

NAHUATL NATION

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION AND INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE IN 21ST CENTURY MEXICO

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PREFACE: THE GENEALOGY OF EXPERIENCE BEHIND THIS STUDY

I arrived in Hueyapan, one of the communities that I study here in 2003. At this point, I was training to be a linguist, and my intention was to learn to speak the local variety of Nahuatl, and to write my Master's Thesis at the University of Copenhagen as a study of some aspect of its grammar. I interviewed as many elderly speakers as I could, recording their stories and conversations, and writing down their words and phrases for later analysis. That way I learned the language. My MA thesis was a study of how speakers of different ages and backgrounds in Hueyapan made use of the complex grammatical constructions that linguists call polysynthesis (Pharao Hansen 2010b). I discovered that the degree to which different speakers used of these constructions was influenced not so much by age, as by whether the speaker spoke mostly Nahuatl or whether they spoke mostly Spanish. I took this to mean influence by Spanish worked at the level of the individual speaker, so that the more a speaker of Nahuatl oriented themselves towards an environment of Spanish language communication the less one used the grammatical constructions that are most particular to Nahuatl – even when speaking Nahuatl.

Doing fieldwork there, I also met the woman who were to become my wife, and through knowing, courting and marrying her in 2006, I learned a lot more about Hueyapan and its forms of life than just the language. I learned about how kinship, politics, ritual, religion and daily life works there. And I learned the lifestories of many individual people from Hueyapan, many of whom were now my family members. Living in Hueyapan for almost year after our marriage, I followed my wife to her religious meetings with the Jehovah's Witnesses and there I observed how the Witnesses were reviving the Nahuatl language as part of their religious practice. This aspect of their religion intrigued me, and based on my observations there I wrote my first ethnographic study (Pharao Hansen 2010a). Here, I argued that the specific social dynamics of the congregation enabled the Witnesses to reverse the process of language shift in the micro-context of the congregation. This experience was what first made me think about what conditions would be necessary for a successful revitalization of the language in Hueyapan. Thinking in the traditional sociolinguistic terms of relative prestige, my conclusion was that in the absence of the particular structures of motivation, such as high prestige of native speakers and practical incentives for youths to learn the language and engage in communication with fluent speakers, revitalization would be impossible. In this period, there was no interest in the language in Hueyapan's general populace, and I did not even consider starting a language revitalization project myself.

In 2009, I did another year of fieldwork in Mexico, focusing this time on understanding how the Nahuatl language lived in communities other than Hueyapan, to gain an understanding of the dialectal differences between the different regional varieties. I had read about certain similarities between the language of Hueyapan and the varieties spoken in the Zongolica region of central Veracruz. I traveled there with my family (by then we were three) and visited several communities in the region, including several of the ones I have also studied for this work. Noticing that in the Zongolica region the language was so much more vital than in Hueyapan making it possible to study other phenomena there, I decided to return there some day for a lengthier stay.

Also in 2009, I learned about the intercultural universities and visited the one in Mexico State near Toluca. This made me interested in the languages of that region and I visited the community of San Jerónimo Acapulco in the Toluca Valley to begin a study of the variety of the Otomi language spoken there. I did fieldwork in Acapulco in 2010 and 2011, collaborating with a group of other linguists that I had invited to participate, and with

Nestor Hernández-Green who began studies there on his own in 2010. In Acapulco, the language was rumored to be extinct, and my original idea was to find any elderly speakers in order to document the language before it disappeared. A linguistic mission of the type that Michael Silverstein might call “butterfly collecting”. But the language turned out to have maybe a hundred fluent speakers. Many of them were happy to have a team of linguists come and describe the language. It turned out that for some political process they were undertaking, they needed some evidence of the fact that the language was still spoken there, to support their claims to being an indigenous communities, and to enjoy the rights and privileges of that status. They requested us to produce printed materials of the language as quickly as possible, which we did. This was my first encounter with the consequences of the 2003 Law of Linguistic Rights, directly motivating an indigenous community to undertake revival efforts.

This is the genealogy of experiences, that made me decide that my doctoral dissertation should investigate the political and linguistic consequences of the Law of Linguistic Rights in Mexico, from the perspective of how it influences the lived lives of Nahua peoples.

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1. NAHUATL NATION: LANGUAGE, POLITICS, AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN 21ST CENTURY MEXICO

Seeds of Change

Tlaquilpa, Veracruz, April 2014. Don Félix takes a handful of maize kernels, yellow, white, red, and black from his seed bag. He carefully places them into the hole he has dug with his hand, between stones and lumps of hard-packed clay, covering it with a couple of handfuls of loose earth and a handful of ash-grey fertilizer. “*Sah Ihkon, ahm’ vehkatlan,*” “Like this, not too deep,” he says, showing me the correct way to sow. “*Tla vehkatlan tiktokas mach tlakis,*” “If you sow it too deep it won’t grow”. In the humid, misty morning, we can see neither the pine trees on the top of the hills above us, nor the houses on the bottom of the valley below us. The earth is cold and doesn’t appear to hold much promise of returning any of the seeds that we put in it. But we do it anyway. Five months later, the corn stalks stand tall and green on the rocky slope.

Hueyapan, Morelos. February 2014. A couple of hundred people are gathered at the central Plaza to celebrate “*Dia de las lenguas indígenas*”. Don Isabel Lavana, a retired schoolteacher who now lives in the nearby town of Jonacatepec, took the microphone to give an improvised speech to the assembled audience. Giving the initial greetings in Nahuatl he went on to explain: “*Axan nehwa ahwel nan niyes semilwitl. Nan niyes tsitsigitzin ivan kwak okseppa tololoskeh kwak okseppa amololoskeh an annechtlalwiskeh tel nigan niyes. Nigan niyes porkeh nigan onitlagat. Nigan oniveyak, Nigan onoskaltih. Tos inin nin no...nigan nochan. Nikittaga itech.. nochi amehwan ken noknivan! Ken toknivan. Ihkon ninamechmoittilia. Ihkon ni..namechmoittilia, an ihkon man ye, an ihkon tigimmachtiskeh in tsitsigitoton. Nehwa axan namechmolwilia: niyolpagi. Niyolpagi kwak amehwan antlahtoa, ankipalewiah in totlahtol. An ankipalewiah nochi tlen tehwan otikpixkeh.*”¹

In 2003, the Mexican “General Law of Linguistic Rights for Indigenous Peoples” officially made the Nahuatl language one of 63 “national languages” of the Mexican nation. For many, this was an important act of political recognition, finally acknowledging the indigenous speakers Nahuatl and the many other Mexican indigenous languages as full citizens with equal rights to receive

¹ [Nowadays, I cannot be here always. I will be here a little and when we gather again, when you gather again and you invite me, I will be here. I will be here because here I was born. Here I grew up. Here I was raised. So this is my... my home is here. I consider this...all of you are like my siblings. We are like siblings. That is how I see you. That is how I see you, and that is how it should be, and that is how we will teach the little ones. Now I will tell you: I am happy. I am happy when you speak, when you help our language. And you help all that which we have had.] Underlining indicates emphasis given by the speaker.

government services in their own languages. The new law established that Mexico as a multi-cultural nation was obligated to provide a full set of rights and services to all their citizens - regardless of the language they speak. It established a new branch of government, the National Institute for Indigenous Languages (INALI) to support the process of fulfilling these rights, and to fortify and support the country's indigenous languages, many of which were rapidly falling out of use in the indigenous communities (Hidalgo 2006). Most speakers of Nahuatl, however, did not experience the passing of the law as a watershed event. The law did not mean that suddenly they could receive information about taxes, regulations, or government aid programs in their language. It did not mean that they could expect to receive assistance from an interpreter if they had to use government health services, or were accused of a crime. And it didn't mean that their children would now receive instruction in the language in school and be able to pursue a career through the use of their own language. None of those things was an immediate result of Nahuatl suddenly becoming a national language. Today 12 years later, all of those things still have yet to happen.

So what *has* happened? This dissertation explores some of the results of the 2003 law, focusing on the political and linguistic consequences of government driven language revitalization for indigenous Nahuatl speaking communities. Through ethnographic studies of two communities that are reclaiming Nahuatl through education, it also explores the potentialities of the law, its risks and benefits. In exploring these relations, it also develops a theory of the relation between language and indigenous politics. Apart from the analysis of the practical consequences of the law, this theory is the major intellectual contribution of this dissertation. The theory emerges from an interpretation of the two ethnographical cases. Ethnographic data is interpreted in relation to an

account of the *longue durée*² historical trajectory of indigenous languages in Mexico, and in relation to an analysis of contemporary Mexican nationalism.

This work proposes that a major function of indigenous languages within the communities that speak them is the function of sustaining and delimiting a political community. In indigenous towns where indigenous languages are spoken by most of the community members, they work as privileged semiotic vehicles through which local public spheres are formed. They are the vehicles through which indigenous communities engage themselves in conversation, and in which they formulate their own worldviews (Hill & Mannheim 1992), which in turn produce values, projects and ideologies. Indeed, it is argued that more than any other single factor, it is the function of language as the semiotic infrastructure of a political community that determines a minority language's value to its community of speakers, and consequently its vitality. Indigenous languages thrive when the speech community³ is politically vital, with a strong sense of identity, and it uses its language in an ongoing debate about the future of the community. Moreover, when the local language thrives as a language of political conversation, it delimits the scope of the dialogue to those who share the language's inherent assumptions about the political and social world they inhabit, fortifying the community. In turn, the challenge of translation that it poses to outsiders wishing to participate in the dialogue, gives the discussion a degree of resistance to the intrusion of outside concepts and values from the majority group. The language forms a kind of "semiotic membrane" that offers the community's political autonomy a degree of protection from outside

² By using this term, I indicate that like Fernand Braudel (1958), I am not considering history within a delimited period, nor am I approaching history as a series of events, but rather as a continuous process of transformation that produces a genealogical relation, which transcends, but also links, periods and events.

³ The term "speech community" has a long and contentious history of definitions within sociolinguistics. From Gumperz' (1968, 1972) and Labov's (1972) widely influential definitions, to contemporary definitions based on practice theory and the Habermasian concept of the public. See Patrick (2008) and Muehlmann (2014) for reviews of the history of the term and its theorizations. I engage the concept further as I theorize the community in relation to language further into the dissertation, but at present, I let it stand with the vague, but useful, definitions of Patrick and Bucholtz as "a socially-based unit of linguistic analysis" or "a linguistically based unit of social analysis" (Patrick 2008).

spheres of politics. Moreover, reciprocally, the community protects the language by maintaining its use as long as the community needs it as a vehicle of their separate identity. When analyzing the consequences of language planning initiatives like those of the Mexican government, it is important to pay attention to this symbiotic-semiotic relation between language and political community.

Hence, in this view, language vitality ties closely with the political autonomy and sovereignty of indigenous communities, rendering the dynamics of language endangerment and language revitalization essentially political processes. This argument contrasts both with the approaches often taken by linguists and anthropologists working with indigenous language revitalization and indigenous politics respectively. Linguists have often seen language revitalization as primarily question of ensuring intergenerational language transmission by supporting the academic infrastructure of the language and raising its prestige within the speech community⁴. This is a task that they realize is best carried out with community support, but which they have tended to envision as an ideally apolitical process that is not directly related to specific political struggles of the speech community. On the other hand, anthropologists who work with indigenous rights and cultural politics from the perspective of social critique sometimes seem to consider language revitalization to be a superficial kind of activism based on essentialist assumptions about the relation between language, culture and identity. They sometimes suggest that cultural revitalization, especially when supported by the state, may in fact contribute to perpetuating and reinforcing stereotypical, essentialist notions of indigeneity, without contributing to solving the political issues of structural violence and racism that brought about the language's endangerment

⁴ This is a somewhat reductionist description of Joshua Fishman's "Reversing Language Shift" paradigm – nonetheless I think it is fair. The strongest expression of this ideology was Hale et al.'s (1992) article in *Language* which called linguists to arms in a struggle against language endangerment. In this regard, I speak also from my own experience as someone who was initially trained to study languages, and took a keen interest in language endangerment and in preserving indigenous languages for the sake of science and humanity. In this way, I am also arguing against my own former apolitical perspective, and simultaneously making a case for the continued relevance of language revitalization.

in the first place⁵. This engagement with language revitalization proceeds from the dual perspective of linguistic anthropology, which has long sought to develop approaches that attend simultaneously to language, politics, and culture, pointing to the many ways in which politics is linguistic, and language is political. From such a position, it is possible to challenge the apolitical view of language revitalization by arguing that questions of language vitality holds a strong political significance and that it is closely related to issues of indigenous sovereignty. From this position, we may suggest that language endangerment is primarily a result of political domination of speech communities, and that a necessary precondition for successful language renewal is a political revival and increased sovereignty - if not in a legal sense then at least in terms of the sociopolitical stance of the speech community's members. Linguistic sovereignty, like territorial sovereignty, then, is a significant aspect of the political sovereignty of a people.

Corollary arguments emerge from the central thesis described above. One of them is the insight that not all possible uses of indigenous languages contribute to making the language more vital. For example, the state may exploit indigenous strategies of language use in ways that weaken instead of strengthen indigenous sovereignty. They may use indigenous languages to subvert the sense of political independence and self-sufficiency of indigenous political communities. Therefore, state sponsored language revitalization should be judged, not solely on its ability to provide infrastructural support for the use of indigenous languages in the mainstream public sphere, but also by its ability to support the political autonomy of indigenous communities. A revitalization effort may threaten both the community and its language, if it threatens the exclusive and intimate relation between community and language. Several common strategies of large-scale language

⁵ This I also consider a fair, if reductionist, description of research in the tradition exemplified by scholars such as Friedlander (1975), Kuper (1988, 2001), (Friedman 1993). More recently (and with more focus on language as well as more theoretical nuance) Muehlmann (2008) has described how some indigenous Cucapá youths clearly experience the discourses and practices of language revitalization to be oppressive. Errington (2003) reviews the state of discourse for against language revival. (J. Errington 2008)) develops a historical review of linguistic complicity in projects of colonialism, including the current paradigm of language endangerment discourse in linguistics.

revitalization that some government and institutional initiatives use, seem to be double-edged swords of this kind. This holds for example for teaching indigenous languages as second languages, and providing remedial education using indigenous languages with the aim of easing indigenous youths access to the mainstream education system. The risks are that teaching indigenous languages to non-speakers who are not members of the existing speech community, may make the language less relevant to its original speaker base. Or that offering access to mainstream higher education to indigenous youths may be a scaffold bringing them into an ideological infrastructure that encourages them to abandon the local speech community and the language. These corollary arguments encourage us to look closely at how government driven language revitalization efforts work in concrete practice, and how they affect indigenous political communities.

Another corollary argument posits a close connection between the vitality of indigenous speech communities and radical politics (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]), understood as political practices and discourses that strive to imagine and produce a radical break from mainstream political structures. Linguistic separateness may provide a means of protection for such radical imaginaries, and the indigenous forms of life encoded in the language may themselves provide inspiration for reimagining politics on a radically different basis. In this view, Indigenous languages may be the vehicles through which new political communities may access ideas and discourses with the power to contest and disrupt the given political structures – what Chantal Mouffe has called “the constitutive outside” (Mouffe 1994, 107-110).

My chosen title, “Nahuatl Nation,” reflects this double interest. I am interested in understanding how the benevolent language and cultural policies of the Mexican Nation affect indigenous communities and their languages. In many ways, in its national consciousness, Mexico imagines itself as a “Nahuatl Nation,” claiming the language and its “millenarian culture” as national patrimony. This is the type of imagined national community that Benedict Anderson (1983)

describes in his influential account of the development of nationalism in post-colonial contexts, where a new national culture is built using the colonial infrastructure, but incorporating the indigenous culture as a symbol of common heritage. In this way, the post-colonial nation takes up the indigenous symbol as a “constitutive inside,” a way to distinguish itself from its former colonizers. But in constituting its identity through a limited selection of symbols, the nationalist state also glosses over and erases its own semiotic diversity, often drawing upon the homogenizing and hegemonizing impetus that Gellner (2008 [1983]) sees as inherent in the nationalist project. This, process through which nationalist ideologies and imaginations of different kinds interact with the indigenous populations and negotiate relations between the state and indigenous communities and cultures, is itself of central interest to anthropology, and in the context of state-sponsored language revitalization also for linguistics.

However, another objective of this work lies in exploring the ways in which indigenous minority communities constitute themselves and persist within the scope of the nation state. In the US, indigenous ethno-linguistic groups are understood as, and understand themselves to be, “nations”. In Mexico, this is not the case. Except for the Zapatista *caracoles*, who claimed autonomy by force, Mexican indigenous communities are not politically sovereign entities, and they often have little or no sense of ethno-political solidarity. Only the most fervent Nahuatl political activists would imagine themselves as members of a sovereign “Nahuatl nation,” let alone seek to promote such an ideology as a basis for indigenous politics. Indeed, indigenous political movements since the 1930s and up until now have tended to struggle to achieve a more meaningful integration into the nation, sometimes under the slogan “Never again a Mexico without us!” Hence, the question becomes what type and degree of ethnic, linguistic, or political separateness is possible for indigenous minorities within the Mexican nation.

This conundrum motivates a turn towards semiotics and the human ability to select and create different meaningful relations between themselves and the objective world, and to make those relations the foundations of their own subjective lifeworlds. A group of people may be able to constitute themselves semiotically as a separate community existing within a separate, but locally shared, conceptualization of the world, and they may be able to privilege the meaningful relations that obtain within that local conceptualization. If so, then the degree to which they can be separate from the nation-state, even while also being a part of it, may be constrained only by their ability to hold on to their locally meaningful world in the face of pressures to abandon it. This suggests the possibility of another kind of “Nahuatl Nation,” one that is now hidden inside the mist or beneath the rocky ground of the Zongolica mountains, or in the memories of the old people of Hueyapan, and which can perhaps only be imagined into existence through the semiotic resources of the Nahuatl language. Perhaps, this is a community of the radically “otherwise” (Povinelli 2012), where different ontological relations obtain between humans and the territory; or a nation of intimate affective relations of different sorts, a nation that has no physical infrastructure or official ideology, but serves only as inspiration for political projects in the present. By describing how two Nahuatl-speaking communities use the language as a vehicle for imaginations of alternative political potentialities, this work may contribute to deepening also the space in which anthropologists can imagine language, and language revitalization, as a potential field of radical minority politics.

Language and History: Time and the total linguistic fact

An overarching question in this work is historical. Why is it that in the past Nahuatl has gone from being a widely spoken majority language to an endangered minority language? What are the ways in which this process can be reversed? This requires understanding first the historical processes that shaped the past, in order to avoid them in the future. Answering these questions, requires an

account of how social forces working at a historical scale, affects language. Such an approach to language and its intersection with social history emerges from the discipline of linguistic anthropology. Faudree and Pharao Hansen (2014) have noted that language is doubly implemented in the production of history, both as an aspect of the flow of human interaction and social relations, and also as the medium through which we become aware of this flow in the form of historical narrative. This proposal breaks with the segregation of the study of language history (traditionally carried out by historical linguists and ethnohistorians) and the study of how historical discourse brings the past into play in present social contexts (one research focus in contemporary linguistic anthropology). In line with this perspective, the history of the Nahuatl language, the social and political processes that have affected it, is a central field of inquiry in this dissertation. More than a simple backdrop that provides the context of the study of language revitalization in 21st century Mexico, it is the field from which the necessary arguments are to be extracted.

Linguistic anthropologists stress the fundamental dialectic interrelatedness between language and the interactional and discursive aspects of culture, often relying on Silverstein's formulation of the 'total linguistic fact' as the fundamental datum for a science of language. He considers language to be an 'unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms . . . [in] situations of interested human use mediated by the fact of cultural ideology' (Silverstein 1985, 220).

Hanks (1996) reformulates Silverstein's fact in terms of practice theory, arguing that communicative practices are the totality of interrelation's between verbal interaction, language structure, and the ideological content in terms of which these are framed. In this dialectic framing, change emerges from the interplay between structure, ideology and interaction

Communicative Practices (Hanks 1996)

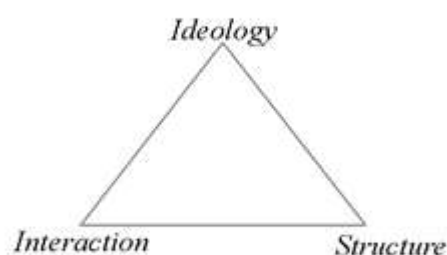


FIGURE 1. The total linguistic fact.

(See figure 1.). Curiously, the only one of these elements that have an inherent dynamic element is interaction, and one must assume then that interaction is the prime mover for processes through which language structure and ideology changes – while changes in these two elements in turn may trigger new patterns of interaction. In other work, Silverstein (1996) has drawn attention to the historical dimension of the society-language nexus, calling for an “ethnohistory of communication,” that would attend to the historical shifts in language use, and the shifting configurations of the total linguistic fact shift over time. This is essentially the project taken on in this dissertation.

A consequence of this essentially historical view of the interrelations of language and society is that history, and consequently historical data and method, take on a particular significance in the present approach. In terms of writing and organization, the centrality of history to the subject matter, means that this dissertation does not have a “historical background chapter” that sets the context for the description of the current state of affairs. Instead, all the chapters are essentially historical chapters that describe a phenomenon within the flow of socio-political time. In fact, the first chapter following the introduction describes the present role of Nahuatl and indigenous languages within the cultural-political context of 21st century Mexico. Subsequent chapters perspectivize this current state of national affairs by showing how the current official stance towards indigenous languages is situated within a historical context, and how it is perceived and experienced from within indigenous political communities. The main historical chapter, chapter 4, also forms the core of the dissertation, because it develops an account of the historical process that has led to the decline of Nahuatl in some places, and its continued currency as a language of everyday life in others.

Historical Background: Histories of Language Endangerment, and Revival in Nahua Mexico

Nahuatl occupies a unique place among the many indigenous languages of Mexico. This status is a result of its history as an imperial language before the Spanish invasion, a colonial *lingua franca*⁶ or vehicular language⁷ after the invasion, and a language of nationalism in the post-independence period. This unique role, as well as the fact that it is the most widely spoken indigenous language of Mexico, has shaped the social history of the language.

Five hundred years ago, central Mexico was home to a thriving and expanding empire centered in the fertile lake valley that is now Mexico City. The one ethnic group that more than any other characterized the empire were the Mexica⁸. They were one of the a Nahuatl speaking Azteca¹⁰ or Nahua peoples who had arrived in Central Mexico as hunting and gathering nomads in the valley in the 12th century. Through a combination of political and military effort and acumen, they rose to make their city Mexico-Tenochtitlan, capital of the so-called Aztec Empire, the largest urban center on the American continent (Carrasco 1999, Smith 2008). The Nahuatl language spread

⁶ Karen Dakin (Dakin 1996) has used the term *Lingua Franca* about a Nahuatl variety that she believes was spoken across Western Mesoamerica before the conquest and was recorded in colonial documents from Guatemala, Chiapas and Western Mexico.

⁷ Michael Swanton has argued that the term "*lingua franca*" suggests a situation in which bilingualism is widespread in the general population, which does not seem to have been the case in Mesoamerica either before or after the Conquest. Swanton proposed the term "vehicular language," to describe a language used mainly by elites and specialists in interethnic communication. (Swanton 2008)

⁸ *Mexica* is the common way of writing the Nahuatl word /*mešihkah*/ meaning "Mexico-people" which is the plural of *mexicatl* /*mešihkaλ*/ "Mexico-person". This word is derived from the placename *Mexico* /*mešihko*/ the Nahuatl name of an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco. This island and the Mexica city of Tenochtitlan (or sometimes Mexico-Tenochtitlan) became the center of the so-called Aztec empire.

⁹ A preliminary note on transcription: Unless otherwise noted I use generally current spellings for Nahuatl words, rather than linguistically specialized ones. Most of these transcriptions are derived from the spelling systems of colonial Nahuatl, and they do not represent all aspects of Nahuatl phonology. They tend to leave out the *salttillo* phoneme and they do not mark vowel length. At times, I add a phonemic representation of the actual Nahuatl word, in which case I use a transcription based on the APA transcription system. In the last major section of chapter 3, I give a much more detailed description of the complexities of Nahuatl orthography and phonology.

¹⁰ The word "Aztec" is derived from the Nahuatl word /*astekaλ*/ (plural /*astekah*/) which means a person from the place of Aztlán (Nahuatl /*asλa:n*/). Aztlán was the shared mythical place of origin of many of the Nahua speaking ethnic groups of Central Mexico (and some who may not have spoken Nahuatl). The identity as *Astekah*, therefore to a certain degree formed an overarching ethnic category uniting many Nahuatl speaking political groups. Aztlán is a Nahuatl word meaning either "place of wings" or "place of eagles" (Karen Dakin personal communication) or more commonly assumed to be an abbreviation of /*astaλa:n*/ "place of herons".

across Mesoamerica¹¹ both through population growth and migration and as an imperialistically imposed vehicular language. After the conquest, the reach of the Nahuatl language continued to expand, as Nahuas allied with the Spaniards in the project of conquering the other peoples of Mesoamerica, brought the language with them to the northern and southern reaches of what became New Spain (Matthew & Oudijk 2007; Matthew 2012; Megged 2013).

Today, Mexico City is still an impressive and sprawling capital, although now no longer of an empire, but of a nation state that still carries the name of the Mexica people's island city. Nonetheless, the citizens and leadership of the Mexican nation are not Nahua people; and they do not speak Nahuatl, although they frequently use symbols, imagery and words that tie them to the Mexica empire, and position them as the heirs of that great polity. Through place names, the Nahuatl language is inscribed into the very geography of the Mexican nation, and many of its words exist as a common stock of localisms that give Mexican Spanish its particular flavor. But the average Mexican, is not consciously aware of the etymological source of these words, and many consider Nahuatl and other indigenous languages to be essentially an aspect of the national past, rather than a part of its present. As Benedict Anderson ironically notes when contrasting the development of Mexican indigenist nationalism with the decidedly anti-indigenous nationalism of other Latin American ex-colonies: Mexico became a nation of "Mexicans speaking in Spanish 'for' pre-Columbian 'Indian' civilizations whose languages they do not understand" (Anderson 1983:199).

Nevertheless, a million and a half indigenous people who speak the Nahuatl language live scattered throughout the central highland states of Puebla, Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, Morelos and Guerrero,

¹¹ I use the term "Mesoamerica" and "Mesoamerican" in a cultural-historical sense to refer to the cultural area that covered central and Southern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and parts of El Salvador and Honduras before European contact. The term originates with Kirchoff (Kirchhoff 1943), who used it for the historical complex that exhibited certain shared cultural traits presumed to have spread through diffusion. It is today in standard use by scholars studying the pre-colonial cultures of Mexico and Central America. See for example, (Chase, Chase and Smith 2009) (Kaufman and Justeson 2009) (Restall, Sousa and Terraciano 2005) (Carmack, Gasco and Gossen 1996).

along the pacific coast of Michoacan, and the gulf coast of Veracruz, and even into Durango and San Luís Potosí in the north (INEGI 2005). It has become customary in academia to refer to these people as “Nahuas,” though hardly any Nahuatl speakers refer to themselves in that way¹². This is because more than an ethnic group with a common identity, this label describes a linguistic group. The term “Nahua” groups together people and communities with a wide diversity of ethnic and political identities because the language they speak shares an origin with the Nahuatl language spoken by the Mexica people. These Nahua people constitute the majority in hundreds of small communities, towns and regions of the vast Mexican countryside, but they also live as mostly hidden minorities in the country’s major cities where they are indistinguishable from any other Mexican citizen. Nahuatl-speaking Mexicans, however, rarely find that the fact that they can claim ethnic ties to the group that founded the Aztec empire affords them any special status within the Mexican national community. In fact, just as all other indigenous groups in the country they experience systematic marginalization. All of their socioeconomic indicators - poverty, literacy, health, employment - are substantially lower than the national average, reflecting the fact that their access to health services, to education, to legal services, is limited and of lower quality than for the majority population. This marginalization is the result of a long history in which the Nahua peoples first fell under a regime of exploitative colonialism; subsequently they were then drafted into the creation of a nation that saw them as second-class citizens.

Since the Spanish Invasion of Mexico in 1519 and the defeat of the Aztec empire in 1523, the general trend of change has been for Nahua communities gradually to abandon the audible, visible and tangible signs of indigenous heritage, adopting instead the signs of the groups in power. In the colonial period Nahuas tended to adopt the signs associated with colonial Spaniards, such as the

¹² They do occasionally describe themselves as *nahuatlacah* /na:waʎa:kah/ “nahua-people,” but a majority seem to self-identify with words such as *macehualli* /ma:se:walʎi/, which originally meant “commoner” and which generally includes also non-Nahuatl speaking indigenous persons.

Spanish language, religion and styles of dress, which would signal power and prestige within the colonial public sphere (J. Lockhart 1992). Nevertheless, they generally maintained the Nahuatl language and used it when addressing their own people, and when formulating ideas of the common good of their own local community.

Even so, the overall use of the Nahuatl language, which is the only potential emblem of a pan-Nahua identity¹³, has declined steadily as the colonial order gradually absorbed local indigenous communities (Karttunen and Lockhart 1976). In fact, almost all of the major Nahuatl speaking political centers of the early colonial period, for example as the cities of Cuernavaca, Toluca, Orizaba, are no longer indigenous communities at all. Their indigenous heritage has simply become an element of a generalized national past, visible in the local place names and perhaps in museums, at archeological sites or in codices. Their inhabitants have become simply “Mexicans”. It is an ironic fact that almost all of the many thousand colonial documents written in Nahuatl were written in cities that are no longer Nahuatl speaking today, whereas most contemporary Nahuatl speaking towns do not have any colonial documents written in the language.

