime fiction writer).

I let the characters pursue the answers to those questions. My job as a writer is to select and record in writing what is important to them. I make sense of their perceptions, feelings, and experiences and their mental comings and goings. I acknowledge and appropriate their voices in English and tap into their cultural memories as members of a particular family and larger community or communities, which in most instances are Mexican-American, Chicano/a, Latina/o, but all within the context of the dominant English-speaking U.S. culture.

CJ: During a Spanish-language poetry reading at the Eighth International Chicano conference held in Toledo, Spain, in May 2012, you mentioned you have found it difficult to translate your own work because there are two egos at work and a kind of tug-of-war ensues between them.

"My personal reason
for calling myself a "Chicana poet"
has to do with my political affiliation
with the Chicano Civil Rights
Movement in general."

LC: As a translator, my ego is interested in doing a good job with what I'm given. It isn't my job to improve the original poem or the story in its original language or alter its meaning to render a good translation. I don't presume to know what motivated the poet or writer to create a particular work, although some textual interpretation is necessary. My ego as translator is always subject to the author's ego. It's like borrowing a car from a dear friend. You tend to take better care of it than if it were your own, but you don't replace the fender or paint it a different color. When it's yours, you have every right to change or improve it as you please.

When you translate your own work, your egos —author and translator sharing the same conscious and unconscious mind— are equal; neither is subject to the other. It's easier then to give yourself permission to change the original to aid the translation process. You end up going back and forth, tweaking the original and then the translation over and over, until it actually becomes another version or in fact another poem or story in the other language as well as in the original. It's a never-ending, burdensome, and frustrating process. For that reason, I don't translate either my poetry in Spanish into English or my narrative in English into Spanish.

CJ: You mentioned —and this is fascinating— how you have found the translating process useful in testing a poem's strength. Would this mean the translation might become stronger than the original?

LC: Indeed, translation tests and highlights the strengths of a poem, but also exposes its weaknesses and identifies them for the poet. If a poem is not strong enough, it won't withstand the process of translation; it won't retain its integrity as a unit. As you say, there are times when the poem in translation is stronger than the original. Sometimes I rewrite that poem, not to fit the translation but to make the original stronger.

CJ: Where does it go from there?

LC: If I'm successful, it's included in a collection or eventually published as an individual piece. If not, I question my reasons for writing it or wanting to keep it as is. If there are sentimental reasons attached to it, I put it in my "unfinished poems" folder. Every so often, I dig poems out of that folder to see if I finally have the experience, skills, perceptions, or intuitions lacking in me when I first wrote them. If I can't work out the kinks in a poem at all and have no special reason to keep it, I don't throw it away; instead, I burn it.

CJ: When the poem or narrative is being translated by someone else, do you have any particular strategies during the translation revision?

LC: A way of making the translations "mine" —a process I refer to as a re-appropriation of voice— requires reading the translated texts aloud. I do this often until my intuition kicks in, takes over, and I begin to sense the language rather than just read it, to feel its rhythms, the measure and tone of the spoken line, and listen to the characters speak in their second language as if they had been doing it since birth. The translated texts become as much a part of my "voice" as the originals.

CJ: Some of your poetry has recently been published by the CISAN, for the first time in Mexico, in the volume *Cantar de espejos. Poesía testimonial chicana de mujeres*.[1] How do you feel about this as a bilingual/bicultural writer and could this been regarded as a source of inspiration?

LC: *Cantar de espejos* is a beautiful and inspiring anthology. Personally, since I know most of the poets and have read most of the poems included in *Cantar* in the original, I have now had the double pleasure of reading these well-rendered translations of the work. Having our work acknowledged by a different audience/readership is always welcome. It validates the work and personally encourages us to continue along the paths chosen. But most of all, *Cantar de espejos* in particular provides the connecting tissue where two cultures, languages, and literatures safely join together in meaningful and essential ways. And that is always a source of inspiration and celebration in any culture and any language. *Gracias.*

CJ: Your first novel, *Eulogy for A Brown Angel*, has been recently translated into Spanish as *Loa a un ángel de piel morena*.[2] How did the translation process and your relationship with the translator work?

LC: When Cristina Crespo Palomares from the Instituto Franklin in Spain got in touch to notify me *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* had been selected for translation, she also asked if I would be willing to be available to Nuria Brufau Alvira, the translator, for consultations. I was excited about providing Nuria with any assistance or information she needed. Our collaboration and communication took place via e-mail across seas, continents, and, of course, cyberspace.

When I got the first digital draft of the novel from Nuria, I read each chapter in Spanish aloud. I did the same with the last draft. My main objective on both occasions was to internalize each character's distinctive voice and manner exclusively in Spanish. I referred to the English text only when I had to check the accuracy of content, specifically as it pertained to Mexican-Chicana/o culture in the U.S. or to verify historical and factual data. When necessary, I provided her with clarifications and some suggestions.

CJ: What kind of translating and other skills would you say Chicano/a or Latino/a texts demand?

LC: I reiterate my firm belief that translation, particularly of a literary text, be it poetry or narrative, is truly as creative an art as any other. In general, the process of translating a novel into another language is by the mere complexity and length of the original work an enormous and daunting task. Implicit is the pressure on the translator to interpret accurately the culture that forms and informs the language that provides it with its voice.

As to the linguistic aspect, the translator must find a way to express, as faithfully yet as intelligibly as possible, what is accessible and in plain sight in the work, as well as what is ineffable, what cannot be assigned meaning or is unchangeable, between two cultures and language systems.

As if these tasks weren't difficult enough for any translator of a Chicano/a or Latina/o text, every one of these languages is both directly and indirectly nourished by two greatly heterogeneous U.S. cultures. The Spanish language that allows

"I reiterate my firm belief that translation, particularly of a literary text, be it poetry or narrative, is truly as creative an art as any other."

one of them verbal or written expression is an amalgam of several linguistic modalities that share a common linguistic source but not a single homogeneous culture. We Chicanos/as and Latinos/as face this linguistic reality every day when we communicate in Spanish, a language that reflects the diversity of Latin American cultures, while we also try to express our daily thoughts and feelings in American English, a language in constant flux, reflecting cultures undergoing transformation even now, as I speak.

In a nutshell, this is also the reality the translator has faced and dealt with quite successfully.

CJ: Would you say that a translation is a re-writing of the original?

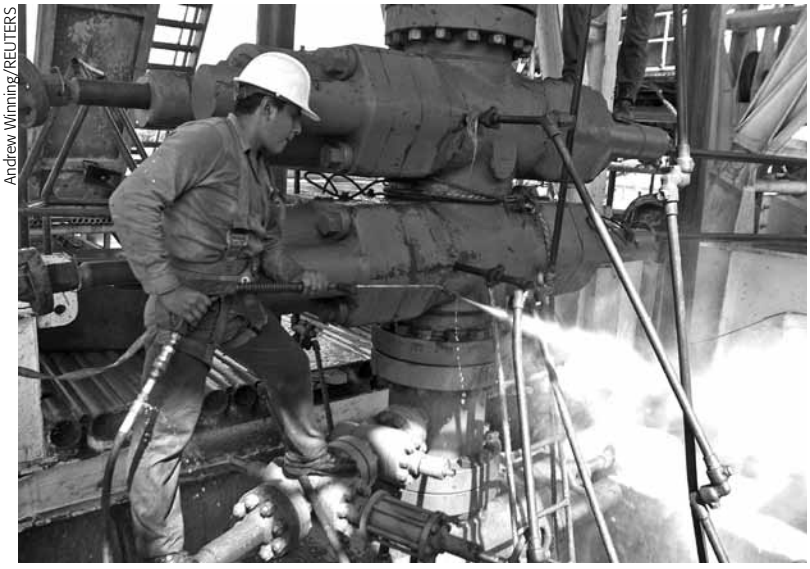
LC: Undoubtedly, each translation is in some ways, as you say, a re-writing. I often refer to translations and the original works as fraternal —not identical— twins. The Spanish-English twins in the case of my poems, and the English-Spanish in the case of my novels. Each work in translation must be able to stand on its own as if it were the original. *Eulogy for a Brown Angel* now stands in a parallel cultural world as *Loa a un ángel de piel morena.* They both stand on their own merits. The test will be aced, of course, when a Spanish-speaking monolingual reader finds herself/himself situated in the story's action and feels as satisfied with it as a reader who reads it only in English. I've had positive comments from a couple of such monolingual readers. Perhaps when *Loa* is reprinted by Arte Público Press in October, 2012, and it becomes accessible to a wider Spanish-speaking readership in the U.S., and perhaps Mexico, I might be able to provide further answers to this. VM

Notes

[1] Claire Joysmith, ed., *Cantar de espejos. Poesía testimonial chicana de mujeres* (Mexico City: CISAN/Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana, 2012).

[2] *Loa a un ángel de piel morena* (Alcalá de Henares, Spain: Instituto Franklin/ University of Alcalá de Henares, 2012).

Today's Strategic Debate about Oil and Electricity



Andrew Winning/REUTERS

Jonathan Bachman/REUTERS

The articles in this section deal with the very current topic of two strategic energy sub-sectors: oil and electricity. The analyses cover different aspects like the sector's legal, regulatory framework; the description of the state of the two most important companies involved (Mexican Oil, or Pemex, and the Federal Electricity Commission, or the CFE); the bodies linked to these companies and their technological institutions; the structure of supply; and policies, actions, and main trends.

Some of the questions that the oil industry studies attempt to answer are, for example: what has the real function of Pemex been for the Mexican state? What interests does it really serve? How has the dispute over oil rent unfolded?

While it is difficult to respond exhaustively, clearly, what we are seeing in Mexico is the development of the neoliberal project and the discrete involvement of the international agencies that support it. In contrast with the international sphere, where oil is a strategic resource managed under state ownership with a business perspective, in Mexico, Pemex is increasingly subject to U.S. energy security requirements and the private interests of transnational corporations.

Another question answered is: do bio-fuels really aid in reducing greenhouse gas emissions? The response is the result of a rigorous evaluation of parameters, like energy return, and water and cultivable land requirements for its production. Just as in other cases, the mitigation of climate change could be achieved by encouraging energy efficiency and conservation, using solar energy, planning land use, conserving biodiversity, recovering rivers, and remodeling local and national urban transportation, among other measures.

Rosío Vargas

A Brief Look at Mexico's Energy Sector

Roberto Gutiérrez R.*

Introduction

Manuel Salgado/Cuartoscuro.com

Mexico's energy sector boasts abundant, diversified resources, something quite favorable for an economy that is among the world's 15 largest and most complex. Therefore, it should be expected that national energy production be efficient and diversified; however, it is actually inefficient and concentrated. It is inefficient because the sector operates with growing medium and marginal costs, as can be seen in the earnings reports of its two main entities, Petróleos Mexicanos (Mexican Petroleum, or Pemex) and the Comisión Federal de Electricidad (Federal Electricity Commission, or CFE). It is highly concentrated because both of these are government monopolies in their respective areas, hydrocarbons and electricity.

The hydrocarbon industry has undoubtedly been the country's main source of wealth since its consolidation in 1911. This can be seen in the size of its domestic and foreign sales; the surpluses it has generated; its central role in the development of other industries and economic activities; the investments made in it; the hard currency, taxes, and duties it has turned over to the state; and the jobs it has created.[1] It has been so bountiful that it has been able to survive recurring practices eradicated in other countries with similar levels of development to Mexico's: siphoning off of its products from pipelines, contraband in maritime routes, and excessive contributions to the oil workers' union and the political party that fostered the creation of both the union and Pemex itself 75 years ago, the National Revolutionary Party, today the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Talking about Mexico's energy sector means talking about two enviably rich, but very badly managed industries. This has given rise to a choice that has polarized society, fostered by the government itself in the 1990s: they should either be managed properly or privatized. This is quite a dilemma if we take into account the fact that oil, expropriated from the foreign oil companies in 1938 by President Lázaro Cárdenas, with the support of the recently created Mexican Oil Workers' Union and individual contributions from the people of Mexico, has joined the agrarian reform, free secular education, and labor legislation protecting workers as the representation of the materialization of the Mexican Revolution.

* Professor and researcher, Economics Department, Autonomous Metropolitan University, Iztapalapa campus, robertogtz@yahoo.com.

Legal Framework

Article 27 of Mexico's 1917 Constitution and the regulatory laws for the oil, electricity, and nuclear sectors specify that the nation is the exclusive owner of all solid, liquid, or gaseous fuels, and holds exclusive rights to exploit and regulate the use of nuclear fuels used in generating nuclear and electrical energy.[2] Article 25 considers the oil, basic petro-chemicals, radioactive mineral, and nuclear and electric energy generation industries as "strategic activities," thus excluding them from the prohibition of monopolies established in Article 28.

Stringer Mexico/REUTERS

Because of all this, Pemex, a vertical company since its nationalization, together with its subsidiaries created in the 1990s, is the only body in the public administration with the faculty of exploring, producing, transforming, exporting, importing, and distributing crude oil, oil-derived secondary refined forms of energy (gasoline, diesel, fuel oil, liquid gas, jet fuel, and others), and primary petrochemicals through its pipelines. It is also the only body that can call for bidding by third parties to establish contracts for the exploration and production of oil and gas, and their importation, liquefaction, and distribution, and grant licenses to private entities to transport them in tanker-trucks, or to sell gasoline and diesel at service stations.

Since the nationalization of the electricity industry in September 1960, the CFE, born in January 1934, is the only entity with the faculty to generate, manage, transform, distribute, and supply electricity as a public service. According to current legislation, it is responsible for planning the national electricity system; generating, managing, transforming, distributing, and selling electricity, and carrying out all works, creating all facilities, and doing any and all work required for the planning, execution, operation, and maintenance of the national electricity system. It is not considered a public service to generate electricity for self-supply, its co-generation, or to generate it on a small scale. Also not considered a public service are the generation of electricity by independent producers for sale to the CFE; for export as a result of co-generation, independent production, and small-scale production; the importation of electricity by individuals or legal entities exclusively for their own use; or the generation of electricity for emergencies due to the interruption of the public service provision of electricity.

The law states that both Pemex and the CFE are decentralized public bodies, each with its own legal status and patrimony, which operate in what the Constitution defines as strategic areas. Therefore, they cannot be understood as the equivalent of private companies, whose purpose is to make a profit. From the point of view of the budget, they are dealt with as entities under direct budgetary control. There are two more of these in Mexico: the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) and the Government Workers Social Security and Services Institute (ISSSTE). From the perspective of national accounting and the public administration, both Pemex and the CFE are subsectors of the energy sector for hydrocarbons and electricity, respectively.

Bodies Derived from Pemex and the CFE

Pemex has a technological wing, the Mexican Oil Institute (IMP), created in 1965. Its mission is to transform knowledge into technology and services of use to the oil industry, focusing on research and technological development, engineering, and technical and training services. Since the federal government and Pemex itself have limited the development of these functions since the 1990s, the institute has reoriented

to giving academic degrees, commercializing its research projects, forging strategic and technological alliances with leading bodies in Mexico and abroad, and technically preparing the bidding processes in areas like refining.

In 1989, PMI Comercio Internacional (PMI International Trade) was founded, a body built like a company, but 98 percent of whose stock belongs to Pemex.[3] Its main functions are trade; export and import of all kinds of products or merchandise, whether raw materials, natural, or industrialized products; trade of crude oil and products derived from its refining and industrialization; as well as trade of petrochemical products and other liquid, solid, or gas products. They do not include their commercialization domestically for areas reserved for Pemex. PMI Comercio Internacional can also offer advisory, commission, management, agency, distribution, mediation, storage, or representation services of a technical, administrative, financial, legal, or economic nature.

In 1992, Congress passed the Law for Petróleos Mexicanos and Its Subsidiaries. This law maintained Pemex's Strategic Planning Unit, but reorganized and decentralized its main activities into four subsidiaries, each with its own patrimony, legal status, and management autonomy. These are Pemex Exploración y Producción (Pemex Exploration and Production, or PEP), whose function is to explore and exploit oil and natural gas deposits; Pemex Refinación (Pemex Refining, or PR), which is in charge of the usual industry refining processes; Pemex Gas y Petroquímica Básica (Pemex Gas and Basic Petrochemicals, or PGPB), which is responsible for processing natural gas, gas liquids, and the industry's basic raw materials; and Pemex Petroquímica Secundaria (Pemex Secondary Petrochemicals, or PPS), which takes care of petrochemical processes Pemex is involved in besides basic petrochemicals.

Based on a change in Article 27 of the Constitution discussed by Congress in 1991 and voted into law in 1993, national and international private capital has been participating directly since then in pumping and distributing natural gas. The most important company doing this is Spain's Repsol, which controls a series of subsidiaries and service providers, many of which are regional in scope.[4] In addition, it liquefies gas from Camisea, Peru, and imports it to the liquid gas plant in the Mexican port of Manzanillo. Once liquefied, Repsol distributes it to the electricity generating plants in the central and eastern parts of the country. It owns some of these generating plants, too: in 2009 it partnered up with Gas Natural and Unión Fenosa, also Spanish companies. Gas Natural had only in 2007 acquired from Électricité de France and Mitsubishi five combined gas cycle plants that sold electricity to the CFE. With that, Repsol has become a monopoly in supplying and distributing natural gas, and is a CFE duopsony together with another Spanish firm, Iberdrola, in independent energy production.[5]

Talking about Mexico's energy sector means talking about two enviably rich, but very badly managed industries. This has posed a choice that has polarized society: proper management or privatization.