Subsequently, during the transition to independence, the majority of Nahua elites rallied around the Mexican National order, leaving behind no trace of a coherent Nahua ethnic community. Left behind, after this “decapitation” of the political structure of Nahua communities was a disorganized array of individual towns each with their own local political and cultural identity, gradually eroding under the advance of national culture and identity. Hence, during the national period Nahuatl speakers adopted the signs of the *criollo* elites, including a love for the *patria* and its symbols and institutions, among them by now the idea of the Aztec heritage (Keen 1971; Brading 1985[1973]; Lomnitz 2001; Taylor 2009). Nonetheless, nationalism also entailed an all-out attack

¹³ The only emblem, because it is the only cultural element that can be considered exclusive to the Nahua group, because that is how the group “Nahua people” is defined. “Emblem” is here used in the sense of Agha (2007).

on the ethnic pluralism that had been tolerated, and partially encouraged, during the colony. More than anything, this advance of the nation state, as ideology and as fact, accelerated the pace at which indigenous communities were absorbed into the wider national community, and the speed with which the Nahuatl language became obsolete.

Nevertheless, the decline of Nahuatl has not advanced at the same pace everywhere. In hundreds of Nahua local communities, the language is alive and well, spoken by children and adults, and used for most social functions within the local community, including for discussing politics, religion and other public affairs. The local communities where the Nahuatl language is most vital are often also the most socially and geographically marginal, with the lowest degree of social and economic development, and least access to the services and commodities of the modern Mexican nation (INEGI 2005). The language and identity of Nahua people seems to be most vigorous exactly in the places where the signs of state-driven development are most absent. One conclusion that could be drawn from this fact is that the vitality of Nahuatl in some communities is simply a residue, left behind only in the places that colonization and nationalism never fully reached. This conclusion is implicit in the influential “three-stage model” of language contact and decline developed by ethnohistorian James Lockhart, which sees the degree of contact induced language change in Nahuatl as steadily progressing as contact and interaction between Nahuas and Spaniards increased (Lockhart 1992, 1991). Nevertheless, scholars have noted that in many cases indigenous towns that are located in close proximity to major Spanish speaking cities, and which have experienced intense contact with Spanish, have maintained their language vigorously (Sicoli 2011). This is the case for example for the Nahuatl speech communities of Tetelcingo in Morelos, and Ixhuatlancillo in Veracruz. So perhaps the proximity and intensity of contact is not the only thing that matters in determining language outcomes. Perhaps the social dynamics within a given local community, and the type of contact this produces with the surrounding Spanish-speaking world, may also play a role, as a force either facilitating or resisting the process of change. This is the possibility that I

investigate in this work, reversing the traditional question asking why and how languages become endangered (e.g. (Dorian 1989)), and asking instead why, in some communities, they are vigorously maintained.

Since 2003, the Mexican state has obligated itself by law to help indigenous communities maintain and strengthen their ethnic identity, including their language. This explicit policy was the culmination of a trend in Mexican indigenous policy starting in the 1970s, which gradually sought to break with earlier policies that saw indigenous identity as a social and national problem. This earlier ideology that prompted a reaction, was generally known as *indigenismo*, and it aimed directly at increasing the level of social development through assimilating indigenous communities to the national majority, erasing any conspicuous signs of ethnic difference (Hidalgo 2006, Heath 1972). Beginning in the 1970s, under the slogan of *indigenismo participativo* [participatory indigenism], indigenous activists and social scientists have sought ways to create alliances with the force to empower indigenous communities to take their futures into their own hands and force the state to give up its paternalistic stance (Faudree: 2013:53-55). Gradually, this movement has been successful in institutionalizing itself within the state apparatus, and has managed to change some of the paternalist policies and practices through which the Mexican state have engaged with their indigenous populations. So far, this development has culminated with the 1992 constitution that defined Mexico as a multicultural nation, and with the 2003 Law of Linguistic Rights, which had several native speaking linguists among its drafters (Nahmad Sitton 2008). As part of this process, Mexican government has created new institutions charged with the dual task of promoting and strengthening indigenous ethnic identity while simultaneously creating social and economic progress through investment in local development and infrastructure. A slogan of this process continues to be "*desarrollo con identidad*" [Development with identity], exemplifying the stated, if somewhat contradictory, goal to change indigenous communities for the better, while simultaneously maintaining their sense of self and deep historical continuity.

Perhaps partly as a result of this significant change in the discourses and policies about indigeneity and ethnicity in Mexico, which have recast indigeneity as a desirable status, many indigenous groups are now seeking to reclaim the overt symbols of their ethnic identity, including the language. Projects aiming to revitalize ailing languages, or even to revive them in locations where they have not been spoken for decades, are appearing throughout Mexico, often sponsored and supported by state institutions. Some such projects emerge from the idea that Nahuatl is the linguistic patrimony of the Mexican nation; other projects build on an ideal of the Nahua people as an indigenous national community seeking to organize a common platform for leveraging political claims. However, the majority are local projects, situated in specific communities, regions, or institutions. They tend to pursue highly local goals such as the revitalization of a specific local variety of Nahuatl, the preservation of a specific set of rituals or social institutions, or the reinforcement of local ethnic identity in order to buttress local claims to land, water, government funds, or political representation.

Concurrently with these projects of cultural and linguistic reclamation, indigenous symbols and languages are also beginning to penetrate into mainstream culture, also among people and in communities that do not have any direct ties to indigenous culture, except for the ties that run through ideologies of national heritage. Nahuatl language courses are popping up in the fashionable neighborhoods of major cities; Nahuatl language music is being sung and produced by stars and celebrities. Preppy middle class youths flock to cultural centers to show their solidarity with indigenous struggles by wearing indigenous style apparel or organizing protests and raising funds.¹⁴ So currently, Mexico is experiencing a largescale push for revival of indigenous symbols

¹⁴ A salient example of this trend can be seen in this article from www.pri.org, describing two Mexico City artists who aim to celebrate and honor indigenous culture through their art. The name of their art collective is the Nahuatl word “tlatoa”, which they attribute the meaning “the one who carries the word”, but which in fact is simply the verb meaning “he or she speaks”. Further examples, are given in chapter 2. <http://www.pri.org/stories/2015-08-30/these-young-mexican-women-artists-are-speaking>

that were falling out of use. This is happening both in individual indigenous communities and in the nation as a whole. But in many ways these efforts run in parallel tracks in those two spheres of action, as two lines of symbolic action destined never to meet.

Hence, this work explores the cultural and political context of indigenous ethnic revival in Mexico, in an effort to understand the complex dynamics involved in the revival, both social, political and semiotic. How may we understand the basic paradox this development poses: Indigenous languages have historically maintained their ethno-linguistic distinctiveness best in the relative absence of the state, but now the state is increasing its presence in indigenous communities in what it presents as an effort to preserve them. How might this process turn out?

Hueyapan's Nahuatl Project and the Intercultural University of Veracruz

The two local revitalization projects that make up the ethnographic sites of this study are: 1. the town of Hueyapan, Morelos and its community-driven but state sponsored language revitalization project, in which youths learn the local variety of Nahuatl; 2. the Intercultural University of Veracruz (UVI), located in the region of Zongolica in central Veracruz state, where Nahuatl is gradually being introduced both as a medium of instruction and academic communication and as a subject. One major sociolinguistic difference between the two ethnographic contexts is the degree of vitality of the language in the two communities.

In Hueyapan, most members of the youngest generations do not speak Nahuatl (as we will see there are important exceptions), but it is still spoken as a first language by several thousand people belonging to the generations who grew up before the 1970s. The generation that grew up in the 1970s is a "shift-generation" most of whom have mainly passive knowledge of Nahuatl, whereas the generations born in the 1980s and later generally have no or very limited knowledge of

Nahuatl.¹⁵ In the town, the language is not generally used in public functions, politics, town meetings, and all social gatherings tend to use only Spanish. Nahuatl is used mostly in one-on-one conversations between people who grew up speaking Nahuatl and still maintain the language as a first language. These speakers nonetheless tend to speak exclusively in Spanish to members of the younger generations.

In contrast, in the entire region of Zongolica, comprising a dozen municipalities and more than a hundred small towns, a majority of the population of all ages speak Nahuatl as a first language. In some communities, language shift is in its earliest phase with some households no longer speaking Nahuatl at all, or no longer speaking it to children. But generally, in all communities in the region a variety of social functions can be carried out exclusively in Nahuatl, from conversing in public to political meetings and commerce. The region is home to over 100,000 Nahuatl speakers, including an estimated 15% monolinguals, a figure that is among the highest for any Nahuatl speaking region. The Nahuatl varieties of the Zongolica region share a number of similarities, enough so that they can be considered a separate dialect area, but the varieties of each municipality and town community are also sufficiently distinct that speakers in the region can clearly recognize each other's place of origin (Hasler Hangert 1996).

In Hueyapan, the education project under study is a local initiative that is coordinated with, and supported by, two distinct state-level projects. The PRD Governor of Morelos, Graco Ramírez, has implemented two important political initiatives: One is an education policy called *Beca Salario* that offers monthly cash stipends to all college-attending youths in the state, contingent on participation in one year of community service. The second is a stated intention to support the

¹⁵ Daniel Suslak (2009) has drawn attention to the significant problems involved in treating generations as objective groups, rather than socially negotiated identities. In Hueyapan of course generation works in the same way and there are speakers and non speakers in all generations – although I know of only one Hueyapan Nahuatl speaker under 15. But as the Kaska youths interviewed by Meek (1998, quoted in Suslak 2009) suggested, they may simply be too young to have learned Nahuatl yet.

petitions of any indigenous town that formally states a wish to become an independent municipality under customary law, called *usos y costumbres*. The first initiative has had the concrete result that several communities in Morelos, Hueyapan among them, have taken the initiative to start up Nahuatl courses, aimed at teaching the heritage language to local youths. The youths can then fulfill their community service by attending the course, and receive their scholarship. The second initiative has spurred several of the same communities, including Hueyapan, to take the steps to file a communal petition to secede from their current municipality to form their own municipality under *usos y costumbres*. The relation between the first result and the second is that it appears that having the Nahuatl course can be understood as, and is in some cases explicitly articulated as, a part in the town's political strategy to claim status as an indigenous community. In this way, it supports their claim to territorial rights and political independence. The Nahuatl courses then have the dual function of securing local youths their individual stipends, and of bolstering local claims to an authentic indigenous identity, and indirectly their right to autonomy. Chapter 5 describes the project, and analyzes the way that the course becomes a central locus where political goals are negotiated between the local project and its state-level sponsors. On one hand, it is possible to conclude that the language project is primarily motivated by the participants' desire to access state resources, which could lead to dismissing it as a less than serious effort by the local community to revitalize the language. On the other hand, this critical analysis does not seem to account well for the high degree of personal engagement that teachers, parents and students invest in the project. Perhaps, then, the project is also serving a different function, one of renewing and strengthening the experiential bonds of shared experience across the generational language divide, restoring a sense of coherence and kinship. If this is the case, as the chapter suggests, then the

participants are also recreating the experiential community¹⁶ as a substrate from which to cultivate a political community.

In Tequila, in the Zongolica region, the “*Grandes Montañas*” campus of the UVI is a direct result of the 2003 Law of Linguistic Rights. Following law, the branch of Intercultural Bilingual Education within the ministry of education proposed the foundation of a series of Intercultural Universities as part of an education strategy to support the implementation of the law by easing the access of indigenous people to higher education. Another aim was to produce a labor force trained within the ideological and theoretical framework of *interculturality*, and who would have the skills to meet the demands for labor required by the implementation of the law in other areas of the educational system and in society. By 2009, 10 intercultural universities had been founded (Schmelkes 2009). Consequently, the UVI is not a local initiative, and a minority of the faculty are local to the region and speak indigenous languages. Nonetheless, the majority of the students are local to the region, and speak Nahuatl as a first language. Also, the ideology of interculturality explicitly encourages the use of the language in all aspects of the institution, and the curriculum includes it prominently as a track of specialization within its major in “Intercultural Promotion” [*gestión intercultural*]. Since the UVI is located in a region where there has historically been very limited access to education, one intended function of the university is to provide local youths with a path into the middle class through the acquisition of a college degree. Another intended function is to foster an attachment to the local community grounded in an appreciation for its cultural values and practices. These two goals are not necessarily compatible, and within the strictures of a chronic lack of institutional resources, there is a constant tension between the goal of fostering individual social mobility for students, and the goal of nurturing community building. During my fieldwork at

¹⁶ In the sense of strengthening the “common communicative environment” in Schütz’ terminology, which I explain in more detail below in the section that defines this dissertations’ theoretical approach to the community-language relation.

the UVI, I noted a gradually increasing integration of the Nahuatl language into the daily functioning of the university, driven by deliberate efforts by leadership and a group of faculty. In chapter 6, I describe how through these efforts the language came to embody a pivot in the negotiation between the two objectives, and additionally, a potential way to reconcile them making the educational institution a factor in the political empowerment of the Nahua people of the Zongolica region. Perhaps a few seeds of change however inadequate seeming and even in an otherwise infertile environment can have a greater positive effect than we might expect.

Methods and “The field”

The ethnographic research on Hueyapan’s Nahuatl Project and at the Intercultural University that form the basis for this dissertation was carried out between September 2013 to September 2014.

Initially, the plan was to study only in Zongolica, to see how the law and its associated institutions such as the INALI and the Intercultural University affected communities where the language was not in need of revitalization. However, when I arrived with my family in Hueyapan in 2013, I was sought out by a group of youths working for the municipality who wanted to start a Nahuatl course for youths and wanted me to teach it. State-sponsored revitalization had arrived in Hueyapan. I declined to teach the course, but decided that the course made for an interesting comparative case with what was going on in Zongolica. I offered my assistance as a linguistic consultant for the teachers of the course, letting them know that I would like to write about the project in my dissertation. As a result, the comparative aspect of this work emerged as a coincidence.

During the fall and winter of 2013, and the spring, and summer of 2014, I divided my time between Hueyapan and Zongolica. In Zongolica, I did participant observation at the Intercultural University’s campus in Tequila, where I paid particular attention to how the language was used in and out of class. I interviewed students and faculty about their linguistic and educational backgrounds, and their ideas about language. I also participated in different cultural events related

to the university, their maize seed exchange, the *xochitlalilistli* sowing ritual, and several conferences and colloquia. When in Zongolica, I stayed in the household of the Sánchez Rosales¹⁷ family in Tlaquilpa, where three family members were connected to the university. Two of them were current students who graduated while I was there, and the third was a former student and current faculty member. I had many stimulating conversations with all of them, particularly with Adán Sánchez Rosales, who was also studying anthropology and collecting local oral tradition. He asked me to be the external reader for his BA thesis, which I accepted – an experience that afforded me deeper insights to the educational workings of the university. Staying with the Sánchez family who graciously and unselfishly shared their home and food with me through repeated visits of more than two months, enabled me to see firsthand how the university affected a local family, providing them with opportunities that were not there before. I was also able to visit one of the other campuses of the Intercultural University, the one in the *Selvas* region of southern Veracruz where very different varieties of Nahuatl are spoken – there I also interviewed students and faculty.

In Hueyapan, I stayed with my family in the household of the Espinoza family. When I was there, I attended the Saturday classes of the language course, I participated in local events and meetings and interviewed students, teachers and parents of the language course. I interviewed and interacted with a number of people at the different governmental levels that were supporting the course, both at the municipal and state levels and in formal and informal contexts. I also traveled to

¹⁷ As a rule, out of respect for individual anonymity and privacy, I assign pseudonyms to the individuals I describe in the ethnographic parts of the work. There are however quite a few exceptions to this rule: When I asked the members of the Sánchez Rosales family specifically for permission to write about their lives, they declined my offer to assign them pseudonyms, saying that they preferred that I use their real names. When I write about the academics who work at the UVI, I think that as a professional courtesy they deserve credit for their thoughts and ideas, hence I asked several of them if they would allow me to use their real names – and they all agreed. I do however not provide names of UVI faculty, unless I attribute significant ideas, initiatives or pedagogical stances to them in the text. I do not attempt to assign pseudonyms to university administrators or directors whose names are public information and who are mentioned in their official capacities. In the ethnographic context of Hueyapan, I assign pseudonyms to all community members, except for those whose identities are public knowledge because they hold or have held significant political offices and whom I describe as public officials rather as private individuals. In referring to persons described by Friedlander (1975), I provide the names that she uses in the book, which are generally their real names.

see how Nahuatl courses under the same program were being taught in other towns in the state of Morelos. Local teachers requested me to see if I could publish the grammatical notes, vocabulary and texts that I had gathered in Hueyapan over the years, as a textbook for use in the language course. I put together a small book with grammar, vocabulary and texts, and they asked the state officials for the funds to print it. They promised the funds and stated their intention to publish it as the first in a series of publications on the Nahuatl language of Morelos for use with the local Nahuatl courses. The process was exceedingly slow, and to date nothing seems to have come of it. Observing the interactions between state and municipal officials and the local activists who were organizing and teaching the course was illuminating of the complicated political dynamics, and the way that monetary and political constraints on all involved actors influence and shape the workings of an educational project of this type.



Figure 1. Locations of Hueyapan, Morelos and Tlaquilpa Veracruz on a map of central Mexico.

In all, during the year of fieldwork, I have collected 80 recorded interviews of between 15 minutes and 1 hour of length, in addition to abundant field notes of my observations and

experiences. In addition to the empirical data collected in the 2013-14 field period, my interpretations and conclusions are informed by my unrecorded life experiences and interactions with Nahuatl speakers and linguists working with Nahuatl since 2003. The view of language endangerment, revitalization, and indigenous politics that developed here, builds on all of those experiences.¹⁸

For the historical aspects of the dissertation, I have collected unpublished historical data in several archives: the Municipal Archive of Tetela del Volcán (2009), the Agrarian Archive of Morelos in Cuernavaca (2009), the Municipal Archive of Orizaba (2014) and the Barlow Papers at the Archive of the Universidad de las Américas Puebla, in Cholula, Puebla (2013). I have, however, used these data as background knowledge for my interpretations, more than as systematic evidence in the way that a historian would. I do occasionally cite archival materials in the text, and I have included scans of some of the most interesting pieces as appendices. For the history of Hueyapan and Tetela, I rely widely on interviews with elderly Hueyapeños as well as on several published accounts such as Martínez Marín (1968), Friedlander (1975), Arías and Bazan (1979), Warman (1980), Álvarez Heydenrich (1987), López Méndez (1974), and Morayta Mendoza et al. (2011). In 2004, I was able to interview two women from Hueyapan who were old enough to remember parts of the revolution, but most of the people I have interviewed about historical topics were born in the 1920s and 1930s. Among the most important sources of oral history for Hueyapan have been Modesta Lavana, Ciro Génis, Cenobio Castellanos, Petra Ariza, Hilarín Montiel, Isabel Lavana, and Desideria Barrios.

The ethnographic data collected for the dissertation describes how Nahuatl is being revived in two specific communities where it exists embedded in very different sociolinguistic contexts. Although not part of the original research design, the comparative perspective permits widening

¹⁸ Part of this experience is described in the dissertation's preface.

the scope of the argument to say something more general about the relation between Nahuatl speaking communities and the Mexican state, and about why the language disappears in some local communities and persists in others. Additionally, by attending to the process of endangerment and revival in comparative perspective, we may get at the underlying question of how projects of language revitalization articulate with social and political processes in the local speech communities, the better to understand what may make such a project successful.

Why languages become endangered and how to avoid it

The main argument in this work contradicts a view that is implicit in much public discourse on language endangerment, namely that indigenous languages remain in use only as an anachronistic residue testifying to the piecemeal and incomplete advance of modernity and its institutions.¹⁹ I also argue against the view that indigenous languages become endangered primarily because of how socio-economic marginalization pressures speakers of indigenous languages to seek social mobility by conforming to majority society by abandoning relatively stigmatized languages and adopting “prestige languages”.²⁰

In arguing against these two views though, it is not to be implied that the explanations they offer are entirely false. Scholars have certainly observed both of these processes in practice in indigenous communities in Mexico and elsewhere. Nonetheless, while illuminating some aspects of

¹⁹ This perspective is most frequently found implicitly in discourses that “count down last speakers” (also critiqued by (S. Muehlmann 2012) (Moore, Pietikäinen and Blommaert 2010) (Perley 2012)), or talk about “preserving languages,” by which is generally meant documenting them for a posterity in which they are assumed to be gone (R. E. Moore 2006). These discourses are particularly frequent in the popular press’ coverage of endangered languages, and occasionally in the writings of scholars.

²⁰ This perspective can be found almost ubiquitously in the linguistic literature on language endangerment, especially in work in the tradition of “reversing language shift” founded by Joshua Fishman, e.g. (Fishman 1991, 2000). Other examples are Terborg & Landa (2013), and most of the essays in Austin & Sallabank (2011). Austin and Sallabank list four types of causes for language endangerment: natural disasters, genocide and war, overt repression by states against minorities, implicit pressures to conform to majority society because of its socio-political dominance. Grenoble and Whaley (1998) do consider a number of political variables, including political autonomy, to be major factors in language endangerment – but this view has not been as influential as the former.

the social dynamics of language endangerment represent, they obscure others that are perhaps equally important. The dissertation explores the proposition that rather than simply being a sign of what one might consider inadequate access to modernity, indigenous languages are in fact maintained by their speakers because they somehow matter to them – they serve social, political or even psychological functions.²¹ Perhaps Mexican Nahuatl expert Miguel León-Portilla was right when he noted that “in order to survive, a language must have a function”²² If this is the case, then it has implications for how we should understand language endangerment as a process, and how we should respond to it.

If we accept the first two views, then the logical solution to the problem of language endangerment and cultural loss would be something along the lines of Mexico’s current *desarrollo con identidad* paradigm: a concerted effort by the state to provide indigenous communities with the socio-economic basis necessary to keep them from jettisoning their language and culture in search of social mobility. Such an effort would, as the approach of the Mexican government does, logically include efforts to provide government support linguistic and cultural revitalization, and to increase

²¹ The question of course must be what is meant by “function.” Functionalism has generally come to be deprecated as an explanatory model in anthropology (A. Kuper, *The Historians' Revenge* 1985) and to an extent in linguistic anthropology (Silverstein 2001). More recently, Kockelman (2013) has made a cogent and well-theorized argument for reconceptualizing functions as affordances within a phenomenological framework. In linguistics “functionalism” refers almost entirely to the view that language is a communicative “tool” and is shaped by pragmatic communicative necessities rather than by cognitive infrastructure. However, there is of course a significant difference between talking about functions as contextual interpretations by individual semiotic actors in specific situations, and positing that a language in general must have “a function” within a community of speakers, as León-Portilla does. There are certainly aspects of functionalism in the theoretical conceptualization of the language-community relation developed in this chapter. In the conclusion, I will assess the empirical bases for these aspects of the argument.

²² This statement has been attributed to León-Portilla by the author Kenan Malik in his essay “Let Them Die” (<http://www.kenanmalik.com/essays/die.html>), but I have not been able to verify if León-Portilla made the statement. In which he argues that language death is a natural consequence when a language is no longer useful to its speakers. His idea of “function” is based on a purely denotational ideology of language and limited to the function of establishing communication between people – it follows that people are better served by speaking languages with more speakers. Whether or not León-Portilla made the statement or not, in other work he clearly shows that he recognizes many important functions that small indigenous languages serve for their speakers (for example here: <http://www.juridicas.unam.mx/publica/librev/rev/derhum/cont/51/pr/pr35.pdf> “*las lenguas indígenas en el tercer milenio*”). The view he describes in this work is basically the one represented by Hale et al. (1992), which I would consider the standard view in contemporary descriptive linguistics.

the prestige of indigenous signs by featuring them prominently in the public sphere, making them signs to be desired rather than rejected.

However, if factors other than relative prestige and access to social mobility play a role in language maintenance and endangerment, this approach may not address the underlying cause of the problem. Perhaps it might even exacerbate the problem rather than alleviate it. Hence, in this work, I scrutinize the process of language maintenance and loss as it has played out in the history of the Nahuatl language and in the histories of specific Nahua communities, to understand whether other factors – for example local political and social factors – may be significant in producing one result or the other. In doing this, I also pay special attention to any factors in the patterns of interaction between the Mexican state and local Nahua communities, to see if there might be specific forms of interaction that influence the process of language loss or maintenance. The specific question that needs to be answered in order to understand this process is why languages matter to people. Perhaps it is simply a question of choosing to speak the language that better offers the opportunity to “*salir adelante*” [come out ahead], a discourse of social mobility often invoked to explain language endangerment in Mexico (Messing 2007a). Alternatively, perhaps the language itself, the emotional and subjective experiences it gives to its speakers, and the ways that it is embedded in social and political contexts of a given local community, also has something to say. In this dissertation, I argue that in the communities where Nahuatl is vital, the language matters to its community of speakers because it creates an experiential bond between a specific group of people inhabiting a specific place, and because this bond in turn provides a strong semiotic infrastructure for a political community.

Language, Locality and Community in a Connected World

The relation between language and the group of people who speak it is of central importance to this dissertation. To understand why some local speech communities end up shifting from a minority

language to a majority language, while others continue to maintain their separate language in spite of strong socio-economic and political pressures to the contrary, we must work to understand this relation. Anthropologists and linguists have worked on aspects of this question since the beginning of their respective disciplines. Anthropologists have asked what defines “a community”, and how to understand the relations between the individuals who constitute it internally on one hand, and its external relations other communities on the other. Linguists have posed similar questions, asking variously how languages both emerge from and constitute social groups, as well as how speakers attach social meanings to the kaleidoscopic variety of linguistic forms they encounter in their communicative lives. This section begins by reviewing anthropological approaches to the question of social groups and their relations, focusing on the study of relations between states and indigenous peoples. Then it proceeds to describe linguistic conceptualizations of the community of speakers, and to frame the question of language endangerment in sociopolitical terms. Then the subsequent section, reviews approaches to the intersection of language and community in the context of indigenous politics, focusing on the role of language and other aspects of indigenous cultural systems in mediating relations between indigenous groups and nation states. Then, the final section in this chapter presents the theoretical conceptualization of language and community and their relations, taken in the current work.

Beginning from studies of social organization of local, face-to-face-type communities, anthropological understandings of community have since grown to include communities at many different scales, from intimate companionships between individuals to national communities of strangers, and to embrace translocal and transnational communities as well as communities at higher levels of dislocation and abstraction. This change in conceptualization has accompanied a social and historical development towards what seems to be an increasingly post-local and post-communal world, in which new social forms replace territoriality and face-to-face conviviality as the infrastructure of the social aggregate. A persistent problem has been how to understand the relation

between macro-level social formations such as the Nation and the State and the smaller, local, ethnically and linguistically distinctive, communities within it.

This question has been haunting the ethnographic context of Mexico, and the analysis of indigenous politics, for nearly a hundred years. The central topic of discussion has been the degree to which indigenous towns are 'closed corporate communities' (in the terminology of Eric Wolf (1957)) with their own culturally inflected forms of politics and minimal participation in the wider national political sphere. Wolf's argument was that the political culture of many indigenous communities is what he calls *localocentric*; that is, the local community is seen by its members, not as peripheral to political life, but at the center of it. Hence, its engagements with outside political domains have the character of 'foreign policy', conducted with the aim of benefiting the local community and its ideas of the common good. Historians working with the political histories of indigenous communities have traced this localocentrism back through the revolution (Brewster 2003), and reform (Mallon 1995) and independence wars (Van Young 2001), to the Indian republics of the colony (Haskett 1991; Lockhart 1992) and all the way back into the pre-colonial order of competing city states (Chase, Chase and Smith 2009). As anthropology moved towards emphasizing interconnectedness of societies in global networks of ideas and goods, (a change in focus partially supported by Wolf's own work on world systems) the idea of localocentrism, and "closed communities" came to be seen as problematic. Reacting to this idea, anthropologists have both questioned the factuality of this political localocentrism pointing out ways in which putatively "closed communities" are in fact always affected by global flows and networks (Escobar 2001). Wolf himself denounced the idea of bounded communities writing that "by endowing nations, societies or cultures, with the qualities of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive bounded objects, we create a model of the world as a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls" (E. R. Wolf 1982, 6). Scholars of ethnic identity have critiqued notions of deep historical continuity of political identity, by focusing on the ways that traditions are invariably

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invented and reinvented to suit political purposes (e.g. Friedlander (1976) and Kuper (1988) in anthropology, Hobsbawm (1983) in history).

Working explicitly from the fact of globalization, a more recent approach to the question of locality, comes from Arjun Appadurai. In “Modernity at Large” Appadurai (1996) argued that the globalization of culture threatens to rip apart the fabric of local cultures as they have existed through most of human history, creating instead disjointed ethnoscaples that defy attempts by nation states and governments to contain or homogenize them. He posited that in the face of this development, locality itself is becoming fragile; no longer something to be taken for granted, but something that must be actively constructed by the members of the communities that wish to continue to see themselves as local in some sense. In this way, Appadurai moved away from seeing locality as a spatial or scalar concept, treating it instead as a set of relations and contexts, and he urged anthropology to attend specifically to the ways in which locality is continuously produced by human agents.