Since 1975, the technological arm of the electricity industry has been the Institute for Electricity Research (IIE). Its mission is to promote and support innovation through applied research and developing technology with high value added to raise the competitiveness of the electricity industry and others with related needs. Both the budgetary limitations of the 1980s and the 1993 amendment to the Electrical Energy Public Service Law created the conditions for the participation of private capital in the industry. This led the federal government to gradually reduce the flow of public monies into the IIE, which not only led it to resort to the market to finance its existence, but also limited its participation in the CFE's technological duties. The CFE, in turn, began to depend increasingly on private investors for the purchase of electricity and technological advisory services. Thus, much of the human capital trained by the IIE has scattered or been lost to other sectors, with unfavorable results for the country's intellectual productivity.

For its part, the National Institute for Nuclear Research (ININ), created in 1979 to do research in nuclear science and technology, like the IMP and the IIE, has reoriented toward the market. It states that its mission is to "offer specialized services and products to industry in general, and the medical field in particular."[6]

The Ministry of Energy (Sener) heads up the energy sector, and has a regulating body, the Energy Regulation Commission (CRE), created in 1993, whose jurisdiction increased after the 2008 energy reform. Since its creation, it has moved from first-hand sales of natural gas to those of fuel oil, products derived from oil refining, and basic petrochemicals. It has also taken on the responsibility of activities carried out

through pipelines, storage systems directly linked to transport or distribution through pipelines, and those that are an integral part of the import or distribution terminals for those products.

Parallel to all this, the energy reform also gave rise to the creation of a series of sectoral bodies:

a) The National Energy Council, whose function is medium- and long-term energy planning and the design of energy policy criteria and elements;
b) The National Hydrocarbons Commission and its Consultative Forum, whose functions are to evaluate and delimit the country's oil resources, regulate and supervise the exploration, drilling, and pumping of hydrocarbons, and maximize the useful life of the deposits;
c) The National Commission for Efficient Energy Use (previously the National Commission for Energy Savings) and its Consultative Council, whose aim is to promote energy efficiency and establish itself as a technical body in matters of the sustainable use of energy;
d) The Consultative Council for Fostering Renewable Energy, made up of representatives from industry, commerce, academia, the government, and the development banking system, which serves as a consulting body in the identifying projects and designing and developing programs related to using renewable forms of energy; and
e) The Consultative Council for Sustainable Energy Use, whose main functions are to review the National Commission for Efficient Energy Use program and work plan; present a report on compliance with the goals and objectives presented in both documents; propose mechanisms to plan, develop, and execute energy efficiency programs; and promote the participation of the private sector in sustainable energy use.[7]

Based on a change in Article 27 of the Constitution in 1993, national and international private capital has been participating directly since then in pumping and distributing natural gas.

The Structure of Supply

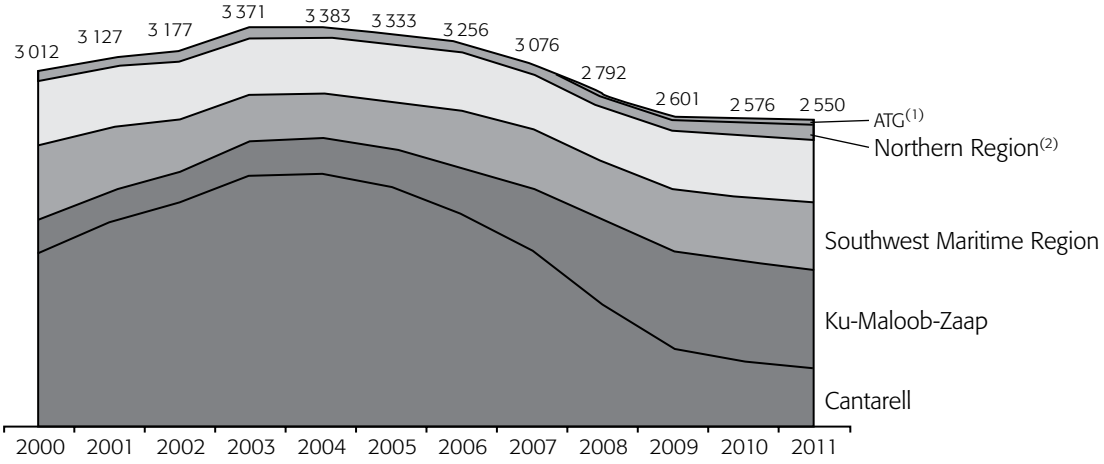
In 2010, Mexico's primary energy production came to 9 251 petajoules,[8] 92.4 percent of which came from fossil fuels: oil, 64.9 percent; natural gas, 24.3 percent; condensed fuels, 1.0 percent; and coal, 2.2 percent. The other 7.6 percent comes from nuclear energy (0.7 percent) and renewable fossil fuels: hydro-energy (1.4 percent), geo-energy (1.6 percent), solar energy (0.05 percent), and biomass, mainly firewood (3.8 percent).[9] The surprising fall in the participation of nuclear-generated electricity should be underlined here: between 2003, when it was 1.8 percent of the total, and 2010, it dropped to less than half that. This seems to confirm problems at one of the two reactors at the Laguna Verde plant, even a year after Fukushima, Japan's six reactors were taken off-line because of the March 11, 2011 earthquake and resulting tsunami, and the beginning of the dismantling of this industry in countries like Germany.

Another significant element is that the country's primary energy production dropped from 10 543.2 petajoules in 2005 to 9 250.7 petajoules in 2010, 12.3 percent in six years. This can be explained mainly by the effects of over-exploitation of the Cantarell deposit in the Sea of Campeche under the administration of President Vicente Fox (2000-2006), which led to a production decline from 2.2 million barrels a day (MBD) in 2004 to only 0.5 MBD in 2010 (see Graph 1).[10]

In the electricity sub-sector, effective capacity in 2009 was 60 440 megawatts (MW), from the following sources: thermoelectric plants, 71 percent; hydroelectric plants, 18 percent; coal-driven plants, 5 percent; nuclear-electric plants, 2 percent; and renewable sources, 4 percent. Most of the renewable sources are geothermal-electrical, wind, biomass, and micro-hydroelectricity, with very limited advances in biogas.[11] Surprisingly, this structure has not evolved favorably *vis-à-vis* 25 years ago, when the first measures to substitute traditional energy sources with renewable ones were put in place. In 1986, thermal power stations were the source of 62.6 percent and hydro-electric plants, 30.7 percent —25 years later they had lost 13 percentage points—; coal plants, 4.2 percent; and geothermal-electric plants, 2.5 percent.[12]

Although since the 1990s Mexico has had nuclear-generated electricity, its weight in effective productive capacity has been declining (from 4 percent in 1995 to 2 percent in 2009). At the same time, thermoelectric plants increased their part of the pie by 8 percentage points between 1986 and 2009, moving away from dependence on fuel oil toward using nat-

GRAPH 1
PRODUCTION OF CRUDE OIL BY REGION AND OVERALL ASSETS
(MILLIONS OF BARRELS PER DAY)



* The ATG asset information is official as of 2008, when its associated fields were dis-incorporated from the Poza Rica-Altamira Comprehensive Asset.
(1) Official information as of 2008; its associated fields were dis-incorporated from the Poza Rica-Altamira Comprehensive Asset.
(2) Does not include ATG.
Source: Sener (Ministry of Energy), *Estrategia nacional de energía 2012-2026*, Mexico City, 2012.

ural gas, which Mexico produces less and less of, thus needing to increase its imports. In the field of renewable energy, geothermal electricity represents 1.6 percent of effective capacity (one percentage point less than in 1987); and electricity produced by wind, which in 1986 did not exist, by 2009, already represented 0.8 percent. It should be underlined that this sector not only has had the highest growth in the industry in the last decade, but that its prospects for development have increased due to the strong winds that blow across states like Baja California and Oaxaca. This has combined with the interest of several Spanish and U.S. firms in this sector. Among them are Renovalia Energy, a Spanish firm operating in Oaxaca through its subsidiary Desarrollos Eólicos Mexicanos, and U.S.-based Sempra Energy, which operates in Baja California and in addition has a subsidiary, Energía Costa Azul, which owns a natural gas regasification plant in Ensenada, Baja California, which imports gas from the United States.

Another important point is that, of the existing 60 440 mw effective capacity, two-thirds are controlled by the CFE and the rest by private companies. Of the latter, most is sold to the CFE for distribution in the national electricity system (19 percent of the total) and the other 14.4 percent is consumed by the producers (6.9 percent), is jointly generated (4.6 percent), goes into continuous use by the producers (0.7 percent), or is destined for export (2.2 percent).[13]

COMPOSITION OF THE DEMAND

In 2010, Mexico's national energy consumption came to 8 151 petajoules, with an average annual growth rate of 2.0 percent beginning in 2000. Of that amount, 60.6 percent goes into final consumption, which had an average annual growth rate in the same decade of 1.7 percent; the other 39.4 percent went into intermediate consumption, which grew at an average of 2.5 percent. By sector, the energy sector itself absorbs four-fifths of intermediate consumption and 32.1 percent of overall national consumption. This is followed by the transport sector, with 27.6 percent of total consumption. Industry absorbs 16.8 percent, and the residential, commercial, and public sectors, 11.2 percent. Surprisingly, despite taking into account the consumption of firewood, the agricultural sector only absorbs 1.8 percent of the total, although 23 percent of the population resides in rural areas.

If this demand structure is compared to the one that existed three decades ago, what is surprising is how little it has

changed: both then and now, the energy sector is the country's main consumer of energy, and not all of it is used efficiently. It is followed by transportation, industry, residential, commerce, and the public sector, which has raised its consumption over that period by about three percentage points, and agriculture, which not only continues stagnant, but has even contracted its consumption by a few tenths of a percentage point.

Secondary energy production in 2010 was 5 263 petajoules, with refined fuels making up 55.1 percent of the total, followed by dry gas, with 26.3 percent. If we add solid combustibles (1.9 percent of the total), among which coal is the leader, we can deduce that hydrocarbons represent a whopping 83.3 percent of the total consumption of secondary energy. That is, electricity only represents the other 16.7 percent, a figure that has remained the same for decades and even tends to decline. This contrasts with the structure of the demand in other countries, particularly developed nations, where energy consumption per product unit is substantially greater, and electricity represents a very high percentage of secondary energy consumption. This reflects greater energy efficiency and better distribution in the use of the energy produced. Thus, for example, in 2007 in the United States, per-capita electricity consumption was 12 747 kilowatt/hours (kw/h); in Spain, 6 818.8 kw/h; in Chile, 3 518 kw/h; in China, 2 584.9 kw/h; and in Brazil, 2 116.7 kw/h. Meanwhile, Mexico, with the world's thirteenth largest GDP, only consumed 1 858.3 kw/h, putting it in 104th place worldwide.[14]

Foreign Trade

Clearly there is a great difference between total primary energy production presented in the previous section (9 251 petajoules) and the country's energy consumption (8 151 petajoules). The 1 100 petajoule difference can be explained by net exports (1 635.5 petajoules) and operational losses (-535.5 petajoules). However, we should make some very important observations: the country has a very high primary energy surplus (2 966.6 petajoules), but the secondary energy deficit is a concern. The first is the case because crude exports came to 3 167.7 petajoules and net coal imports only came to 201.1 petajoules. However, secondary energy showed a deficit of 1 333.1 petajoules, which can be explained, in order of importance, by net imports of gasoline and naphtha (635.7 petajoules), dry gas (492.7 petajoules), fuel oil (231 petajoules), liquid gas (122.2 petajoules), coke (92.1 petajoules), and kerosene (5.4 petajoules), and by the net exports of fuel oil (231 petajoules) and electricity (3.3 petajoules).

In terms of barrels, exports of crude oil came to 1 338 million barrels a day (MBD) in 2011; in 2004 they had been 1 870 MBD. However, thanks to the increase in international crude prices between 2002 and 2011, hard currency earnings rose from US$13.39 billion in 2002 to US$49.32 billion in 2011. On the other hand, net imports of refined oil products (gasoline, diesel fuel, oil fuel, liquid gas, and others) soared from 88 MBD in 2002 to 493.4 MBD in 2011, worth US$1.31 billion and US$23.19 billion respectively.

Clearly Mexico has not concerned itself with increasing its specialization in the production and export of raw materials in the first 12 years of the twenty-first century, despite the fact that the increase in its imports of derivatives has been more than proportional. This can be seen in the fact that it has not built new refineries; the last one built, in Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, dates from 1979. It has also opted for increasing its consumption of natural gas, used both for dual centers and vehicular transport,[15] without taking into consideration that the production of this type of energy peaked in 2009 at 7.03 billion cubic meters per day, and since then, by mid-2012 has declined 9.0 percent.

This has brought Mexico's hydrocarbon industry to a critical point: proven reserves of oil, gas, and gas liquids have dropped consistently since 1987, when they came to 69 billion barrels of crude oil equivalent (BBCOE), to 13.8 BBCOE in January 2012. What is needed now is to explore the ocean floor and pump crude out of low-yield areas like Chicontepec. This means that Mexico has left behind the era of cheap oil and gradually seems to be distancing itself from the possibility of continuing to create exportable surpluses. As a correlation to this, Pemex's investments in exploration have stayed very high: between 2004 and 2011, they came to between US$19 billion and US$34 billion a year at constant 2011 prices. This has pushed up the deficit in public finances, and the trend is that they continue to rise in coming years.

The country regressed enormously in the development of non-fossil forms of energy between 1999 and 2010, and it will take several decades to recover.

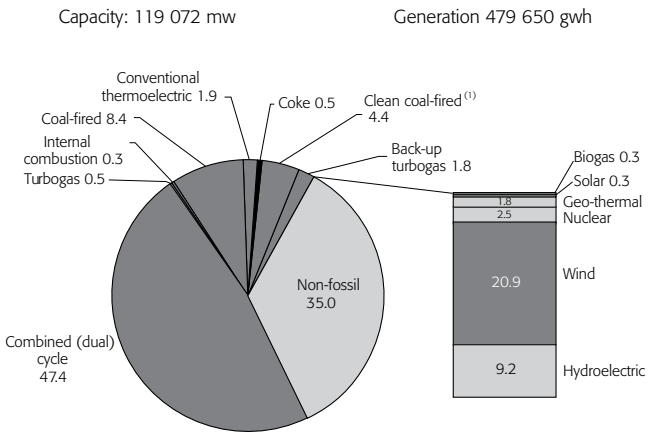
Financial Situation

In terms of sales, Mexico's first and fourth largest companies billed 13 percent of the country's GDP in 2011 (Pemex, Mex$1.55 trillion, and the CFE, Mex$291.9 billion, according to *Expansión* magazine.[16] However, their company reports show that only Pemex made operational profits (Mex$681.4 billion). The CFE suffered losses to the tune of Mex$27.1 billion, associated above all to absorbing the Central Mexico Light and Electricity Company (LFC), dissolved by the federal government in 2009. Once their taxes were paid to the federal government and federal government transfers made back to them, Pemex registered net losses for Mex$91.5 billion, and the CFE for Mex$17.2 billion.

Despite the rather more unfavorable circumstances of the CFE versus Pemex, the latter's liabilities/assets ratio was 111.2, with its liabilities in 2011 valued at 11.2 percent more than its assets, or a negative Mex$193.9 billion. The CFE's liability/asset ratio was 0.654 in the same year; that is, its liabilities were 34.3 percent less than its assets of Mex$313.2 billion. Finally, debt per worker came to Mex$11,448 in Pemex and Mex$6,029 in the CFE. All these figures suggest that Pemex is in deplorable shape, which might well serve to justify more privatization in the oil industry. However, most of the growth of Mexico's Central Bank international reserves since the beginning of the century can be explained by the money contributed by Pemex to the economy. One-third of federal tax earnings come from it, and 10.7 percent of the GDP is explained by Pemex's total sales.

One-third of federal tax earnings come from Pemex, and 10.7 percent of the GDP is explained by Pemex's total sales.

Graph 2
Government Projection of Gross Electricity Generation (2026) Using Renewables (percent)



(1) Coal-fired electricity with CO_2 capture and sequestration.
Source: Sener (Ministry of Energy), *Estrategia nacional de energía 2012-2026*, Mexico City, 2012.

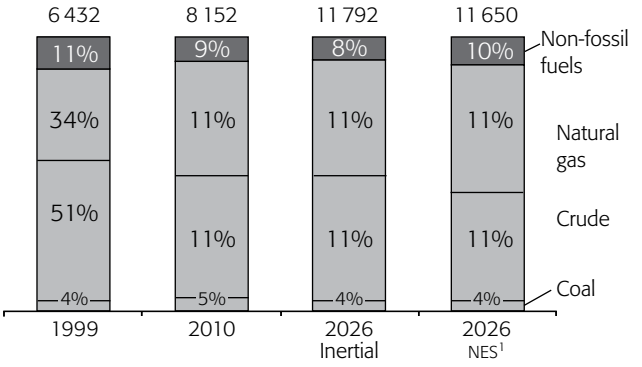
Perspectives and Conclusions

All official predictions since the 1980s have promised the country a reorientation of electric energy production toward alternative sources, from hydroelectricity and nuclear-generated electricity to renewable sources. This has been presented as the first step toward reaching an energy balance that is less dependent on hydrocarbons, better for the environment, and capable of taking advantage of the country's energy potential. However, to a great extent, the situation today is worse than it was 30 years ago. In the first place, dependence on both domestic and imported hydrocarbons has increased due to the spread of dual plants, which all use gas and are all operated by private companies, and therefore the greater use of gas as fuel. In the second place, no new nuclear-electric plants have been built, and it is possible that one reactor of the only plant Mexico has, at Laguna Verde, is suffering from operational problems. In the third place, the use of renewable sources has only increased, such as in the case of wind energy, after important investments by private business in Oaxaca and Baja California; the increase in the use of solar energy has been imperceptible; hydro-energy has structurally contracted; and, if we compare ourselves to countries like Brazil, we can say that there has been no advance in biofuels. Therefore, 2012 CFE and Sener predictions that by 2026 non-fossil-fuel energy generation would make up 35 percent seem very optimistic (see Graph 2).