Appadurai’s argument and conceptualization of locality seems eminently compatible with the approach to “community” adopted in the present work. The face-to-face type community that Appadurai labels the “neighborhood,” corresponds well to what I have called the “experiential community”. For Appadurai, the neighborhood is where locality is realized as a social form involving situated immediacy, actuality and interaction. Locality, however, is a phenomenological quality that emerges through the interplay of interaction and social reproduction within specific spatial configurations. In his own argument for reconsidering “place” as an important locus of anthropological inquiry, Arturo Escobar (2001) quotes Casey, who says that “To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all is to know the places one is in” (Casey: 1997:18 [cited in Escobar

2001])²³. Escobar also points out that “place” is a “sedimented social structures and cultural practices” – as such it is at the intersection of individual and social life. In semiotic terms, one might rephrase this as my own conceptualization of community, where the neighborhood or place is the field of practice that produces locality as a shared indexical ground in relation to which the signs of the world are interpreted. The two ethnographic chapters take up Escobar and Appadurai’s suggestions to scrutinize the social production of locality and “place”.

In addition to Appadurai’s demonstration of the necessity of attending to locality in an increasingly globalizing and translocalizing world, locality holds a particular significance in discussions of indigenous peoples and their politics. The very category of indigeneity both in common parlance and in the various legal definitions of the term, presuppose a particularly type of relation, conceptualized as primordial or even inalienable, between the indigenous people and their territory. Therefore, to attribute a group of people the status as an indigenous community is also a claim about locality, and the ideology of indigeneity is an ideology of locality. Through the anchoring of the indigenous in the Mexican territory, the Mexican nation state becomes able to claim indigenous communities as “our indigenous people,” and their resources as “our resources”. The fact that both the local political community and the nation state have stakes in the process of localizing indigenous communities, raises the question of how ideologies and practices of locality in national space map onto those within the indigenous public and vice versa. The two ethnographic chapters show that there is a gap between the way that local communities are “localized” within the official discourse of the national community, and how indigenous groups localize themselves in a local cosmovision reproduced through social relations, interactions and rituals. In returning to the idea of localocentrism as a significant political concept in Mesoamerican indigenous politics, this dissertation participates in a longstanding debate – hopefully providing new arguments and

²³ It may be significant that this quote is from 1997, at a time before the internet reconfigured forms of life and knowledge to include the virtual forms of presence and copresence.

conceptualizations, and without reinventing the billiard ball conceptualization of the local community.

Parallel to the anthropological discussion of the local community and its relation to the abstract imagined community on one hand, and the concrete territorial geopolitics of the state on the other, linguists have theorized the relations between sociolinguistic units at different scales, and different levels of abstraction. The ideology of ethnic nationalism that emerged in the 18th century, and which is still common in the world's nationalist movements, sees language as the embodiment and vehicle of the national community (Anderson 1983). The development of the nationalist ideology emerged from Herderian notions of language and community as both naturally given and isomorphic. The national community was assumed to be identical with the linguistic community, united by the "sentiment and will of speaking the same language".²⁴ The linguistic unit was also assumed to be pre-given and naturally delimited by its own internal homogeneity. Nevertheless, scholars studying the social functions of languages have consistently found that language is never homogeneous, even within a group of language users who conceptualize themselves as "a community".²⁵ Gumperz (1964) described how dialectologists had taken issue with the dominant approach in historical linguistics that saw linguistic communities as homogeneous and localized entities in a way that allowed for drawing neat tree diagrams based on the principle of 'descent with modification' and shared innovations. Dialectologists rather realized that dialect traits spread through diffusion and that social factors were decisive in how this happened. They also realized that traits spread as waves from centers and that often several competing varieties would exist in some communities. This insight

²⁴ *"En effet, la définition de l'identité linguistique ne peut être que sociale: quelles que soient les différences de fait entre les sujets parlantes, il y a langue une là où des individus se comprennent entre eux, ont, de une façon consciente ou inconsciente, la sentiment et la volonté d'appartenir à une même communauté linguistique"* (Meillet 1921, 80-81)

²⁵ Woolard (1985) noted that "The simplest and yet most important contribution of sociolinguistics to social scientific knowledge is its insistence on recognizing the considerable variation in speech that exists within even the most homogeneous of societies.' The second important contribution is the insistence that this variation is neither trivial nor a pale reflection of "real" language, but that it is systematic and that the systematicity of linguistic variation is an imperative object of study in itself."

prompted Gumperz to problematize the notion of the linguistic community as the community that carries a single speech variant, and instead to seek a definition that could encompass heterogeneity. This could be done by focusing on the interactive aspect of language, because interaction in speech is the path along which diffused linguistic traits travel. Gumperz defined the “speech community” as “... Any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage (Gumperz 1964).” Gumperz’ definition is significant because it gives equal importance to the language structure and interactional networks in delimiting the sociolinguistic unit, and especially because it does not aim to delineate either the community or the language system as discrete entities. The community is a group of people who frequently interact with each other. This is not a definition of a discrete group because frequency of interaction is relative and graduated, and never stable. However, Gumperz’ definition draws attention to the fact contrary to the assumptions of the Nationalist ideology, most of the linguistic entities that we call “languages” are in fact not coextensive with “speech communities”. This disjunction led Michael Silverstein to point out the importance of distinguishing between the “speech community” and the “language community” (Silverstein 1996, 1998). The former term describes a community whose speech forms are identified under a single label and assumed to share a single denotational code; the latter as a community whose members engage in linguistic interactions and as a result have come to share a set of specific linguistic practices, regardless of labeling. Where “speech communities” emerge the mutual daily calibration of linguistic practices through interaction, “language communities” are artefacts of the process that creates language labels, and which works to homogenize the linguistic systems that the labels denote. This process is a political process, that follows hand in hand with nationalism, where the linguistic variety favored by the nationalist ideology is defined as “a language”. Haugen (1966), described how the process of creating a national language, requires first the selection of a favored linguistic variety, then its codification into a standardized homogeneous form, and finally the propagation of the

codified standard variety through which ever means of reproduction are available in a society. In the same process, the varieties that the national community wants to subsume into its imagined community are subordinated to the standard variety and given status as “dialects”. The distinction between the localized “speech community” and the national “language community,” is central to the present work, since Nahuatl is a language label that subsumes many speech communities with highly variably linguistic practices. As we will see, it is however a contested question whether Nahuatl is also a language community, and consequently whether it holds the potential of being the vehicle of an ideology of pan-Nahuan ethno-nationalism.

Language and Indigenous Politics:

Several ethnographic studies of towns that are Nahua speaking or have historically been so have provided important argumentation in the debate about local communities and their politics. Most important among these studies are those of Tepoztlán in Morelos (just 30 kilometers from Hueyapan). The first study of Tepoztlán was Redfield’s (1930) study, followed by Lewis’ (1951) re-study, and further studies by Lomnitz (1992), (2001) and Martin (2005)²⁶. Lewis critiqued Redfield’s characterization of Tepoztecan internal politics as a kind of cultural bipartition along lines of liberal intellectuals and conservative traditionalists (*los correctos vs. los tontos*), for ignoring the larger context of historical dispossession, labor relations and outside economic and political ties. Lomnitz on the other hand, drew attention to the fact that Tepoztlán’s history and internal politics have to be read in the contexts of local, regional as well as national domains of politics, with attention to the separate political cultures that exist each domain. He noted the role of elite intellectuals who have access to participation in the political cultures beyond their own immediate cultural domain, in brokering power in the articulations between the different domains – forming a

²⁶ But see also studies of other communities such as Schryer (1990) who studies a community in the Huasteca region, and attends to the intersections and disjunctions between ethnicity and class within the community. Taggart (1983) studies social structure through of Sierra Nahuatl through its reflection in local myths, and the conflicts that originate along ethnic, class and religious fault lines (Taggart 2007) (Taggart 2008).

system of representation that is never truly representative, because it is dictated in the terms of the national and regional elites. For Lomnitz, the only political uses of elements of indigenous culture, is as an idiom through which local elites can articulate their own elite status within a national public sphere that values the 'indigenous' as an expression of national history. Local patriotism, in this analysis (which is also adopted by historians such as (Gillingham 2011)) is primarily a way in which local communities make themselves visible and recognizable to the national state, staking out a place for themselves in the national narrative.

Lomnitz' argument about local patriotism as local accommodation to nationalism, considers the public function of the symbols of indigeneity to be primarily oppressive. Friedlander (1976) forcefully articulated his argument in her study of the Nahua community of Hueyapan, Morelos. She argued that the state ideology of *indigenismo* forced a stigmatized Indian identity onto the local communities whose members would rather become simply Mexicans. Where Lomnitz focused on showing the use of indigenous symbols as a kind of cultural currency or discursive idiom used by local elites in their interactions with regional and national elites, Friedlander sought to deconstruct the very symbols generally considered to be indigenous. In this way, she demonstrated that many of the cultural forms generally considered to mark Hueyapan as an "indian community," such as the 'traditional' dress, crafts, ceremonies, rituals, songs, and even the Nahuatl language, are essentially artefacts of colonial history. She pointed out that many of these 'traditions' did not have very deep histories, sometimes having been introduced by the state's own agents in the post-revolutionary period, or by the colonial order. Hence, for Friedlander considering Hueyapan an "indian community," was tantamount to participating in the government's attempt to force the locals to accept a stigmatized and powerless identity, and keep them in the political role as a clientele. Under this perspective, internal politics in Hueyapan was primarily a struggle to escape the 'indian' identity, a struggle that was necessary in order instead to become a kind of community able to participate in regional and national politics and achieve a degree of power over the town's future. In

the foreword to the 2006, second edition of the book, Friedlander revises aspects of her argument in the light of some significant developments since she carried out her study in the early 1970s. One such development is the global replacement of political discourses of *indigenismo* and *indios* with rights-based discourses of indigeneity; the other is the way that some forms of political action such as the Zapatista rebellion and the Guatemalan pan-Maya movement have shown themselves able to leverage indigenous identity as a force for radical change. She remains skeptical however, and I would argue rightly so, of the use of these identity categories and symbols by the state.

Friedlander's work represented a new way for anthropologists to think about the political potential of their own discipline and its long history of engagement with cultural others. It prompted ethnographers to consider the political consequences of our engagements with subjugated and colonized people's cultures. Ethnographers suddenly realized that in our efforts to faithfully depict cultural diversity, we risked making it even harder for cultural minorities to escape stigmatized and stereotyped identities. In addition, it began a tendency of critically examining how states use cultural discourses and ideologies in strategies of domination. Since then, anthropologists have dedicated enormous efforts to the development of a critical conceptual framework in which to understand the relations between indigenous peoples as cultural minorities and the national states that now increasingly adopt discourses of multiculturalism. Through the 1980s and 1990s discourses of cultural rights and indigeneity spread outside of anthropology, carried forward by international political bodies such as the UN, and the WTO. But as state after state declared itself to be "multicultural" and respecting the cultural rights of minorities, it quickly became clear that the risks Friedlander's had warned about had been real. In Indonesia, Tania Murray Li (2000) noted how the end of the Suharto regime had witnessed the introduction of a "tribal slot," into which the country's indigenous groups were working to insert themselves to become able to claim rights over territory. She argued that not all potentially indigenous groups had equal access to claim this position, resulting in new forms of marginalization. Diane Nelson

(2001) demonstrated how the Guatemalan state used the multicultural agenda as a “finger in the wound” caused by the genocidal civil war, and how it seemed to deploy the idea of colorfully clad indigenous Maya women who had now become reintegrated into the national collective, as a prosthetic for the state’s own mutilated body. Rearticulating Friedlander’s argument about forced identity in the context of multiculturalist Australia, Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) noted how the culturalist discourses of identity selectively drew certain aspects of indigeneity to the fore, while burying other, less convenient ones, such as land rights. She demonstrated how these discourses systematically distorted the perception of the indigenous other in the Australian public, in turn forcing indigenous peoples to conform to the stereotypes making misrecognition the only achievable form of recognition. In an argument even more forceful than Friedlander’s, Adam Kuper (2003) denounced the complicity of cultural anthropologists in recreating the previously abandoned, racist category of “the Native,” now under the term “indigenous,” as label used to position some communities as standing outside of modernity and civilization. The same process of neoliberal multiculturalization was described for Peru and Guatemala by Charles Hale (2002, 2004, 2005). He argued that the focus on cultural difference was limited to permitting a certain kind of easily manageable, culturalized, indigeneity, which rarely materializes in improved conditions for the indigenous groups of the country, or in any attention to their collective needs.

At the same time, anthropologists working with indigenous peoples have sought to escape earlier totalizing narratives of cultural otherness, without losing the ability to recognize and describe the ways that cultural differences participate in shaping how indigenous groups view and understand the world and their place in it. Already in 1998, building on ethnographic work in Guatemala through the civil war, Kay Warren showed that indigenous Maya intellectuals were using their cultural heritage as a way to build unity and peaceful resistance in the face of the violent oppression of the state. She pointed particularly to the role of Maya linguists and their participation in language revitalization activism in creating a rallying point where the movement could articulate

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a shared pan-Mayan identity. Drawing on the concept of 'strategic essentialism' from feminist theory, Warren suggested that culturalizing resistance, as the Maya movement was doing, did indeed risk perpetuating essentialist tropes and stereotypes. Nevertheless, she argued, such self-essentialization also served as a new strategy through which indigenous Guatemalans could seek a political voice that they had been denied, and which could no longer legitimize itself through the stigmatized discourse of a social rebellion. Complicating the picture, some studies of revitalization and linguistic decolonization in the Maya movement have drawn attention to how the codification of subaltern languages risk producing new parameters of difference and subalternity within the broader indigenous community, pointing to the fraught nature of linguistic revival as empowerment (French 2010, Barrett 2008, Romero 2012).

In the context of the state of Bolivia, Nancy Postero described how in the 1990s during the state's flirt with the ideology of multiculturalism cultural rights were enforced selectively in ways that served to incorporate indigenous communities into a neoliberal governmentality while retaining government control over resources and territory (Postero 2005). It was the backlash to this neoliberal multiculturalism, which did not result in social or political improvements for the indigenous majority, that set the stage for the subsequent rise of the country's "indigenous revolution" the *pachakuti* (Postero 2007). Also working in the context of Evo Morales' new paradigm for Bolivia, Gustafson examined how language and education policy also participated in creating new spaces for indigenous groups to articulate positive identities for themselves and foster participation in new forms of politics (Gustafson 2009). In neighboring Paraguay, Mario Blaser (2004, 2010) examines state projects aimed at bringing socioeconomic development to indigenous communities and he argues that indigenous people may formulate their lifeprojects, including their visions for the future of their town and local community, against an entirely different backdrop than the majority society that aims to 'develop' them. This backdrop is the culturally constituted lifeworld, understood a set of culturally contingent categories and assumptions about what exists

that make up the world that we navigate and in which we interact. In Blaser's analysis, it is necessary to insist on examining how the relations between humans, environment and ethnic groups are culturally inflected in different ways, in order to understand how the Yshiro people form radically different visions for their own future than the one's the Paraguayan state are seeking to implement. Here, Blaser suggests that by attending to differences between how human-environment relations are culturally narrated in different communities, a state might be able to work together with indigenous groups, supporting their own visions of development, rather than imposing neoliberal development schemes on them. By focusing on narrativity as the medium of ontology, Blaser avoids the risk of posing ontologies as monolithic constructions that produce indigenous peoples as radically other.

While all contemporary scholars of indigeneity accept the basic fact that political projects based on discourses of indigeneity are vulnerable to misappropriation and cooptation by states, a consensus seems to be emerging that indigeneity is a double-edged sword, capable of enabling oppression as well as empowerment of minorities. Recent scholarship suggests that cultural differences in perspectives and worldviews may play a significant role in providing indigenous groups with the tools to articulate their own political projects (Blaser 2009). Comparatively, few scholars have focused directly on the role of language in relation to indigenous politics; particularly in the study of language endangerment and revitalization, its potential relations to indigenous politics have yet to be fully formulated. It seems yet to be an open question whether indigenous languages, and their revival through activism, holds any positive political potential.

In Mexico, work by Dan Suslak (2011) on the critically endangered Ayapaneco Zoque language has shown that language endangerment discourses are also critically prone to cooptation by neoliberal agendas, including commodification and exploitation by global business. Shaylih Muehlmann (2013) has shown that the centrality of indigenous languages to the way that Mexican

government conceptualizes and operationalizes indigeneity, puts indigenous groups whose languages are no longer central to local identity, such as the Cucapá, at a disadvantage in claiming their rights. She shows how Cucapá youths sometime feel obligated to use the indigenous language to which they have never experienced any relation except in the form of swear words. She describes how government efforts to support youths seem to have centered on language shift as a social problem, to the exclusion of addressing the much more intense challenges faced by indigenous youths growing up in poverty with few possibilities for legal employment and several options for illegal employment. Language activism in the Cucapá and Ayapaneco case takes on a decidedly oppressive character. Nevertheless, both of these studies take place in communities where the language does no longer serve any central social functions in the everyday workings of the local political community. Some recent studies carried out in contexts where the indigenous languages are more vital suggests that expanding language usage into new social domains may provide platforms where local identities can be renewed and reformulated, suggesting potential political relevance. Paja Faudree's (2013) work on the revival of the Mazatec language as a medium for artistic and religious expression strongly suggests that language revival has a positive role to play in community building, at least when it is driven by local initiatives, assuring its relevancy in the specific local context. Writing about Nahua intellectuals, Kelly McDonough (2014) clearly sees the use of Nahuatl language literary text production as the medium through which a Nahua ethno-political identity can be forged and leveraged. In her analysis of contemporary Nahuatl intellectuals engaged in forms of language activism, she draws on Gramscian theory to argue that literary practice is necessary to produce a set of Nahuatl cultural forms that are coherent and robust enough to challenge the narratives of the national hegemony. McDonough does not however engage with the question of what role the Nahuatl language itself might have in this process: is the use of the Nahuatl language necessary for the process of political formation to take place, or is the existence of a community of intellectuals who identify as Nahua enough to challenge the national

hegemony? Could Nahua intellectuals writing in Spanish or English perhaps not form a counter hegemony just as well? Or is there something about the Nahuatl language that makes it particularly suited for this purpose? Or is it simply the best available medium to serve as an emblem of the process of the cultural revival, regardless of whether or not the Nahuatl texts achieve a readership? Faudree in turn, does attend to the specificity of the Mazatec language, pointing out how Mazatec people experience a close relation between their highly tonal language and music, making song performance in Mazatec a medium inherently suited for Mazatec cultural mobilization. In relation to Nahuatl, these questions about the significance of specific languages to specific communities, have yet to be asked, but I will address them implicitly and explicitly over the course of the dissertation.

More pressing however, I consider the need for an explicit theorization of the relations between indigenous community politics and language maintenance. The intense anthropological debate about the political uses of the concepts and discourses of indigeneity has led to the formulation of coherent and well-theorized accounts of the relation between indigenous communities and their territories, and have also theorized narratives and religious practices as central loci of identity formation, but similar theoretical attention has not been dedicated to language. When the issue is addressed at all by language activists it is often at the level of slogans drawing on Herderian romantic ideals such as “a language is the soul of a nation” or “when a language dies a culture dies” (Woodbury 1993). Alternatively, language is sometimes argued to be important qua its role as a privileged medium for other ideas of importance to the construction of a political or communal conscience, for example cultural memory, or indigenous knowledge. In either case, language is conceptualized primarily as a vessel for something else of potential value.

The most theoretically sophisticated arguments have emerged within the field of postcolonial and decolonization theory, where authors have argued that the imposition of a colonial

language amounts to a colonization of thought itself, making the use of a language other than the colonizers imperative for the process of decolonization to succeed. This argument was seminal presented by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the Mind*. Wa Thiong'o also describes the significance of language as that of the vessel, although he considers it one that is essentially inseparable from the political community that it carries: "Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world... Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world" (wa Thiong'o 1986, 15-16). Wa Thiong'o posits an intimate relation between specific languages and the formation of a political consciousness among the people who speak them, but falls short of providing an account of the dynamics that lead to this intimate relation between language and speech community, or of the mechanisms through which they are tied together. Surely, it is a significant insight that the formation of the relation should be understood as a historical process, but if we are to move beyond positing the intimate relation between language and community as a simple statement of fact, we have to understand the practical and concrete ways that history interweaves sociality and language. The argument that language revitalization is a central piece of the process of decolonization is echoed by recent reviews of the field of language policy and revitalization such as (Gustafson, Julca Guerrero and Jiménez 2016). The approach to the community-language relation developed in this dissertation aims to provide the theoretical foundation for this type of argument.

Summarizing this section, we see that in the approaching the relation of endangered indigenous language and indigenous community politics, we must pay close attention to community internal politics, as well as to the ways that state power and discourses penetrate the local political domain. Moreover, the fact that that this is a historical process, requires us to pay attention to how these configurations shift over time, in order to find patterns that will allow us to understand the

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networks of causality. This requires an explicit theorization of the indigenous community and its politics – and of the role of language in both, developing such a theory is the aim of the following section.

Lifeworlds and Publics: Communities as experience and as politics

An aim of this dissertation is to reintroduce the idea of community, re-theorizing it to fit a contemporary understanding of social complexity. An important reason to reconsider the community is that the concept is a central part of social reality in indigenous Mexico. Nahuatl people very commonly express that they consider themselves part of a community, usually the community of their town of birth. They tend to construct their identities, whether as indigenous people or as other types of political subjects, focusing strongly on their relation to their local community of origin. The concern with the local community as the seat of language and sociality is also found in the work of many indigenous linguists. This is even the case for proponents of a pan-Nahuan ethno-political ideology such as the Nahuatl linguist and teacher Miguel Barrios Espinosa, who in the 1940s combined his interest in promoting an “Aztec” nationalism with an intense pride and interest in his own community of origin, Hueyapan.²⁷ Victoriano Tepoxteco de La Cruz Cruz, who previously worked with the IDIEZ project which promotes a pan-Nahuan ideology and who now publishes two online Nahuatl language journals, also proudly reaches back to his natal community of Tepoxteco, Chicontepec, Veracruz as a source of identity.²⁸ Mixe linguist Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil argues forcefully for recognizing the local linguistic varieties. Following linguist Leopoldo Valiñas she proposes to define the varieties of indigenous town-communities as *communalects*, and

²⁷ Barrios’ work includes the publication of local folk narratives from Hueyapan, and the Aztec-nationalist news paper Mexica Itonalama which was published in the early 1950s.

²⁸ In McDonough (2014:118) de la Cruz Cruz writes: “*Tonelhuayo huan toxic motoctoc ipan millah huan nechca tlixictli. Iuhcatzan ticpanquizah ipan ceyoc tlalli ma tichuicacan totlahtol huan totlallamiqiliz huan amo ma tictlatican*” [Our roots and our umbilical cords are buried in the milpa and next to the fire ring. Even when we move to the cities we must take our language and our knowledge, there is no need to hide these things. (translation by McDonough 2014)]. The significance of de la Cruz Cruz’ rootedness in the community of Tepoxteco, can also be seen in the fact that he uses “Tepoxteco” as his online pseudonym, and publishes one of his Nahuatl language digital magazines at www.vitepoxteco.org.

she argues that they should be considered separate languages for the purpose of studying speaker demographics and language vitality (Aguilar Gil 2013). She argues that only in this way, the right of a speech community to pass on its local language to new generations can be protected. This argument is frequently echoed from local speakers in the context of language revitalization projects. As Aguilar, Nahuatl speakers tend to locate the political significance of language at the scale of the local *altepetl* community. From this discrepancy between the anthropological reluctance to locate the community in an increasingly dislocated world and the indigenous insistence of anchoring identity in local soil and local social aggregates, stems the necessity to understand the relation between local community, local language variety and language politics. Aguilar Gil finishes her argument stating that “*si la lengua no es uno de los pilares de la comunalidad, sí es una de sus principales creaciones*” (Aguilar Gil 2013:71) [if language is not one of the pillars of communality, it is at least one of its primary creations]. The conceptualization of the language-community relation developed in the following, intends to show that language is indeed one of the pillars of communality – as well as being its product.

I propose to conceptualize communities as constituted in two different ways: *As experiential communities* and *as political communities*. I develop this theoretical distinction by synthesizing three strands of social theory: 1. Phenomenological formulations of shared practice, experience and intersubjectivity as the basis of community (following for example Schütz (1967 [1932]) and the later Wittgenstein (1999 [1958])²⁹), 2. Critical perspectives on the political community (including perspectives from Gramsci (1971) and Habermas (1989 [1962])), and their subsequent developments by Fraser (1990), and Warner (2002), and Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985])), 3. Both of these theories, I re-analyze through the theoretical lens of Peircean semiotics (C. S. Peirce 1955).

²⁹ I do not engage with the phenomenological theorizations of Husserl or Brentano, since they are more psychological and less centered on the way that human communities constitute themselves through shared experience.

(The semiotic theories of C. S. Peirce (1931 –35) have been developed by many theorists in linguistic anthropology, not least Silverstein (1976, 1981, 1985, 1992, 1993, 1996, 2003, 2014), Woolard (1985), Gal (1989), Irvine (1989) (and Irvine & Gal 2001, and Gal & Woolard 1995, 2001), Hanks (1990, 1992, 1996, 2005), Urban (1996, 2001), Kockelman (2010, 2011, 2013), Agha (2007) and Kroskrity (2009)). As this synthesis requires some explicit theorization and some familiarity with the three theories' most basic concepts, the theoretically uninclined reader may choose to skip this section.

I define experiential communities as communities constituted by a shared set of experiences, these shared experiences include both the ways that the physical world manifests itself to the members of community as a set of basic conditions of life³⁰, but also, importantly, it implies a shared meaning that community members attribute to the experiences. The experiential community therefore sustains itself by a set of shared conditions of life, and a set of shared meanings given to those experiences. Together these experiences constitute what in phenomenological philosophy has been called a *lifeworld* [Lebenswelt]. This lifeworld is anchored in experience which can of course never be entirely shared by two individuals nor fully distinct between two human groups, and it is the world that the members of an experiential community inhabit together. Rather than adopting the ontological conceptualization of the lifeworld espoused for example by Blaser (2009) and other proponents of the so-called “ontological turn”, the present work attempts not to assume too much about the degree to which lifeworlds actually constitute ontologies for those who inhabit them. Recently anthropologists writing on ontology have used the term in a metaphysical sense, as a way to describe relativistically, or “emically,” how people may live with beliefs about existence and nature that differ radically from their own. Linguistic

³⁰ Here I think of the kind of process that Sapir described in the following way: “*The true locus of culture is in the interactions of specific individuals, and on the subjective side, in the world of meaning that each one of these individuals may unconsciously abstract for himself through these interactions.* (E. Sapir 1949a [1932], 515)”

anthropologists have criticized this view for not distinguishing between the experiential world, and the semiotically mediated world (Keane 2013; Course 2010). Following this critique, the conceptualization of the lifeworld developed here attends centrally to the semiotic infrastructure of the experiential community.

For semiotic theorists like Paul Kockelman (2010, 2011, 2013), an ontology is not so much a metaphysical or psychological construction as it is a configuration of signs and categories derived from experience and socialization, which makes up the background knowledge against which we interpret the qualia of life. For Hanks (1990), the lifeworld is spatialized as an intersubjectively shared deictic field that we navigate through language and embodiment. Or, in the formulation of Greg Urban (1996), it is the set of categories that we use to make the sensible world intelligible. This understanding traces back to Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations, in which he argues that meaning arises from the "forms of life" in which we participate on a daily basis, and in relation to which any experience must receive its significance.³¹ Wittgenstein's "forms of life" built on Husserl's phenomenological concept of *Das Lebenswelt*, but he seems to have deliberately distinguished his own concept from Husserl's in order to move away from the idea of meaning as a psychological phenomenon towards a view of meaning rooted in shared practice. Acknowledging the phenomenological legacy and the cognitive rooting in experience, I use the term lifeworld, but I use it in such a semiotic sense.³²

³¹ In Wittgenstein's "middle period" in the "Big Typescript" he used the term "grammar" to describe the semiotic structuration of phenomenological experience (Wittgenstein, Big Typescript: TS 213 2012) – in the development of the typescript to the final version of *Philosophical Investigations* he got rid of this term.

³² In this semiotic sense, following semiotician John Deely (2004), the lifeworld can also be understood using Jakob von Uexküll's concept of the *Umwelt*. *Umwelt* is the world that appears to an organism as sensory input received and shaped by the limitations of the organism's sensory apparatus and which is interpreted within the context of the organism's possible types of reactions, for example the way a sunflower perceives sunlight, and reacts by turning towards it. The lifeworld, in this sense is the specifically human *Umwelt*, which compared to the *Umwelt* of non-human organisms is formed to a much larger extent by cultural and linguistic categories through which sensory input is interpreted and paired with reactions. My own conceptualization of the concept of the lifeworld as I use it in this dissertation combines aspects of this biosemiotic Uexküllian conceptualization with a Wittgensteinian one that is more centered in language practices.

In this semiotic sense, the function of the lifeworld is as an indexical ground (Hanks 1992) which is either shared or assumed to be shared, and against which members of a community interpret the world as it appears to them and becomes a sign. The lifeworld is not primarily a linguistic construction; on the contrary, words and sentences can only become meaningful when interpreted in relation to a lifeworld, and the very possibility of communication rests on our assumptions, justified or not, that our own lifeworld is sufficiently commensurable with that of our interlocutor for meanings to be intersubjectively shared. Nonetheless, the lifeworld does have an important linguistic aspect, because language use is one of the primary ways in which humans share experience, and the instrument by which we intersubjectively calibrate lifeworlds through the process of language acquisition and socialization, and the formation of communities of language, speech and discourse. Growing up in a community of experience entails growing into a speech community, and participating in its communities of discourse – and thus, language, along with other symbolic practices, plays a central role in the way that the community of experience is itself experienced.

Qua its function as an indexical ground, our membership in an experiential is largely unconscious, taken for granted, and implicit in participating in the forms of life of a particular location in space and time. In contrast, membership of a political community requires each member to have a degree of consciousness both of the community's existence and of their own membership. This is because political communities depend on their members' ability to explicitly articulate a shared identity with other members of the community in order to establish shared ideologies and values, and to formulate paths of collective action.

Work in linguistic anthropology by scholars such as (Gal & Woolard 1995, 2001; Cody 2011; Swinehart & Graber 2012; Muehlmann 2014), has built on Habermas' (1989) concept of the "public sphere". Specifically they have drawn on the concept's development by theorists such as Fraser

(1990) and Warner (2002). Such uses of Habermas, interprets his “bourgeois public sphere” as a specific historical instantiation of a wider, arguably universal, concept of the political community. The bourgeois public sphere, as described by Habermas, emerged under specific historical circumstances where a sphere of public discussion was able to emerge in the gap between the sphere of government and the private sphere of relations between individuals. However, a more generalized idea of the public sphere, describes any space of communicative action in which visions of a “common good” can be formulated, and in which the joint attention to this common good creates a sense of political community. If Habermas described the emergence and fall of the European “bourgeois public sphere,” then this dissertation traces the various historical manifestations of Nahuatl public spheres. Such a Nahuatl public sphere will probably be quite different from the type described by Habermas, with its focus on rational discussion among property owners carried on in the urban coffeeshops and through the technological platform of print media. Previous work by anthropologists and critical theorists have rejected some of Habermas’ ideals for the public sphere. They have problematized Habermas’ insistence on a concept of rationality that many have found to be restrictive and perhaps exclusive to a European bourgeois constituency; and they have questioned the possibility of a public sphere being inclusive of all possible visions of the common good. Scholars such as Nancy Fraser (1990) and Michael Warner (2002) have worked towards a concept of the public that makes pluralism of values, rationalities, and formulations of the common good, possible. In their view publics are simply communities of discourse and value, engaged in a joint struggle to promote their vision of the common good – sometimes formulated in distinct opposition to hegemonic discourses and values within a wider public sphere into which they are subsumed. Such communities, whose visions run contrary to a wider public sphere that claims them as unwilling members under the banner of a hegemonic formulation of a common good, Fraser and Warner call *counter publics*. The notion of the counter public has already been incorporated into the study of indigenous political

communities' relations with the state, focusing on how discursive practices that formulate an indigenous political community and its public good as distinct from that of the nation state, may be a vehicle for indigenous empowerment (Stephenson 2002; Urla 1995). The conceptualization of political pluralism inherent in the idea of publics and counter publics, is also similar to Lomnitz' (1992) concept of nested political cultures at the national, regional and local levels – but it provides for an even more complex structure with additional hierarchical levels, and other parameters of difference in addition to geographic scope – such as language.

In this pluralist vision of the public, public spheres are fuzzy constructions that intersect and overlap with each other, that permeate and influence each other, and which may subsume or incorporate each other as Russian dolls at multiple scales. A universe of public spheres can be graphically represented as a venn diagram, for example with a national public encompassing, partially intersecting regional, local, ethnic or political sub- or counter publics, which may in turn subsume their own internal micro-public spheres. Importantly, this conceptualization recognizes that all such public spheres are constituted, not by a tacit consensus of values or meanings among its members, but by their *joint attention* towards the public itself as the forum in which a common good can be formulated. The reliance on joint attention means that public spheres are necessarily unstable constructions, in that the degree of participation in a public sphere is contingent on how crowds react to specific historical moments, specific discourse, and political relations, potentially switching attention back and forth between two publics or even more. In this way, public spheres are precisely not “billiard ball”-type communities, because they are neither expected to be internally homogeneous, nor discrete, nor impervious to outside influences, nor are they expected to be stable over time.

The sustainability of a public relies on its ability to maintain the attention of its participants across contexts and events. Hence, a public not only tolerates, but requires, a degree of

heterogeneity to be able to sustain itself as a meaningful forum for debate. Part of this inherent heterogeneity may well involve a discussion of whether to even maintain the political community separate from some other public. Individual participants in a given public may be in favor of introducing concepts, goals and values from outside public spheres, or they may see themselves as members of other publics and aim to convince other members that it is in their common interest to abandon theirs. What defines the public is the sustained conversation among a group that sees itself as a “we,” but the duration within which a public sustains itself, as well as the degree to which it commands the attention of those who orient towards it may be highly variable.³³ A metaphor for a universe of public spheres may be a social occasion such as an evening reception where mingling is taking place. The participants in such an event will naturally segregate into smaller groups of conversation, but each group is only sustained as long as the conversation maintains the interest of the participants. No conversation is truly exclusive or closed off, although people with shared interests will tend to gravitate towards each other. But participation is optional. When participants become bored, or something else catches their attention, they will defect – joining another conversation. Some conversations will be better able to maintain the participants’ interest than others: some will quickly dissolve, and other more interesting ones will draw the attention of new participants. Within this metaphor, we can imagine the semiotic membrane protecting a public with its distinct language, by imagining a group of deaf people conversing in sign language in the middle

³³ In using the term “orientation” (and orient and reorient), I draw on Schütz’ (1967[1932]) conceptualization as a selective attention to a specific form of “we-relation” with a “common communicative environment”. Orientation is thus a kind of intentional stance of an individual (which can change from moment to moment, and context to context). When I attribute orientations to a community, saying for example that a community “reoriented towards the national public sphere,” this is to be understood as a cumulative outcome of the changing orientations of its individual members. A “community” (understood as a group of people who interact regularly) does not require its members to share the same orientation, and hence at the aggregate level orientation will always be partial – except at the point when we see that a form of “we-ness” that previously characterized the community now no longer exists. At that point, reorientation can be said to have occurred. Hence, the process of community reorientation is *always* partial and gradual, never binary – except in retrospect (when for example a “Nahuatl public” has become a “Mestizo town”).

of the reception. Regardless of how loudly other participants yell, the conversation among them will not be disturbed.

In being heterogeneous and prone to dissolution as attention shifts, the political community, the public, is different from the community of experience. The community of experience is indeed homogeneous to the degree that experience is induced by a similar physical, social, and cultural environment. In fact, regardless of whether it is homogeneous or not, its members simply assume as a given that people who live in close proximity and interaction with each other also share similar experiences of local environment, social relations and cultural ideas. The shared perspectives that constitute the experiential community are the ones that are tacitly presupposed, and which cannot therefore easily be objects of discussion or debate. These tacit perspectives and implicit conventions tend to lie outside of the conscious awareness of its members who may not even consciously realize the existence of the community.³⁴ Indeed the experiential community only exists in so far as certain basic experiences are assumed by its members to be shared, and the sense of community ruptures if elements assumed to be shared suddenly show themselves not to be. This happens for example, when, in a discussion, interlocutors become aware of a difference in social class, that they had not been previously aware of. When such a difference suddenly becomes conscious, it may threaten the conversation (it may turn towards smalltalk and then shortly thereafter dissolve). Such ruptures may emerge from even the tiniest indexes of difference, an odd accent, a wrong brand of sneakers, or a casual political commentary. The assumed existence of important experiential communities may also be a site of policing, when such

³⁴ In making this distinction, I build on Michael Silverstein's (1981) recognition of the principle of differential and selective awareness, which has a longer genealogy in Boasian anthropology and is central to the phenomenology of Schütz. I consider it to be in essence a basic semiotic principle, which builds on the fact that in order to produce meaning in communication we need an intersubjective indexical ground, a lifeworld, which is relatively stable between individuals and across interactions. Through the use of an explicit ideology within a political community, individual aspects of the shared lifeworld can be selectively pulled into consciousness and negotiated, but in doing so other aspects must necessarily remain unquestioned since they will form the ground against which the negotiation takes place.

indexes of differences in experience are drawn into conscious awareness and become enregistered emblems (Agha 2007: 235-238) of insider vs. outsider status (Silverstein 2003, 2014). Minor linguistic differences, such as differences in pronunciation become *shibboleths*, marking individuals as not sharing the basic experiences of a local community. Chapter 5, describes how these processes of policing experience through metapragmatic engagement with its salient indexes, becomes crucial in a language revitalization context.

However, both the community of experience and the public are semiotic constructions. Language is also a central vehicle for the constitution of a political community: it is the sign system in which the community of experience is encoded, both its specific and explicit sense of “we-ness” as well as its internal debates about the common good. Because language becomes meaningful through its indexical anchoring in a lifeworld, it therefore ties the political community to a community of experience. Hence, language may act as a pragmatic barrier to participation and infiltration of members of other publics who do not share basic aspects of the lifeworld to which the political community anchors itself. Language in this way forms a *barrier of contextualization* for signs from outside of the local community, because entextualization into a new community of experience brings outside concepts into indexical relations with new co-texts, coloring their meaning and adapting them to the local community of experience. And because of the symbolic nature of linguistic communication, which means that to participate in the political debate one has to first acquire the repertoire of referential signs that the political community puts to use, it also provides a symbolic barrier to outside participation. Language forms a *barrier of translation* through which outside symbols must pass before they can even become entextualized within the new public.³⁵ When conceptualized in this way, the act of encoding political debates about a

³⁵ Here I use the term symbol in its Peircean sense as a conventional sign. Hence, language poses barriers at least two of the semiotic levels: the indexical and the symbolic. There may also be such a thing as a barrier of similarity, working at the iconic level. Such a barrier would affect the way that signs are recognizable as tokens

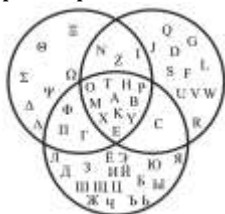
common good in a language distinct from that of surrounding or competing publics, may partly inoculate a public against attempts of usurpation of power from external hegemonic forces. Both because expressions from the outside must be translated into a new linguistic code, but also because signs originating in an external public sphere even when translated will become meaningful only in the relation to the indexical ground of the lifeworld.³⁶

The two semiotic barriers that a distinct language affords its speech community, constitutes the community as something that adapting a concept proposed by Yuri Lotman (Lotman & Clark 2005) we could call a *semiosphere*, a sphere in which a given, limited, array of signs are socially current, and each have a relatively restricted scope of probable interpretants constrained by a (relatively) shared interpretational ground. Consider for example the way that choice of script (Roman, Cyrillic, Amharic, Egyptian) demarcates a social sphere in which a set of signs are current and have relatively stable interpretants.³⁷ One might illustrate the concept of semiospheres, using the Greek, Latin and Cyrillic alphabets to stand for the array of symbols used within each

of the same type. An illegible handwriting, or a new font type, or in speech an odd accent, might pose such a barrier.

³⁶ To conceptualize how the two semiotic barriers protect the public think again of the sign language speakers at the evening reception. A hearing person who has learned the denotational code of sign language may join the conversation. Yet, if she tries to describe the sound of a particular piece of music playing in the background or an annoying voice in one of the other conversations sign language will presumably be of no great help in getting her point across to those who do not recognize sound as a part of their experiential world. The experiential world of the sign language speakers, forces its terms onto the hearing participant if she wishes to participate in their public. This is of course also an illustration of how the principle of linguistic relativity applies to the domain of politics.

³⁷ For example, the sign A has a similar though not identical value in all the communities that employ the Roman alphabet: In each textual community, it symbolically refers to a similar phonetic value in the language of the community. A language that used the sign A to signify a consonant or the sign K to signify a vowel would no longer participate fully in the semiosphere demarcated by the Roman alphabet. In the same way the use of a specific variety of Nahuatl, demarcates a semiosphere in which a specific set of verbal signs are current, and in which there is relative agreement about the range of possible meanings of each verbal sign. In order to participate in the semiosphere, both the signs and their ranges of meanings must be acquired.



semiosphere – some sign shapes are shared between all three scripts. Alphabets are analogous to languages for the purpose of this illustration in that they are both arrays of conventional signs that need to be learned through socialization. Hence, the boundary of a semiosphere is likely to coincide with the boundary of a community of experience in which it is adopted as a vehicle of socialization. The boundary of the semiosphere imposes the barrier of translation and the barrier of contextualization for signs that cross between publics. These two barriers posed by the use of an indigenous language, make up the semiotic membrane that may circumscribe an indigenous experiential or political community within the national public sphere, and offer it a degree of resistance to assimilation.

This is all a complicated and perhaps overly theoretical way to point out that by phrasing politics in a given language, a political community also circumscribes the group of people who can participate in the political domain, and the set of political discourses and concepts that can be deployed within it. Summarizing the above: a Nahuatl public sphere is a sphere of political action, in which a political community constitutes itself by using the semiotic resources of the Nahuatl language to embed its communicative action within a Nahua lifeworld. It is any speech community that uses a Nahuan language, including its entailed ontological commitments and assumptions, as the medium of discussions about how to move collectively towards the future.

The conclusion that emerges from this theorization of the relation between experience, politics, community and language, is that language endangerment and revitalization can be considered to have direct bearings not only on the political life of a local community, but also on the subjective lives of all of its members. What are the ways in which speaking, or not speaking, a given language affects the lives of human beings; how does it shape their relations to their local community, their families, their peers and to the mainstream national public? To answer these questions we should investigate the role of political and communicative factors as well as existential and experiential

factors in producing decisions about using or abandoning Nahuatl. The hypothesis is that a language's vitality will be strengthened when its speakers are invested in consciously maintaining the "semiotic membrane" that keeps their local public separate from the mainstream public sphere.

Under this perspective, language shift can be understood as a symptom in a process through which a public gradually merges with another. The political community's own formulations of the common good are replaced with outside ones; the linguistic barrier disintegrates as the community adopts a foreign linguistic code; finally, the community lifeworld is transformed through saturation with outside concepts, signs and meanings. Conversely, language persistence can be understood as resistance to this process, by maintaining the linguistic barriers of translation and contextualization. The question then becomes, why do some political communities' seemingly resist the process of absorption into the national public sphere while others seem to embrace it? The answer to this question is by logical necessity grounded in some aspect of the community's politics, understood as its internal discussions about what is the common good. Operationalizing the hypothesis, I therefore suggest that indigenous languages are perhaps maintained better in those indigenous political communities that take on the character of a counter public in which we-ness and political identity is defined in opposition to the surrounding national public sphere.

The theoretical approach outlined above, requires me to pay particular attention to two processes: One of them is the process through which languages become meaningful to their speakers as a part of their everyday lives. If understood as an aspect of the total linguistic fact, this process is the formation of the relation between linguistic practice and linguistic form. The formation of indexical linkages between specific elements of linguistic matter and specific experiential patterns through everyday practice. This process is of interest because by studying the role of language in everyday lives, we can assess the potential for an indigenous language to participate in the constitution of a lifeworld of an experiential community, which means that in turn

we can assess its potential relevance as a factor of interest for a political community. If the lifeworld of the experiential community depends significantly on the indigenous language and its formulations of the common good that would potentially heighten the possibility of language becoming an issue of conscious political debate within the political community – and this might fortify the political community by maintaining the barriers of contextualization and translation.

The other process I study is the conscious choice by a political community to use the language as a part of their political strategy. As an element of the total linguistic fact, this process is the formation of the relation between linguistic ideology and linguistic form. As described by Irvine and Gal (2000) metasemiotic processes at the ideological level may form part in a strategy of re-erecting barriers that semiotically isolate the political community and reinforces its sense of a separate identity. Such conscious political uses of Nahuatl and other indigenous languages function by integrating political and metalinguistic ideologies, selectively emphasizing or downplaying differences between linguistic varieties at the local, regional, pan-ethnic, national or even international levels. This kind of ideological work makes it possible to use language to constitute political communities by tying political communities at different scales, whether localocentric, regional, pan-ethnic or nationalist, to specific forms of language.

Theoretical considerations in writing a History of Nahuatl Publics

In *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, Habermas set forth a theory of the bourgeois public sphere. He described the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere as a distinct development in Western Europe, that took place as a mercantilist society gradually developed into capitalism. Through this development the market came to be a common good of the bourgeoisie classes, who met in coffeehouses and salons discussing how best to further their common interests, by pressuring the ruling class to consider their needs. With the emergence of new fora for public debate about the common good, a new form of political culture emerged, one in which deliberative reason and

consensus formation was the driving factor. This in turn provided the foundation for the emergence of democracy. One feature of Habermas' formulation of the public sphere that has caused some controversy is the extent to which he is positing the bourgeois public sphere as a historical fact or as an ideal construct through which he can criticize contemporary political forms, and developments of the public sphere. Nonetheless, important critiques of the concept exist both at the historical level (i.e. the emergence of the public sphere may not have happened exactly as Habermas describes) and the conceptual level (i.e. the Bourgeois public sphere may not be as ideal as Habermas paints it). Instead of considering Habermas' formulation of the public sphere to be an absolute construct, we may take it to be simply one kind of public sphere which he used as a contrast through which he could criticize the actually existing public sphere in Europe. Then we may consider the "public sphere" as a general concept, simply the sphere in which public opinion is formed and circulated, whether or not this happens in the rational deliberative process idealized by Habermas. By taking this view, we may avoid many of the well-known critiques of the public sphere, such as its exclusivity to certain privileged social groups, its reliance on a particular ideology of rationality, and its totalizing tendencies.

In order to make the concept of the public sphere useful for studying kinds of politics that are formed in opposition to the bourgeois public sphere, scholars such as Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner have developed the concept of the counter public. In her original proposal of the concept, Fraser (1990) built on previous Gramscian critiques of Habermas that saw the Bourgeois public sphere and its claim to being a sphere in which subaltern classes could pose demands on those in power, simply as a transition from a primarily coercive form of power to one based primarily on consent. Fraser posited that this consent is never total, and that subaltern political communities always exist within any hegemonic public sphere, these she describes as subaltern "counter publics" in which public opinion is formed by those who are excluded in different ways from direct participation in the hegemonic bourgeois public sphere. Fraser considers these subaltern counter

publics to be characterized by their dual function as “spaces of withdrawal and regroupment” as well as “bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics (1990:68)”. That is, they have the simultaneous function of being a domain in which ideas of the “common good” can be discussed *internally*, while at the same time, while also planning strategies for *external* political work in the larger macro public sphere, which the counter public is simultaneously in opposition to and embedded within. This duality of the counter public will become conceptually important in the description that I am about to give of the development of the Nahua public sphere. Another important aspect of the counter public is that it may be characterized not only by a subaltern definition of “the common good”, but also by a subaltern language in which this common good is formulated and discussed. Even if the idiom in which the common good is discussed in the bourgeois public sphere is limited to an enlightenment ideal of rationality, this need not be the case within the counter public, where other idioms may be used. Nonetheless as pointed out by Spivak (1988) and many others, when the subaltern intends to address the hegemon, she is forced to adopt the hegemonic discourse in order to be heard, requiring a process of *translation* between the idiom of internal discussion to the idiom of *external* agitation. As Michael Warner (2002) points out, this is the Achilles heel of the counter public, because by orienting outwards it takes on the shape of a social movement within the macro-public sphere. From the perspective of the macro-public, the social movement is just a private sphere among many each advocating for the private interests of a subgroup within the larger society. In this way the formulation of multiple embedded public spheres is asymmetric - what looks like a counter public from the subaltern perspective looks like a private sphere from the hegemonic perspective; and it is fractal, because within any public sphere, a number of subordinate “counter publics” may be embedded. A result of this perspective is that the “private sphere” is conceptualized as an apolitical sphere where only intimate relations are found. Rather any “private sphere” is the site of possible formation of counter publics, and a counter public may in fact be indistinguishable from a private

sphere from the perspective of the external macro public. Local silence therefore cannot be taken as evidence for the absence of a local public sphere, just as local indifference to the national hegemony cannot be taken to be evidence of consent or of absolute hegemony having been achieved. Rather, the public or private nature of interactions between individuals within any given social domain becomes an empirical question. This is the perspective I will adopt in my attempt to describe the decline of the Nahua public sphere over the course of the 16th through 21st centuries.

The historiography and ethnography of indigenous politics in Mexico predates Habermas' formulations by half a century, and most engagements with Mexican indigenous politics do not employ the concept of the public sphere. Nonetheless, if we reread the tradition of studies into the political relations within indigenous Mexican communities we can find concepts that seem to be related. Starting with Redfield's studies of rural Mexican communities, the division of Mexican society into a folk society juxtaposed with urban society could be considered a forerunner of the realization that the sphere in which national politics are formulated is disconnected from the sphere in which most rural Mexicans live and act. In his study of the Nahua community of Tepoztlán in the second decades of the 20th century, Redfield saw Tepoteztecan society as divided into two groups, the *tontos* and the *correctos*, corresponding more or less to their orientation towards a more folk or a more urban ideology of politics and society. Lewis, in his famous restudy of Tepoztlán society contradicted this division, and stated that the main social division in Tepoztlán was based political power and the access to land. He saw the associated correlations of different value systems as a result of a process in which the landholding class oriented towards the political culture of the upper classes while the marginalized classes did not. For Lewis, it was a fundamental mistake to speak of the social divisions of Tepozteco society as cultural, considering such a perspective to be missing the fundamental political nature of the division, by culturalizing it. This distinction between the cultural and the political, has been a recurring theme in anthropology since then. Following Lewis, and the subsequent prevalence of Marxist anthropology and its opposition to

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symbolic anthropology considered apolitical by the Marxists, as well as the recent influence of critical theory which focuses on culture as a factor in generating false consciousness in oppressed peoples, anthropologists have developed an aversion to culture as an explanatory tool when understanding indigenous practices. As others (including Gramsci) have argued before me, and as I will argue in this chapter, this distinction and the severance of 'culture' from the political domain has caused anthropologists to sometimes miss a fundamentally political role of the forms of expression that are considered to be "culture" in indigenous societies.

Following Lewis' critical approach, other studies of indigenous communities in Morelos, such as Friedlander's famous study of Hueyapan, and Lomnitz' further "re-"studies of Tepoztlan, focused on the social divisions within the communities (often between modernizing/progressive and traditional forces) and how they reflected the workings of hegemonic dynamics. Friedlander specifically rejected cultural difference and the ethnic category of "indian" as a crude tool of oppression wielded by the state to force the people of Hueyapan into a subordinate political position. She specifically admonished anthropologists not to lose themselves in the study of cultural otherness, lest they become complicit in the state's strategy of domination by reifying that otherness and thereby depriving cultural minorities of the access to redefining themselves as part of the national community should they so choose. Friedlander's approach was part of a redefinition of Mexican anthropology by a new generation of critical anthropologists who like her denounced the complicity of anthropologists in state sponsored projects perpetuating cultural domination (Warman et al. 1970). One of these young anthropologists, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla published in 1987 his book *México Profundo*, in which he argued that Mexican society could only progress if it were to recognize the deep roots of its popular culture within the Mesoamerican past, abandoning its aspirations to becoming a Western Nation. He argued that Mesoamerican cultural practices provided the subsoil of Mexican society, which he called "Deep Mexico", and that nonetheless its primary carriers the indigenous groups had been subordinated to an "Imaginary Mexico", in which

the nation is imagined as an essentially European and Western modern nation. Bonfil's argument resonated widely and has become a staple reference point of any discussion about culture and identity in contemporary Mexico. It can be considered foundational for the Mexican conceptualization of interculturality as a revaluation of indigenous culture as something to be recognized, cherished and integrated into Mexican National culture, rather than hidden, marginalized, and obliterated by 'progress'. Nonetheless, Bonfil's argument can be considered as largely parallel to Redfield's distinction between the "folk" and the "urban", or similar binary distinctions between the "modern" and the "traditional", and furthermore it can also be considered to encourage national appropriation of indigenous culture (although this was clearly not the intention of Bonfil).

Lomnitz (1993, 2001) continued the tradition of Lewis and Friedlander by giving attention to the political history of indigenous communities and their relations with the state, particularly focusing on Tepoztlán. He proposed that previous studies of indigenous communities had failed because they had not provided sufficient attention to the regional level as intermediate between the state and the local community. By proposing a multi-tiered model of politics in which national, regional and intimate political cultures form a Russian doll, Lomnitz' model is similar to the model of embedded publics. For Lomnitz, each political domain is characterized by its own political ecology of power, political relations, classes and symbolic idioms, and hence culture becomes the idiom in which politics is pursued. Lomnitz focused on the articulations between these different levels, and particularly the roles of local intellectuals as cultural agents and mediators of political discourses between the local, regional and national level. In my thinking, I follow Lomnitz's model quite closely, except that I will have to contradict some of his analyses of how politics are pursued in what he considers the 'intimate culture' of the local community. I consider the concept of intimate cultures miss important aspects of politics by focusing too narrowly on public intellectuals of a particular type and a narrow set of political forms. Specifically, Lomnitz argues against Bonfil,

that “Deep Mexico” is not an alternative political sphere, because it has no political voice in Mexican National space (the National public sphere). Lomnitz demonstrates this by showing how Tepoztecan intellectuals were forced to take on certain roles in relation to the national public in order to address it, and how part of this process required them to reformulate their cultural identities in forms that would make them visible to the state as “indigenous”. This is the process of cultural identity formation that Friedlander called “forced identity”, and which Tania Murray Li (2000) has referred to as taking “the indigenous slot”. Lomnitz shows how the ostensibly indigenous cultural forms practiced by leading indigenous intellectuals in Tepoztlan, such as linguistic revitalization of the Nahuatl language or the annual Quetzalcoatl birth celebration, have no broad anchoring in the community. According to him they represent a cultural veneer which is mostly meant to address outsiders and lay down a claim to a particular political identity within the national public sphere.

Nonetheless, other perspectives lead to different analyses of such processes of active identity-making. Fraser's statement about the duality of the counter public and its doubly directed communicative strategies, suggests that we should not reduce the political identity of a public to the identity it represents externally. These forms of seemingly “fake” identity-claims fielded by indigenous intellectuals representing the local community in the national public sphere may in fact be a deliberate communicative strategy, which does not necessarily reflect how the community itself formulates its identity in its own internal public discourse. This possibility echoes observations by Warren (1998) who as argued that in their dealings with the state, indigenous communities may make use of what Spivak calls “strategic essentialism”. That is, the strategic use of essentializations of indigenous identity, which indigenous people themselves recognize as stereotypical caricatures, but which nonetheless serve a purpose in achieving objectives in interactions between the indigenous community and the state or the national public. This leaves open the possibility that by focusing only on the external political communication directed by

indigenous intellectuals towards the national public, we are led to misrecognize indigenous communities as more assimilated to the national public than they actually are, because we are only hearing the 'translation' of their identities to the discourse of the national culture. Methodologically, we will make this potential for misrecognition a basic principle, which we will call the "*thesis of the inconspicuousness of the indigenous public sphere*". This principle means that if we are to advance past the identity-charade (if indeed it is a charade, which we can also not take for granted), we have to start with the assumption that the indigenous public sphere is not a priori visible to us. This challenges us to seek to adopt an internal perspective and learn to understand the idiom in which the community formulates its politics. And this, in turn, requires us to consider the possibility that indigenous politics does not at all sound or look like the kind deliberative communicative action described by Habermas for the bourgeois public sphere.

Gramsci himself looked to what he called "folklore", when trying to find the political within the disorganized subaltern peasantry. He argued that "until now folklore has been studied (in fact, until now there has only been the collection of raw material) as a 'picturesque' element. It ought to be studied as a 'conception of the world'" of particular social strata which are untouched by modern currents of thought" (Gramsci 1992:186). For Gramsci, folklore was the idiom that through its elaboration and systematization by intellectuals would become the symbolic vehicle of a counter hegemony. In Gramscian analysis, the only viable end-goal for a subaltern social group, would be to elaborate their own conception of the world into a coherent cultural system, which could then eventually be substituted for the hegemonic one once the counter hegemonic process achieved its end point. But perhaps total hegemony is not necessarily the end point of hegemonic processes. By seeing the public and the circulation of world views as delimiting the scope of the hegemonic process, we can conceive of hegemonic processes that are only focused on maintaining a local hegemony, but without interest in exporting their cultural hegemony externally.

This possibility brings linguistic differences into focus. Scholars such as Fraser and Warner have described counter publics that are not ethnically different from the mainstream public of which they are part. Nonetheless, they also note the role of language forms specific to the counter public as a central instrument in maintaining its oppositional identity. Within a counter public that shares the national language of the mainstream, linguistic cohesion and diversity can nonetheless be maintained through the use of specific discourses, sociolects, technical vocabulary and registers. Other scholars have in fact focused on the way that minority languages can become central in the construction of counter publics, or “outlaw” publics such as those described in Urla's (1993) account of the emergence of Basque language free radios in the Basque country in the 1980s. Similarly Laura Graham (1995) has argued that the language practices and ideologies of the Xavante of Brazil, who collectively perform individual dreams in polyphonic song, maybe understood as an indigenous way of sharing and discussing topics of common concern, such as identity, origin and future. In purely practical terms, it stands to reason that a minority language, not understood by members of the macro public, is a practical tool for the maintenance of internal dialogues about concerns that exclude outsiders. Even if hegemonic representatives learn and use the indigenous or minority language, discussions in this language have to be carried it 'on their terms', as it were, and the primary public addressed by the discourse will be limited to those who understand and speak the language. Indigenous languages in this way serve to level the playing field by positing a set of counter exclusions that are not easily penetrated by the dominant political discourses. On the other hand, we must also recognize that an exclusive language is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the establishment of a counter public. For example, not all groups that share a language may necessarily share a set of common concerns, nor will they necessarily be discussing them in the language. Nahuatl is shared by many communities that never communicate with each other about any common concern, and often when Nahuatl speakers from different communities do discuss issues of common concern they do so in Spanish. This is even the

case in many Nahua communities where the language of politics is no longer Nahuatl but Spanish. Moreover, it is perfectly possible to have a counter public that uses the same language as the hegemonic public sphere, simply hindering access to their discourses by imbuing the language with different meanings and experiences, because its words come to be indexically anchored in a different political reality. However, as a point of departure, if we are to attempt to scrutinize the inscrutable indigenous public sphere, it would be a grave mistake not to take into account the indigenous language. Likewise, it would be a mistake to assume that indigenous people speak about the same topics in the same ways when they speak in the indigenous language, as when they speak in the majority language. Indeed, such an assumption amounts to a conscious decision not to listen for the subaltern voices that might be speaking. Hence, in my methodological approach, I will seek to locate the subaltern voice and the subaltern counter public, exactly by privileging Nahuatl language sources, in order to find topics that seem to be of common concern to Nahua people and communities when they address a Nahuatl speaking audience, as opposed to when they address a Spanish speaking one.