In contrast to this panorama, 2012 Sener predictions regarding the composition of primary energy production seem to reflect the country's inability to change. It is expected that if appropriate energy substitution and savings policies are implemented, the participation of non-fossil-fuel energies in the

GRAPH 3

PRODUCTION OF CRUDE OIL BY REGION AND OVERALL ASSETS
(MILLIONS OF BARRELS PER DAY)



[1] NES stands for National Energy Strategy.

Source: Sener (Ministry of Energy), *Estrategia nacional de energía 2012-2026*, Mexico City, 2012.

gross domestic energy supply will come to 10 percent in 2026, a figure which, paradoxically, will be one percentage point less than that of 1999, as Graph 2 shows. This reflects the country's enormous regression in the development of non-fossil forms of energy between 1999 and 2010, from which it will take several decades to recover.

In other words, the Sener's intention is to intensify its efforts to produce hydrocarbons. It is betting on being able to mitigate the irreversible decline of Cantarell and later on Ku-Maloob-Zaap, the reservoir that peaked in 2012. It is basing its plans on the production of hydrocarbons from the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico; this implies a titanic technological effort, in the event that crude oil is even found, since by mid-2012, of the 19 wells drilled in the area that Pemex calls "Mexico B," only one of them hit gas, after an investment of Mex$20.99 billion.[17]

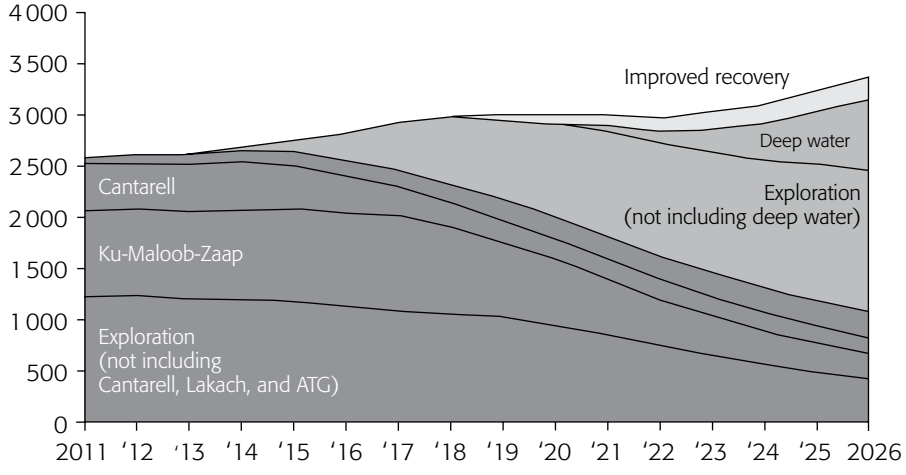
But gas is not exactly the energy Pemex and the exploring companies are interested in finding in that region, given the enormous needs and the international price of oil (see Graph 3).

In addition, hopes for gas extraction are placed on the rich deposits of shale gas inland. No one yet knows what will happen when the decision is made to exploit them since the debate is raging worldwide about their effects on global warming. This is because, if these hydrocarbons are extracted, it is necessary to hydraulically fracture the rock (a process known as "fracking") and it is presumed that this generates very severe environmental transformations (see Graphs 4 and 5).

Fortunately, the country's energy consumption elasticity today is approximately one, which means that the price policies implemented since 2008 have had a certain effect on demand. Now is the time to decidedly transition to the substitution of conventional sources of energy to non-conventional sources, above all renewable ones. In this process, Pemex must stop being the most important source for federal government resources; the export of hydrocarbons must be gradually reduced to insure their existence for domestic use for more years; the sector's research and technology development institutes

GRAPH 4

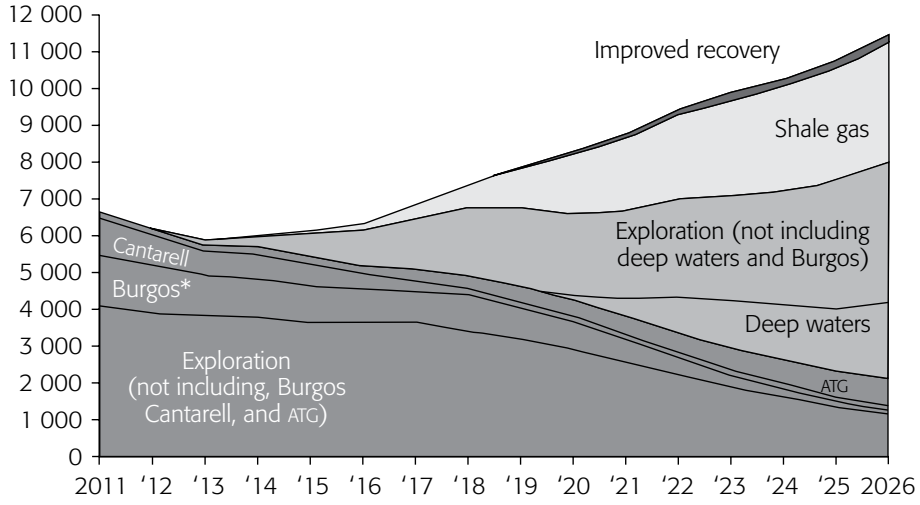
GOVERNMENT PROJECTION OF CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION BY LARGE PROJECTS (2012-2026)
(MILLIONS OF BARRELS PER DAY)



Source: Sener (Ministry of Energy), *Estrategia nacional de energía 2012-2026*, Mexico City, 2012.

GRAPH 5

GOVERNMENT PROJECTION OF NATURAL GAS PRODUCTION BY LARGE PROJECTS (2012-2026)
(MILLIONS OF CUBIC FEET PER DAY)



Gas production does not include nitrogen.
***Includes financed public works contracts (COPF).**
Source: Sener (Ministry of Energy), *Estrategia nacional de energía 2012-2026*, **Mexico City, 2012.**

must be promoted; and investment must once again be channeled into refining and primary petrochemical plants to reduce our dependence in these areas and strengthen the country's industrialization. VM

FURTHER READING

Gobierno de México, "Ley del servicio público de energía eléctrica," *Diario oficial de la federación*, December 22, 1993.

Gutiérrez, Roberto, "El sector eléctrico de México hacia el año 2000," *Comercio exterior* vol. 40, no. 3, March 1990.

——— "The Mexican Energy Sector," in Miguel S. Wionczek, Óscar M. Guzmán, and Roberto Gutiérrez R., eds., *Energy Policy in Mexico. Problems and Prospects for the Future* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988).

INEGI, Sistema de cuentas nacionales de México, 2010, www.inegi.org.mx.

NOTES

[1] Lorenzo Meyer, "El desarrollo de la industria petrolera en México," in Enrique Cárdenas, comp., *Historia económica de México*, readings from *El trimestre económico* no. 64, vol. 4 (Mexico City: FCE, 1994).

[2] Regulations for the oil industry date from 1958 and were last modified in 2008; for the electricity sector, they date from 1975 and were last changed in 2012; and for nuclear energy, from 1985, and were last changed in 2012.

[3] PMI Comercio Internacional is part of the PMI Group, made up of 11 different companies: PMI Comercio Internacional, S.A. de C.V.; PMI Holdings Petróleos España, S.L.; PMI Holdings B.V.; PMI Norteamérica, S.A. de C.V.; PMI Trading, Limited; PMI Marine, Limited; PMI Services North America, Inc.; Pemex Services Europe, Limited; Pemex Internacional España, S.A.; PMI Holdings North America, Inc.; and PMI Services B.V.. See http://www.pmi.com.mx/onepage/public/pmi_english.jsp.

[4] Some of Repsol's subsidiaries and/or partners, all for-profit corporations, are Gas Natural México, Gas Natural Vehicular El Norte, Gas Natural Servicios (distribution), Comercializadora Metrogás, Unión Fenosa, México Unión Fenosa Cogeneración, Fuerza y Energía de Naco Nogales, Transnatural, Central Anáhuac, La Propagadora del Gas, Fuerza y Energía de Tuxpan, Fuerza y Energía del Norte de Durango, and Fuerza y Energía BII Hioxo.

[5] A duopsony exists where there are only two buyers for a good or service. It is analogous to the duopoly, except the latter involves supply, while the duopsony involves demand. [Editor's Note.]

[6] See www.inin.gob.mx.

[7] Gobierno de México, "Decretos de la reforma energética," *Diario oficial de la federación* (DOF), November 28, 2008.

[8] A petajoule is equivalent to 10^{15} joules, and 210 joules is the equivalent of 50 megatons of TNT, the amount of energy produced by a Tsar bomb, which caused the biggest nuclear explosion known to humanity.

[9] Sener, *Balance nacional de energía 2010*, 2011, www.sener.gob.mx.

[10] Comisión Nacional de Hidrocarburos (CNH), "Producción de hidrocarburos por regiones," 2012, www.cnh.gob.mx.

[11] Extenda, "El sector de las energías renovables en México," Oficina de Promoción de Negocios en México, October 2011.

[12] Roberto Gutiérrez R., "La reforma petrolera de México: ¿Dos sexenios sin política energética?" *Argumentos* no. 58, September-December 2008.

[13] Extenda, *op. cit.*

[14] EIA (Energy Information Administration), 2012, www.eia.gov.

[15] Dual centers are thermoelectric plants that reutilize the steam produced from heating the water, unlike the others, which release it into the atmosphere. [Translator's Note.]

[16] "Las 500 empresas más importantes de México," *Expansión*, June 2012.

[17] Atzayaelth Torres, "Exploraciones fallidas," *Excélsior* (Mexico City), July 3, 2012.

Pemex
From Nationalism to Denationalization

Sergio Suárez Guevara*

Introduction

March 18, 2012, was the seventy-fourth anniversary of the historic expropriation of oil in Mexico, with its nationalist vision that supported our economic, social, and energy future.[1] This commemoration brings to mind the denationalization onslaught by domestic and foreign neoliberal groups against Pemex for the last 29 years. This strategic industry's exploitation and riches must be used for the country's —and its own— economic development and social welfare.

*Researcher with the "Economics of the Energy Sector" research unit at the UNAM Institute for Economic Research, sergiosg@servidor.unam.mx.

To understand the road that has been imposed, it is important to remember that in 1947, the neoliberals met in Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland, to launch their struggle. They were led by Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, members of the Austrian school of economics, in which other outstanding figures like Friedmann, Polanyi, Röpke, and Popper, among others, also participated.

The statement of aims that came out of that meeting, commonly known as the Mont Pèlerin Consensus, is the basis for neoliberalism, since it takes up the basic principles of classical liberalism: individualism, private property, freedom, and a state with very curtailed economic functions. Its objective was to combat Keynesianism and any and all forms of social solidarity, as well as to create the theoretical founda-

STRINGER Mexico/REUTERS

tions for hard capitalism, lacking any rule, that is, the neoliberal or savage capitalism model.

The neoliberals' critique of the import-substitution model and the suffocating foreign debt of the 1980s made it possible for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to foster reforms and economic policies in Latin America through economic and structural adjustment programs. This was called economic neoliberalism, the model that promoted the privatization of public companies and services, the elimination or decrease and flexibility in social policies, opening up the economies to the international market, the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), industrial reconversion, and a new educational system. And we must not forget its offensive against the defense of any national interests, like the one represented by Pemex.

Pemex Today

Pemex's current circumstances must be analyzed in the context of neoliberalism. During the neoliberal administrations of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982-1988), Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), and Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (1994-2000), of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI); and of Vicente Fox Quesada (2000-2006) and Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (2006-2012), of the National Action Party (PAN), the para-state company began to suffer partial denationalization measures. These allowed activities that the Constitution had stipulated were exclusively its purview to be handed over to others through applying illegitimate deregulation policies and opening up to private national and international investment oil activities that had been vertically and strategically integrated.

These administrations justified the furtive denationalization of Pemex, saying that they were doing it to modernize the company and make it competitive so Mexico could catch the energy globalization train and integrate itself into the hemisphere. What they did not say is that our oil industry operates according to the requirements of U.S. energy security and of the interests and profits of powerful multinational oil corporations. Therefore, we can well say that oil neoliberalism is synonymous with conquest, since it involves not only resources, productive and commercial hydrocarbon activities, but also the land itself, thus endangering both our energy and territorial sovereignty.

The neoliberal administrations justified the furtive denationalization of Pemex, saying that they were doing it to modernize the company and make it competitive so Mexico could catch the energy globalization train and integrate itself into the hemisphere.

To know more about the case, the reader can look at Pemex Exploración Producción (Pemex Exploration and Production, or PEP) bidding processes for private companies so that they can provide hydrocarbon exploration, development, and production services in specific blocks.[2] This leads us to look at history, that is, the critical historic context in which Mexico's oil was expropriated according to the nationalist principle of "Mexican oil for Mexicans,"[3] and to compare it to the history of Pemex under the neoliberal administrations and their denationalizing project. The latter aims to leave in private hands, particularly those of multinationals, the operational, financial, and technological functioning of this strategic public activity, making Pemex increasingly dependent on foreign companies to carry out its different activities.

Today's neoliberalism is pushing Mexico toward being a more dependent, globalized, transnational economy, demonstrating that everything in the world of oil is different now, since the strategies, actions, and policies established in development plans, as well as energy programs, are focused on denationalizing Pemex. In short, we are told that the transition toward the company's modernization and competitiveness requires opening and deregulation measures favoring the penetration of private investment, above all foreign investment. Government after neoliberal government has applied measures to allow the encroachment of the private sector into the oil industry, led like a profit-making business. Their incursions include activities that have been strategically integrated, ranging from extraction, transformation, distribution, commercialization, control of markets, and secure earnings; this means that private oil companies are operating parallel to Pemex with the security offered them by regulations and laws amended for the purpose.

A Vision of Pemex's Future

The idea that has been spread that Pemex's present and future development has no domestic solution shows that for-

eign interests have filtered into all its activities. With that aim, the principles of the Constitution have been manipulated and changes made to Article 27's regulatory legislation, a law that is subordinate to the Constitution itself. This is despite the fact that the regulation's own Article 9 states that the goods under public domain are inalienable, that is, they cannot be passed to others and cannot be sold, and that this right is not subject to any statute of limitations, that is, as a right with no time limit, it cannot be changed or lost under any circumstances.

For example, although Pemex's company, the Industria Petroquímica Básica (Basic Petrochemical Industry, or IPB), is one of the goods that come under public domain —see the General Law of Public Goods—, it has been opened up to private interests . . . but without great results. The importance of Pemex's petrochemicals company is that, before basic petrochemicals were reclassified, they were the basis for the productive activities in the secondary chemical industry, which was something only few countries had achieved.[4] Clearly, despite official speeches about defending the national sovereignty of the oil industry, the facts show that the managers' real option has been to open Pemex up little by little —and even sell it— despite its strategic importance, since there is no public or private entity that can replace it in terms of its energy, fiscal, and economic significance and transcendence.

It is a fact that the oil-energy-basic-petrochemical trio will maintain its transcendence in the next millennium. Then, why not take advantage domestically of the wealth that pours out of the oil reservoirs in Mexican territory and its transformation in refineries and petrochemical plants? Why deny future generations the products, services, and profits derived from oil-based activities? What could be better than their remaining in Mexican hands and serving the nation's interests?

Why deny future generations the products, services, and profits derived from oil-based activities? What could be better than their remaining in Mexican hands and serving the nation's interests?

Energy Reform: A Continuing Dispute

In 2008, the first executive proposed an energy or oil reform based on changing the legal framework to continue opening Pemex up to private sector participation, creating strategic alliances, making inroads into deep-water drilling in search of the "treasure below the sea," and increasing refining capacity.[5] Thus, using the pretext of a lack of technology, experience, and capital, after a heated debate, the first executive managed to reform and pass the laws corresponding to its proposed denationalization project. This reform required the creation of a legal framework —obviously unconstitutional— for the penetration of private companies, particularly transnational ones, into strategic activities that had been exclusively reserved for Pemex. This is the case of exploration, but includes all the other aspects of oil production, whose CEOs have incorrectly managed the nation's resources and goods that should be used to benefit the country's economic and social development.

But the denationalizing spirit has not been completely sated. Despite being anti-national and unconstitutional, the measures in favor of opening up Pemex are derived from the neoliberal economic and energy project that the country's neoliberal administrations have fostered and from pressure from institutions like the International Monetary Fund. The latter, for example, intervened making "recommendations" for Pemex to sign "contracts with incentives" to increase reserves and production.[6]

Some of the reform's results can be observed in the performance of certain variables. Because of the over-pumping, proven hydrocarbon reserves dropped from 14.31 billion to 13.80 billion barrels of equivalent crude. At the same time, oil production slumped from 2 792 to 2 550 barrels a day (BD) and exports from 1 403 BD to 1 338 BD. The only positive note has been that during what has been called the new oil boom, between 2008 and 2011, characterized by the unprecedented rise in the price of oil, the price of a barrel of export-grade crude rose, on average, from US$84.38 to US$100.92. Between 2007 and 2011, this meant Pemex raked in total sales to the tune of US$498 billion, an amount never before attained by any previous administration. This proves its profitability if we disregard the suffocating fiscal regime applied to it, which sucks out 100 percent of its profits.

We should not forget how important domestic sales are for Pemex, whose earnings come from the hike in oil products, particularly gasoline. Domestic sales represent 50 percent of its total sales; that is, domestic consumers are an important pillar for the company.

The 2008 energy reform required the creation of a legal framework —obviously unconstitutional— for the penetration of private companies, particularly transnational ones, into strategic activities that had been exclusively reserved for Pemex.

Oil, a Strategic "Weapon"

Oil is a powerful "weapon" for the confrontation among powers since whoever controls it worldwide will have incomparable power. As sovereign property, oil takes on special importance for underdeveloped countries since those like Mexico continue to be part, whether by conviction or external pressure, of an oil denationalization project, despite crude's strategic position in the energy hierarchy.

Trade, economic, and financial confrontations among the powers make Latin American countries' oil a strategic "weapon," but national interests are subjugated to those of the transnationals. What is hiding behind supposed entrepreneurial freedom is "savage" capitalism that takes over strategic resources and public companies to raise private profits. We can say that public goods are "expropriated" to the benefit of the private sector, based on an illicit legal foundation.

Despite the resurgent nationalist spirit in the sphere of Latin American oil, the privatizing "wave" is advancing gradually on the oil industry and vertically integrated activities, making them energy-financial "booty" and an instrument of power. This is a stimulus for the United States, since with this kind of an energy advantage, it will be able to face down other powers and strengthen its economic activities. The forced march of turning public property into private and the control and monopolization of public activities and goods, of strategic natural resources, markets, and domestic consumers, all strip enormous wealth from the Latin American countries. That wealth would be of enormous use for their present and future economic and social development, and that is why recovering it becomes a strategic policy.

Conclusion

The neoliberal denationalizing euphoria is an invitation to recover the nationalist spirit. The imperative is not to continue opening the public sector to private companies, but to reclaim and modernize Pemex for the good of the nation, since it already has sufficient numbers of specialists, experience, and capital. I think it is fundamental to support any and all projects that can give new impetus to the para-state company, based on its workers and its own operational, technical, financial, and research assets, but with a different vision of national development. Every last drop of oil that exists in the bowels of the country and the wealth that its exploitation brings must be used to benefit Mexican society. VM

Notes

[1] The oil was expropriated by President Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (1934-1940) in 1938. [Editor's Note.]

[2] See http://www.pep.pemex.com/Licitaciones/Paginas/Licitaciones.aspx.

[3] We should remember that the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas fostered the independent development of the national economy in accordance with a six-year plan imbued with a nationalist spirit, using our natural resources together with the development of our own industry, with active state support. One aim was to reduce foreign control over the economy, since it was very dependent and controlled by foreign capital.

[4] After four reclassifications carried out between 1986 and 1991, of the 72 petrochemicals that made up Pemex's list of basic petrochemicals only ethane, propane, butanes, hexane, heptane, naphtha, and the raw material for carbon black were left in the category; all except the last of these are gases. All the others were disguised as secondary petrochemicals.

[5] The energy reform was approved October 28, 2008. The following laws were amended: the Law Regulating Article 27 of the Constitution in the Area of Petroleum; the Founding Law of Article 27 of the Constitution in the Area of Petroleum; the Founding Law of the Public Federal Administration; and the Law on the Energy Regulatory Commission. New laws were also passed: the Law on Petróleos Mexicanos; the Law on the National Hydrocarbon Commission; the Law for the Sustainable Use of Energy; and the Law for the Use of Renewable Energy and Financing the Energy Transition. On October 21, 2008, the section of the Federal Government Service Charges Law pertaining to the fiscal regime applied to the PEP was amended.

[6] The "contracts with incentives" will allow private oil companies to explore and exploit deep-water deposits. Pemex will establish areas to this end, sub-lease them to private companies, which will explore them, and, if they are productive, will design a marketing project for the zone. If they are not profitable, they will return them and Pemex will not be obligated to pay for the work done. See "La Suprema Corte analiza los 'contratos incentivados' de Pemex. Suárez Coppel los defiende y asegura que entrarán en vigor," http://www.elmananarey.com/XStatic/manana/template/notaimprimir.aspx?id=581372.

The Social Importance of Oil

Irma Delgado Martínez*

Andrew Winning/REUTERS

Mexican society, the true owner of the country's oil, has benefitted little from this great resource, since public policies' supposed appropriate use of oil surpluses has not been reflected in social well-being. Most of the population is clear that oil rent is one of our country's main sources of income and the most promising option, *par excellence*, for obtaining public revenues and finding immediate solutions to all the economic, social, and political problems in Mexico's history.

Oil should be a lever for economic and social development in the twenty-first century because it brings in hard currency from abroad and because, linked up with other industries, it is a good that can increase its value importantly, creating many jobs. In addition to this, it can be very useful as a means to cut the costs of oil-derived inputs, such as fuels, if they are produced in Mexico, and, of course, since it generates more tax and financial earnings that go into the state coffers, the government could use them for economic and social growth and development.

With foreign capital's entry into oil exploitation, the economy and oil's social significance undergo drastic changes. Given the magnitude of the oil deposits, the proximity to the United States, its main consumer, and the advantageous conditions granted investors by Mexican administrations, the flows of foreign capital are so high that in a short time they will cause the beginning of the decomposition of traditional society.

Oil rent should serve to reinvent the future, but this has not happened, or has only happened in a poor way in our country. And, as is the case in general with the import-substitution model, the main problem is that the concept of development is not fully understood or the country's economic and political actors do not perceive it in the same way.

*Academic participant in the "Economics of the Energy Sector" research unit in the UNAM Institute for Economic Research, delmar@unam.mx.

If the government had not frittered them away on running expenses, oil surplus revenues could have built 10 refineries, or paid for 10 years of deepwater exploration, or built 1 600 specialized hospitals or 10 600 university campuses.

That is, economic development can be understood as a phenomenon that implies social development, in which most people improve their quality of life; gain access to better health, educational, security, and housing services; and enjoy greater well-being with more and better job opportunities in productive, profitable companies in an economy characterized by macro-economic equilibrium, visible both in the balance of payments (which implies trade balance, payment of factoring services, and balance of capital) and in sustained, long-term growth. If we understand economic development in this way, we can conclude that this has not happened in Mexico, despite the fact that the conditions existed for achieving it.

Why has oil, for more than 74 years the property of the nation and administered by the state, not been clearly an engine for growth in Mexico? Among other reasons, this is because Pemex became the state's main source of income, given the inefficiency of other revenue sources. This has meant that the parastate company could not reinvest part of its profits in modernization, exploration, drilling, production, and refining, at the same time that the resources that it provided to the the state are often distributed inappropriately. Thus, oil has served for getting loans from abroad, but, when its price and/or production drops, those same loans have strangled public finances and caused economic chaos in the country, precisely because the desired economic development has not been achieved.

Oil Surpluses and the Country's Development

Pemex gives the government the revenues that it has not been able to collect through other taxes. According to the Federal Auditor's Office, between 2001 and 2008, the country received oil surplus income of Mex$1.28 trillion; however, 71 percent of that money went into operating costs (that is, wages, bonuses, Christmas bonuses, employee benefits, office supplies, coffee, cookies, etc.).[1] In early 2011, the National Manufacturing Chamber (Canacintra) denounced that oil surpluses continued to be used for operating expenses instead of to "modernize and expand the industry toward levels that would today put the country at the forefront in oil matters, given their extraordinary size."[2]

What could the oil surplus revenues have been invested in if the government had not frittered them away on running expenses? They could have built 10 refineries, each at a cost of US$10 billion;[3] or paid for 10 years of deepwater exploration —US$200 billion are needed for 20 years;[4] or built 1 600 specialized hospitals, each at a cost of Mex$800 million;[5] or 10 600 university campuses, for Mex$120 million each.[6] Unfortunately, the oil economy enormously benefits a few, increasing the existing great social inequalities.

Mexico got rich on oil and has been squandering that wealth for three decades, and the consequences have intensified in recent years. For at least four years, production by Mexico's main oil producer, the Cantarell Complex, the victim of over-exploitation by all the administrations since its discovery, has been declining, with pumping dropping to less than half. "Cantarell closed 2010 with a production of 501 000 barrels a day (b/d), but it began 2011 at 469 000 b/d in February, 459 000 b/d in May, and 443 000 b/d by September, a drop of 13 percent."[7] By January 1, 2012, Mexico had proven reserves (called 1P) of almost 13.8 billion barrels of equivalent crude, a 0.1 percent increase *vis-à-vis* 2011. Proven and probable reserves (2P) came to 26.2 billion barrels, and when added to possible reserves (3P), they came to 43.8 billion.[8]

These figures show the urgency of taking action. It is time to look beyond economic interests; it is true that making changes to current policies will affect the public initially, since the revenues now supplied by Pemex will have to come from other taxes, if fiscal policy were to be modified. But, if those changes are not made now, Mexico will go into a crisis that it will not be able to extricate itself from because, without oil to maintain the country and pay all the debts, the government will not be able to pay all its workers, and taxes, which will inevitably increase, will not be paid simply because the citizenry will not have the money to pay them.

Despite being oil- and gas-rich, Mexico has not been able to foster the social development of its population in accordance with the standards set by international bodies. This has led some economists to minimize the potential of natural resources as driving forces for development not only for Mexico, but for any nation. Jeffrey Sachs considers that the existence of oil and natural gas seems to have an influ-

ence in decreasing the economic and social well-being of countries that have them, calling this theory "the natural resource curse."[9] Colin Campbell, for his part, states that countries rich in energy sources have already reached peak oil and that from now on, production will decline.[10] The implications of this include pressure on the World Bank in 2008 to withdraw its financial support to energy-resource-rich countries whose economies have not developed. In the case of Mexico, I think there are four important aspects to be considered in the design and management of public economic policy that have caused the energy sector's deficit:

1. *An erroneous federal fiscal policy*. It has been a mistake for federal revenues to continue to be highly dependent on the tax on oil instead of seeking new sources of income; this is why a fiscal reform is urgent.
3. *The decision to levy high taxes on Pemex*. This has meant that, since 1980, the company has lacked the cash it needed to invest in exploratory drilling.
3. *Pemex's lack of efficient refineries*. Mexico needs to increase the value added of its exports.
4. *The lag in technological research*. The discovery of the country's largest oil deposit, Cantarell, in the Gulf of Mexico, with oil in shallow waters, contributed to Pemex's not moving ahead to develop other kinds of exploration techniques, as has been done elsewhere. Now that Cantarell has entered into an accelerated process of decline, Mexico needs other sources, but it does not have the appropriate technology for exploring and sinking wells in difficult conditions or deeper waters.

Mexico is one of the world's most important oil-producing countries. The value of its crude exports exceeds almost every year the income from foreign direct investment or remittances. Oil resources represent about 33 percent of income, but how the monies from the oil surplus are used is of capital importance for evaluating its true potential as a tool for development and a mechanism for redistributing income.

According to data from the National Statistics and Geography Institute (INEGI), from 2001 to 2011, the exports of oil and its derivatives tripled their contribution to the Mexican economy, soaring from US$13.19 billion to US$56.32 billion. Given that, the participation of oil exports in the GDP rose from 2.5 percent to 5.0 percent from 2001 to 2011, reconfirming that Mexico's dependence on oil earnings has sharpened.[11]

What will happen when our oil runs out or when national production is insufficient? Before that happens, Pemex needs to be turned into a lever for the overall growth of the economy.

In short, what will happen when our oil runs out or when national production is insufficient? Before that happens, Pemex needs to be turned into a lever for the overall growth of the economy, without abandoning its important role as an aid for the national coffers. We must stop thinking of oil as the guiding axis of the national economy, overcome that dependence, and change the paradigm. What is needed is careful planning to guarantee the rational use of oil surpluses. In this sense, one fundamental aspect that must be reviewed is the real distribution of those surpluses, essential for strengthening the government's financial capacity and making its participation in the economy more effective. Development plans will be very hard to put into practice if the state does not maintain significant participation in the productive process so that it can have the capability of opting for the modes it might consider appropriate. The largest part of the resources should be earmarked for long-term productive projects, social development, and savings, and not for superfluous payments or increasing government spending obligations. Preferentially, the state should earmark oil surplus monies to investments in energy, in the creation of scientific and managerial capabilities, and in social cohesion. VM

NOTES

[1] "Excedentes petroleros rebasan el billón de pesos," *El Universal* (Mexico City), February 17, 2010, http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/659581.html.

[2] *La Jornada* (Mexico City), February 27, 2011, http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2011/02/27/economia/026n2eco.

[3] Noé Cruz Serrano, "Hoy se anuncia la nueva refinería," *El Universal* (Mexico City), April 14, 2009, http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/finanzas/70263.html.

[4] "Inversión en aguas profundas, prevista en US$200 000 hasta el 2025," *Business News Americas*, February 22, 2005, http://member.bnamericas.com/news/petroleoygas/Inversion_en_aguas_profundas_prevista_en_US*200,000_hasta_el_2025.

[5] "Sin fecha aún, construcción de Hospital de Alta Especialidad," http://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/409079.sin-fecha-aun-construccion-de-hospital-de-alt.html.

[6] "Construirán unidad de la UACM en Gustavo A. Madero," *El Universal* (Mexico City), June 25, 2006.

[7] Comisión Nacional de Hidrocarburos, "Reporte de indicadores de explotación al 30 de septiembre de 2011," http://cnh.gob.mx/_docs/Re portes_IH/Reporte_CNH_30_Sep.pdf.

[8] "Petróleo seguro para hoy…¿y mañana?" CNN *Expansión*, http://www.cnnexpansion.com/economia/2012/02/29/petroleo-seguro-para-hoy-y-manana.

[9] Jeffrey Sachs is an economist, professor, and director of the Earth Institute at New York's Columbia University.

[10] Geologist and founder of the Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas.

[11] Edmundo Sánchez, "Crece en una década dependencia petrolera," *El economista* (Mexico City), January 15, 2012, http://eleconomista.com.mx/industrias/2012/01/15/crece-decada-dependencia-petrolera.

Pemex-PMI: A Black Hole

María Fernanda Campa-Uranga*

Germán Romero/Cuartoscuro.com

This article is directed at each and every reader interested in understanding how Pemex, a company that belongs to all Mexicans, operates, what interests it benefits, and what to do with it.

Energy in 1938 and 2012

Mexican Petroleum (Pemex) is the powerful Mexican company that emerged from the expropriation of British oil companies on March 18, 1938. It has historically been managed by a technocracy appointed by each federal administration, and in recent decades, it has been subordinated to the world's oil mecca controlled from Washington and Houston, based on the February 1995 accords that mortgaged Pemex for US$52 billion given to the Mexican government. Since then, Pemex operations have been opaque, effected via agreements to satisfy concrete interests of multinational companies until today, when it is close to collapse.

The big discoveries of crude oil and gas from the Mesozoic era in Chiapas-Tabasco and the Campeche Sound in the late 1960s, when crude was being imported, grew Pemex to a historic maximum unequaled until today. This made it one

*Geological engineer and founder of the "1917 Constitution" group of oil engineers, geoatea@hotmail.com.

As part of the process of privatizing Pemex, in 1989 the PMI-Comercio Internacional Group was constituted to handle Pemex's imports and exports of crude and its derivatives.

of the world's most important oil companies and by far the largest in Latin America. We should remember that those important deposits were discovered through exploration done entirely by Pemex with Mexican resources because of the U.S. boycott in retaliation for the republican action of expropriating our oil resources.

The ominous unconstitutionality of Pemex's current operations is characterized by chaotic commercialization of crude oil, gas, gasoline, and petrochemicals managed by a group of companies called PMI, S.A. de C.V. In this context, the black market in refined products grows daily through the theft of gasoline, lubricants, and diesel, turbo, and jet fuels produced by Pemex-Refinación (Pemex Refining). Another form the black market takes is the contraband in raw materials used to adulterate the products and increase their volume. In addition, irregular establishments engaging in clandestine sale of these products have also proliferated, although they are also sold through legal gasoline franchises. Given the increases in gas and diesel fuel prices, car owners, truckers, and industrialists resort more and more to stolen or adulterated fuels. Official Pemex distributors reveal how this black market is promoted from inside the para-state company itself.

The Modernization of Pemex

The so-called modernization and restructuring of Pemex and the government energy sector under the guidance of the McKinsey Company and others consist essentially of the privatization of the oil and electricity industries via consulting firms and contracts with multinational companies controlled from Houston. Pemex has not repeated the feat of discovering reserves as important as the historic ones, but it has been subjected to drastic reforms that have led to the export of almost a million and a half barrels a day of crude to the United States, sales controlled by PMI-Comercio Internacional, S.A. de C.V. (PMI-International Trade). This crude is not refined in Mexico to produce gasoline; rather, there has been a rapid growth in the importation of gasoline from the United States: almost half a million barrels a day. In addition, every day one billion cubic feet of gas is imported into our country by Repsol: this is equivalent to half the consumption of foreign companies operating in Mexico, including the gas imported for the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE).[1]

Contracts and Article 27

In 2008, the efforts to legalize contracts with private companies together with other oil practices outside constitutional stipulations made it possible to advance President Felipe Calderón's bill to make them into law up until April 8, shortly before the close of the congressional session. The problem holding up previous similar bills is Article 27 of the Constitution. Together with Articles 25, 26, and 28, this document is absolutely clear about the ownership of our oil being in the hands of the Mexican people, under the guidance of the nation, and that that ownership is direct, unalienable, and not subject to any statute of limitations. This means that the Constitution puts Pemex in charge of all activities related to exploration and exploitation, comprehensively and to the exclusion of all others.

We should remember that the 1917 Querétaro Constitutional Congress approved Article 27, which made it possible to demand public ownership of our oil resources. The article in question attributes exclusive original ownership of all lands and waters inside the national boundaries to the nation itself, as well as the principle of the direct and unalienable domain without any statute of limitations by the nation over all natural resources in the subsoil. This legal epic tale led the oil companies to refuse to recognize Mexico's 1917 Constitution. The United States did not recognize the administration of Venustiano Carranza or subsequent ones as long as Article 27 remained intact, and at the same time inflicted an international boycott against Pemex.