Language, and minority language practices, also take on a special importance in relation to the question of the political and the apolitical. Candea (2011) cautions us to note whenever divisions between the political and the apolitical are proposed – in order to recognize politics that are either outside of conscious awareness, or deliberately designed to fly under the political radar. Any segregation of certain fields of existence as lying outside of politics is in effect a political claim, one that circumscribes political debates to taking place within certain domains, while it leaves other domains free of direct political interventions. In the context of Corsican language revival, he notes that it is exactly the fact that language revival is coded as an apolitical cultural activity, and not as a kind of ethnic nationalism, that makes the process acceptable from the point of view of the national mainstream. Similarly Warren (1998) notes how linguistic revival efforts by groups of Mayan and North American linguists during the Guatemalan Civil War, a period when the government would

react to any signs of political organization of Indigenous peoples with extreme violence, were also coded as a neutral apolitical activity. Nonetheless the language revival movement would later pave the ground for the pan-Mayan political movement which emerged as a third political path between the paths of state oppression and military insurgency within the mine-strewn landscape of post-War Guatemala. These perspectives give us cause to be particularly aware whenever ostensibly apolitical phenomena may seem to be conspicuously absconding from the field of the political. We must always ask ourselves, to whom a given activity is apolitical, and to whom it is not. From the perspective of the national public something may be eminently 'private' or 'intimate', while from the perspective of the counter public it may be the primary focus of public concern.

The assumption of the inconspicuousness of the indigenous public sphere poses for us the challenge of identifying the indigenous public sphere – and the risk of misrecognizing it, either by not seeing it where it is or by seeing it where it is not. Hence, it is of value to be explicit in defining what it is we are looking for. The indigenous public sphere is a domain of *linguistic practices* in which *issues of common concern are formulated and solutions are sought*, and in which *issues of power are addressed, and consensus can be formed*. The indigenous public sphere is not necessarily based on rational debate, but might as well be characterized by other forms of discourse, such as listening to tapes of sermons (Hirschkind 2001, 2006), performing dreams (Graham 1993, 1995), or singing in an indigenous language (Faudree 2013), or reciting place names (Basso 1988, 1996). Much less, of course, does it require literacy, and the circulation of public discourse in written form, nor other forms of mass-mediated discourse. I also do not require the indigenous public to be exclusively for the debate of issues of public, as opposed to private or intimate, concern. As I described above, I consider the distinction separating out an intimate or private sphere from the public to be itself a political move that serves to locate certain concerns outside of the public domain, and focuses political discourse on other areas. But these ostensibly apolitical issues might as well become issues of 'common concern' if for some reason they are taken up as such in the

public debate, and they may well be already considered issues of 'public concern' for specific subgroups within the larger public sphere. Gossip for example, is a form of discourse that is profoundly intimate, but also profoundly public (Besnier 2009). Other good examples of this non-separability of the public and the private is how national legislation may consider land to be privately owned, while an indigenous counter public may simultaneously hold that the uses to which privately owned land within the community is put, is a public concern within the collective of landholders. Or national legislation may hold that choice of religion is a private concern, whereas for some indigenous communities it may be a central common concern that specific religious traditions be kept and perpetuated (de la Peña 2002).

As Warner (2002) notes, the public sphere is the result of joint attention: it requires an attentive and participatory audience, who listens to and recirculates its discourses, and it disappears if this fails to exist. Scholars have given much attention to the role of intellectuals in the process of circulation and recreation of public discourses, and they are often seen as the primary agents sustaining any public. But the definition of who is an intellectual used is often narrow, sometimes implicitly restricted to the notion of the 'public man of letters' (or perhaps sometimes a woman). The idea of an illiterate intellectual, already seems to stretch the term. This to me is simply an artifact of the narrow and parochially ethnocentric definition of public politics used by Habermas and Gramsci (it is also even implicit in the work of Fraser and Warner). If we are to locate the indigenous public, we must first locate the indigenous intellectuals who act as its mediators, and we cannot assume that they are lettered men, or that they use deliberative reasoning, or that they critique and field claims on authorities. What is required however is that they are the objects of attention of a public, who consumes and reproduces their discourses. This shows us the fallacy implicit in thinking that the lettered indigenous persons who are at the forefront of writing about their culture, or promoting it in the national public sphere are necessarily the intellectuals who are the agents of the indigenous public sphere. As Lomnitz (2001:282) shows

us, such intellectuals are in many cases the object of a “fair amount of apathy” from the audience that would hypothetically constitute their public. But from this apathy we cannot conclude that there is no indigenous public. Instead, we must find the cultural agents who do have the attention of the indigenous public – requiring us to focus on which discourses indigenous people reproduce among themselves, and find the individuals who form the key nodes in the network of reproduction. They may be midwives rather than schoolteachers, or *curanderos* rather than doctors. Lomnitz (2001:272) points this out when he notes that indigenous hamlets may have an “inordinately open forum of local discussion and debate”, but the “cultural values accessible to all in the village are not the ones that allow access to the mediated national public sphere”. Which means that in effect “Hamlets had no local intellectuals that could effectively mediate between the local community and state or private institutions” (2001:272). The consequence of this lack of intellectuals whose voices can be heard in the Mexican national public sphere is what leads Lomnitz to consider “deep Mexico” to be also “silent Mexico”. But reversing the perspective one might suggest that it is rather the National public sphere that is deaf.

Another important point by Warner is that a function of publics is the poetic function of world-making. That is, public discourse tries “to specify in advance ... the lifeworld of its circulation” (2002:82). This, in accordance with Gramsci's view of folklore as worldview, I take to mean that publics rely on a shared ontology, a theory of existence, which it reproduces and reifies and which it invites its public to adopt as the indexical ground within which they are to interpret their individual and public lives. Just like the members of a public brings the public into existence by their joint attention, the public provides its members with a set of ontological categories, with which they interpret their own publichood. This means that when we want to find the indigenous public sphere we should not necessarily look for what presents itself as political discourse, but we should look for the intellectuals who (re)produce ontologies, and we should analyze the discourse forms through which they do so in order to find the terms in which they posit ideas of “common

concern". This argument reiterates the concern of scholars like John Monaghan (1995), who argued that ethnographers intending to study indigenous social organization ought to focus on the culturally distinctive ways that indigenous communities make sense of the social – attending to their symbolic idioms. He in turn drew on studies such as Warren's (1978) attention to the ways that an indigenous community made sense of the fact of their own political domination, and how they put it into language. The argument here is essentially the same as Monaghan's, except this dissertation focuses specifically on understanding the indigenous community as a public sphere and the relation of indigenous language public discourse in creating both a barrier of exclusion and a privileged infrastructure in which to reproduce indigenous ontologies of the political.

Chapter Roadmap

The next chapter, chapter 2 describes the current cultural context of indigeneity in the Mexican National public sphere. It presents the argument that Nahuatl, as well as other symbols of indigeneity are currently in fashion, being promoted in all aspects of cultural production in the Mexican nation. From a revitalization perspective this might be considered good, because it associates indigenous culture with a prestigious rather than with a stigmatized identity.

Paradoxically, if we remember Friedlander's and Lomnitz' arguments about Hueyapan and Tepoztlan, in the context of Mexico, the use of linguistic difference as a political strategy could also be aimed at communicative action within the national public sphere, rather than within the local public. Additionally, the indigenous language may be used by its speakers as an idiom through which to achieve a voice in the national public, but in the same way it can be used also by those agents within the indigenous communities who seek integration into the national public rather than separateness. Yet more paradoxically, agents in the national public sphere may use indigenous languages to gain access to indigenous political communities, opening them up to outside influence. Or they may appropriate indigenous languages for their own purposes, stripping them of any relation to a community of experience and a lifeworld, turning them into mere 'cultural capital'.

Mexican indigenous politics are described as part of a wider political strategy in which the state appropriates indigenous cultural resources in order to commodify them on a global marketplace that values 'authenticity'. In this context, state discourses of interculturality, pluralism and indigenous rights come to look suspiciously as the ideological infrastructure that can facilitate and legitimize the process of appropriation.

Chapter 3 presents the Nahuatl language to the reader. Far from being a homogeneous language of a well-defined ethnic community, Nahuatl is in fact better understood as an array of closely related languages grouped under the same label, although they are spoken by distinct local political communities. The chapter describes the role of language ideologies in producing languages as conceptual categories, and analyzes the language ideologies that are at play in the revitalization of Nahuatl. It is concluded that the four main ideologies are all purist in nature, but that they base their purism on different criteria: etymological, historical, nationalist, or localocentric. The type of localocentric purism, which has not previously been described in the sociolinguistic literature, ties language to a specific face-to-face community and its shared experiences and values. Because of the connection between local lifeworlds, localocentric politics and local varieties of Nahuatl, it will never be possible to produce a political community of Nahuatl speakers encompassing speakers of all the varieties that fall under the label. More than any ties to a wider historical pan-ethnic community, it is exactly the specificity of local Nahuatl varieties and their "intimate grammars" (Webster 2010), tied to places and local communities, that makes the language valuable to most of its speakers.

In chapter 4, a hypothesis of an intimate relation between language and indigenous publics, is presented as it emerges from a historical study of the evolution of Nahua political communities. The chapter describes how in many communities that have maintained the Nahuatl language until today, localocentrist politics, sometimes fueled by outside opposition and violence, have

contributed to the formation of local counter publics. The historical argument focuses on the 19th century, which is particularly significant in the history of Nahuatl decline, because it is the period where Nahuatl goes from being a fully institutionalized literary language to becoming an endangered minority language. As noted by Faudree 2013, there is a tradition in the historiography of Mexican indigenous histories of jumping directly from colonial period to the post-revolutionary context - probably partly because of the relative scarcity of 19th century written sources. In the ethnohistorical engagement with Nahuatl communities, this leads to a tendency to skip from the “classical” Nahuatl of the colonial period, to “modern” Nahuatl in the 20th century, while dedicating only scant attention to the crucial transition between the two³⁸. After the continued existence of Nahuatl speaking local communities, the so-called Indian republics, during the colony, the national period in the 19th century abolished the possibility of official indigenous political communities. This caused the Nahuatl elites who were able to move into the National public sphere to do so, leaving behind their local communities with no political representation and no medium for the formation of local publics other than face-to-face communication. It is proposed that the much discussed cargo system in which politics are tied to systems of ritual kinship, emerged in indigenous communities as the medium of local community politics in the 19th century in response to nationalism, and that it built on a semiotic infrastructure of localocentrist ideologies encoded in the use of local indigenous languages. These local indigenous publics were able to exist exactly because the national public sphere viewed them as being apolitical and belonging to the private sphere. The fact that during the colony and in the 19th century, the areas where indigenous languages continued to be spoken were more likely to rebel against the state, lends support to my claim of the existence of indigenous publics. The chapter also draws on literature from the discipline of history, that has argued that localocentrism was a major component also in the many recorded cases where indigenous

³⁸ For a case in point, see (Olko and Sullivan 2013). See also Faudree 2013:46 who mentions the tendency to jump directly from colonial to post-revolutionary history, and gives another salient example.

communities openly espoused nationalism in their politics – suggesting that this can be understood as a kind of strategic nationalism.³⁹ In the post-revolutionary period, initially Nationalist politicians turned towards seeing indigenous citizens as a political constituency and offered them material development and cultural rights in exchange for electoral support. But as a result of rapid urbanization the importance of the rural indigenous population dwindled, and indigenous policy returned towards simple assimilation. This is the process that following Habermas, here called the “decline of the Nahuatl public spheres”. In this process, indigenous communities gradually oriented away from their local publics as the guardians of the common good, towards a patron-client relation in which the national public sphere became the provider of welfare. It is proposed that indigenous languages have remained most vital in the communities that resisted this process because they were in a directly antagonistic relation with the state and the national public sphere, and in communities with a strong local political identity, i.e. in “counter publics” in the sense of Warner (2002).

In addition to the history-based argument, chapters 5 and 6 provide ethnographic evidence showing how indigenous political communities today negotiate the continued role of their languages.

Chapter 5 studies the process of language revitalization in the town of Hueyapan (the town also studied by Friedlander). The process can be understood as an attempt to use the language as a political tool in their negotiations of political sovereignty from their historical rival of Tetela del Volcán. Government involvement in the process seems to pose a risk of appropriation and forced identity, which sometimes comes to the fore as political forces use the language and other symbols

³⁹ Here I draw on Gayatri Spivak’s (1987) notion of “strategic essentialism” associated with the strategic use by essentialist discourses about women by feminists, but which has also been applied to self-essentialization by cultural and ethnic minority groups (e.g. Warren 1998). The concept of “strategic nationalism” is also found in Florencia Mallon’s (1995) descriptions of strategic alliances with state nationalist discourses, by local Nahua communities in the pursuit of local political goals, during the reform period.

of indigeneity as a form of capital in the national or transnational public. Nonetheless, the chapter concludes by stating that for the participants in the revitalization project their use of the language is an attempt to reconnect with a local lifeworld that is becoming lost, and that as such it is in fact contributing to strengthening the local political community by fertilizing its experiential substrate.

Chapter 6 describes the integration of Nahuatl language practices into the educational sphere at the Zongolica campus of the Intercultural University of Veracruz (UVI). It shows how local Nahua lifeworlds provide for a different conceptualization of the region than the one found in the national and academic public, which sees Zongolica as a barren wasteland that must be saved by the introduction of “development”. In contrast, Nahua conceptualizations of the Zongolica highlands, sees the cold and rocky forests, as only a surface that covers a fertile depth of options and possibilities that can be accessed by adopting the proper forms of life. By using the Nahuatl language to introduce this conceptualization to students, the teacher-activists at the UVI are simultaneously reinvigorating a Nahua lifeworld within a new a generation, and challenging the national public sphere’s attempts to enforce its own conceptualization onto the Nahua territory. The way that the language is used at the UVI makes it a potential vehicle for the formation of a local counter public in the Nahuatl speaking region of Zongolica. The infrastructure of the Intercultural University, which is provided by the state and an integral part of the state’s policies of indigeneity, may serve two distinct purposes: It may be a center of emanation where the symbols and discourses of the National public sphere diffuse into Nahua discourse communities. Alternatively, it may be a space in which Nahuas may form a counter public and reclaim the authority to inscribe their lifeworld onto the sierra.

Chapter 7, the dissertation’s conclusion, summarizes and assesses the risks and benefits of Mexico’s intercultural ethnic policy in general and its interventionist language policy in particular. In both of the case studies, in Hueyapan and Zongolica the process of cultural, political and

linguistic revitalization is fraught and fragile, existing in a field of contending interests, perspectives and worldviews. Mexico's state sponsored language revitalization is at best a double-edged sword. Its ability to create truly empowering indigenous communities depends almost entirely on the ability of the communities themselves to appropriate the often somewhat malleable nature of new institutions and use it to create spaces of possibility, where they can introduce, develop and propagate alternative imaginaries.

The conclusion cautions us as linguists working with endangerment, to be wary in welcoming government involvement in projects of revitalization, considering carefully the impact government involvement may have on the local political community. It is also a suggestion that revitalization projects that do not recognize a political component to their basic functions and actively attempt to inscribe the language into the strategy of a political community, are unlikely to succeed in ultimately revitalizing the language. If done wrong, for example by creating a group of neo-speakers who are not a part of the experiential community of the native speakers, a revitalization project is even likely to unwittingly contribute to damaging the foundation that the language needs to survive. This conclusion adds to an increasing body of linguistic and ethnographic literature that considers both the political and ethical aspects, of language revitalization.

For anthropologists on the other hand, the conclusion echoes work by Elizabeth Povinelli (2012) who has argued that one of the keys to formulating a radical politics within the context of state discourses of multiculturalism, lies in the capacity for indigenous worldviews to function as catalysts for the imagination of the "otherwise". Perhaps more anthropologists ought to engage seriously with language and its potential as a nexus for the organization of lifeworlds and communities of experience, when studying or participating in decolonizing projects. For the scholar wishing to contribute positively to empowering communities in a process of decolonization,

perhaps the central responsibility is to alert communities to the potential political pitfalls of the process as well as the possible spaces of possibility.

2. "NAHUATL IS VERY FASHIONABLE NOW": INDIGENOUS SIGNS AS CULTURAL CAPITAL OF THE NATION

Introductory Vignette: The State at lunch

"You should find some company that could be interested in sponsoring the Nahuatl course. What about the Tres Palomas bakery?"

"They went out of business last year."

"Oh..."

I was at lunch with four of the people working in the office of the State Secretary of Culture, including the secretary herself and the director of the municipalization project, who was using my presence at the meeting, as a pretext for asking for increased funding for the Nahuatl courses. But his request was not seriously considered. I tried to support him, commenting that I thought that the current project in Morelos was unique worldwide, in that it actually pays youths to study their community's language, and that the state could get a lot of positive publicity from the project. "No," said the secretary, "What we should do is tell everyone that being bilingual makes you more intelligent. There are neuroscience studies proving that! We should make it clear that all children ought to learn to speak Nahuatl and to play the violin. That is the way to rescue these languages." And with that, we moved on to other topics. On our way back I asked her more about how she was working to support the indigenous languages. She told me about two projects she had recently carried out: One was the production of a memory game to learn Nahuatl vocabulary. The memory cards were illustrated by a famous Mexican cartoonist; they were printed in color on thick glossy paper and the design was absolutely gorgeous. Another was a children's book with poems in Nahuatl and professional color illustrations. Arriving at her office, she gave me one of the memory games, and showed me the book. "You can't have the book, we didn't make very many copies and this is the only one I have left." I wondered where the other copies were, and guessed that they probably were not in the hands school children in the Nahua communities, just as the luxuriously designed memory-games probably never would be. "Why do you think spending all these resources on creating Nahuatl language art is important," I asked. She looked at me seriously, with a look that suggested that I had finally understood what it was all about: "You see, Nahuatl is very fashionable right now. Everybody wants to learn Nahuatl and support indigenous peoples." I knew she had studied design in Paris, and dressed as she was in a black designer dress with a matching broad-brimmed hat, and a white scarf, it seemed clear that she knew what she was talking about.

This chapter develops an analysis of how the Mexican government's support for indigenous language revitalization fits into political and semiotic processes at the national and global scale. It suggests that Mexican nationalism is in the process of reconstituting itself through the extraction and expropriation of indigenous semiotic resources, which it uses to develop itself as a brand that

can compete within a global market of national brands. The chapter examines these processes can be examined by analyzing the way that indigeneity is discursively constructed in Mexican public discourse, and how indigenous symbols are used in domains of cultural production such as the fashion industry, the news media, and on social media networks. Commonly, scholars have considered the current paradigm of multiculturalism in Mexico to be primarily a response to the threat of indigenous political activism in Chiapas beginning in the 1990s and the increasing momentum for indigenous ethno-activist politics (de la Peña 2006). In contrast, this dissertation argue that it is within the context of the new nationalism and its particular political economy of signs, that indigenous symbols have become fashionable, and in which support for indigenous language revitalization has become a priority of the Mexican state. The second half of the chapter, however, describes the paradoxes and ambiguities of the change in discourse. The positive, rights-based discourse of the *indígena*, which now dominates the official discourse of the national public sphere, coexists with the historical forms of racism, discrimination and oppression. This disjunction between explicit benevolence at the level of official discourse and latent racism and covert oppression, is taken to be a lens from which to achieve an approximate idea of what state-sponsored cultural revitalization may look to Mexico's indigenous peoples.

The claim in this chapter is that this meta-cultural shift has provided the foundations for the way that the Mexican state and National public has shifted towards a positive perspective on indigenous signs. Nevertheless, it makes the case that even though the shift has occurred throughout the Mexican nation with similar effects, this change looks quite different when looked at from the perspective of the national public sphere, and when seen from the perspective of an indigenous public. This ambiguity may be considered the main fissure in the construct of Mexican nationalism of the 21st century.

The politics and semiotics of fashion: Superorganic or all-too organic?

The approach to Nahuatl language revitalization of the Morelos State Secretary of Culture in the introductory vignette shows clearly that the field of language revitalization and its discourses and practices are embedded within a wider field of cultural production. It shows that actors in this field may understand the significance of their acts in radically different ways from those of linguists and language activists. Most linguists for example would consider language revitalization to be important for the sake of the language itself, as a part of a universal human patrimony of knowledge and for the sentimental or cultural value it has for the members of the speech community who developed it (see e.g. Hale et al 1992, Woodbury (1993)). Another view is simply that language revitalization is valuable because it is part of a fashion trend. The secretary's statement in which she made fashion the key to understanding the importance of Nahuatl to the state, prompted me to try to understand the role of fashion (both in the sense of changing norms, and in the sense of changing ideas and design patterns in consumer goods) to the politics of indigenous linguistic and cultural revival.

The first anthropological engagement with "Fashion" was Kroeber's analysis of the changing fashions of dress length (Kroeber 1919, 1963, Richardson & Kroeber 1940). He observed a certain regularity of the cycles through which dress length became progressively shorter until reaching a practical minimum length and then progressively longer until they reached a practical maximum length and started becoming shorter again. He also posited that social volatility, for example during wars and revolutions, reflected in increased volatility of styles. He seems to have taken it as an example of his idea of culture as superorganic process driven by laws that lie outside of those of physics and biology. Beginning with Sapir's famous critique of the idea of the superorganic, in which he emphasized the role of human agents in producing culture and history (E. Sapir 1917), anthropologists have tended to disregard this type of lofty ideas focusing more on the more organic aspects of cultural processes, such as the ways they are embedded in socio-political and material

contexts. A perspective on fashion based on Bourdieu's concept of "distinction" (P. Bourdieu 1979) [English: (1986)] seems more in line with current anthropological thinking. Such a perspective would see fashion changes as driven by the process through which higher classes engage in conspicuous consumption in order to distinguish themselves from the lower classes, who in turn in a process of mimicry, strive to gain access to the symbolic capital through which the upper crust of society semiotically consolidates its power.

A synthesis of these two perspectives might come from a semiotically informed approach. Semiotic anthropology might combine aspects of the superorganic and the all-too-organic materialist view, seeing it instead as a process of interpretation and re-interpretation, in which shifting indexical grounds motivate new conceptualizations and cultural expressions, that in turn become the ground for further interpretations in a chain of indexical orders. Giving one perspective from this field, Greg Urban (2001) has posited that metacultural ideologies, are an important factor in providing a certain structuredness of long-term processes of cultural change. In Urban's formulation, metacultural ideologies congeal semiotic repertoires into registers that are then differentially valorized (Agha 2007, 147-150). For example, in a context where cultural innovation is particularly valued one may expect a different type of fashion dynamic than in one that values faithful reproduction of tradition. The beauty of this idea is that it allows us to look at change as a process through which the present fashion emerges from a past, which it then appropriates by converting it into "history," before proceeding to project itself into the future. Fashion is not random, it is a semiotic process, that works through a reactive dynamics. Each new idea builds on the previous idea (which it either emulates or distances itself from), and in this way fashion forms genealogies across semiotic contexts.

When we want to look at *longue durée* historical processes, as I do here, the concept of metacultural dynamics that work across periods, local historical contexts and events, becomes a

potent analytical tool. In the next chapter, Urban's idea leads me to look at how metacultural ideologies may underlie the process that has seemingly brought indigenous Mexican languages into fashion in the 1920s-30s, out of fashion in the 1940s-90s, and back into fashion in the 2000-2010s. In this chapter, I focus on describing the way that the current surge of fashionability in Mexico fits into a wider set of metacultural ideologies and into the dynamics of political economy in Mexico and on the global market of ideas.

Specifically, I will argue that the indexical ground relative to which Mexican indigenous languages and cultural expressions have become fashionable, is characterized by a nationalist metacultural ideology. Within this ideological regime cultural expressions that are indexically tied to concepts of global capitalism and American consumer society are devalued, and in which those expressions that indexically invoke ideas of authenticity, autochtony and locality are positively valued. This ideology in turn fits into a global market in which nations increasingly turn to narratives of national authenticity, in order to brand themselves and so better become able to compete with other nations and with global corporations and their brands (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). This is the global cultural field that recent sociolinguistic studies have also described as characterized by the condition of "superdiversity" (Vertovec 2007, Blommaert & Rampton 2012, Blommaert 2013, Duchêne & Heller 2009).

In this market, Indigenous languages and cultural resources become a cultural resource that nations can expropriate and exploit, as long as they at least appear outwardly invested in progressive ideas of indigenous peoples' rights. One might suggest that the notion of superdiversity, specifically refers to a condition in which diversity is arriving to states that considered themselves to be previously culturally homogeneous, and hence must undertake different forms of institutional and identity-based re-accomodations to the presence of "diversity" (such as is the case in 21st century Europe). In contexts such as Mesoamerica or Africa where

diversity, pluri-culturalism and pluri-lingualism has been the norm for millennia, it is less easy to argue that the globalization processes of the 21st century constitutes something truly unprecedented. Nonetheless, I would argue that if we understand superdiversity as a distinctly European reaction to globalization, then this condition with its “multicultural” move towards positively valuing “diversity,” has been an important ideological engine in producing the global economic and ideological conditions under which the Mexican nation has chosen to revalue the diversity within its borders.

The argument of this chapter hinges on my analysis of discourses and texts that are reproduced in the Mexican national public sphere through the print media and television, public signage and information campaigns, and in everyday discourse. In the second half of the chapter, I look at some of the ways that the Mexican state uses the Nahuatl language, arguing that rather than representing a genuine engagement with indigenous communities, they tend to be superficial gestures, which serve mainly to legitimize the broader national expropriation of indigenous symbolic resources.

From *Indio* to *Indígena*: The metacultural ideology of indigeneity in Mexico

A central shift in the way that the discourse of the Mexican national public represents the indigenous population within its borders, has been the change away from referring to them as *indios*, preferring instead the term *indígenas*. This change in terminology indexes a wider change of metacultural ideology, from an institutionalized ideology that explicitly marginalized and deprecated the semiotic configurations associated with the country’s aboriginal population, to one that idealizes it, and even places it at the core of the national identity. In addition to being different discursive regimes in a Foucauldian sense combining different configurations of power and knowledge, these two discourses are also language games in a Wittgensteinian sense, motivating

different types of practices in the people whose forms of life are predicated on the grammar of the game.

In Mexico, the category of “Indigenous” [indígena] traces back to the colonial world system that emerged as Iberian colonizers arrived in the American continent, whose locally pre-existing assemblages of cultural signs thus became “indigenous” with a stroke. Originally, the category was not labeled “indigenous/*indígena*” but “indian/*indio*” and it was formulated in racial terms within the social ideology of *castas*. Under the rules of this language game it was advantageous for anyone labeled “indian” to work the best they could to avoid that label, since it was stigmatized and constituted a major obstacle for social mobility, and hence an obstacle for the achievement of almost any possible lifeproject (Nutini & Isaac 2010). The language game of “Mexicans and Indians” as it was played in Mexico throughout most of the 20th century entailed a tacit agreement that everyone falling under the category “indian” should eventually move towards the category “Mexican” which entailed giving up the attributes of indianness, including language, but also “superstition” (i.e. religion), poverty, violence, and peasant livelihood. Speaking a minority language was merely one sign among many of being an Indian, but the real substance of indianness was the status as under-developed and pre-modern. Importantly here, under-developed was understood not just in the sense of being materially disadvantaged, but in the sense of being less than fully human. The result of this game was the process of development known as *mestizaje*, through which “indians” converted themselves into “Mexicans” - fully developed human beings. In this game, development was synonymous with ceasing to be Indian.

The discursive shift largely emerged from the cultural critique developed by anthropologists. Through the second half of the 20th century, with the discursive efforts of anthropologists such as Bonfil Batalla (1972) and the Barbados Declaration (1986), momentum was built for the abandonment of the label “Indian” which was exposed as reproducing the colonial

racial hierarchy. In its place the global human rights discourse provided the new discursive nexus in the term “indigenous,” which was meant to refer not just to “indians” but to all ethnic minorities that had been disadvantaged by effects of colonial histories. Globally, the official change from discourses of “indians” to discourses of “indigenous peoples” marked a new discursive regime based on liberal human rights discourses, and the concept of an international community in which nation states as peers monitor each other’s progress towards the ideals of liberal, humanist democracy. In Mexico and most of the other Latin American states, the class of individuals picked out by the category “indigenous” is the same as the one picked out originally by the category of “Indian”⁴⁰. Taking a strictly critical view, I might argue that the colonial difference simply took on a new name. But in fact, the discursive change also marked a change in the rules of the language game in which the term was embedded.

Charles Hale (2004) has described this new international discursive regime of indigeneity as “*the era of the indio permitido*,” critiquing it as a way of using discourses of cultural diversity to placate indigenous movements, and avoid political unrest, by conceptualizing cultural otherness and cultural rights as a property of the indigenous individual, not of a political class. This critique is certainly relevant for Mexico as well. A by now common-place narrative sees the development of the new multicultural Mexico as following directly from the 1994 Zapatista rebellion, which showed the severity of the Mexican “indian problem” to the world. In this narrative, the 1996 peace accords of San Andres Larrainzar between the government of Ernesto Zedillo, laid the foundation for the explicitly multiculturalist stance adopted by the subsequent government of Vicente Fox. Reality,

⁴⁰ There are a couple of important exceptions to be noted here: 1. Some people might be identified as “indios” when used as a simple pejorative denoting individuals of low social status and without bourgeois sophistication regardless of whether they had any connection to an indigenous group. 2. A schoolteacher or public intellectual would be unlikely to identify as “indio” in the 1950s-1980s (this reluctance is what provided such rhetorical force to Natalio Hernández’ famous poem “*Na ni indio*” [I am an Indian] (Hernández 1985). But today schoolteachers and intellectuals may very well identify as *indígenas*.

however is that Mexico already became officially pluricultural with the 1992 changes to the constitution, promulgated two years before the Zapatista uprising. That same year indigenous peoples all over America protested the celebration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of the Americas. As Hidalgo (2006, vii) points out, both the political change and the indigenous social movement was longer underway, than the most convenient narrative has it. In fact, the 1992 constitutional changes also included the Agrarian Law, a liberal reform that ended agricultural subsidies, and terminated the redistribution of *ejido* lands, opening up ejidal holdings to the market (Otero 2004, 12). It is clear that in Mexico, the official multiculturalization of the nation and the neoliberalization of the agricultural sector in which a majority of indigenous people labor, was part of a single ideological package.⁴¹

Regardless of its origins and motivations, the new stance was symbolized in three main political changes: 1. Following a proviso of the San Andrés accords which officially ended the Chiapas uprising in 1996, the government of Vicente Fox passed the 2003 Law of Linguistic Rights. The law institutionalized the country's indigenous languages as "national languages," making them technically equivalent in status to Spanish "within their respective ambits". This law nominally gave indigenous people the right to receive obligatory education and all other government services in their own languages as well as Spanish.

2. The law also executed the dismemberment of the National Indigenist Institute INI which was previously in charge of all indigenous issues and which had become a symbol of the paternalist and neocolonialist indigenist framework which had been severely criticized by anthropologists and indigenous activists (E.g. Warman et al (1970); Bonfil Batalla 1987; Friedlander 1975, 1986).⁴² It

⁴¹ Paja Faudree (personal communication) has suggested that indeed one might see the 2003 law as the outcome of a growing indigenous participation in the bureaucratic structure of the INI through the 1980s – a development that had in turn been initiated by the 1970s ideological critiques of indigenismo by social scientists calling for a more participatory indigenism.

⁴² see Nahmad Sitton (2008) for an inside perspective on the vigorous debate between "*eticista*" and "*indigenista*", and Marxist anthropologists in the 1970s.

was replaced with two new institutions CDI (*Comision de Desarrollo de Pueblos Indígenas*) charged with promoting socio-economic development of indigenous communities, and INALI (*Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas*), charged with revitalizing and strengthening the country's indigenous languages (de la Peña 2006).

3. The law also established the adoption of an educational regime based on the ideology of Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB) according to which the minority and majority cultures engage with each other on what is supposed to be an equal footing. This constitutes a change in contrast to the explicitly hierarchical conceptualization of majority and minority languages that was implicit in the previous education regime which had *castellanización* as its explicit goal. If the motto of the previous discursive regime was “development as the solution to the indian problem,” the motto of the current multi/inter-cultural discursive regime came to be “development with identity”.

This change in the discursive regime surrounding the native peoples of Mexico, means that even though the “indigenous” and “indian” discursive categories are similar in that they mark those ascribed to them as lacking development, there is also a marked difference in their implications. Whereas “indianness” was conceived as a temporary state of marginalization and debasement to which development was the solution, indigeneity is today conceived a permanent state of identity and development is understood to be an associated right. This also leads to different responses by the groups designated by the category. People labeled as Indians experienced it as stigma that they wished to escape because it placed them in an infantilized category within a paternalist regime and in this way in fact limited their opportunities. The discourse of indigeneity in turn motivates individuals and groups to seek ascription to the indigenous category because it confers specific rights and new opportunities onto its members.⁴³ It is in this relation, regarding the definition of

⁴³ This is true also for the way that indigeneity is conceptualized internationally, and the way that the category provides motivation for previously non-indigenous groups and individuals to ascribe themselves to the category, is one of Kuper's (2003) salient points of critique.

who is indigenous and hence has access to the associated rights, that language comes to take on a key role.

Although falling short of the provisions of the San Andres Accords, the three legislative steps constituted an important change in the way that the relation between the Mexican state and its indigenous peoples was discursively framed. The official recognition of multilingualism and the right of speakers of minority languages to receive services in their own language, was a radical break from previous policies which have been described as little more than state-sponsored linguocide (e.g. (Hamel 2008; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). And the establishment of an entire branch of government to maintain and develop the threatened indigenous languages by supporting and fomenting their use, remains one of the most progressive language policies in any country of the world.

Although the dissolution of INI into CDI and INALI seemed to mark a separation of the questions of material development and issues pertaining to indigenous languages this distinction does not in fact hold. First of all this is because the official definition of “indigenous” continues to be based on linguistic criteria. In order to be considered an “indigenous community,” and therefore in order to receive attention from CDI, a town must be able to claim an indigenous language as part of their cultural heritage. This puts language at the very center of the formation of the conceptualization of indigeneity, indigenous rights and indigenous development policy in Mexico.

Today, the national census bureau INEGI, defines as indigenous any individual who lives in a household where an indigenous language is spoken by any of the household members. This definition was adopted as an alternative to the previous definition which counted only those individuals who themselves spoke an indigenous language. The previous definition, had itself replaced a definition that defined status as Indian on the degree of access to the consumption goods such as wheat bread and leather shoes. Its introduction had the odd effect that children of

indigenous persons were often considered non-indigenous, since many indigenous languages are no longer transmitted from parents to children because of the traditionally Spanish based language policy. For this reason, the counting method was severely criticized and denounced as a kind of “statistical genocide,”⁴⁴ as it ignored all non-linguistic factors that might be involved in the producing continuous processes of indigenous ethnic identity, resulting by design in a progressively decreasing number of indigenous people.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the current definition also does not really take in to account any non-linguistic factors, because it essentially uses language as a proxy measure for non-linguistic cultural or socio-political factors that are presumably considered much harder to quantify than the linguistic ones. It will for example undercount children of speakers of indigenous people that have moved away from their parents and grandparents. It counts people as indigenous who do not come from or participate in the life of any indigenous experiential community, but who have studied an indigenous language in a school or university. For example, the entire family of a scholar of Nahuatl born and raised in an upper middle class family in Mexico City could be counted as indigenous under this criterion, but the children, and grandchildren of Nahuatl speakers who have moved to the city, but continues to participate in the cultural practices and networks of reciprocity of their town of origin, would not. In this way language remains the key factor to the official definition of indigeneity in Mexico, even if the state realizes that it is not a sufficient criterion.

Using these criteria for defining the category of “indigenous person,” the census clearly establishes a statistical correlation between the markers of development and indigenous languages. People who speak indigenous languages are much more likely to be “under-developed” than people who don’t, and indicators such as extreme poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, child mortality, etc.

⁴⁴ E.g. in this news article “<http://www.ultra.com.mx/noticias/estado-de-mexico/Local/82956-genocidio-estadistico-realidad-para-indigenas-mexiquenses.html>”

⁴⁵ This critique was forcefully voiced by (G. Bonfil Batalla 1987) who considered a much larger segment, essentially the entire nation, to be culturally indigenous

are all significantly higher for speakers of indigenous languages. This can be considered to justify the existence of CDI, and its focus on boosting social development in (linguistically defined) indigenous communities – after all development of non-indigenous communities is also carried out by other government agencies such as SEDESOL [*Secretaria de Desarrollo Social*] (the Mexican ministry of social development, whose services are also available in indigenous communities of course). In this way, speaking an indigenous language becomes a statistical indicator of necessity. In this new language game, being indigenous, which means speaking an indigenous language (or knowing someone who does), is synonymous with being meritorious of development.

The affective regime of the indígena

The conceptualization of the indigenous subject that ties indigeneity to notions of merit and necessity also plays out in Mexican media depictions of indigenous people. In news stories as well as government ads, portrayals of indigenous people often rely on affective regimes of pity, indignation and victimhood, rather than the regimes of ridicule, disgust, extreme otherness and empathic distance associated with traditional media depictions of “*indios*”.

In Mexican News Media, the story of the *indígena* tends to be the human-interest story: either as happy stories of resilience of colorful indigenous cultures and the efforts of indigenous persons to overcome difficulty, or as sad stories of discrimination and marginalization. For example, in 2012 the most widely publicized news story involving indigenous peoples was the famine among the Tarahumaras of Chihuahua. Because of drought and extraordinarily cold weather, their traditional subsistence agriculture failed, and many died of hunger before efforts to bring them supplies even began. In the fall of 2013, high profile news stories containing “*indígenas*” included the stories of the floodings and mudslides in the state of Guerrero whose victims were frequently described as “*indígenas*” by those who led the efforts to collect blankets, canned foods and clothes for those left homeless. In November, President Peña Nieto, appeared in traditional

Tzotzil Maya attire, announcing the presidential pardon of Alberto Patishtán, a Tzotzil teacher and political activist who had been framed for murder by his political enemies (including the then governor of Chiapas) and had already spent thirteen years in prison. News stories rarely mentioned Patishtán's Tzotzil ethnicity, but usually simply described him as a "*líder indígena*" (*indigenous leader*). Another story was of a Mazatec woman who gave birth alone on the lawn in front of a rural health clinic while waiting to be attended.⁴⁶ The televised report mentioned that it was not the first time that this had happened in this exact clinic in the Sierra Mazateca of Oaxaca, but that the other woman to whom it had happened could not be interviewed since she "did not speak Spanish well". Another story that got significant coverage in early December was about a Mixtec girl who was the victim of bullying in a Mexico City secondary school. The story was news-worthy both because of her status as "indigenous," and because it was accompanied by a graphic video of the girl being kicked and beaten by several other children in a school hallway.⁴⁷ In September, another report of bullying described a boy in Monterrey in Northern Mexico who was harassed by his schoolmates because he spoke Nahuatl at home.⁴⁸ Here, the news-worthiness was enhanced by moral outrage caused by the fact that the school principal had allegedly told the mother who complained about the abuse, that she simply ought to not have taught him that language in the first place. The all-time top indigenous news story of the fall of 2013, repeated in all news media over the entire month of October, was the story of "*los niños triquis*" [the Triqui children]. This was the name given by the media to the basketball team of a rural primary school in the Triqui speaking area of western Oaxaca, who won tournaments in the US, Argentina and the Dominican republic – and who, enhancing the news value of their underdog triumph further, preferred to play barefoot.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ <http://www.proceso.com.mx/354510/irma-la-indigena-mazateca-que-pario-en-el-patio-de-un-hospital>

⁴⁷ <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/comunidad/2013/11/30/931311>

⁴⁸ <http://mexico.cnn.com//videos/2013/10/16/ninos-indigenas-son-discriminados-en-monterrey>

⁴⁹ "Niños indígenas de la sierra de Oaxaca, que juegan descalzos, se coronan en competencia de basquetbol en Argentina." <http://sipse.com/mexico/pobres-ninos-indigenas-de-oaxaca-juegan-descalzos-al-basquetbol-pero-ganan-y-ganan-torneo-internacional-en-argentina-56700.html>

These stories highlight the difference between the discursive regimes of the *indio* and the *indígena*. If the *indio* was dirty, uncultured and unreliable, the *indígena* in turn, is constructed as a subject who struggles to overcome the barriers put in front of her by unfortunate socio-economic circumstances and meanspirited discrimination, and who simply needs some care, and support in order to advance and become all she can be. While the *indio* is the radical other, the *indígena* is really just like us, only with minor cultural differences such as a preference for colorful clothes, playing basketball barefoot, or speaking a different language.

Nonetheless, there are still spheres in the media where the discursive shift has yet to take effect. An interesting exception to the general tendency of using the sympathy inspiring category of *indígena* as the main way of discursivizing Mexican multiculturalism, is the genre of the *telenovela*

which seems to continue to contain only *indios*, and never *indígenas*. This may be because of the by now entrenched conventions of the narrative genre that require the unlovable character of the *indio*, as a counterpoint to the stories of emotional hardship suffered by rich, morally pure, white people. In such a narrative,



FIGURE 2. Salvador Sánchez as Cipriano Valdez in Televisa's 2013 novela "Quiero Amarte".

the presence of the *indígena* would simply undermine the sympathy for the unfailingly white protagonists. For example, the novela "*Quiero Amarte*" features two ambitious peasants, easily recognized as Indians by their Tzotzil style ponchos and linguistic mannerisms (in spite of their light skin) who conspire to take advantage of a rich white ranch owner in an attempt to rise above their stations. One of them is played by actor Salvador Sánchez, and is portrayed as having problems with drinking and gambling, and he even goes as far as gambling away his daughter to one of his drinking buddies. This character clearly draws on the negative stereotypes of the *indio* as unrestrained, given to machismo and drunkenness, and as practicing arranged marriages of

underage girls. Similarly, the novela "*Mariana de la Noche*" first broadcast in 2003, but rerun by Televisa in 2013, features a rich blonde beauty, somehow struck with amnesia and displaced to a poor village in the sierra. Here, a dirty *Indian* charlatan of a *curandera* (indigenous religious specialist) with a habit of spitting and picking her nose, takes advantage of the girl's innocence to further her own illegitimate ambitions. These characters are never explicitly described as "*indios*" in the novelas, but any Mexican would be able to recognize them as such. It would however be unlikely for them to be described as *indígenas*, since that word draws an entirely different set of stereotypes and affective relations into the discourse.

The difference in affective regime between the two terms can also be seen for example in the 2013 comedy novela "*Que pobres tan ricos*" with a plot based on satirical social commentary about the helplessness of the rich when stripped of their privileges. Here, one of the antagonists, an upper class euro-philiac witch, who having lost her wealth gathers her socialite girl friends to announce the creation of a new foundation for the benefit of homeless children in Sicily. Her friends refuse to cooperate, stating that they would rather pay to benefit their own poor, such as "our *indígenas* of the Tarahumara jungle or the Maya desert"[sic]. Here, the word *indígena* again stands for a class of particularly meritorious national subjects – although of course no "*indígena*" actually appears in the novela. This, then, is the language game of the *indígena*, which is now played by government actors, news media outlets and communities all over Mexico in the first decades of the 21st century.

The Naco, the Fresa and the Indígena as Metacultural Icons

The new discourse of indigeneity fits together with a new construction of Mexican nationalism, including the relation between the Mexican nation and its relation to the global political economy. The approach to the relation between consumption patterns, nationalism and indigeneity that I take in this chapter is based on insights made by Claudio Lomnitz in his essay "Fissures in

Contemporary Mexican Nationalism,” published as chapter 5 his 2001 book “Deep Mexico Silent Mexico”. Here, Lomnitz insightfully points out that the increasing integration of Mexico into global material and ideological networks is causing the otherwise solid construct of the Mexican nation state to crack. He relates the wave of nationalism of the mid-20th century to the economic situation of the period, when the Mexican economic strategy worked by strengthening the domestic market through an economy of substitution⁵⁰ – creating a link between the national imaginary, the consumption of national products and the symbolic power of the pre-colonial Mexican past as accessed through archeology. He describes how fissures in this construct began to form as the enchantment with local products faded, when both upper and lower classes increasingly tired of locally produced commodities and began to crave consumer products from the international market. These were first accessible only to the upper classes, but later through migration they became available also to the lower classes. This caused a reaction of “distinction” (Bourdieu 1986) as the upper classes needed to distance themselves from this emerging pattern of consumption. Lomnitz describes how the category and epithet of the *naco* replaced the concept of the *indio*, as the a instrument with which to castigate lower class consumption patterns. Whereas *indio* was used to stigmatize the consumption of basic domestic goods such as corn tortillas and beans, the label *naco*⁵¹ was introduced as a way to stigmatize lower class consumers of international, mostly US-American, goods (the current *cholo* stereotype seems to serve a similar function, though principally in urban contexts). Through the introduction of the *naco* stereotype, global consumer culture, which in the 1980s and 1990s was still the main source of cultural capital in Mexico, was devalued and resignified as gauche, kitschy and inauthentic. Lomnitz leaves his analysis open, pointing

⁵⁰ The policy called Import Substitution Industrialization aimed to industrialize the Mexican nation by producing national imitations of foreign products and placing tariffs on imports, or even prohibiting the importation of certain luxury products. (Moreno 2003, 41-42)

⁵¹ The concept itself originated as an anti-Indian slur, “Totonaco” originally referring to the Totonac indigenous group, but it was eventually stripped of most of its ethno-racial referential meanings (if not its indexical meanings) and came to refer to people of low socioeconomic class and their consumption patterns. See also (F. Báez-Jorge 2002).

towards the possibility of different future developments of Mexican Nationalism, and it is the outline of this future – which is now the present – that I seek to provide in this chapter. My main argument here is that the fissuring Mexican National space has attempted to repair itself, by reaching once more into the treasure trove of indigenous symbolic resources, to find there the glue with which to mend its own crumbling construct. Current Mexican nationalism has responded to the threat of the global market by increasingly marketizing what it considers its own cultural heritage. It is in this context that discourses of indigenous rights, indigenous languages and the well-being of indigenous communities have come to play a significant role in Mexican National space again. This has happened in spite of the fact that the percentage of the population that makes up the indigenous element today, is too small, too fragmented and too politically inconvenient to make up a significant democratic constituency.⁵²

Lomnitz' argument advances from the symbol of the *naco*, the kitschy consumer of lower class international symbols. By constituting the living link that indexically associates consumer goods from abroad with lack of class and refinement, the *naco* caused the metacultural devaluation of the “international,” particularly the American, as a brand. This devaluation in turn also indexically tainted those upper and middle class consumers who lagged behind the times and still preferred foreign products. The concept of the *fresa* ridicules this kind of upper class consumer (F. Báez-Jorge 2002) – corresponding to what in the parlance of the PRI-era would be called a *malinchista*⁵³ – a traitor to the *patria*. Resultingly, where a Mexican consumer of the cultural elite in the 2000s could still be seen sporting Armani suits and Tiffany's jewelry, today the more progressively minded elites can be seen wearing artisan-crafted suits of Oaxacan silk, indigenous

⁵² In chapter 4, I argue that the surge of fashionability that indigenous languages and cultures enjoyed in the 1930s were driven by the fact that the indigenous element of the population in the period before urbanization was still large enough to be viable as a constituency.

⁵³ This insult refers to Malintzin or Malinche, Hernán Cortés' native Mayan translator and concubine who assisted the Spaniards in conquering Mexico-Tenochtitlan. A highly complex character, she came to symbolize the fetichization of the foreign in the context of postrevolutionary nationalism (Karttunen 1994, 1-23) . Today she is also being reinterpreted as a feminist indigenous, or even Chicana, icon.

woven shawls, Huichol-style beaded bracelets and embroidered Triqui style huipiles, or even the simple two piece *traje de manta* [white cotton pants and shirt] iconic of the indian peasant. It is hardly a coincidence that this change in fashion has accompanied the introduction of the category of *indígena*, and the institutionalization of international concepts of indigenous people's rights.

Lomnitz' analysis provides the basis for understanding the metacultural ideology that drives the field of cultural production in contemporary Mexico, and which translates into two simple equations:

Foreign = low status, inauthentic, unattractive.

National = authentic, high status, attractive.

The concept of "foreignness" is iconically represented by the US and all the indices of its consumer culture, whereas the concept of "nationalness" is represented by Mexican indigenous peoples and the indices of their traditional modes of production. By simple syllogism, this constellation of concepts and values translates into a pressing need for the national public sphere to assume control of the field of indigenous cultural production.

Cultural Expropriations and Waves of Liberalism

My claim is that the Mexican Nation needs to control the indigenous cultural resources in order to mend the cracks in its own ideological constitution. In order to do this, it has to enact mechanisms for the extraction of these resources.

Since the conquest and the colonial economy of extraction that it instituted, Mexican economic advancement has been characterized by processes of expropriation of resources from the territory it commands – territory which was of course originally acquired from indigenous peoples.

Here I use the term expropriation to signify a type of appropriation that can be simultaneously

violent and exploitative, but simultaneously authorized by the state and taking place within a framework of legality – albeit a legality that is often specifically produced to be able to sustain this type of exploitation. Because it is legal, expropriatory processes require some kind of adherence to protocols and legal frameworks. In Mexico, the expropriatory processes of the colonial period were characterized by the empty legality of the *requerimiento*, its related ideologies of just war (Faudree 2012), and the network of colonial laws put in place to sustain, authorize and regulate resource extraction. Whereas the post-independence liberal era was characterized by expropriations of indigenous material resources and labor, to the benefit of foreign investors, the nationalist period saw the expropriations of indigenous land and history taking place for the benefit of the greater national collective. When Cárdenas nationalized the petroleum industry, he took it away from foreign investors to the benefit of the nation. When the Miguel Alemán dam was built in Northern Oaxaca, INI director and anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán argued that the flooding of Mazatec and Chinantec communities was a reasonable price to pay for the creation of electricity to power the nation (Gutierrez 1999:101-103).

Today, a new wave of liberalism is expropriating indigenous land across Mexico to benefit foreign investors.⁵⁴ Indeed, where previous legislation only allowed land expropriations when they could be considered to be in the direct interest of the national public, President Peña Nieto's reforms have redefined public interest to include making resources available for foreign investors. This means that today national legislation makes it possible for the state to expropriate private land with the purpose of selling it to foreign companies, if they deem it to be in the interest of the state – which they do. Land is being expropriated, primarily from indigenous and other poor rural communities, with minor economical compensations, to make its resources available for extraction

⁵⁴ This wave would be either the third or the fourth such wave, depending on whether all the Mexican liberal reforms carried out since Carlos Salinas de Gortari's laid the foundation for NAFTA are considered a single wave or two consecutive ones. On the idea of waves of modernization and liberalism in Mexico, see Beaucage (1998).

by Canadian mining companies (Boni, Garibay og McCall 2015), for aqueducts or gas-pipelines (López-Ramírez 2015), or wind parks (Howe 2014) – all driven by foreign investors and without seriously consulting the communities directly affected. Expropriation of indigenous resources has been, and continues to be, a basic element policy of Mexican national development (Coria og Encinas 2015). Expropriation is a process of conquest that masquerades as liberal business, and which superficially carries the trappings of a *quid pro quo*, positive-sum, win-win arrangement. However, on further inspection, at least when taking on the viewpoint of those from whom resources are expropriated, it invariably turns out to be a predatory process in which the state exploits its citizens, and justifies the exploitation by reference to a greater good.

Today, as national culture increasingly values indigenous cultural production, the expropriatory process has turned to exploiting the semiotic resources of indigenous peoples. What has changed is not the nature of the process, which continues to be expropriatory, but that the resources that are subject to expropriation are no longer only material, but also symbolic. This is not entirely new, after all the national period saw the large scale nationalization of the indigenous past through the institutionalization of archeology and history, but what is new is that the current phase of expropriation also aims to incorporate the living fields of indigenous cultural production into the national economy.⁵⁵ Where previous phases of symbolic expropriation separated indigenous communities from their pasts in order to enshrine it as National History, the current phase sees the indigenous communities itself as a deposit of resources to be exploited. Another difference is that where expropriated resources in the nationalist period stayed in the national field of cultural production for local consumption, in this period it is specifically marketed to a public of international consumers, where the symbolic resources are used as a part of Mexico's brand. In the

⁵⁵ Stephen D. Houston (personal communication) correctly points out that rather than being entirely new, this appropriation of cultural resources also took place in the colonial context. For example as Spanish families legitimized themselves through genealogical connections to Indigenous nobility, or adopted some of the symbols of prestige of the indigenous hierarchy.

next section, I describe how the Mexican Nation uses indigenous cultural production to create a brand with which to market its goods abroad.

“Made in Mexico”: National Expropriations of Indigenous Culture

Benito Juárez Airport, Mexico City. In the recently renovated international airport of Mexico City, standing in line to have my passport checked is almost pleasant. The line is considerably shorter than it used to be, and a female customs official courteously helps me fill out the customs forms before I arrive at the counter. But the main difference is in the space itself: it is saturated with a mosaic of bright yet pleasant colors and a soft sound of children playing. The colors come from a dominating mural on the wall to my left; its painted fruits, tropical landscapes, pre-columbian pyramids and Mexicans in colorful costumes fill the room with an almost tangible air of mexicanness. The sound comes from a wide screen television above me showing a looped video that announces a welcome message. The message is set to a series of National Geographic style images of indigenous children with embroidered shawls and wide-brimmed sombreros smiling to the camera, a woman in front of a colonial style church, a Yaqui dancer jumping with his deer-antler headdress and a rattle right into the camera. What makes the room so pleasant is a deliberate message aimed at all of my senses, a message saying “Mexico is diverse, Mexico is exciting, Mexico is pleasant”. Mexico is being branded. The line I am standing in and the counters with customs officials checking my credentials as an international traveler are what Mitchell (1999) called a “state effect” - the tangible manifestation of the Mexican state regulating access to its territory. But the symbols represented in the mural and the video, and the way that it inserts me into a narrative of “mexicanness” produce a “nation effect,” gently telling me that I am not only entering Mexican territory, but also Mexican National Space, a unique space of pleasant, unthreatening diversity.

“Diversity” is in high currency on the global market place – travelers are attracted to it, and travelers are big business. Through the past decades, the realities of cultural globalization and the ideologies of multiculturalism have attached value to the exotic and the authentic as perhaps never before. A deliberate response to earlier nationalist narratives that saw diversity as a threat to national cohesion, these new discourses are working to reconceptualize cultural diversity as a value in and of itself. And it seems to be working.

In this section, I present evidence from contemporary Mexican cultural production, in which commodities adopt indigenous semiotic resources as part of their brand. The literature on the semiotic process of branding conceptualizes the brand as a way of indexically tying products, ideologies and experiences together across contexts, making commodities recognizable and desirable and adding value (Manning 2010, Nakassis 2012, Moore 2003). In this context, the nation may come to work similarly to a corporation whose brand adds value to its products by indexing desirable narratives, and in this way assures their desirability abroad (Volcic & Andrejevic 2011, 2015). Comaroff and Comaroff have described how African nations appropriate ethnic symbols as capital in projects of nation-branding (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:122), noting how some countries actually take out trademarks on brands meant to fortify their national rights to marketing certain cultural commodities considered national property. Recent work on nationalism has even suggested that the ideological fabric of nationalism has entered a new phase in the 21st century, within the context of an increasingly globalizing consumer capitalism, and an ever-increasing focus on the trade balance. Comaroff and Comaroff, on the other hand, would suggest that perhaps this corporate and mercantilistic tendency has always been latent within the construct of the nation: "The modernist nation might always have been a brand- under-construction, always immanently, imminently corporate. But it is becoming ever more explicitly, affirmatively, assertively so as the idiom of ethnonationalism interpellates itself into the existential core of civic being, even in the European heartland." (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:122)

Mexico, also brands itself, and it increasingly uses indigenous symbols to do so. One unmistakable example of this is the 2012 premiere of the movie "*Hecho en México*" (Made in Mexico), a music-movie by English filmmaker Duncan Bridgeman, depicting Mexican cultural life as a seamless blend of technological modernity, post-modern eclectic hybridity, and colorful indigenous heritage. Its soundtrack including indigenous Huichol musicians singing in Huichol and Mexican celebrity pop icons such as Gloria Trevi and Alejandro Fernández became particularly

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popular. The young Huichol boy singing the sexually suggestive song “*Cusinela*” in his indigenous language became a literal poster-boy for the movie’s attempt to incorporate living indigenous culture into the Mexican mainstream media, where living indigenous culture traditionally has been absent. The movie itself, with its delicious graphic presentation of a Mexico in vivid saturated colors, with smiling faces and delicious meals and beautiful exotic landscapes was in effect a post-card or a tourist brochure turned cinema. It was partly funded by Televisa, the Mexican television company closely aligned with President Peña Nieto and his wife Angélica Rivera, making it hard not to look at it as a 90 minutes long ad for Mexico. Clearly indigenous culture is a key part of Mexico’s way of branding itself to potential foreign visitors.

The use of indigenous cultural emblems as a national marketing strategy is also evident in Mexican fashion design. Mexican designers have increasingly used indigenous emblems and symbols as part of their designs and media strategies through the past 5 years. Important designers such as Ricardo Seco, Carmen Rion and Francisco Cancino incorporate elements that either directly copy or indexically invoke indigenous crafts. Seco’s sneakers for example incorporate the colors and technique of Huichol beadwork, but also the sacred imagery of the peyote cactus flower. Cancino’s designs draw on the iconic Tzotzil Maya dress styles from Chamula, and Rion fabricates her shawls in collaboration with

Oaxacan weavers’ collectives. All of them have narratives about the significance of the indigenous element of their designs that both discursively appropriate the indigenous tradition as a national or



FIGURE 4. Huichol beaded sneakers by Ricardo Seco (photo from <http://www.widewalls.ch/ricardo-seco-designs-huichol-new-balance-fashion-week-new-york-2014/>)



FIGURE 3. Huipil with indigenous style embroidered patterns by Francisco Cancino of the fashion house Yakampot, photo from the yakampot website.

regional heritage that also belongs partly to the designers through their own heritage, and they also use discourses of honoring and generating visibility for indigenous artisans to explain and justify their choices. In the spring of 2015, trouble arose when French designer Isabel Marant was chastised on social media for marketing an exact copy of the traditional *huipil* (blouse) of the Mixe town of Santa Maria Tlahuitoltepec – produced in India, and without so much as mentioning where there “inspiration” of the design originated⁵⁶.