Shortly thereafter, the U.S. government negotiated the Bucareli Accords with Álvaro Obregón in 1923; and in 1925, the legislators passed the Regulatory Legislation for Article 27 of the Constitution for the oil sector, recognizing rights of international companies to oil, based on the principle of the Constitution not being retroactive, which is what the Bucareli Treaties stipulate.

The pressure from foreign companies under the protection of different U.S. administrations has not stopped. A letter

from Under-secretary of State for Latin American Affairs Spruille Baden to his boss, Secretary of State Walter Thruston, avows that the oil companies have finally seen the moment of returning triumphantly to Mexico; that the State Department has no preference for any of them, since it only wants their return to be astute and cautious because Mexicans would probably place great importance on keeping up appearances; nevertheless, the Mexican government is obligated to respect the rule of law and protect the sub-soil, which is the property of the nation; and if the oil companies participated in developing the industry, it would have to be through contracts, so that the Mexican government can avoid giving the impression that concessions are being given to foreign interests. Though this anecdote dates from 1946, it is surprisingly current.[2]

The results of the ominous seven Senate decrees and new unconstitutional laws passed in October 2008, after 10 months of debate, jibes perfectly with the 1946 observation.

PMI-Comercio Internacional, considered a private company, is not required to give an account of its actions.

This energy reform opened the door even wider to the foreign firms, attempting a simulation of the government maintaining control and that it was not granting unconstitutional concessions. The discourse in the new laws does not cancel the advance of the intention of other privatization projects, publicized as "modernizing," but with the clear intention of convincing those who do not understand —or prefer not to understand— to move toward another, more profound reform that is on the agenda.

As part of the process of privatizing Pemex, long in the works since the first reclassification of petrochemical products in 1986, on May 24, 1989 the PMI-Comercio Internacional Group was constituted as a company with majority government ownership. Its aim was to be Pemex's trade branch in the international market; it handles Pemex's imports and exports of crude and its derivatives. Seven companies were created and granted initial licenses: PMI Services, BV (Netherlands); PMI Holdings, BV (Netherlands); PMI Holdings, NV (Dutch Antilles, now in Spain); PMI Comercio Internacional, S.A. de C.V. (Mexico); Pemex Capital, Inc. (Delaware, U.S.); Kot Insurance Company, AG (Bermuda, now in Switzerland); and III Services, S.A. de C.V. (Mexico). Outstanding among these is PMI-Comercio Internacional, since its authorization was signed directly by Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, former minister of programming and the budget under the administration of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, May 23, 1989.

In the name of the president, Zedillo backed Pemex's request to create the "private company" PMI-Comercio Internacional; due to this, it is not required to give an account of its actions, which puts it outside the law, as confirmed by the Federal Auditor's Office in its audit of public accounts for the years 2003 to 2006. Pemex itself has told the Federal Institute for Access to Public Government Information (IFAI) that PMI is not its subsidiary, although its offices occupy several floors of Pemex's headquarters office building. What is more, when review 299/08 presented against Pemex was underway, the company stated, "Because of its legal origin, Petróleos Mexicanos and [its] subsidiaries have the dual nature of public bodies and private persons, and in the latter case, they act in the same manner as any private individual." What is more, what is today known as Grupo PMI, S.A. de C.V. functions with different companies that use those initials in their names: PMI Trading, Ltd.; PMI Norteamérica, S.A. de C.V.; PMI Holdings Petróleos España, SL; PMI Holdings, BV; PMI Services North America, Inc.; PMI Pemex Services Europe, Ltd.; PMI Pemex Internacional España, S.A.; PMI Services, BV; PMI Holdings North America, Inc.; and PMI Marine, Ltd. The companies in this group are also directly or indirectly owned by Petróleos Mexicanos, although they do not give an accounting of their actions. Auditor Arturo González de Aragón testified before the Senate on July 17, 2008, "Opacity, complexity, and confusion were found in Pemex's investments in national and foreign firms' stocks, which have multiple ends; 21 of them are not transparent; they do not account for themselves, and their results are not sufficiently revealed in federal public accounts."

The unconstitutionality is manifest, and the murkiness regarding international oil earnings and expenditures is complete, similar to the way organized crime operates, making this a veritable black hole.

WHERE NOW?

We must recognize that a reform to make Pemex-PMI's transactions transparent in accordance with the law is urgent;

also, it must create an administrative structure that puts an end to the uncontrollable financial speculation amidst which it functions. Our time is clearly characterized by the replacement of the generalized use of highly polluting fossil fuels —the oil of the twentieth century and the coal of the nineteenth— with alternative energy sources, like solar and wind power, now in development. Pemex and the CFE have been excluded from these modern forms of business, which has meant that they are confined and subordinated to the transnational corporations that get the most profitable contracts in the world and thus capture most of the oil rent. Nuclear-electrical plants, presented as alternatives, are also obsolete and highly dangerous, since they emerged during the Cold War to simultaneously produce electricity and plutonium for weapons.[3]

Pemex and the CFE could have a promising future in producing solar energy. They should be restructured to make them modern, active companies, in Mexico's energy transition toward solar and wind power —the old windmills renovated— that we could even export to the countries of the North. The manifestly unconstitutional laws must be repealed and both companies given the independent management they require. VM

NOTES

[1] Last year, the CFE paid out almost Mex$200 billion to 22 private firms, mostly transnationals, with whom it has signed 25-year contracts for the generation of electricity. This is just the payment for the purchase of energy from these private firms. In addition, it had to spend Mex$88 trillion to comply with a contingency clause that commits it to assuming the cost of the risks that could prevent the so-called "independent producers" from fulfilling their contractual obligations. This is, in fact, the reestablishment of the colonial model.

[2] Miguel Alemán Valdés, *La verdad del petróleo en México* (Mexico City: Pemex, 1988), p. 482.

[3] Today, the 500-ton stockpile of separated plutonium is sufficient to make 100 000 nuclear weapons. In 1994, the U.S. Academy of Sciences stated that this material represented a clear danger for national and international security, and since then, no technology has been developed capable of dissolving plutonium, which continues to accumulate as a waste product that puts environmental health, and therefore, human health, at risk.

The Energy Agenda for The 2012-2018 Administration[1]

Rosío Vargas*
Heberto Barrios**

The rumor has been spreading that the legislature will pass a new energy reform soon, perhaps even before December 1, when the new president is slated to take office. That was Enrique Peña Nieto's campaign pledge that made the biggest impact in the foreign media; however, the national political situation and the complexity of the task will make it difficult to implement, above all because no consensus exists about the details.[2]

The programatic proposals disseminated until now call for major surgery: for example, the proposal to make Pemex a government corporation registered on the stock market; the adoption of a regime of concessions for the drilling and pumping of oil, gas, and shale oil and gas; a constitutional reform of Article 27 that, once approved, could immediately be followed with a change in the article's regulatory legislation; and strategic alliances and what is involved in the many "good contracts" signed over by Pemex for oil production, but also to all those activities opened up to private participation.

* Researcher at CISAN.
** Member of the National Committee for Energy Studies.

Top Pemex officials are convinced that the current model has run its course and the company has stopped being a lever for national development, meaning that now is the time to change its status from a public body with no autonomy to one with autonomy.

Manuel Salgado/Cuartoscuro.com

The arguments for changing Pemex' circumstances center, first, on the need to change its fiscal regime to advance with new developments; this is due to the fact that its budget is insufficient for the investments required, which means that the company would have to go into debt to make them. What is more, the contribution of oil revenues to the national budget goes preferentially into day-to-day government operations instead of long-term investments and to pay a debt that has not been reduced; this is why company directors are thinking about a comprehensive financial reform under a new fiscal regime that would levy all kinds of taxes.

A second argument is Pemex's supposed managerial incapability due to a presumed insufficiency that, it is believed, can be overcome with foreign investments and human resources. Top Pemex officials are convinced that the current model has run its course and the company has stopped being a lever for national development, meaning that now is the time to change its status from a public body with no autonomy to one with autonomy.

While Pemex's financial situation is considered "critical," the same is not the case of its prospects for production: the goals set even attempt to reach the maximum oil production levels of 2004 (3.4 million barrels a day). This "optimistic" vision is based on an estimation of oil reserves that would allow for more than 30 years of potential production using all of them.[3]

The official discourse recognizes that cheap oil has come to an end in Mexico. However, the prospects look encouraging in light of all the government projects in the works: fractured deposits; Chicontepec, shale oil and shale gas, deepwater projects, the incorporation of enhanced recovery techniques (improved oil recovery, or IOR, and enhanced oil recovery, or EOR), and heavy and extraheavy crudes. Pemex is investing in the "understanding of the geology" of these projects; its policy is to increase reserves, maintain the production platform, implement secondary and improved recovery systems, advance in developing complexes, seek to be complementary to the private sector in the incentive contracts, and make inroads into new developments. The general aim is to "acquire expertise" to understand the costs.

With fractured deposits, the task is to optimize exploitation management. Chicontepec is another challenge because of its complex geology. The project for drilling shale gas is based on resources that would put Mexico in third place worldwide, and would require huge investments and skilled human resources to exploit them. The prospects for deepwater drilling are framed in a broad potential estimated at 26.5 billion barrels in prospective resources, but there are managerial limitations. The company's success in replacing its reserves, which last year came to 100 percent for proven reserves, has encouraged this optimistic outlook.

The scenario of the decline of oil does not seem to concern company officials. In this sense, we can contrast two mo-

ments in recent oil history. In contrast with the times when the first "diagnostic analysis" was made during the 2008 debate about the energy reform,[4] when the image of oil was in crisis and the depletion of reserves a major factor, today, the vision is far from being catastrophic. What is more, it does not seem to be a concern that peak oil has been reached; what is a concern for company executives is acquiring managerial capabilities to carry out their works projects that would lead to delegating and ceding activities to international corporations, arguing a "lack of knowledge" and "national experience."

In a context of abundant resources, it is logical to establish roads ahead like a policy of accelerated production, even for Cantarell, ensuring this way that the wells will continue to be productive. In that case, there is also no concern about production costs. A palpable example is the case of Chicontepec, where more than 300 wells have been operating producing 6 barrels a day or less than their economic limit, meaning that money is being lost and the programmed production goals are not being met. According to a report by petroleum exports about the explotation of crude in Chicontepec, current production levels do not justify the payments Pemex is making to contractors. Pemex reports Chicontepec as a project that is continually increasing production (up to 11 barrels/day, taking into account the entire productive life of the well), when it is actually operating below its financial limit.[5]

Pemex reports Chicontepec as a project that is continually increasing production (up to 11 barrels/day, taking into account the entire productive life of the well), when it is actually operating below its financial limit.

Shale or Lutite Gas

In this general tone of abundance, the potential for shale or lutite gas has been announced (680 trillion cubic feet). Three wells have been sunk and Pemex has drilling plans for the next 50 years; the goal is 27 000 producing wells. For these to be economically viable, Energy Regulating Commission officials think it necessary to move toward a regime of licensing. The reasons they give, however, are contradictory. On the one hand, they argue that this exploitation does not produce rent, a statement that seems to derive from the associated high production and regulatory costs, since regulations raise the project's total cost by 30 to 40 percent. Nevertheless, this does not mean there can be no oil rent.[6]

The argument that there will be no rent is used to justify the state's withdrawal from investment as well as its monopolistic character, which would lead to introducing competition in this segment, except in transportation and distribution of hydrocarbons, activities considered monopolies. In turn, this justifies the need for constitutional changes for handling shale gas.

The extraction of shale gas is also associated with the "problem of the Dutch disease," that is, with rentism associated with the macroeconomic impact of earnings derived from its being realized in the market. In both cases, the argumentation is questionable, since there is no unavoidable so-called Dutch disease; rather, this seems to support the proposal of a regime of licensing and concessions to private contractors.[7]

Another business option proposed for shale gas is possibly importing it, with the argument that Pemex is not yet prepared to exploit it. This includes the proposal of building pipelines to transport the imported gas, with an estimated annual volume of 6.5 million cubic feet; investments in 600 kilometers of pipelines by 2026 are being analyzed.

The proposal is accompanied by an underground transport system that could be operated by a company like Spain's Unión Fenosa, which would bring together and operate the system to avoid a critical alert. In this case, the businesss would be in the hands of Texans and pipeline builders on Mexico's northern border.

The risks of this energy option include not only the environmental impacts that would result from fracturing the rock and the water being used for the process, but also that this is a new factor that would create dependency for Mexico. Would it not be better to try to recover all the associated or flare gas that is burned in the atmosphere in Mexico's Southeast?

Refining and Petrochemicals

The proposals for these activities are no different from what is currently being done. There has been no promise to acquire refineries abroad given the non-existence of the refineries that Mexico requires, in addition to the possibility that purchasing them could also bring risks. Petrochemicals are only considered as being developed jointly with private companies.

One surprise has been the impetus given the nuclear alternative, in which sizeable investments will be made. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has a budget for the Federal Electricity Commission to invest in this form of energy.

What prevails in the discourse is an effort to underline that the losses accrued to previous bodies were for financial reasons, using virtual figures, not real, operating figures, just like in the case of petrochemicals.[8] There is a clear goal of underlining the deterioration of the company's finances,[9] based on accounting that shows a company that is broke. The aim: to pave the way toward autonomous management, following the paradigm of Petrobras.

Policies and Actions for the Electricity Sector

Many specialists share the position that, for energy security, the ideal is a combination including practically all a country's energy sources, but in Mexico the official proposal includes the majority. While it is difficult to call greater participation of clean energies in the national energy matrix an energy transition, a general evaluation of greater diversification of energy sources makes it possible to see the growing participation of foreign corporations and international bodies in the sector's projects and developments. However, clearly, the process is moving ahead without any strategy, without a comprehensive plan.

What is more, those in charge of implementing it are not specialists in the field, which limits their ways forward and operativity.

Regarding non-fossil-fuel sources, the aim is that their participation increase in total production by 35 percent by 2026.[10] Of that, 28 000 MW will come from wind energy and 20 MW from nuclear power.[11] The Electricity Sector Works and Investments Program (POISE) goal is 2000 MW from clean electricity generation by 2026. To achieve this, the Ministry of Energy (Sener) has three funds:

1) the Conacyt-Sener Hydrocarbon Fund, that aims to create technological solutions based on Pemex's needs for deposits, deepwater, refining, heavy crudes, and environmental contingencies. The proposal is to call on research centers to work on improved recovery and injection technologies;
2) the Conacyt-Sener Sustainability Fund, with has a starting goal of 35 percent in the production of electricity using renewables. Part of it will be used for geothermal activities to achieve a production capacity of 800 MW based on the existing geothermal potential; and
3) the IMP Technological Research and Development Trust.[12]

One surprise has been the impetus given the nuclear alternative, in which sizeable investments will be made. In this sense, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), headquartered in Mexico at the U.S. embassy, has a budget for the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) to invest in this form of energy. Despite the stimulus to green and nuclear energies, fossil fuels will continue to be the main object of the U.S. agency's budget for decades to come. This is reflected in the fact that these resources are preferentially channeled into Pemex rather than the CFE.

The fact that fossil fuel supply is the majority also has to do with the limitations of renewable energy. The aforementioned goal of renewable energy being 35 percent of supply seems difficult to achieve, since greater development is needed to be competitive *vis-à-vis* other energy sources. Here, the ideal would be that financial support not be poured only into training human resources, but into the production with national content of all the equipment and mechanisms needed. This is because it is to be expected that they will be imported from United States and/or Europe, which will leach social sustainability out of green development because it would not create jobs in Mexico nor multiply impacts for national industry. Benefits would continue to go to Spanish and U.S. corporations, which are continuing to join in on electricity generation using renewables, the transportation of liquified natural gas, and possibly shale gas through a pipeline on the northern border.

Energy Transition and Profound Integration

President Barack Obama has fostered the development of clean energies in an attempt to turn his country into a global leader in the field. However, it is difficult to think that this will be sufficient for displacing hydrocarbons in the near future. Clean energy's influence will be a clear factor, however,

based on the investments and the trade in renewable technology that will enter the Mexican market, given Obama's efforts to create jobs in his country. While his visible bet is on renewables, he has not stopped paying attention to strengthening oil drilling on federal lands. The impetus to the production of hydrocarbons in the United States also has an impact on Mexico's strategy.

Pemex's policy favors maximum oil production for export; this can be gleaned both from the production predictions Pemex has presented and from USAID's preferential investments. Mexico continues to emphasize its role as a trustworthy supplier for the United States, and, like Canada, seeks to buttress its partner's energy security.

The basis for Mexico's oil policy design is the U.S. view of the world hydrocarbon situation, particularly concerning changing peak oil to a wavy curve that can be extended for a longer period before the decline of production, based on the existence of abundant non-conventional resources and the development of secondary and tertiary recovery techniques. This will lead to intensive drilling and pumping of Mexico's remaining fossil fuels.

Clearly, U.S. oilmen and companies see the opportunity of benefitting from oil rent, by becoming part of all phases of production and business opportunities. This is why Pemex is being encouraged to transition to a scheme of corporate governance that would allow for issuing stock, opening up to the transnationals through strategic alliances, and concessions to private companies, which would allow them to incorporate our reserves as part of their assets, improving their stock issues and at the same time maximizing the production of Mexico's remaining petroleum.

The strategy is framed in the profound integration taking place in North America, in which its institutions and actors are those who design the policies of our energy companies, reflecting the trilateral agreements among the elites of the three countries of North America after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP).

The North American Competitiveness Council (NACC) has been the body that has generated the concrete proposals for privatizing Pemex and the CFE, deregulating the market, and fostering integration. Among the most important recent objectives are

1) maintaining the security perimeter related to oil reserves and production;

Clearly, U.S. oilmen and companies see the opportunity of benefitting from oil rent, by becoming part of all phases of production and business opportunities.

2) including clean energy, the focus on climate change, together with fostering the mechanism for clean development;
3) strengthening cooperation and encouraging collective security including exploration and extraction of resources;
4) supporting the work to facilitate the flows through the inter-connected network; promoting investment and trade in clean energy technologies; and encouraging electricity interconnectedness, increasing the use of renewables; and
5) bolstering nuclear security in North America by working with the International Atomic Energy Agency on research to convert poor uranium into highly enriched uranium, as agreed at the Washington meet on uranium security in 2010.[13]

The United States organizes its support of its partners according to the strategy of dual bilateralism, which means that it arranges integration with each one separately.[14] The accords reached by President Obama with his two geographical neighbors were a recent example of the importance of this. Canada's prime minister made it clear that he would align with U.S. interests by venturing into the Asian market with his country's oil; at the same time, the United States pressured Mexico to open up its oil sector to private investment, getting Mexico to sign an agreement in February 2012 related to "the development of oil and gas reservoirs that cross the international maritime boundary between the two countries in the Gulf of Mexico."[15]

The assymmetry of the relationship between the two countries and the way in which this agreement was worded led to the supposition that the U.S. oil industry will be in charge of managing the two countries' resources. This completes the scenario that makes it possible to conclude that national energy policy design is the sounding board for the future of North American integration and for U.S. energy policy in particular.

Conclusions

Despite the fact that the country's demand for crude oil can be covered by the production of the Chiapas-Tabasco Mesozoic, shallow water drilling, Ku-Maloob Zaap, and Cantarell, Pemex directors propose big developments that would mean enormous amounts of investment, and, above all, big risks, like those involved in the Chicontepec deposits (also ATG or Tampico Misantla), deepwater deposits, and shale gas.

While there are those who think that the current comprehensive service contracts for exploring and production are sufficient, others promote constitutional changes to Articles 27 and 28 as necessary to achieve a regime of concessions and autonomous management for Pemex.

Mexico's next first executive's agenda is a clear example of the service we Mexicans provide to the interests of the empire, under the auspices of the neoliberal paraphernalia. VM

Notes

[1] One of the most important sources of information for this article was the July 2012 Forum for Energy Strategies held in Mexico City. Among the participants were Rogelio Gasca Neri, professional consultant to Pemex; Édgar Rangel Guzmán, of the National Hydrocarbons Commission; Sergio Guaso Montoya, assistant director of Pemex Business Development, Exploration, and Production; Pemex Director Juan José Suárez Coppel; Juan Carlos Zepeda Molina of the National Hydrocarbons Commission; and Verónica Irastroza Trejo, the vice-minister of energy planning and development of the Ministry of Energy (Sener).

[2] David Shields, "Pemex autónomo," *Reforma* (Mexico City), July 1, 2012.

[3] Juan José Suárez Coppel, "Pemex: situación actual y perspectivas," paper presented at the Expo Foro Pemex 2012, www.pemex.com, July 2012, p. 5.

[4] Sener and Pemex, *Diagnóstico: situación de Pemex. Resumen ejecutivo* (Mexico City: Sener and Pemex, March 2008).

[5] Luis Carriles, "Chicontepec no cubre sus costos. Expertos," http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/finanzas/96503.html, July 24, 2012, accessed July 24, 2012.

[6] High estimated production costs are not enough to conclude that there will be no rent, since this would depend on international gas reference prices (the Henry Hub or Houston Ship Channel price), which Mexico accepts as valid. It would also depend on estimated demand, technology, the investments made, and the availability of the natural resources associated with extraction. The concept of rent that these arguments are based on is limited.

[7] In Mexico, the true causes of rentism have not been pondered, nor have international experiences aimed at sterilizing petrocurrency and channeling earnings into long-term investments, thus sterilizing oil earnings. Brazil's Presal strategy includes measures for avoiding rentism.

[8] It was made clear in the case of refining that of the Mex$79 billion racked up as losses this year, only Mex$12 billion were real operational losses, that is, only 15 percent.

[9] In terms of what have been called "labor liabilities," although the media only talks about pensions and retirement, in reality, they include the annual cost of severance pay for all Pemex's current workers and executives, as well as retirement; that is, they involve getting rid of both active workers and retirees. This is also an item in an accounting system designed for businesses in bankruptcy.

[10] Comisión Federal de Electricidad, *Programa de obras e inversiones del sector eléctrico 2012-2026* (Mexico City: Subdirección de Programación/Coordinación de Planificación, 2012), pp. 2-3.

[11] Ibid., p. D11.

[12] These are sectoral Conacyt-Sener funds. See Sener, Fondos Sectoriales Conacyt–Sener, http://www.sener.gob.mx/portal/Default.aspx?id=1442, accessed August 13, 2012.

[13] http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/02/joint-statement-north-american-leaders, accessed July 15, 2012.

[14] Gabriel Dana, "The North American Leaders Summit and Reviving Trilateral Integration," Infowars.com, http://www.infowars.com/the-north-american-leaders-summit-and-reviving-trilateral-integration, accessed July 15, 2012.

[15] Gabriel Dana, "NAFTA Partners Take Steps to Boost Trilateral Relationship," April 9, 2012, http://beyourownleader.blogspot.mx/2012/04/nafta-partners-take-steps-to-boost_09.html, accessed July 15, 2012.

Mexico and the Biofuel Challenge
A Critical Balance Sheet

Gian Carlo Delgado Ramos*

In the face of the widely recognized phenomenon of man-made climate change[1] and in a context in which easily accessible oil reserves are beginning to peak,[2] energy security is today of major importance for the future. Considering the impact of the transportation sector on the climate, but also on the quality of the air, among other socio-environmental and energy security issues, not only the use of technologies to increase energy efficiency, but also new —in principle more sustainable— forms of fuel have been proposed as an alternative: biofuels.

Ognen Teofilovski/ REUTERS

A Ministry of Energy report concluded that "in all cases the production costs of biodiesel are higher than the opportunity cost of the diesel sold by Pemex."

This is an important pledge, above all if we consider that the transportation sector was responsible in 2009 for consuming 96 exajoules of energy, almost all of it fossil fuels. In addition, the tendency for the world's vehicular fleet to expand cannot be ignored: it will go from 1.2 billion to 2.6 billion units in 2050.[3] This undoubtedly complicates the sphere of action for reducing net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions given that, even considering increased vehicular fuel efficiency, the tendency for generating emissions associated with the transportation sector points to an increase: 50 percent more by 2030 and 80 percent more by 2050, in the best of cases, since they could increase by 130 percent by 2050.[4]

Given that it is taken for granted that biofuels emit less GHG, they have been put forward as a potential solution. This notion, however, has been widely questioned not only in terms of the amount of energy required to produce them (ethanol or biodiesel), but also regarding the emissions associated with their life cycle, from production all the way to distribution and combustion. Other problems are also pointed to like competition for the land and water for producing food versus biofuels and the stimulus to the change in soil use to the detriment of ecosystems, which would bring with it the loss of the ability to capture carbon, among other consequences.

Even taking into account the impetus given to biofuels (for example, in the framework of the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative, launched at the Rio + 20 meeting), their potential is limited from the perspective of their contribution to the global energy matrix. It has been estimated that the maximum potential could be 20 to 30 percent of all liquid fuels utilized by the transportation sector.[5] In 2010, biofuels only represented 2.7 percent of the total.[6] In 2010, ethanol production reached 86 billion liters, 17 percent more than in 2009. Production was cornered by the United States (57 percent) and Brazil (31 percent), with the gap between these two countries increasingly widening and clearly reversing the ratio that existed between them just a few years ago when Brazil was the world's largest producer. Biodiesel production, on the other hand, although it has increased 24-fold since 2000, has plateaued in recent years, and in 2010 came to 19 billion liters. The world's top 10 producers accounted for 75 percent of production in 2010: the European Union led with 53 percent of the total, while Asia (above all Indonesia and Thailand) represented 12 percent.[7] Particularly important were Germany, which produced 2.9 billion liters (BL); Brazil, with 2.3 BL; and Argentina, with 2.1 BL.

The Impetus of Biofuels Worldwide

The impetus biofuels are experiencing is particularly derived from the implementation of different initiatives and regulations worldwide, mostly to satisfy the demand of U.S. and European automobile drivers. The European Union, for example, has stipulated that 10 percent of fuel used by its transportation sector in 2020 would be biofuel. South Africa did

*Researcher at the UNAM Center for Interdisciplinary Research in the Sciences and Humanities (CEIICH), giandelgado@gmail.com.

something similar, setting its goal at 2 percent. The United States decided it would produce 136 BL of biofuel by 2022, and China set a goal of 13 BL of ethanol and 2.3 BL of biodiesel per year until 2020.[8] The ethanol/gasoline ratios vary from country to country, since, while in Finland it is E6 (6 percent), in Ethiopia, it is E10. The same is the case of biodiesel, where the mixes are B3 and B5 in Thailand, while in Spain they are B6, with the expectation of reaching B7 in 2012.[9]

According to the Renewable Policy Network for the Twenty-first Century (Ren21), by the end of 2010, 31 national initiatives, 29 state or provincial initiatives, and 19 national tax-break schemes had been identified.[10] Total subsidies to ethanol production per liter of fossil fuel replaced are estimated between US$1.00 and US$1.40 in the United States, and US$1.64 and US$4.98 in the European Union. For biodiesel, they range from US$0.66 to US$0.90 in the United States and from US$0.77 to US$1.53 in the European Union.[11]

Added to these measures are the actions and lobbying efforts of the Global Bioenergy Partnership and the World Bank loan packages,[12] as well as packages from similar banks in Latin America (Inter-American Development Bank, or IDB), Asia (the Asian Development Bank, or ADB), and Africa (African Development Bank, or AFDB). The IDB, for example, has opened up a line of credit for more than US$3 billion, mostly channeled through its Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Initiative (SECCI).[13]

Biofuels in Mexico

The Ministry of Energy, with support from the IDB and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), asked to evaluate the viability of the production and use of biofuels in the transportation sector. The result was a report, "Potenciales y viabilidad del uso de bioetanol y biodiesel para el transporte en México (Potential and Viability of the Use of Bioethanol and Biodiesel for Transport in Mexico), which concluded that sugarcane is the most promising crop for ethanol production in the short term.[14] After studying different inputs for biodiesel, the report concluded that "in all cases the production costs of biodiesel are higher than the opportunity cost of the diesel sold by Pemex."[15] And it added that, in any case, the most competitive crops given the country's conditions are palm trees, sunflowers, and soy beans.

Taking into consideration this background information and these assessments, the Chamber of Deputies passed

To cover one-fifth of the Valley of Mexico's gasoline consumption with ethanol made from sugarcane, about half the area's territory and the entire natural water supply would have to be used.

the Law to Promote and Develop Biofuels (LPDB) on April 26, 2007. After several changes, this law created a Biofuels Commission, a Program to Introduce Biofuels, and Sectoral and Annual Programs regarding the production, storage, transportation, distribution, commercialization, and efficient use of biofuels.[16] It should be pointed out that until now, most of the commercial ventures have involved sugarcane and palm production, the former cultivated mostly in Veracruz, and the latter, in Chiapas.

In Mexico, estimates put the technical potential for land that could be planted with sugarcane at 2.9 million hectares, almost four times what is currently under cultivation.[17] In terms of the irrigated land that could potentially be used to plant sugarcane to make biofuels, which would have higher yields, the estimate is about 1.2 million hectares.[18] The biggest difficulty is the limited processing capacity, since, until today, only two plantations, La Gloria and San Nicolás, both in Veracurz, have the technology to make ethanol. To this should be added the regulatory protection of the sugar industry that analysts consider makes the production of ethanol unviable.[19]

And, despite this regulatory framework, the stakeholders in the biofuel business, or those who might be interested in being in it, have said that the concrete actions needed to implement research results on an industrial scale, as well as the productive projects themselves, continue to be relatively limited, to a great extent because government financial support is practically non-existent.

Added to this are strong criticisms, above all related to biofuels' potential impacts on the environment and the demand for land and water, among other things. Others point out that the idea of sparking rural development by fostering biofuels is wrong, because what should be focused on is sustainable production of basic foods for reasons both of food security and food sovereignty. While the production of food can be based on the population's general well-being, biofuels, in contrast, benefit in fact mainly private consumers, whether national or foreign (if they are exported).

Biodiesel made of palm oil is part of the aforementioned scenario, plus the fact that the country only produces 0.1 percent of the world's palm oil, and that, according to the National Association of Oil and Edible Lard Industrialists, our country has increased its dependence on the international vegetable oil market.[20] Our imports of palm oil represent 1 percent of the world's total. This, among other reasons, indicates that betting on this fuel is highly questionable and, for the moment, unviable on a large scale for reasons similar to those stated with regard to ethanol, and above all, given the intensive use of palm oil by the food processing industry.

Water and Land: Key Limitations On Biofuel Use in Mexico in 2025

The consumption of liquid fuels in Mexico has increased and, according to the Sener, gasoline consumption is expected to rise 57 percent, and diesel, 43 percent, by 2025.[21] This means that any use of ethanol and biodiesel would have to increase to be significant, at least in terms of climate change mitigation. In the framework of the research project titled "Socio-ecological Viability of the Use of Biofuels: a Review of the Country's Ground Transport Sector," coordinated by this author, estimates were made concluding that the implementation on a national level of an E10 mix (a mix of 10 percent) would require using 3.2 percent of all the country's cultivable land to grow sugarcane.

Assuming an approximately 32-percent increase in crop yield, as Sagarpa suggests, the same mix in 2025 would require 3.9 percent of the country's cultivable land. However, considering the crop's characteristics, estimates of potential cultivable land limit the area to no more than 2.9 million hectares, of which only 1.2 million can be irrigated. Considering that the yields for un-irrigated crops are between 60 and 64 tons per hectare, planting 1.7 million un-irrigated hectares would cover a maximum mix of E11 in 2025. To the contrary, planting 1.2 million irrigated hectares, which could well expect yields of 100 tons per hectare, would be sufficient for an E12 mix; this means that the entire potential for sugarcane crops in the country would barely displace 23 percent of the gasoline demand in 2025.

The idea of using biofuels in the country based on first-generation technologies is extremely limited in the best of cases, essentially due to their intensive use of land and water.

The same estimate for the Valley of Mexico Metropolitan Area (ZMVM) shows that an E20 mix for 2025 would require an equivalent of 44 percent of the area's land surface to be planted if yields per hectare increased. This is the dimension of the demand for land of an energy vector like ethanol. With regard to water, the cost of ethanol is clearly high; suffice it to say that the natural availability of water in the ZMVM is about 4 224 gigaliters, which means that with that amount, an E20 mix would barely cover the city's requirements, but it would be slightly short —5 percent— for that mixture in 2025. In other words, to cover one-fifth of ZMVM's gasoline consumption with ethanol made from sugarcane, about half the area's territory and the entire natural water supply would have to be used. Of course, this argument is only for comparative purposes, since it is clear that the concrete impacts will occur in the sugarcane-producing regions where disputes over land and water use could well arise or intensify.

With regard to the production of biodiesel made from palm oil, the results obtained suggest that if current national palm output were all used to make biodiesel, leaving nothing for the food industry, it would only be enough to cover a B11 mix for the ZMVM, since nationally it would not even represent 1 percent of the mix. To achieve a national B5 mix, the land planted with oil palms would have to increase six fold, thus sharpening the demand for land and water. The amount of water required for a B7 mix nationwide would be the equivalent of all the natural water available for the entire ZMVM.

The current yield of oil palms per hectare is low, but it is estimated that it will double by 2025, reaching standards like those in Asia's main palm producing countries. This explains the fact that the projections for 2025 register an increase in the water footprint, while land surface is reduced practically a third. Nevertheless, if this yield scenario is not achieved, the demand for land would increase, although certainly face important limits given other uses for the land, including conservation or ecological balance. This is exactly what has occurred in the world's most important palm-oil producing countries, and is also already starting in Mexico because it is becoming a threat in areas of high biodiversity in Chiapas.

Given all this, the surface area required for a national B20 mix would be the equivalent of the entire area of the states of

The alternatives for mitigating climate change in Mexico include reducing energy waste, developing solar energy, long-term planning of soil use, conserving biodiversity, recovering rivers and soil, improving waste management, and reformulating the regional and national urban transportation system.

Tlaxcala and Morelos combined. However, if yield/hectare remains completely unchanged, that surface area would double, that is, it would be the equivalent of the states of Querétaro, Morelos, and Mexico City's Federal District together. What is more, if European Union data are correct in the sense that the total emissions associated with first generation biofuels' life cycle are higher than expected —particularly palm, soy, and rapeseed oil create more emissions than petroleum (105-95gr of CO_2e/Mj *versus* 87.5gr of CO_2e/Mj)—, emissions savings in Mexico would be non-existent.[22] On the contrary, they would be more polluting the higher the mix level.

We can conclude, then, that the idea of using biofuels in the country based on first-generation technologies is extremely limited in the best of cases, essentially due to their intensive use of land and water. The potential for biofuels, in the best of cases, then, would only displace 20 percent of gasoline with sugarcane ethanol (the maximum mixture that conventional gasoline engines can use) and not more than 5 percent of diesel with palm-oil-based biodiesel. Naturally, other kinds of inputs can be added that would, however, also have to compete not only for land, but for water.

The possible emissions savings —only in the case of ethanol, since in the case of biodiesel, it would actually be the reverse— does not seem in and of itself to be something that would justify the enormity of the gamble. Neither is the supposed reactivation of the Mexican countryside, since it is a badly focused measure. This is not only because of the kinds of inputs required for producing biofuels and since they are a long way from any attempt at guaranteeing food security in the context of climate change, but also because of the agro-industrial form of cultivation, which, far from favoring the peasantry, tends to benefit big producers.