Mexican designers, as well as anthropologists and indigenous activists, lined up to join the campaign condemning this blatant example of cultural appropriation. Marant unconvincingly defended herself by saying that the design was meant as an homage to the Mixe, in spite of there being no indication of the blouse’s Mixe origins in the narrative surrounding the design, and not even an

oblique attempt to include Mixe people in the discourse. Clearly Marant had made a misstep, but it is less clear if the misstep was the dubious use of Mixe heritage carried out without the moves and social narratives that would license it as being ethically sound, or if it was the fact that being French she could make no convincing claim to being a co-proprietor of the heritage.

Also in the spring of 2015, the New York Fashion Institute announced that Mexico would be included as one of the world’s up-and-coming fashion capitals. News coverage in The Guardian



FIGURE 5. Tweet comparing Isabel Marant’s design with the traditional Tlahuitoltepec huipil, and also comparing the price of the two items. The caption says “@trendency: Isabel Marant stealing Mexican embroideries, it is from Tlahuitoltepec, Oaxaca”.

⁵⁶ “The \$290 Isabel Marant Huipil Rip Off That Pissed Off Oaxaca’s Mixe Community” Andrea Gompf, May 21, 2015

<http://remezcla.com/culture/the-290-isabel-marant-huipil-rip-off-that-pissed-off-oaxacas-mixe-community/> accessed 5.30.2015

Also covered in El Milenio: http://www.milenio.com/tendencias/Mixe_Tejido-Isabel_Marant-Neiman_Marcus-Susana_Harp-Santa_Maria_Tlahuitoltepec_0_522547950.html

included a picture of the presidents' wife, actress Angelica Rivera, dressed in Mexican fashion. An article titled "Designs from tribal past make Mexico a fashion hit" mentioned the prominent use of indigenous designs: "I want to show the cool Mexico with pieces you can wear on the street," says Seco, who is among many Mexican designers who capitalise on the country's diverse culture, mixing old and new. Inspired by the landscape, Alejandra Quesada often clashes floral and fauna prints for her modern maxi dresses, sweatshirts and more, while Francesco Cancino of Yakampot adapts indigenous shawls and Tzotzil tribal craft processes for his minimalist slouchy silhouettes."⁵⁷ The piece also interviewed a fashion analyst who notes that the Navajo inspired designs that are circulating in the US (and which famously got Urban Outfitters in legal trouble with the Navajo Nation⁵⁸) are simply too kitsch for the Mexican scene, which is why Oaxacan fabrics and patterns are preferred by Mexican designers. In this way, Mexican design was not so subtly, distanced from US designs and indigenous tradition, probably Mexico's closest competitors on the global indigenous fashion scene.

The use of indigenous symbols is not restricted to *haute couture*, but in fact permeates all aspects of Mexican elite culture. In Mexico City's posh *Zona Rosa* neighborhood, one may find ads for Yoga and meditation with Tibetan crystals and mantras in Nahuatl - offering participants the chance to simultaneously connect with the elements of nature and their national heritage by chanting in ungrammatical Nahuatl while listening to the sound of gongs and Tibetan singing bowls. The enthusiasm for indigenous symbols also makes it onto the national stage through through the performing arts, a salient example is the production of *Xochicuicatl Cuecuechtli* the "first opera in Nahuatl" by Mexican composer Gabriel Pareyón. In the following, I describe my experience of the

⁵⁷ Melanie Abrams. "Designs from tribal past make Mexico a fashion hit" Saturday May 9, 2015. The Guardian. <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2015/may/09/mexico-fashion-capital-indigenous-design-angelica-rivera>

⁵⁸

opening night of the opera, arguing that the engagement with the Nahuatl language is largely superficial and symbolic in nature.

In June 2014, Mexican media were teeming with praise for the newest on the opera scene: *Xochicuicatl Cuecuechtli*, an opera based on a poem in Nahuatl from the 17th century collection *Cantares Mexicanos*. It opened at the National Auditorium with everything sold out, as I found out

upon arriving for the performance hoping to buy a ticket.

With a few other optimists, I was given the option to wait

and see if a seat opened up. Standing in line, I took the

opportunity to ask the others why they wanted to see the

opera, if they had any particular connection with the

Nahuatl language – none of them had. One was an

engineer-cum-naturopathic healer who was simply

interested in everything indigenous, and who felt it was

natural for Mexicans to feel in touch with their cultural

heritage. The other said that he felt it was his duty to

support national art and culture. He compared this duty

with the duty he felt to reject the offer when someone once

gave him a pirated cd of Lila Downs (another Mexican

performer of Mexican indigenous and US-heritage who has become part of the Mexican brand). “Oh

yeah, if you say you support Lila Downs’ progressive politics, then why don’t you pay full price for

her CD?” he sarcastically quipped at his imagined pirate friend. He equated the ability to support

Mexican culture with the ability and will to pay for it, and stigmatized the lower class practice of

cultural piracy as anti-patriotic.



FIGURE 6. The official poster for xochicuicatl cuecuechtli, "the first opera in nahuatl".

As it turned out we were all in luck and seats opened up for us, and we were seated on the balcony just as the music was about to begin. The music of the opera, was performed by the ensemble *Llúvia de Palos*, using pre-columbian (or pre-cuauhtemic⁵⁹, as is now the politically correct label) percussive instruments. It was not the first time that I had heard pre-cuauhtemic music, but I was very surprised at the enormous range of expressivity that Lluvia de Palos were able to create with their limited means. In spite of clearly being in the genre of “contemporary” compositional music, the sound was not easily associated with any specific place or time in the world. At times, it was reminiscent of Japanese music, as I know it from Kurosawa movies, or of Balinese gamelan music. At other times, it sounded like nothing I had ever heard before. At one point the three *Ahuianime* (female Aztec courtesans) use the *metates* (grindstones for grinding corn) as musical instruments, the sound of stone grinding against stone creating a rich texture with the wooden sounds of the slit drums.

The singing was also very different from what someone familiar with opera or Western music would expect. In an interview given to the online news medium *diariodigital*, Pareyón had explained that he had worked consciously to try to arrive at a singing style that was not based on European singing. In the same interview Enid Negrete, coordinator and scenographer stated that “The Nahuatl language gave opportunity to, provoked and required a different vocal technique, completely distinct from the European technique which is based on articulation rather than embodiment, and which is also used in order to make sure the Nahuatl is intelligible and retains its intonation.”⁶⁰ The vocal technique was very different from European techniques. It involved singing in a high-pitched highly glottalized (what linguists would call “creaky voice”) register, where the voice frequently breaks into falsetto. It was at times difficult to distinguish the composition from the

⁵⁹ Cuauhtemoc is the name of the last Aztec emperor, so through the renaming of the pre-colonial period the name of the European colonizer is substituted with the name of the last independent ruler.

⁶⁰

vocal technique. The singers seemed to repeat a small number of melodic figures most of them based on a rising falling melodic contour, with different accentuations and phrasings, chopping them up into staccatos with strong accent on each syllable, breaking into violent falsettos on the high point of the phrase, or glottalizing the descending phrase into a fading shriek. I was able to hear quite a bit of the libretto and recognize parts of the poem, which were repeated in the voices of the different singers. But many times I was unable to hear what was being sung at all – perhaps this was because of the technique’s focus on embodiment rather than on articulation, and certainly one cannot always hear what is being sung in a European opera either. But also the intonation of the language was completely changed. A lot of the time, the speech rhythm was weirdly staccato sounding like no variety of Nahuatl I have ever heard, and frequently stress was placed on syllables where they would never occur in spoken Nahuatl. Overall, the delivery of the language came across to me as extremely artificial and unnatural. In me, as a naïve listener, yet accustomed to hearing Nahuatl spoken and sung, the choice of vocal technique produced a very strong *Verfremdungseffekt* which provoked me to think critically about the whole project and the way it depicted the indigenous people as completely exotic (and savagely erotic) others. This made me ask myself whether the pursuit of the aesthetic other of European music in an imagined pre-cuauhtemic Mesoamerica does not easily turn into a kind of “occidentalism”.

The plot of the opera revolved around a Huastec man, being seduced by three *ahuianimeh* (Aztec courtesans) before taking on the guise of the Aztec corn deity. The scenography was highly erotic. The poem *Xochicuicatl Cuecuechtli* (Shameless Flowersong) that serves as the basis for the opera is not explicitly erotic, although we know that the dance accompanying this type of song was considered indecent by Spaniards. Mexican nahuatologist and philosopher Patrick Johansson has published an analysis of it arguing that it is in fact permeated by a veiled sexual innuendo, expressed metaphorically and only accessible through deep cultural and linguistic analysis – according to him the first example of the Mexican national verbal genre, the *albur* (Johansson 2002).

Pareyón based his interpretation of the poem's meaning on Johansson's. However, at the performance, the Nahuatl libretto of the opera was nowhere represented in writing – neither in the program nor in the running light titles above the stage. Anyone who was not able to understand the sung Nahuatl (I would estimate that would be about 98% of the audience) only had access to the “supertitles” in Spanish above the stage. The “supertitles,” also written by Pareyón, had a very indirect relation to what was in fact being sung in Nahuatl. At times, the titles approximated Johansson's translation, but at other times it deviated completely from the Nahuatl words, creating dialogue between the characters. Or it added sexual innuendo such as “we women do not subsist on corn and beans alone, we also need chili” or “I erect my flowery pole” neither of which was present in the sung words. The supertitle was more of a guide to the plot, and a representation of the composer's interpretation of the poem, than an actual translation of the sung text. This made the Nahuatl text stand alone, isolated from the meaning of the plot, and to me gave the impression that the language was only an instrument to achieve an aesthetic effect, but not meant to be a language of communication. Kind of like a meaningless soundscape, that the Spanish supertitles then inscribed meaning onto.

While this performance was the official premiere, the opera had in fact already been performed for an audience of Nahua people in Arcelia, Guerrero. This was done, according to the composer, in order to show indigenous people that also non-native speakers can use the Nahuatl language. Again this gesture was ambiguous, as it could be either interpreted as a genuine interest in honoring the language and ascribing its speakers the prestige of the cultural elite, or else as a strategy of condescension and appropriation, by which Nahuas are shown that their language is now national property. It does seem that other than this, no native speakers were ever directly involved in the production – certainly none were on stage.

After the performance, I attended the reception, and made smalltalk with some others in the audience. One was a composer himself and a friend of Pareyon, “he is amazing” he said, “he speaks fluent Russian, Finnish, Italian French and Otomi, but he doesn’t speak a word of English”. Another person in attendance whom I recognized was Francisco Baranda, a well-known Nahuatl teacher and native speaker from Milpa Alta and founder of one of the Nahuatl language academies. I asked him what he thought about the performance: “It was very beautiful and interesting” he said smiling under his huge moustache, “but I wish that the language had been featured more prominently”.

I consider the use of Nahuatl in the *Xochicuicatl Cuecuechtli* an example of the highly ambiguous nature of the current fashionability of Indigenous languages in Mexico. On one hand, such engagements explicitly claim to be ways of honoring indigenous peoples by exalting the quality of their cultural production, but on the other, indigenous people have no voice in the interpretation the meaning of the signs that ostensibly represent “their” cultural production. The interpretation and execution is carried out entirely by cultural specialists from within the National public sphere. This exoticism and appropriation of the right to interpret indigenous culture, is the dark side of the “belletristic” (Faudree 2013) approach to indigenous culture, in which cultural elites take the responsibility of converting native “folklore” into “art”. Rather than being works of cultural translation (Asad 1986) that seek to represent the meanings that indigenous people attribute to their art to an audience of cultural others, such works risk ending up as a colonization of the Nahuatl text, and the erasure of voice of the Nahuas who wrote it. The liberating or inclusive potential of engagements with indigenous culture depends entirely on the degree to which indigenous people are allowed to participate in the integration of indigenous languages into the national culture. When their voices are left out such work quickly reverts to the well-tried pattern of honoring the Indians of the past, while mocking those of the present. Having described now, the

ambiguous nature of official *indígena*-philiac⁶¹ discourse as it plays out on Mexico's public "front-stage"; the next section describes how racism and negative stereotypes still thrive on the nation's "backstage" as a backlash to the overt discourses of multicultural indigenism.

Return of the *Indio*: The *fresas* strike back

*"Que tal si lo mio está en Europa, y yo aquí sufriendo con estos indígenas."*⁶²

(Meme published in Twitter by Liliana Sevilla Rosas, Director of the Municipal Institute for Women in Tijuana)

*"No voy a mentir. Te voy a decir cómo hablaba ese cabrón: 'Quiobo, jefe gran nación chichimeca. Vengo Guanajuato. Yo decir a ti, no diputados para nosotros o yo no permitir tus elecciones'".*⁶³ (Lorenzo Cordova Vianello, Director of INE, the National Institute of Elections, in a covert recording leaked to the press, describing a meeting he had with a delegation of indigenous representatives.)

It would be false to imply that everyone in Mexico has been struck by *indígena*-*philia*. Many of the country's political elites clearly remain ambiguous, if not directly disdainful of indigenous peoples. As we know from basic physics, every action has an oppositely directed reaction. This also applies to the social action of revalorizing indigenous cultures in the Mexican public. The conscious use of political discourse to increase the value of the indigenous sign on the market of Mexican cultural production, equates to a devaluation of the traditional dominance of the European-extracted sign. Even if the change in value is predominantly caused by non-indigenous Mexicans, who also predominantly profit from it, this devaluation leads to resentment among non-Indigenous Mexicans. This resentment sometimes shows itself as further fissures in the narrative of national

⁶¹ By this I mean to suggest that the idealization of the "indígena" as a particularly National subject, is parallel to the idealization of the mestizo in the period from 1920-1960 which Alexandra Stern has called "mestizophilia" (Stern 1999).

⁶² ["What if my thing is really in Europe, and here I am stuck, suffering among all these indígenas"]

⁶³ ["I am not gonna lie . I'll tell you what this dude talked like: 'Hau! I great chief Chichimeca Nation. I come Guanajuato. I say you, no congress members for us and I not allow your elections"]

unity under the banner of shared indigenous roots. In many cases, such fissures take the form of the kind of linguistic gaffes described by Jane Hill (2009), where an underlying deep-rooted racism is momentarily displayed through a rift in the thin veneer of civility. Frequently, such gaffes occur when powerful persons mistakenly think they are acting in the comfortable and intimate space of the backstage, but suddenly find themselves performing on a mass-mediated front-stage (cf. Goffman). As in the context of the US, where the racist gaffe momentarily exposes the illusion of the post-racial society, in the Mexican context, the racist gaffe demonstrates that the “*indio*” and its related racist stereotypes is not yet truly gone.

The two quotes beginning this section comes from such stage-switching gaffes. In the first quote, it was a public functionary in Tijuana, who made the mistake of thinking that her facebook profile was a private space, separate from her public functions. She used it to express what seems to be a frustration over the increasing focus on the indigenous aspect of Mexican roots. It is perhaps no coincidence that she was exactly from Tijuana a city that likes to see it self as “almost part of the US,” and in which the throng of indigenous people marketing products for American tourists are widely seen as a backwards “blemish” on the town center. As the press caught her statement and the public harried her over it, she was at first unapologetic defending it as humor, but later saw herself forced to publicly apologize, as pressure on Tijuana municipal politicians to do something mounted.

In the second case, Córdoba Vianello, director of the National Institute of Elections was recorded speaking on the phone with a colleague, expressing his frustration with having to deal with objections to the electoral reform by indigenous rights organizations. As a media-storm began to form on the horizon, Córdoba, a political scientist educated in Italy, at first did not comment on what he had said, but only critiqued the dishonest and potentially illegal way in which the recording had been made. As it became clear that he had in fact himself participated in approving legislation

legalizing the covert recording of private conversations, he relented and gave an apology for his “poorly chosen words”.

Another way that latent racism manifests itself is in the trappings of humor. As previously mentioned, Mexico has a long tradition of making fun of the *indio*. Depicted as lazy, naïve, uncultured and passion-driven, such stereotypes have permeated Mexican cultural forms for most of the 20th century. While some figures such as the famous character India Maria, can be argued to contain a certain element of social critique. Others, such as Lucila Mariscal’s character Doña Lencha, are simply clowns using the indigenous element and its associated lack of grace as a prop. Or they are dastardly villains whose ethnicity suggests an element of unpredictability and lack of basic moral values.

While the *indio* as a comedy stereotype has become less prevalent and is now widely seen as lacking in taste, it continues to find new ways to reproduce itself, now often using new, less formal, and more anonymous, media than the mainstream television channels. In the spring of 2014 a new class of internet memes began to



FIGURE 7. Collection of -tl memes, note that half include english in the intertextual/interlingual blend. Interestingly the 6th meme also includes an iconic reference to the salient typological feature of polysynthesis characterizing many indigenous languages including Nahuatl, by agglutinating the entire English phrase “i love you” into “*ailoviutl!*”.

circulate on facebook and twitter, seemingly mostly among middle class urban youths.⁶⁴ These memes combined images of indigenous peoples with captions of hybrid English/Spanish expressions always with the ending *-tl*. The *-tl* ending an obvious reference to the absolutive suffix which is an ubiquitous grammatical element on Nahuatl nouns, here iconicized to stand for indigenous languages in general. Not all of the memes were explicitly racist in their content, but nonetheless they were all predicated on the stereotype of the *indio* as an inherently humorous figure – and defined as a genre by the iconic/indexical reference to the Nahuatl language achieved by the addition of *-tl*.

In this way, the memes' use of Nahuatl was fully parallel to Jane Hill's (2009) concept of "mock Spanish," a "humorous" register of English that reproduces stereotypes of Spanish speakers, indexed through the use of iconic representations of Spanish phonology such as the suffix *-o*. The meme trend spread so virally that eventually CONAPRED, the *Consejo Nacional para la Prevencion de la Discriminación* [National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination] published a blogpost, describing why the "mock nahuatl"-*tl* memes were discriminatory. Following the strategies of deflection described by Hill for users of Mock Spanish who are confronted with the racist implications of their statements, online apologists for the memes, such as the facebook group "Yolotl," maintained that the memes were just for fun and were not meant to be racist.

Many of the memes worked by simply adding the *-tl* to a well-known Anglicism, and juxtaposing them with an image of an indigenous person performing some vaguely related act. For example, the Nike slogan "Just Do It" combined with a woman of an indigenous woman in skirts and sandals running. Or an indigenous person taking a "selfie" and the caption "selfietl". Thus the memes, work exactly by indexically associating the foreign and by extension "*naco*" and "low

⁶⁴ In the context of Internet culture, a meme is a mental selfpropagating virus, that takes the form of an image, and a caption – the caption-image relation usually indexing other memes.

prestige” with the indigenous person. The semio-political implication is that the Spanish/Mestizo Mexican sign is normalized and idealized, exactly by virtue of its absence among the unattractive exoticness of the Anglo/Indigenous. The meme in this way constitutes a covert, but easily accessible, *Hispanista*⁶⁵ form of Mexican Nationalism, which I consider to be motivated exactly by the marginalization of this perspective in mainstream public discourse. By using anonymous memes, the *fresa* middle class whose status is threatened by the revalorization of indigenous symbols, strike back by reaffirming their own sense of superiority. The latent and covert racism found in the expressions of the Mexican upper and middle classes is one reason why we must consider the expressions that overtly value indigenous languages and cultures as a strategic rather than genuine dedication to values of pluralism. Another such reason to doubt the sincerity of national *indígena-philia* appears in the following section, as I analyze aspects of the state’s concrete efforts at implementing their own policies of linguistic rights.

When the State Speaks Nahuatl: A study in double voiced communication

In the past decade, Mexican national space has witnessed the results of the multiplication of efforts and resources spent on language planning, implicitly with the intention of eventually complying with the law of linguistic rights. These results are most clearly visible to the public in the form of public writing in indigenous languages, on public signs, information flyers and brochures, and even billboards. These visible efforts can be ointerpreted as testifying to the state’s determination to normalize indigenous languages in public space and to comply with the letter of the law.

Nevertheless, if we analyze the efforts it becomes clear that while they are highly visible, they are not effective means of achieving the main provisions of the law, nor are they serious attempts at

⁶⁵ Since the 19th century Mexican cultural production has had tension between “hispanistas” who preferred to orient towards European, particularly Spanish culture, and “indianista” or “indigenistas” who considered that the indigenous cultures were an important aspect of Mexican national heritage, separating Mexico from its former colonial masters.

providing crucial linguistic services to the indigenous population. In this sense, while the state ostensibly seeks to comply with the obligations the law puts it under, in the more meaningful sense of fulfilling the actual necessities of speakers of indigenous languages, the law continues to be “*letra muerta*” [“dead letters,” i.e. only on paper]. This insight poses the question of what it is then, that is being achieved with the considerable expenditure invested in indigenous language projects by the state. In the following section, I review what the concrete results of the states efforts have been, evaluating especially how they might serve speakers of indigenous languages.

The Law of Linguistic Rights obligates all branches of government to provide its services in indigenous languages to those who need it. It does not specify how this is to be done, nor does it, apart from the creation of the INALI, establish an infrastructure in charge of accomplishing the change. In 2014, INALI summarized its accomplishments in the previous ten years in a public campaign focusing on three concrete results of its work. 1. The translation of the Mexican constitution into 11 indigenous languages (not including Nahuatl, since the Nahuatl translation was not funded INALI, but by the Mexican Senate as part of their celebration of the centenary of the Revolution and bicentenary of Mexican independence). 2. The elaboration of official orthographies for indigenous languages, 3. The organization of a corps of 500 indigenous language translators. It makes sense to look at the concrete impact of these accomplishments for the degree of accessibility of indigenous language speakers to government services.

The Nahuatl translation of the Mexican constitution (which is in fact the second such translation, since the translation of the 1857 constitution by Miguel de Palma) was published in 2010 (Hernández Hernández & Hernández Ramírez 2010). It was translated by Natalio Hernández and Zósimo Hernández. Natalio Hernández is a poet laureate, member of the prestigious Mexican Academy for the Spanish language, native speaker of Eastern Huastecan Nahuatl, with an educational background as a bilingual teacher. Printed in an undisclosed number of copies, it was

distributed free of charge, but there was no organized effort to distribute it to indigenous communities. Individual speakers of Nahuatl interested in reading it had to actively seek it in government agencies such as INALI, or its local state branches such as AVELI (*Academia Veracruzana de Lenguas Indígenas*) in Veracruz, or by downloading digital copies online. However, even if they had distributed it more widely it is not clear how much that would have benefited Nahuatl speakers. Hernández is a speaker of Eastern Huasteca Nahuatl, which is one of the Nahuatl varieties with most speakers, but also one that is markedly different from the better-known varieties of the Central dialect areas, as well as from the also very populous areas of Southern Veracruz and Guerrero. Hernández and his collaborators however chose not to translate the constitution into his own variety of Nahuatl. Rather, presumably in order to produce a translation that was accessible beyond his own dialect area, they chose to avoid many of the grammatical features that distinguish his own variety from others – creating a kind of *koiné* consensus variety⁶⁶. As a result, the translation uses the western pronouns instead of the Eastern ones that Hernández uses when he writes in his own Huastecan variety (i.e. <yehua> /yehwa/, instead of <yaja> /yaha/). It consistently uses a plural future ending with the suffix /-seh/, used only in the Huasteca and in Michoacán, instead of the ending /-skeh/, used in all the other varieties. It generally uses the negation “amo” which is used in all the Western varieties and some of the eastern ones, but also occasionally uses the exclusively Huastecan negative prefix *ax-* /aš-/.⁶⁷ The translation also shows syntactic influence from Spanish. Typical of the Huastecan variety it uses the particle *tlen* /λen/ as a calque of Spanish /de/ to create noun phrases instead of using noun compounds, a strategy with a

⁶⁶ In dialectology a *koiné* is a variety that emerges through contact between two regional dialects (as the Koiné Greek emerged through the mixture of Ionic, Attic and Doric Greek dialects), through a process of leveling and simplification in which the most highly marked forms in each dialect are lost, and forms that are shared or can be leveled remain. (Trudgill 1986)

⁶⁷ For example, the translation consistently uses *axcanah* in the meaning “no where” and *axcuali* in the meaning “bad”. None of these expressions are readily intelligible outside of the Huasteca region.

longer history in the language.⁶⁸ The decision of using an artificial *koiné* variety, presents its own problems as far as the translation then represents a Nahuatl that is not spoken by anyone, and which by virtue of its being reproduced in an official context is imbued a priori with a higher level of prestige than the varieties of Nahuatl actually spoken.

Another choice made by the translators was to avoid Spanish loans, and instead create neologisms (or sometimes reach back to terms used in colonial Nahuatl texts) to express all those concepts that do not have well established equivalents in contemporary Nahuatl, including most legal and political terminology, institutions of government etc. This type of terminology is of course densely used within the text of the constitution. Here is an example from the constitutions paragraph two, which establishes Mexico as a pluricultural and pluriethnic nation with roots in the indigenous pre-colonial communities.

“Totlalnanzin monelchihua ihuan monelhuayotia ipa miaquintin masehual altepemeh tlen hualahuih ipan calpolmeh tlacamecayotl chanchihqueh ipan Anahuac totlalnanzin tlen queman opehqui yancuic chantilistli ihuan, mopialia tlen yehuan tlanahuaticayotl, tlapialistli, toltecayotl ihuan tlatocayotl, noso san achitzin tlen yehuan.” (Hernández Hernández and Hernández Ramírez 2010, 16)

“Our country [land-mother] truly makes itself and has its root in many indigenous communities that come from the lineage of peoples [neighborhoods lineages] who lived in our country *Anahuac* when the new settlement began, and who have its own laws, property, culture and government, or only some of the these.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Many other varieties simply use the loanword “*de*” in this function – in some varieties speakers are reluctant to form compounds including Spanish lexical material and therefore use constructions with *de*. Hill and Hill (1986) theorize that “*de*” was introduced through its usage in honorary titles, a theory I consider highly dubious and incongruent with my data). The title of the constitution is “*Amatlanahuatli Tlahtoli tlen Mexicameh Nechicolistli Sentlanahuatiloan*” corresponding to “Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos” [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States]. The word *tlen* is used to mean “of” as a direct calque of “*de*”. This is standard usage in the Huasteca and some other varieties, but sounds foreign in Hueyapan where the word “*tlon*” cognate of Huastecan “*tlen*,” is used only in the function as a relativizing particle (e.g. in the sense of “that which”).

⁶⁹ My translation. Translated without consulting the Spanish text. *Toltecayotl* and *Tlatocayotl* here used in the meanings “culture” and “government” are terms readopted from colonial Nahuatl. *Tlalnanzin* (lit. “earth-mother”) as “nation” or “country” can be guessed in context. “*Yancuic chantilistli*” (lit. “new home-making”) can also be inferred to mean “colonial settlement” in the context. The intended meaning of “*calpolmeh*”

While there is a glossary included in the translation, it does not in fact cover all the terms, and because of the density of neologisms in the text, the reader would have to familiarize themselves with the neologisms before being able to read even the first sentence. The glossary also of course only gives the equivalent term in Spanish, but does not otherwise define or describe the meanings, which means that the reader must have good knowledge of the constitutional apparatus and its Spanish terminology before being able to understand the Nahuatl terms. Hence the translation is accessible only to a Nahuatl speaker who is literate, well-versed in political terminology, patient enough to use the glossary to learn neologisms, and able to cope with dialect based difficulties of intelligibility – as well as able to find a copy of it through the internet or by traveling to a government office. Clearly, this would describe only a very small subgroup of the population of Nahuatl speakers, and would a priori exclude all monolingual speakers. Furthermore, there is little reason to think that being able to read the constitution is a necessity or even an interest of most monolingual, or even most bilingual Nahuatl speakers. The fact that even when provided in translation, the sufficient knowledge to understand the constitution is not available to most members of indigenous communities, provides an excellent example of how the semiotic membrane of the hispanophone Mexican public sphere, consisting of the barriers of translation and contextualization, effectively prevent outsiders from participating.

In sum, the communicative aspect of the translation does not seem to be the main motivation behind the project of translating the constitution, rather it is probably its symbolic value as tangible expressions of the state's interest in and dedication to indigenous communities and linguistic rights. Nevertheless, I would argue that by extension, they also serve as an expression of

tlacamecayotl" (lit. "neighborhoods lineages") is somewhat unclear but seems to refer to continuous habitation of a place from the pre-colonial to modern times. I tried reading this with some native speakers from Hueyapan and they achieved a general sense of the content of the paragraph, but found many of the highlighted words and phrases difficult or impossible to understand.

the incorporation of indigenous communities into the nation state and their integration into its political order. So that in this way the translations constitute a way for the state to legitimize its claim to authority and eminent domain over ethnic groups that could potentially see themselves as standing outside of its sphere of hegemony. It is a pre-emptive negation of any claim that indigenous communities might have to being politically independent of the Mexican nation.

Another task undertaken by INALI is the elaboration of standardized orthographies. This project has the same kind of political implications, in which the state and its institutions constitute themselves as the unique holder of an authority through which the norms for how to represent indigenous languages in writing can be established. As I describe in chapter 3, there are in fact numerous claims to orthographic authority, motivated by various ideologies of writing – and it is yet to be seen which position INALI will support. Nevertheless, whichever orthography they choose to give official status, this choice will carry with it political effects for indigenous communities. These effects will impact the ability of communities to control what aspects of their language and identity they consider important to represent in writing.