So, the proposal to use biofuels in Mexico, more than creating clear benefits, presents a negative balance sheet that spreads the impact, complicating it, since it is not limited to the atmospheric and the socio-environmental costs that the oil industry creates. It also involves the use and abuse of water and soil in the sphere of rural production, the potential loss of biodiversity, and the relative erosion of security and food sovereignty.

The alternatives for mitigating climate change in Mexico seem clearer and more justified. They include actions like reducing energy waste (efficiency); developing solar energy, above all thermal; long-term planning of soil use; conserving biodiversity; recovering rivers and soil; improving waste management; and reformulating the regional and national urban transportation system, among other issues associated with reducing the vulnerability of peoples and, therefore, of socio-economic inequalities. VM

Further Reading

Edenhofer, Ottmar, Ramón Pichs-Madruga, Youba Sokona, *et al.*, eds., *Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation. Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,* IPCC, Cambridge University Press, 2012, http://srren.ipcc-wg3.de/report.

Notes

[1] S. Solomon, D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, et al., eds., "Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change," *AR4-Climate Change 2007, The Physical Science Basis*, IPCC, 2007, http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_ipcc_fourth_assessment_report_wg1_report_the_physical_science_basis.htm.

[2] See www.aspousa.org.

[3] See UN-Habitat, 2011, http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=9, p. 42.

[4] IEA (International Energy Agency), *World Energy Outlook 2009*, Paris, pp. 29, 43.

[5] Eugenio Sanhueza, "Agroetanol ¿un combustible ambientalmente amigable?" *Interciencia* vol. 2, no. 34, Caracas, 2009, pp. 106-112.

[6] Ren21, *Renewables 2011. Global Status Report* (Paris: Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century, 2011), p. 31.

[7] Ibid., p. 32.

[8] Ibid., p. 60.

[9] In this nomenclature, "E" stands for "ethanol" and "B" for "biodiesel," while the numbers refer to the percent biofuel represents in the biofuel-fossil-fuel mix.

[10] Ren21, op. cit., p. 61.

[11] Ibid., p. 38.

[12] See Garten Rothkopf, *A Blueprint for Green Energy in the Americas. Featuring: The Global Biofuels Outlook 2007* (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, 2006), and Elizabeth Cushion, Adrian Whiteman, and Gerhard Dieterle, *Bioenergy Development* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2010).

[13] Masami Kojima and Todd Johnson, *Potential for Biofuels for Transport in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme/World Bank, 2005).
[14] Sener/GTZ/BID, *Potenciales y viabilidad del uso de bioetanol y biodiesel para el transporte en México*, Proyectos ME-T1007-ATN/DO-9375-ME and PN04.2148.7-001.00, Mexico City, 2006, p. 8.
[15] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[16] See "Ley de Promoción y Desarrollo de los Bioenergéticos" (LPDB), 2008, www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LPDB.pdf.
[17] INE, *Análisis integrado de las tecnologías, el ciclo de vida y la sustentabilidad de las opciones y escenarios para el aprovechamiento de la bioenergía en México* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2008), p. 16.
[18] Sagarpa, *Bases técnicas para el fomento a la producción de biocombustibles en el país a partir de caña de azúcar* (Mexico City: Sagarpa, 2010), p. 66.
[19] Ibid., p. 116.
[20] ANIAME, *La palma de aceite en el sureste mexicano*, Reportaje/Métodos Globales Respuestas Locales/Asociación Nacional de Industriales de Aceites y Mantecas Comestibles, A. C., Mexico City, 2006, http://portal.aniame.com/uploads/palmadeaceiteenelsure_61a49_001.pdf, p. 2.
[21] Sener, *Prospectiva de petrolíferos 2010-2025* (Mexico City: Gobierno Federal, 2010).
[22] EurActiv, "Biodiesels Pollute More than Crude Oil, Leaked Data Show," EurActiv, January 27, 2012.

The Mexican Electricity Sector

Francisco Carrillo Soberón*
Mario Galicia Yépez*

Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution states "it is a function exclusively of the Nation to generate, manage, transform, distribute, and supply electric power whose aim is to be a public service." However, a lower law, like the Public Service Energy Law, contradicts the spirit of the Constitution, stating in its Article 3 that, "The following are not considered public services . . . II. The generation of electrical energy by independent producers for its sale to the Federal Electricity Commission." This addition to the law has allowed recent administrations to substantially increase the activities of independent energy producers. During the administration of Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, that participation increased from 59.43 terawatt hours (TWh) in 2006 to 84.26 TWh in 2011; this last figure represents 33.1 percent of the country's total electricity generation, excluding co-generators and self-generators.

It is noteworthy that the increase in private participation not only represents a deterioration of national sovereignty, but also creates operational problems, like the loss of flexibility in economical power generation dispatch, plus economic problems, since it pushes up costs for financing investment in electricity infrastructure.

The purchase of energy from foreign companies under the heading of "independent energy and self-supply producers" is a covert privatization of the electricity system. Public policy designers forgot to ask the operator of a national central dispatch control center what would happen to the electricity produced by private plants that the national grid did not re-

Alfredo Guerrero/Cuartoscuro.com

*Coordinators of the National Energy Studies Committee.

ceive at times of low consumption. The law includes a clause according to which "the concessionaire will assure the sale of all electricity produced during the period the concession lasts to the CFE, whether that energy is required or not." This means that generation in Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) plants will drop to favor private investors because some economists decided that "the investment risk would be assumed by the state." What is more, a technical audit of the hydroelectric plants in Mexico's Southeast would show the relationship this has to cyclical floods in Tabasco.

Electricity Service Coverage

Article 5 of the law that created the CFE, passed August 14, 1937, states that the commission's objective shall be to organize and direct the national system of generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity based on technical and economic principles, without seeking a profit, and with the aim of attaining the greatest yield possible to the benefit of the general interest at a minimum cost.

The Electricity Public Service Law, published in the *Diario oficial de la federación* (Official Gazette) on December 22, 1975, repeals the 1937 law, but does not directly contradict the CFE's mission as originally stated. For that reason, the commission has attempted to plan for increasing the percentage of the population with access to electricity, despite the technical and financial effort involved in supplying the rural sector, which is very disperse nationwide. So, between 2002 and 2006, the percentage of the population with electricity went from 95 percent to 97 percent, an average annual growth rate of 0.52 percent. By contrast, the average annual growth from 2007 to 2011 was only 0.07 percent; this indicates a marked disinterest on the part of the federal government in improving the living conditions of the lowest income sectors of the population.

About Renewable Energy

While the government's 2007-2012 Sectoral Energy Program did not commit to achieving a goal commensurate with its total capacity, it did set a 2-percent-of-total-capacity goal for public service, wind-generated electricity. However, the current state of affairs is 1 percent, with the added disadvantage that 86 percent of the existing wind-generating capacity is in private hands. This means that the government has retreated from its responsibility of fostering renewable fuels.

> The purchase of energy from foreign companies under the heading of "independent energy and self-supply producers" is a covert privatization of the electricity system.

But, also, in frank contradiction to the benefits of using renewables, it has granted licenses to generate electricity for export using renewable energy; today, 300 MW are already in operation. This leaves the pollution in our country and does not contribute to replacing the fossil fuels currently being used in the national electricity sector.

Workers in the Electricity Sector

The forcible take-over of the installations of Luz y Fuerza del Centro (Light and Electricity of Central Mexico, or LFC) by the army in order to dissolve the company and fire the workers is a violation of the Constitution and of several pieces of secondary legislation, with unprecedented disregard for the labor rights of the company's 44 000 workers and 22 000 retirees.

Calderón's arguments about the LFC's costing the country enormous amounts because of high operating costs are full of distortions and are part of an entire scenario prepared beforehand to justify the liquidation of the union, a manifest opponent to his privatizing policies. This can be understood from a broader perspective if we look at the mechanisms for integrating the electricity industry, nationalized in 1960: the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) administrations staged a strategy to eliminate any kind of progressive unionism in this strategic sector.

The majority of what were called LFC's operating deficits can be explained by the fact that it was prevented from increasing the size of its electricity-generating installations. This forced it to purchase all the energy it distributed from the CFE at prices that not only did not allow it to make a profit, but actually caused it to incur losses. That is, the prices charged by the CFE to the LFC were higher than what the LFC could charge its customers, particularly for medium- and high-tension services.

It was absolutely necessary to fight the corruption of some of the high officials of the LFC. However, the government

never did that; quite to the contrary, it allowed those practices to grow. Later, it used this as an argument to justify to the public the elimination of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME). But the result was that it also eliminated highly skilled labor. All of the work, from planning the electric public service, designing the works and installations, and the supply of different inputs (transmission towers, substation structures, grid management measuring and control panels, iron fittings for distribution, prefabricated pieces of buildings, and many others) to works for expanding the company, was done by LFC workers, with entirely Mexican engineering and highly skilled technicians trained for these jobs.

The LFC installed a fiber optic network —all the work was done by members of the SME— that was needed for internal communications in the company and for remote control of different installations and substations. However, all this technology also had the capability of offering other audio and video services; this sparked the ambitions of the media monopolies, which saw the SME as a formidable opponent to their intentions to exploit this public good for their own private benefit. Through the company Totalplay, the TV Azteca network is enjoying juicy licenses for its private benefit.

The cost of the dissolution of the LFC in patrimony and money for the nation has been very high if we take into consideration all of its effects: generating plants paralyzed, industrial facilities neglected or completely destroyed, buildings torn down, the loss of technical and historical archives, and the waste of workers' experience and operational know-how as well as of engineering and national technology, just to name a few.

The SME's demands include the possibility of an eventual re-creation of a public company to replace the old LFC or that the workers be re-hired by the CFE as their substitute employer, where they would seek to recover the most possible of the LFC's nationalist traditions. However, the government fears that the Single Electricity Workers Union of the Mexican Republic (SUTERM), which organizes CFE workers, would be contaminated by SME workers' democratic, critical, combative habits. That fear —if not panic— is shared by the SUTERM leadership, who is pressuring against this completely legal solution to the conflict, as proposed by the SME.

Today the CFE is operating in LFC facilities using another unconstitutional, illegal concept, that of the "free loan," which is not applicable for a good which has been deemed part of the nation's strategic patrimony. It is doing this after coming to an agreement with the Management and Alienation of Goods Service (SAE), part of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) and the depository of all the LFC's goods and obligations. The CFE uses this as an argument before the Labor Relations Boards to reject the proposal of being a substitute employer for the workers in resistance.

> It was absolutely necessary to fight the corruption of some of the high officials of the LFC. However, the government never did that; quite to the contrary, it allowed those practices to grow.

The Necaxa Hydroelectric Plant

The dissolution of the LFC brought with it the abandonment of the Necaxa hydroelectric plant in the state of Puebla. This meant that one of the works that was part of Mexico's historic industrial heritage was interrupted. Its importance is not its generation capacity, which only comes to 112 MW, but its historic significance: the challenge it represented in terms of both engineering and construction.

In its time, 1906, the work required design solutions that stretched its resources to the limit. It also demanded high levels of technical perfection by the more than 10 000 workers who built it; almost all the workers came from neighboring towns. Also, the cost was considerable. In addition to the US$17 million spent on the hydroelectric plant itself, we must add the several towns that disappeared under water when the dam was put into operation.

The architectural value, the singularity of the engineering, and the human cost should be, in and of themselves, sufficient for preserving the Necaxa plant as part of the nation's industrial heritage. But, if more arguments are needed, we should remember the social value the plant has for the community of Nuevo Necaxa, as well as surrounding towns. All of them depend economically on the work done in operating the plant.

The dams that received water from the Necaxa Dam have also been affected, and with them, aquaculture activities in the region have declined; since operations have not continued, environmental damage in the form of dropping water levels and contamination of the dams occurs. Tourism has also been hard hit by the ecological deterioration of the area. In short,

the situation unleashed by the dissolution of the LFC in the Necaxa region not only contravenes the promises made by Felipe Calderón during his presidential campaign, among them job creation and the promotion of regional economic development, but have also complicated living conditions for Necaxa residents.

Among the threats to Necaxa are the following:

1) *Risks due to inappropriate operation of the electricity system*. Irreparable damage to the hydraulic infrastructure; economic losses due to lack of regulated, on-going generation of electricity; in addition to the severe or irreparable damage to electrical and mechanical equipment because of lack of maintenance.
2) *Damage to the environment, society, and the economy*. The change in the operation of the hydroelectric plant and the lack of regulation during the rainy season could result in an unmanageable flow of water, with the consequent damage both to neighboring communities and to environmental resources in the case of flooding.
3) *LFC land being taken over or usurped by outsiders*.
4) *Indirect effects on the region's residents*.

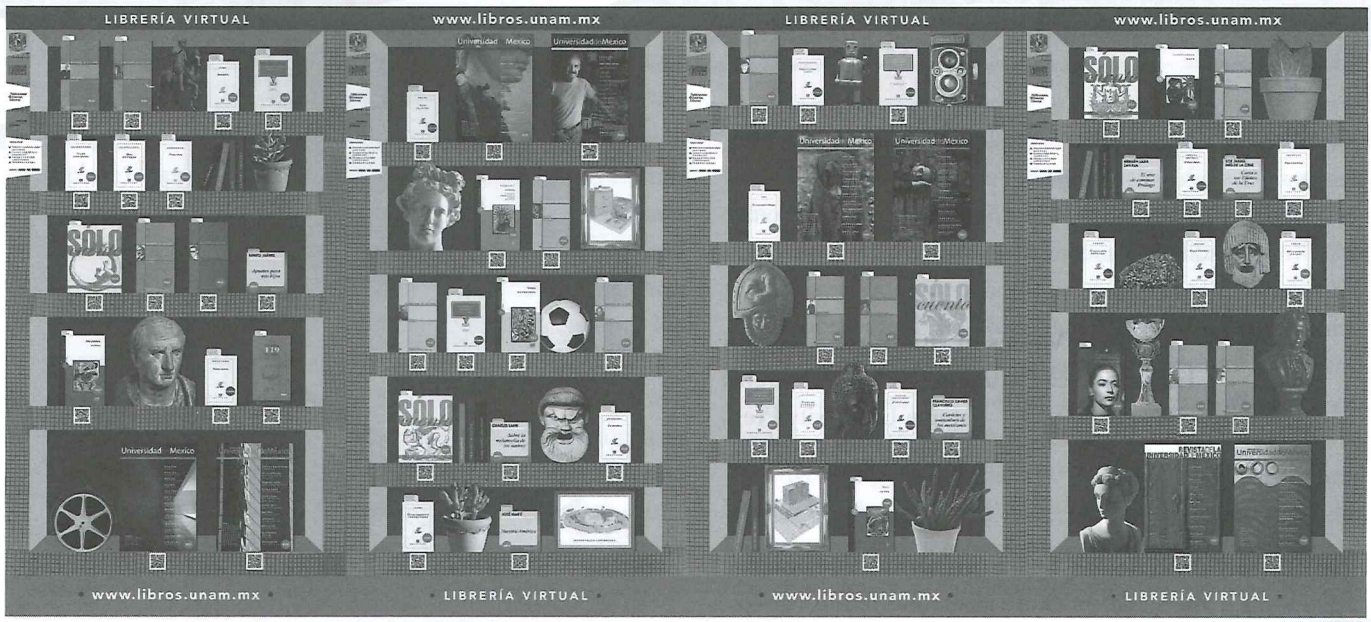
> The architectural value, the singularity of the engineering, and the human cost should be, in and of themselves, sufficient for preserving the Necaxa plant as part of the nation's industrial heritage.

The operation of the Necaxa hydro-electric system is not only necessary for the good of the communities surrounding it, but is also affordable thanks to the great experience of its workers. Rehabilitating the generators would be a much more prudent solution than abandoning them. VM

Publicaciones & Fomento Editorial

¡Conoce nuestra librería virtual!

www.libros.unam.mx



La Dirección General de Publicaciones y Fomento Editorial lanza la primera librería virtual que contiene 60 títulos que los estudiantes y la comunidad universitaria podrán descargar de manera gratuita en sus dispositivos móviles, escaneando el código QR de la obra que elijan, ya sea archivos e.pub., pdf y mp3 y disfrutarla en minutos.

Y por supuesto, tenemos un amplio acervo de nuestras publicaciones impresas en

Jaime García Terrés
Av. Universidad núm. 3000
Ciudad Universitaria
C. P. 04510, México, D. F.
Tel. (55)5616 1286 / (55)5622 2406
Lib_jgt@libros.unam.mx

Palacio de Minería*
Tacuba núm. 5
Col. Centro, C. P. 06000
México, D. F.
Tels. (55)5518 1315 / (55)5512 8094 (fax)
lib_mineria@libros.unam.mx

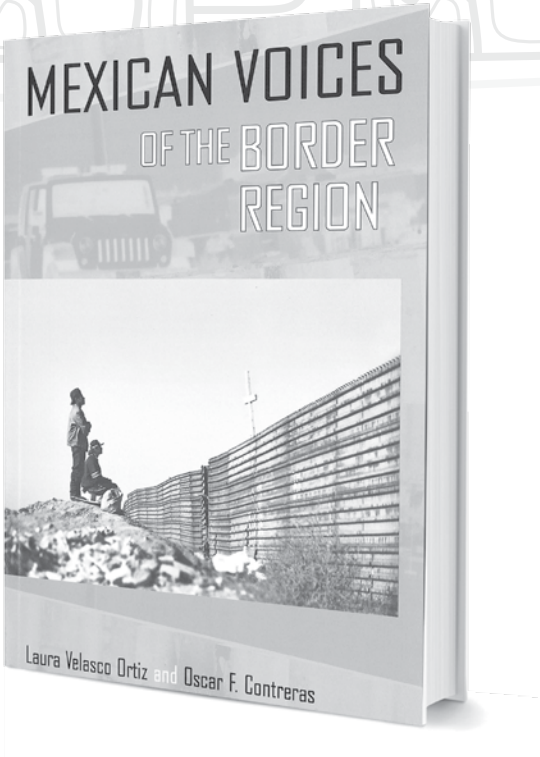
Un Paseo por los Libros
Pasaje Zócalo-Pino Suárez, local 28
Col. Centro, C. P. 06000, México, D. F.
Tel. (55)5542 2548
lib_zocalo@libros.unam.mx

Casa Universitaria del Libro
Orizaba y Puebla, Col. Roma
C. P. 06700, México, D. F.
Tel. (55)5207 1787
lib_casul@libros.unam.mx

Henrique González Casanova
Corredor Zona Comercial
Ciudad Universitaria
C. P. 04510, México, D. F.
Tels. (55)5622 0271 / (55)5622 0276
lib_hgc@libros.unam.mx

Librería Casa de las Humanidades
Pdte. Carranza núm. 162
casi esquina con calle Tres Cruces
Col. Del Carmen
Coyoacán, C. P. 04000, México, D. F.
Tels. (55)5554 8513 / (55)5554 5579
lib_coyoacan@libros.unam.mx

* Abierta los 365 días del año.



Mexican Voices of the Border Region
Laura Velasco Ortiz and Óscar F. Contreras
Temple University Press
Philadelphia, 2011, 238 pp.

In the spring of 2012, while conducting my own ethnographic fieldwork in the border cities of Tijuana and Tecate, Mexico. I began to read Laura Velasco Ortiz and Óscar F. Contreras's book *Mexican Voices of the Border Region*. It gave me excellent examples and a privileged window into the diverse topography of the Mexican borderlands experience. Even though my own U.S. deportee story direction moved into a different arena than their book, their work became an important asset for thinking and writing about the border as a diverse, complex, changing place. The book that Velasco and Contreras write for us depicts the border as one where people both produce and are products of their ability to cross the border wall into the U.S. "The border constitutes a force for differentiation and social hierarchization" (p. 16). For Velasco and Contreras, the ability to cross the border is a source of stratification and differentiation along the lines of the superior Human and the inferior human, theoretically and empirically proving it constitutes a source of social cultural power for those who manage to get into the United States. Furthermore, they contribute greatly to the critical borders studies project by depicting the border as a diverse, non-static, ever-changing unnatural space. They allow subjects the power of enunciation from the bottom up; the voice of the individual is never lost in theory. More importantly the book details cases of internal migration within Mexico, the story that let us step away from the hegemonic idea that everyone in Mexico wants to cross the border into the United States. Furthermore, the book also contributes to the demystification and deconstruction of the "American Dream" myth, a story that is no longer just an American Dream but part of the Mexican new urban dream, a hybrid of the "American Dream," enmeshed in the United States' mass consumerism cult and the hyper-modernity of Mexican border cities.

The individual stories presented in the *Mexican Voices of the Border Region* provide a critical analysis by offering the reader an insight into the lives and experiences of real, ordinary people who struggle and live in the borderlands of both Mexico and the United States. The multi-thematic, over-190-page book revolves around one main argument: the diversity of experiences of people near the border. It does a good job of representing the experiences of internal immigrants within Mexico given its uneven regional development between the North and South. The first five chapters touch on the Mexican side of the story: the border never crossed. Velasco and Contreras write about the experiences of Mexican internal migrants looking for work and a better future inside the Mexican northern agricultural frontier. Then they delve into a series of thematic chapters that speak to the urban maquiladora

system experience in Tijuana ("Home Sweet Industrial Home") as female workers struggle to support their families. Chapter Three, "Sex without Kisses, Love with Abuse," speaks to sexual exploitation and women along the sexual border. Velasco and Contreras let the experiences of individuals speak about the role of the state and institutions by writing from the perspective of people's everyday life experiences. Chapter Four, "A Straight-Dealing Drug Trafficker," and Chapter Five, "An Indigenous Woman Street Vendor," articulate the border as a place of opportunities for individuals who are not successfully integrated into the legal job market. Chapter Six, "A Caregiver Commuter," Chapter Seven, "A Border Acrobat," and Chapter Eight, "The Mexican Panther," show how the border is a source of connectivity and economic interdependence between the U.S. and Mexico. Finally, Chapters Nine and Ten present the story of the border crossed, from the perspective of Mexican-Americans protecting and seeking the "American Dream." Chapter Nine, "A Young Mexican American," and Chapter Ten, "Guarding the American Dream," offer a critical understanding of the hegemonic myths supporting the idea of the United States as the land of opportunities.

Mexican Voices of the Border Region has a few minor shortcomings. First, Chapter Nine, "A Young Mexican American," is less developed than the other sections of the book, and reads as an appendage somewhat at odds with the rich analytical detail of the rest of it. The internal colonial subject concept would better explain the position of Mexican-Americans inside the U.S. empire. *Mexican Voices of the Border Region* contributes to a more critical cultural, geographic, and economic understanding of the border. Drawing on the power of critical ethnography, Velasco and Contreras produce a good sample of how to conduct and write critical ethnographic case studies. They tell the stories of everyday people without falling into the individual reductionist arguments that lead other researchers into stereotyping.

Velasco and Contreras give the individual the agency to speak that places *Mexican Voices of the Border Region* in a dialogue with a broad, disparate range of contemporary literature dealing with critical border studies and ethnic studies in the United States. The book could be expanded to include related issues, such as Wendy Brown's 2010 analysis of border securitization in *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*,[1] Trevor Paglen's 2009 research into the undercover sides of the U.S. military-industrial complex in *Blank Spots on the Map*, or, more generally, geographer Derek Gregory's body of work on urban militarism. Nevertheless, Velasco and Contreras provide

The stories presented in this book provide a critical analysis by offering an insight into the lives and experiences of real, ordinary people who struggle and live in the borderlands of both countries.

multiple empirical examples that complement theoretical limitations by connecting the individual story of immigrants and minorities' marginalization within the urban space of the U.S. and Western Europe. See for instance, Balibar's 2007 "Uprising in the Banlieues"[2] or Kipfer and Goonewardena's 2005 "Colonization and the New Imperialism: On the Meaning of Urbicide Today."[3] Read in tandem with these books and articles, *Mexican Voices of the Border Region* would be extremely useful for someone seeking to put a human face to the effects of global capitalism, migrations, and the military industrial complex. Read alone, the book provides an excellent introduction to everyday life on the border and is a key contemporary depiction dealing with these themes. It is an excellent tool for geographers as well as ethnic studies, area studies, and cultural studies programs. Velasco and Contreras allow the reader to make up his/her own mind and make his/her own assumptions. It is a bottom-up approach to social science and a great addition to anyone looking for an introduction to everyday life in the borderlands. VM

Ramón Quintero
Bio??

Further Reading

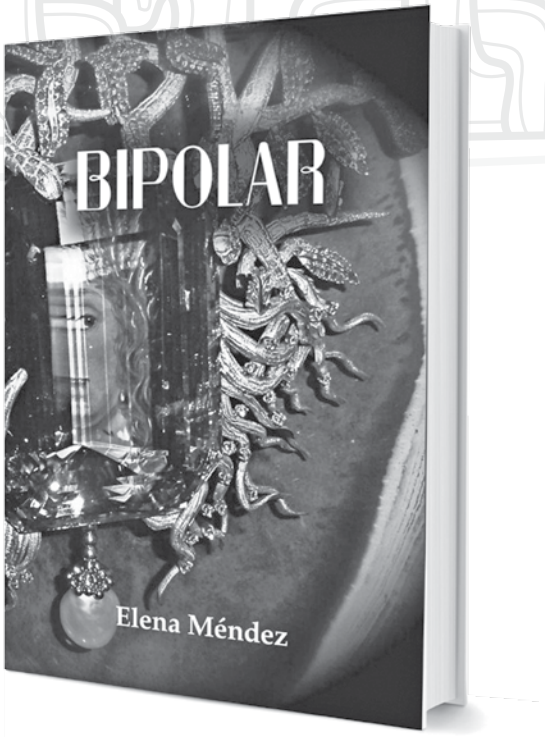
Graham, S., and S. Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London: Routledge, 2001).

Notes

[1] W. Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (Brooklyn, New York: Zone, 2010).

[2] É. Balibar, "Uprisings in the Banlieues," *Constellations* vol. 14, no. 1, 2007, pp. 47-71.

[3] S. Kipfer and K. Goonewardena, "Colonization and the New Imperialism: On the Meaning of Urbicide Today," *Theory and Event* vol. 10, no. 2, 2005.



Bipolar[1]
Elena Méndez
Linajes Editores
Mexico City, 2011, 86 pp.

"Bipolar, you say, because I say I
hate you and I love you?
Well, what will you say when I kill
you and then revive you?"
Belisa Bartra[2]

Ricardo Piglia says in his theses about the short story that this genre always consists of two stories because they are one inside another, secret one, which constitutes the key to its form. "The short story is constructed to make something that was hidden appear artificially. It reproduces the always renewed quest for a unique experience that allows us to see, under the opaque surface of life, a secret truth."[3] And he quotes Rimbaud, mentioning "the instantaneous view that makes us discover the unknown, not in a far-away unknown land, but in the very heart of the immediate."[4]

In this sense, in their apparent immediacy, the stories of Elena Méndez (b. Culiacán, 1981) always reveal to us something more profound that might go unnoticed by the hurried or inattentive reader.[5] It is already a well-known fact that the short story is not particularly sought-after as a genre by the more commercial publishing houses because it demands more involvement by the reader than, for example, the novel. The short story is constructed by the reader in his/her mind with elements that the author merely sketches for him/her. There is no time or space for more. The art of the short story lies in making a crack through which a broader, but more profound reality, beyond the simple anecdote told, can be glimpsed. The art of the short story writer is not making the crack very large, but picking the exact place that this crack will open so the reader can glimpse the story from a unique, privileged viewpoint.

In addition to being an excellent cultural journalist, focusing mainly on interviews and literary reviews, Elena Méndez reveals herself to us with *Bipolar* as a promising short story writer. This collection of 21 stories is divided into two sections: "El cuerpo del delito" (Corpus Delicti) and "Tal vez morir en soledad" (Perhaps to Die in Solitude). The first part presents the longer stories, which are more difficult reading, despite their apparent transparency and simplicity. The great majority have female characters enmeshed in fleeting sexual and love relationships generally in dark, clandestine settings: nightclubs, bars, seedy hotels, brothels; stifling atmospheres and scenarios that frame their own unhappiness, tragedies, and contradictions.

These are characters that have lived on the razor's edge and seem to bet everything on a furtive one-night stand; on a twisted, destructive relationship; on the hungry, overwhelming passion for fornicating, that in the end leaves them more alone and empty, with unsatisfied desire and the wound of lovelessness right under their skin.

The narration of the characters' sexual encounters is almost always explicit, sometimes harsh, with no niceties, and yet, it surprises us with details of intense eroticism that tone down the crudity of certain situations.

The characters in Bipolar
have lived on the razor's edge and seem
to bet everything on a furtive one-night stand;
on a twisted, destructive relationship.

The author's intelligent handling of different narrative voices should be underlined, particularly the use of second person singular —which is exemplified so often with the novel *Aura* that it would seem Carlos Fuentes had invented it. It is a very difficult form of narration that, in the hands of a less skillful writer would be disastrous, but Elena Méndez handles with natural ease and effectiveness.

In other stories, the author uses the more traditional first person because, from time immemorial, it is the best way of telling stories, or making the reader feel as though he/she had been there because it speaks directly to him/her, like in "El cuerpo del delito" (Corpus Delicti). Therein lies another element that characterizes Elena Méndez's writing: the use of orality, the great "ear" that she has for the popular turn of a phrase, slang, regionalisms from Mexico's north, specifically the state of Sinaloa, where she was born.

On the other hand, the author knows how to play with different genres, combining them with the short story, without the piece stopping being a short story. Sometimes her texts are almost like aphorisms, like short poems, touching on poetic prose. In one that I consider outstanding, she dares make a micro-Rayuela. This is "Crónica de una pasión en vano" (Chronicle of a Passion in Vain), in which in a bare 13 numbered paragraphs, she tells us what initially seems to be a story of failed love, but thanks to the "reader's guide" that she places at the end, she surprises us with a variation of it, using the same resources.

The book's second part is made up of shorter stories, dominated by an even more somber, sad feeling, since the characters have to deal with the impossibility of love, with incompleteness, with loneliness.

Some inattentive readers might consider Elena Méndez's work "feminist" because her characters are mainly women and therefore show a sensibility unrelated to the "traditional." As critic Teresa Dovalpage says quite rightly in her brief introduction to the book, "Elena Mendez's stories do not look at the situation of women today through rose-colored glasses, but present it as it is." Most of the women portrayed in *Bipolar* are bitches, determined women who control their own bodies and sexuality, women who are not to be messed with. "In every lead character, there's a clear dose of madness, or at least, of transgression," as Ignacio Trejo Fuentes said when referring to the book.[6]

As is the case in the work of all writers, Elena's characters contain a little —or a lot— of the many Elenas that make up the author. Curiously, the last story in the book, "Noches vacías" (Empty Nights), has a male protagonist, whose situation also expresses that sadness to the point of weariness, that impossibility of relating to the opposite sex, which demonstrates that being fucked-over has no preferences, and visits itself equally on men, women, and chimeras.

The stories in *Bipolar* are situated in the reality of emotions and feelings, in the going and coming of loves and lovelessness, of need and loneliness, without falling into the facile or melodrama, but with the profound, critical gaze of its characters and their circumstances. This is why they move the reader, never leaving him or her unperturbed, always pushing him/her to reflect on human nature in these times, so miserable and so extraordinary, so contradictory, so bipolar. VM

Guillermo Vega Zaragoza
Writer and literary critic
***Revista de la Universidad de México*, UNAM**

Notes

[1] A previous version of this review was published in the *Revista de la Universidad de México*, April 2012. All notes in this review are Editor's Notes.

[2] Tweet from Belisa Bartra.

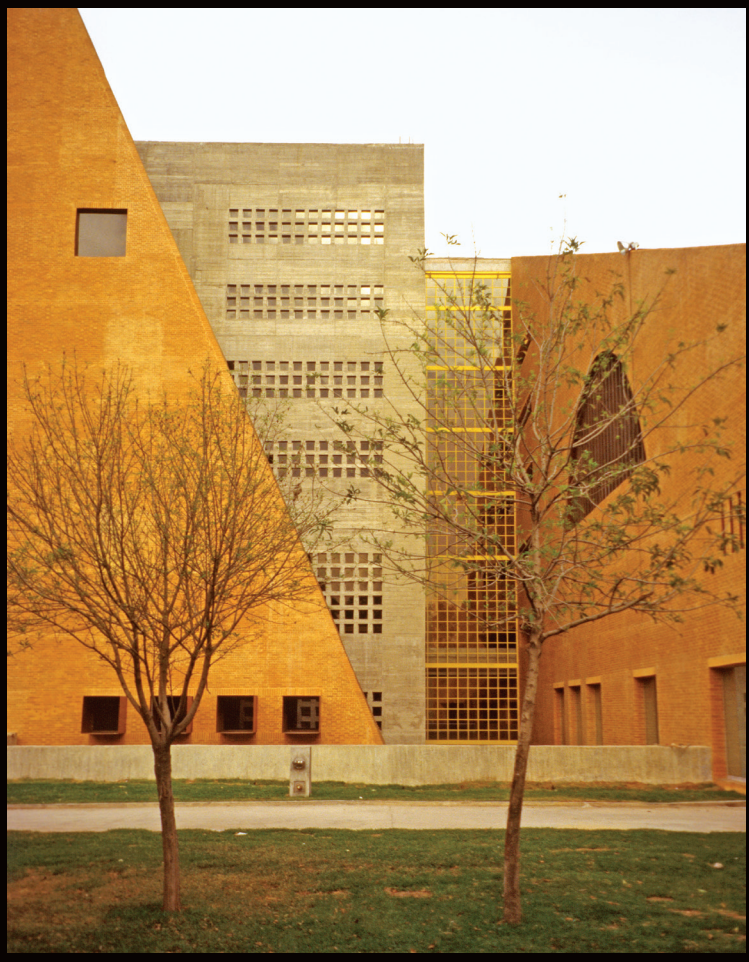
[3] Ricardo Piglia, "Tesis sobre el cuento," Tesis XI. *Crítica y ficción* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1990), p. 90.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Elena Méndez received her bachelor's degree in Hispanic language and literature from the Autonomous University of Sinaloa and writes in the literary portal www.homines.com. From 2007 to 2010, she was the assistant director of www.revistaespiral.org. She has participated in literary workshops with Mexican writers María Baranda, David Toscana, Cristina Rivera Garza, Andrés de Luna, Federico Campbell, Anamari Gomís, and Antonio Deltoro. Articles, interviews, and literary reviews of hers have been published in Spain, Chile, Mexico, the United States, Brazil, and Colombia. She is the co-author of *Antología mínima del orgasmo* (Monterrey, Mexico: Ediciones Intempestivas, 2009). Information taken from her blog, http://cuentistacuentera.blogspot.mx/.

[6] Ignacio Trejo Fuentes, "Cuentos eróticos," in "La cultura en México," supplement of *Siempre!* August 20, 2011, http://www.siempre.com.mx/2011/08/cuentos-eroticos/.

RICARDO



Lourdes Legorreta

LEGORRETA