Another area where different branches of state is working to produce Nahuatl language services, is in certain kinds of information

campaigns targeted at indigenous groups. Particularly CONAPRED, [the National Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination] have used Nahuatl in this way, in publicity campaigns informing about discrimination and civil rights legislation protecting against it. One campaign was



FIGURE 8 poster from conapreds anti-racism campaign in Mexico city metro trains in the spring of 2014.

carried out in the Mexico City Metro with the hashtag slogan *#noeschidodiscriminar* [#discriminatingisnotcool] accompanied by a Nahuatl hashtag *#AmoKualiTlajTiTeIxpinautía* [literally: “it is not good if you make people ashamed by looking at them”], accompanied by a photo of a female Nahua lawyer (the twitter Nahuatl hashtag, has exactly 0 uses on twitter).

Another CONAPRED publication is a booklet, entirely written in a Central variety of Nahuatl, informing Nahua speakers of the prohibition against discriminating on the basis of gender, sexuality, disability or social background. Here some of the problems with producing this kind of material for a language in which human rights discourses have not previously been reproduced become apparent. The word chosen to translate “homosexual” is the Nahuatl word *cuiloni*. This word is in fact a commonly occurring word used to label homosexual men in Nahuatl, and it is even attested in classical Nahuatl where it referred specifically to the receiving partner in a homosexual penetrative relation (Sigal 2005, 2007) – but today it carries heavy pejorative connotations. This makes for odd reading as the brochure literally conveys the equivalent of “you have a right not to be discriminated for being a faggot”. It is not obvious how one might find a better way to communicate the message, in the absence of a Nahuatl speaking queer community that can decide what terminology to adopt. Again, however, it is unlikely to be a problem noticed by many Nahuas, as the brochure is not widely distributed except by internet and in the offices of INALI.

Some information campaigns are even clearer examples of what I would consider the use of Nahuatl in a “civilizing mission,” in which the state targets what it considers moral or cultural deficiencies in indigenous communities. For example the State Academy of Indigenous Languages of



Figure 9. Information on the law against child marriage in Huasteca Nahuatl. The Spanish caption says “México without early unions and matrimony of girls, in law and in practice”. The Nahuatl text says “Law 86. A boy and a girl cannot marry until they are eighteen years old.”

Veracruz [AVELI], circulated a campaign against child marriages in Nahuatl. This is different from the CONAPRED campaign, because this material is not a translation of information material produced also in Spanish – but is targeted specifically at Nahuatl speaking audiences (See Figure 9). Ideas that indigenous people practice arranged marriages for young girls, or that they even sell them, often appear among the stereotypes of non-indigenous Mexicans.⁷⁰

Finally, the education of interpreters is an essential step in achieving linguistic accessibility to government services for indigenous people. However, the 500 interpreters that INALI claims to have educated must be seen in relation to the presence of at least 60 different languages and the 6 million people speaking them. Clearly, they do not cover the entire indigenous language speaking population, and in practice it is highly variable where they are found and how they are employed. It is not at all the case, that monolingual speakers of indigenous languages can count on having interpreters in their interactions with the state anywhere in Mexico. There are many reports, particularly from Oaxaca with its extreme linguistic diversity, of indigenous people being arrested, convicted and imprisoned without ever having had a chance to know the charges against them or to respond to them.⁷¹ Other reports tell of indigenous peoples traveling to court appointments multiple times, only to have them canceled for lack of an interpreter. Others tell of prison inmates being used as ad hoc interpreters for other inmates. Some studies describe a practice of using

⁷⁰ As an example, the local newspaper of Orizaba, Veracruz "*El Buen Tono*," published an op-ed by the local priest and rector of the Iglesia del Calvario in Orizaba, Helkyn Enqiruez. It was titled "*La Iglesia Pide Respeto para la Mujer*" [The Church requests respect for women]. Enriquez argued that "we need not look to Iraq to find patriarchy and lack of respect for women - we can just look at the Sierra de Zongolica where adult men marry adolescent underage girls. They are not physically or psychologically prepared for matrimony."

⁷¹ According to this article 10,000 speakers of indigenous languages are currently imprisoned, and only 10% of them have had access to an interpreter. The article also critiques the practice of not remunerating translator services and using unprepared interpreters. <http://veracruz.ndmx.co/2015/07/13/en-la-carcel-cerca-de-10-mil-indigenas-por-falta-de-un-interprete/>

This article states that in 20012 alone 8,502 speakers of indigenous languages were imprisoned without having access to an interpreter in responding to the charges against them. It states that through assistance by CDI 1000 of them were released.

<http://expansion.mx/nacional/2013/10/12/no-hablar-espanol-el-delito-por-el-que-indigenas-han-pisado-la-carcel>

indigenous janitors or food vendors in the court buildings as interpreters. (Kleinert og Stallaert 2015) Outside of the legal system, for example in medical contexts or in the context of municipal government, there is no systematic attempts to provide interpreter services at all. In some indigenous majority municipalities, I have visited, I have been able to converse in Nahuatl with officials, and even in some cases with the municipal president. But in others, also inhabited by a majority of Nahuatl speakers, I have observed monolingual Nahuatl speakers have to request help from strangers when trying to understand the information given to them by monolingual Spanish municipal officials. There is currently no requirement, nor even a general practice of hiring native language interpreters at the municipal level, rather the presence or absence of interpreter services are left to chance. Just one municipality out of the ten I have visited in the Zongolica region had specifically hired a Nahuatl interpreter, and this was only for a specific project that required the municipality to reach out to its citizens in an effort of getting them to pay property taxes. Ironically, it is mostly in the more urbanized environments, such as in Orizaba or the city of Zongolica, that interpreter services are least likely to be found – in spite of also being main administrative centers for large populations of Nahuatl speakers, and in spite of having considerably better resources to spend than more rural municipalities. In other areas of government services such as healthcare provision, taxation and policing, there is even less access to multilingual information or interpreters. Consequently, if the Law of Linguistic Rights is seen as setting an ideal for the provision of state services that governmental institutions aspire to achieve, then the process remains in an incipient state. If the law is understood as establishing an actual obligation for that same provision, then it is an obligation that the state cannot currently be said to be seriously trying to fulfill.

Finally, anecdotal observations of politicians addressing Nahua audiences serve to illustrate, what I consider to be, the basic insincerity of the Mexican state's official engagements with indigenous languages. Bourdieu, in his *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991, 16, 68), gives the

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example of the Mayor of the French town of Pau addressing the local public in the Bernais patois rather than in standard French. Bourdieu describes this choice as a “strategy of condescension”. In effect, the Mayor takes what is superficially a solidary stance, but which in fact only serves to underline that he, in contrast to the audience, can claim ownership of both the local and the national symbolic capital, since he masters both languages and can switch between them at will. I have yet to hear a Mexican politician or official (with the exception of the director of the INALI) address an audience fluently in an indigenous language, but occasionally they will sprinkle a few words or phrases into their speeches – particularly to say thanks. In Nahuatl, there is considerable local variation in how to express gratitude, but the most commonly known and taught expression is *tlasohkamati*, a set expression originally abbreviated from the verb form “*niktlasohkamati*” meaning literally, “I appreciate it”. A simple word to pronounce as Nahuatl words go, it is however a rarity that these attempts by politicians to say “thank you” in the local language are fluently pronounced. Variations abound, such as *tlaxokomatli* (said by the Governor of Morelos, Graco Ramirez when visiting Hueyapan)⁷², *tlaksokámati* (said by a state official visiting Hueyapan⁷³), and *tlakosamati* (written by an academic in a poem honoring the memory of the famous Hueyapanecatli intellectual and healer Modesta Lavana⁷⁴). The most widely circulated *tlasohkamati*-gaffe however, was made by the then presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto. In an address to a Nahuatl speaking town in Guerrero, he managed to say “*tlaxkalli miyak*” which in fact means “many tortillas.”⁷⁵ This odd mistake was recorded on video and circulated on youtube and facebook by his opponents, as evidence of his intellectual unfitness to the presidency.⁷⁶ Though perhaps understandable and relatively insignificant, this gaffe serves as a poignant example of the

⁷² <http://morelos.gob.mx/?q=version-esténografica-del-gobernador-graco-ramirez-durante-la-inauguración-de-la-feria-hueyapan-2013>

⁷³ Recorded in fieldnotes.

⁷⁴ <https://hormega.wordpress.com/2012/08/06/volver-al-viento-72/>

⁷⁵ In Central Guerrero where he was speaking the word for “thank you” is not *tlasohkamati* but *tlaxtlawi*, an abbreviation of the phrase “*totahtzin mitztlaxtlawis*” literally “Our Father will repay you”.

⁷⁶

superficial and primarily symbolic level of the Mexican state's engagement with indigenous languages.

Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) notion of double voiced communication invites us to attend to how multiple intentionalities can be co-present in the same utterance, and how they may struggle for control of the final interpretation. I suggest that most of the Mexican states' communication in indigenous languages are double voiced texts, intentionally ambiguous signs calculated to be interpreted in one way by the language public they explicitly address, and in another in the National public from which they are addressed. From the perspective, or rather angle of listening, of the National public they are meant to index the progressive stance of the government, and the official integration of indigenous communities into the national public sphere. This communicative strategy, I think, is largely successful. But when indigenous publics are listening - to the degree that the messages ostensibly intended for them ever reach them - the semiotic process is much more semiotically volatile and susceptible to unpredictable interpretations. When heard from the indigenous angle, the attempts to signal interest in the indigenous communities by using their language, come off as sufficiently insufficient to be insulting, or at least enough to undermine any impression of sincerity.

Culture, Violence, and Capitalism:

For most Mexicans, the first decade of the third millennium was marked by the transition from peace and relative prosperity into an abyss of extreme and spectacular violence, an increase in crime and delinquency and an even greater increase in the fear of being victimized by crime - all this combined with the mounting economic crisis. Since violence broke out in 2007, during Felipe Calderón's presidency and his war on drugs, many more than the official figure of 50,000-60,000

Mexicans have been killed.⁷⁷ Previously peaceful cities all across Mexico degenerated into violence and crime, with some cities such as Ciudad Juarez having violent death rates comparable to Bagdad during the American invasion, or to the most crime-ridden South-African townships, and the most violent favelas in Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia (Vilalta og Muggah 2014) (Vilalta 2014).

The increasing violence has been accompanied by an increasing importance of tourism for the Mexican economy. Mexican economy traditionally has been considered to hinge on manufacturing, oil revenue and foreign remittances from migrants in the US – tourism being the fifth most important sector after direct foreign investment. Of these however, oil revenue has continuously fallen as reserves are depleted and global prices drop, and remittances has for the first time experienced a decline during the financial crisis and the massive deportations of the Obama presidency.⁷⁸ The increase in violence, and the increasingly shrill warnings sent out by foreign ministries to travelers to Mexico, has been widely expected to cause massive decline in tourist revenue. However, in fact, it has not. On the contrary, tourism in the same period has been experiencing the most dramatic growth of any Mexican industry. Under current projections, it is expected to become the third greatest contributor to GNP by 2018⁷⁹, and to account for 15% of it by 2028.

The fact that the intense violence and bad press that Mexico has been receiving worldwide has not caused any significant decline in tourism is surprising. In order to explain it, I believe that one must take into account Mexico's potential for generating positive images, even in spite of

⁷⁷ <http://eleconomista.com.mx/sociedad/2015/06/17/mexico-segundo-pais-mas-violento-toda-america>

This article estimates a total deathcount of 85,000 since 2004.

http://www.huffingtonpost.es/2014/11/03/cifras-violencia-mexico_n_6092856.html

⁷⁸ This article shows the change in remittances over the past decades, showing a clear drop between 2008-2011 and a subsequent slow recovery. <http://eleconomista.com.mx/finanzas-publicas/2016/03/01/remesas-crecieron-188-enero>

In 2015 nonetheless, remittances surpassed oil revenue as a source of national income for the first time

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/mexico-got-more-money-remittances-oil-revenues-2015-n510346>

⁷⁹ According to <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-06-25/tourism-seen-jumping-to-mexico-s-3rdbiggest-cash-source-by-2018>, accessed on May 30th 2015

beheadings and random shootings happening in major tourist destinations like Cuernavaca and Acapulco. My claim is that this potential draws on Mexico's ability to harness and project the positive imagery associated with its indigenous culture and heritage. This in turn explains partly why Mexican government is investing not just in converting indigenous towns into picturesque "*pueblos mágicos*" and in improving basic infrastructure in tourist zones, but also, I would argue, why it invests millions in promoting indigenous arts and crafts – and languages.

Surely, the fashionability of indigenous symbols is not driven only by government investment, but also by global discourses and ideologies that tie indigeneity to ideas of authenticity and progressive ethics and political values. However, in a neo-liberal world economy in which national identity is reimagined as a brand, nationalism becomes a question of marketing the nation as unique and attractive in a globalizing political economy (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009; Volcic & Andrejevic 2015). Within this logic, Mexican artists, designers and cultural agents come to share the Mexican state's interest in branding Mexico, making them natural allies of the Mexican state in order to become able to compete with other nations on a cultural market. Nationalism then, rather than being an idea of a shared imaginary community, becomes an idea of a sharing a single brand, the overall value of which relates directly to the ability of an individual cultural agent to realize their own potential. In this process, the cultural resources of indigenous peoples are now expropriated for the greater good of the nation and its representatives on the global market, just as their material resources have been and continue to be.

In this sense, we may argue that the Mexican nation's apparent sudden dedication to indigenous peoples is driven by cynical ulterior motives rather than genuine concern or any deeper ethical commitment; we may argue that as such it should be denounced as phony and be rejected. But this argument would miss out on an important possibility – namely the possibilities for positive development that may be generated for indigenous peoples by their sudden role as the centerpiece

of the national brand. Lomnitz (2001) describes how the stereotype of the *naco* represented a fissure in the ideology of nationalism, and I would suggest that such fissures emerge because Mexican nationalism in its current incarnation does not constitute itself as a monolithic ideology, but rather as a bricolage of ideas and emblems that it uses used to market itself. One of these fissures is the fact that what Lomnitz described aptly as ‘silent Mexico’ is now given a voice. No longer excluded from the national public sphere, but rather somewhat forcibly incorporated into it, indigenous voices now have much more of a platform from which to make themselves heard. And while there is no guarantee that anyone will be listening, this platform, as well as the claim to ownership of the national brand that many indigenous groups now can advance, puts them in a position where certain kinds of power that was previously entirely denied to them can perhaps be grasped. Another fissure is the fact that if exotic semiotic resources are now considered capital, indigenous communities are in a unique position to become the arbiters of authenticity in regards to this commodity, and hence might be able, with some political cunning, to corner the market.

The question therefore becomes what kinds of possibilities are now afforded to indigenous communities by the fact of their fashionability. These questions will be explored in chapters five and six that explore how two Nahua communities exploit the fissures generated by the expropriation of indigeneity by the national brand, by demanding compensation in the form of increased institutional and discursive presence.

Here in concluding this chapter, I return to Kroeber and the classic debate about cultural evolution and the question of what forces drive it. I conclude that insofar as a superorganic element can be said to exist in cultural long-term history, it is best understood as a semiotic process operating on a historical scale which causes the indexical ground to shift under pre-existing signs, forcing a new pattern of interpretations to emerge. Dresses will continue to shrink, as long as the metacultural ideology that grounds fashion developers’ interpretations of “fashion” values

“shortness” over “length”. But given that the shortness of dresses is constrained by practicality, a tipping point is inevitable when the ground will have to shift and “length” will become the meta-cultural value driving fashion. In a similar way, it is the national ground in which the indigenous sign is rooted that has changed since the 1990s. This change has caused a return to a cultural policy that looks similar to that of the *indigenista* nationalism of the 1930s Cardenista period (when Indigenous signs were also positively valued in the National public sphere, and indigenous publics were actively being incorporated into the Nation state rather than marginalized from it). In the 1940s and 1950s economy of import substitution industrialization, where the Mexican state enforced the consumption of national products, foreignness came to be positively valued. But as globalization brought about conditions where mass-produced foreignness was accessible to all, the ground of interpretation turned, making local and “authentic” commodities desirable.

Within the framework of an antagonist politics, we may consider the process that drives changes in metacultural ideology to be largely reactive, creating a pendulum-like movement, as political affronts and oppression creates collective defensive reactions. Laclau and Mouffe (2001[1985]) and Mouffe (1997) describe how communities constitute themselves, centering themselves around their “constitutive inside” while distancing themselves from the “constitutive outside”. In the case of Mexico and its indigenous peoples, the nation considers “its indians” to be its constitutive inside, whereas at least some indigenous communities consider the state to be their “constitutive outside”. This semiotic dynamic will be described in chapter 4, as it unfolded in Mexico’s long 21st century. The next chapter takes up the challenged posed to governmental uses of Nahuatl, by the fact that it is not a unified language, but a continuum of regional and local varieties.

3. NAHUATL IN THE PLURAL: THE LINGUISTIC AND IDEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF NAHUATL

One of the ways in which the superficiality of official engagements with indigenous languages reveals itself is in their lack of specificity. They often address a generic “Nahua” audience without meaningfully connecting to indigenous lifeworld, or they use a generic variety of Nahuatl (classical Nahuatl, or the artificial *koiné* of the translated Constitution) that does not resonate within actual Nahuatl speech communities. This chapter explores why specificity matters. It describes the contemporary diversity of Nahuatl, and how this diversity of linguistic forms reflects a deep history. Using the concept of linguistic ideologies to describe how people who engage with Nahuatl assign different meanings to diversity, the chapter introduces a new form of linguistic purism based on establishing the local variety as the norm to be followed. Within Nahua speech communities, it is common that locals value their indigenous language, not because it is Nahuatl and ties them to a wider Nahua ethnic nation, but because it ties them to a local community of experience.

How many Nahuatls are there?

On the last day of March 2014, the *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas* (INALI, National Institute of Indigenous Languages) hosted a talk by the Danish linguist Una Canger, who has spent the past 40 years studying Nahuatl dialectal variety. The talk was mainly attended by linguists working at the institute, several of whom were native speakers of Nahuatl, and by linguistics students from different universities in Mexico City. Javier López Sánchez, the general director of the institute, headed the event, and he gave the welcome in Tzeltal Maya, his native language. The offices of INALI, located in Mexico City’s pleasant borough of Tlalpan, were adorned with pretty, blue signage giving directions and the names of every room using Nahuatl neologisms, with small lettered Spanish translations below. One sign said: “*yancuictepoztenahuatloyan* [lit. “new metal commanding place”] – *direccion de tecnologías de información* [lit. “direction of technologies of information”]”. Another said: “*iciuhca quixohuayan* [lit. “rapid place of exiting”] - *salida de*

emergencia [lit. “emergency exit”]. The sign at the entry depicted a young indigenous-looking girl waving at the camera, and carried the text “*Mah cualli ahxihualo nican INALI, in nepapantlahtolcan* [lit. may one arrive well here at INALI, place of many languages] – bienvenidos a INALI espacio multilingüe [lit. Welcome to INALI a multilingual space].” Beneath, in small type, it added: “*itlahtolcuepaliz inin amaixco mochiuhtoc inic ticahxiltizqueh in tlein quitohua in tlaxelolli 13 ipan ihueytlanahuatil inantlatolhuan in Macehualtepemeh. Xiquita!* [lit. The translation of this papersurface is made so that we can achieve what article 13 of the great law of the mothertongues of indigenous peoples says. Look at it!].”

At the meeting that day, Canger spoke about her experiences working with Nahuan varieties from Guerrero, Tabasco, Durango and Puebla. She focused her attention on how language change and diversification is a natural process, taking place in all living languages. She also cautioned the audience not to focus too much on the question of what orthographic conventions to follow when working with Nahuan varieties, and to instead focus on making sure to value and support the ways of using the languages by its native speakers. When she finished speaking and gave time for questions and comments it became clear that her arguments had left the audience somewhat bewildered. The audience had a number of specific questions that they had clearly expected her to answer in her talk. “Is Nahuatl a single language or many different ones?” “How many separate varieties of Nahuatl are there?” “By what criteria can we distinguish between a language and a dialect?” and “How can we produce a standard orthography that will work for all Nahuan varieties?” Though Canger did her best to satisfy the audience, none of the questions had the straightforward answers they seemed to be wanting. She pointed out that most linguists consider that the question of whether a linguistic variety should be treated as a language or a dialect is a political, not a linguistic question, and that there are no strictly linguistic criteria that can make this decision. She pointed to her experience as a native speaker of Danish, to whom the Swedish and Norwegian languages are almost fully intelligible, but which everyone nonetheless consider to be

separate languages from Danish. Mutual intelligibility then, is not the only factor to take into consideration when deciding whether something is “a language” or “a dialect”. Finally, the director spoke. Thanking Canger for her participation, he pointed out why these questions are of the utmost importance to INALI: The mission of INALI is to provide the infrastructure through which the 2003 Law of Linguistic Rights can be put into practice. The ultimate goal is to provide all the most important government services in all of the indigenous languages of the nation. However, to fulfill this mission the institute needs to know how to make an informed decision about how many languages to provide services in. He pointed out the problems faced by the institute in this process: “If for example we say that Mixtec is a single language, and produce a single material for all speakers of Mixtec, but only half of them understand it, then that is bad public policy. We need to produce materials that the people can understand. But I am being criticized from all sides. Some people come and tell me that when INALI divides their language into several varieties we are damaging their coherence as an ethnic group. They say 'what good is having an *indígena* in INALI if he is trying to finish us off?' The discussions are tough! That is why we are interested in finding a scientific way to define objectively how many varieties to work with.”⁸⁰

This encounter between the perspective of academic linguistics, which tends to see languages as fluid continua of linguistic variation with no clear cut-off points, and the practical challenge of how to deal with linguistic diversity in public policy, sets the stage for this chapter. Here, I will try to describe the internal diversity of what INALI calls the “Nahuatl linguistic group” and to understand its significance from a gamut of different perspectives. I will show that the question is not merely a conflict between an abstract academic perspective and the practical perspective of public services, but that it has even deeper implications for Nahuatl communities, and for individual speakers.

⁸⁰ My translation of López Sánchez’ original statement in Spanish, recorded in field notes during the event.

In the end, the significance of linguistic diversity is not found in the realm of objectively observable facts, whether in the histories of languages and language communities, nor in the ability of speakers to understand the referential meanings of each other's words. Rather, linguistic diversity becomes meaningful only in the subjective experience of differences by individual speakers. This subjective experience in turn is created partly by the objective measurable differences in linguistic form that may impede or facilitate communication, partly by the historical and political relations between the communities that are indexed by these formal differences, and partly by the speakers' subjective sense of kinship affiliation with some of the communities so indexed. This subjective process must be considered central to understanding why many Nahuatl speakers and communities value their own local variety and the traits considered to characterize it highly, while they reject other varieties and their associated traits as foreign. This phenomenon in turn is key to understanding the immense practical challenges of providing services such as government information or public education in Nahuatl. And importantly, I show that when speakers of Nahuatl do not agree about what Nahuatl is or who speaks it, this provides a formidable challenge for generalized efforts of language revival.

To make this argument, I start by tracing the deep linguistic and social history of Nahuatl, understanding the historical and linguistic processes that have created the linguistic variation that is observable today. Then I discuss the concept of metalinguistic discourses or ideologies, which has been used in most previous theoretical approaches to understanding how linguistic diversity becomes meaningful. Particularly, I focus on prescriptivist and purist ideologies and discourses. I show that linguistic purism may take many different forms, and I describe a new form of purism, which I consider particularly widespread and particularly important: Namely, what I call "localist purism," which sees the local variety (or "communalect", in the terminology of Valiñas and Aguilar) of a language as being the one that matters. I conclude that different ideologies of Nahuatl purism are used to create, sustain and delimit imagined communities at different scales. Each type of

purism delimits distinct communities of speakers, which can be based on national, racial, ethnic or local ideologies of affiliation. Purist ideologies, as the kind of socio-linguistic force that Bakhtin would call a centripetal force, have the central social function sustaining ideologies of kinship, and the political function of seeking to create publics.

To exemplify the inescapability of ideology in any undertaking that involves some conceptualization of the Nahuatl language, I describe how different ideologies of language are implicated in the controversial matter of how to choose an orthographic standard. Different actors engaged in the practice of writing Nahuatl present their orthographic choices as based on rational and pragmatic criteria such as the ease with which it represents a linguistic analysis of the language, the ease with which it facilitates use of historical sources, or the ease with which its speakers learn it. Nevertheless, each of these rationales in turn emerge from and resonate with the actor's own perspectives about the kind of community that the language represents. Choosing a modernizing orthography can be alternatively understood as severing the historical continuity between Nahuan intellectuals of the colonial period, or as a way to decolonize the language by ridding it of Spanish influence. Choosing an orthography based on the colonial standard can be understood as privileging the varieties of Central Mexico, but excluding the phonologically divergent varieties of the peripheries. Just as there is no ideologically neutral way of referring to Nahuatl, there is also no neutral way of writing it.

As noted by Gal and Woolard (1995) “[c]ultural categories of communication such as named languages, dialects, standards, speech communities and genres, are constructed out of the messy variability of spoken interaction.” This construction takes place in an ideological field where the ideologies of native speakers, interested outsiders, colonizers, educators, missionaries, activists, linguists, and anthropologists interact. The topic of language ideologies has been particularly fruitful in engendering research regarding government language policy and the role of often-conflicting speaker ideologies in language endangerment and revitalization (Kroskrity 2009). But

while almost all language revitalization projects involve multiple actors with differing ideologies, only relatively recently have linguists begun to examine how our own ideologies interact with those of native speakers, even though linguists and language educators are among the most important sources from which language ideologies flow into the public discourse (Collins 1998; Bucholtz 2003).

Investigating what makes different people evaluate something as “Nahuatl” or “not Nahuatl” is significant because many people are currently investing time and energy in projects aimed at “saving” or “strengthening” the Nahuatl language in different ways. But what happens when this “Nahuatl” that they are working to save is someone else’s “not Nahuatl”? This question requires what Kroskrity (2009) has called “ideological clarification” - finding out what existing ideologies about the use of a language are in circulation. Inspired also by Errington (2003), I define three different types of Nahuatl language activism: nationalist, ethnopolitical and localocentric language activisms, each of which participate in different glottopolitical projects, and each of which I believe appeals to different groups of people. Silverstein (2003), has pointed out how small objective differences may also have strong indexical implications, as chains of indexical orders may associate even minute variation with political and regional identities. Such indexicality may in turn lead to between conflicting authorities. Scholars in sociolinguistics have attended amply to the role of authority in prescriptivism (Milroy and Milroy 1999[1985]) at the national level, and purism at the level of mixing distinct denotational languages (Flores Farfán 1995, 2003; Hill & Hill 1986, Hill 1985, 1991). But the form of linguistic purism or prescriptivism that I call “localocentric,” has been previously neglected by scholars. Localocentric language purism sees linguistic authority as tied to a place, a localized community, from which a local set of norms emerge, and in which they hold sway. Recent scholarship in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology have used the concept of sociolinguistic scales to describe the process in which enregistered linguistic varieties maps onto imagined communities with different scopes, some of which encompass others (Faudree 2014b). In

this line of thinking, ideas and discourses about “diversity,” regulate and manipulate social scales (e.g. Faudree & Schulthies 2015; Faudree 2015b), and structure space (e.g. (J. Blommaert 2013)). One might consider the process of mapping across scales and domains one of mutual constitution, in which localities constitute languages, while languages also constitute locality – “producing locality” in the terminology of Appadurai (1996). However, I mean to suggest that in addition to the overtly political uses of language as scalemaking tool, there is also a less conscious and perhaps even intimate aspect to “diversity,” which comes into being through the way that human subjectivity is shaped through experience and participation in concrete sociality. In the context of Nahuatl language activism, even minor linguistic differences can produce strong experiences in Native speakers, because they produce what Sapir called a different “form feeling” (E. Sapir 1924, 153), or which has also been called “intimate grammar” (Webster 2010). I consider that this aesthetic-subjective aspect of the relation between people, their places and their communities, contribute to giving localocentrism a particularly strong appeal, and to making it a force to be taken into consideration in projects of language revitalization.

A history of Scholarship on Nahuatl and Nahuatl speaking communities

Nahuatl is doubtless the most studied and described indigenous language of the Americas. This is because of its legacy as an important language in the colonial administration, and even most contemporary studies of Nahuatl deal exclusively with the language of the colonial sources. In the colonial period, friars produced dozens of grammars and dictionaries, and Nahuas themselves produced thousands of pages of text in all kinds of genres, from religious instruction, to local history, administrative documentation, and even private wills and letters. Because of the language’s rich historical legacy, it is entirely possible to be an expert on Nahuatl without ever having heard a word of spoken Nahuatl or met a Nahua person. Until recently, this was in fact exceedingly

common, as American and European scholars typically studied “classical Nahuatl” the same way one would study the classical languages of Europe without having knowledge of the contemporary forms of the same languages. Danish linguist and Nahuatl expert Una Canger has noted how the academic life of “classical Nahuatl” has existed largely disconnected from interaction with study of spoken Nahuatl. Drawing attention to the process through which the register called ‘classical Nahuatl’ was codified and became the best-studied and most prestigious form of Nahuatl, she has pointedly described it as a language “created by Spanish Friars and German Scholars”.⁸¹

An important step in the process through which the Nahuatl of the colonial sources became “classical” consisted in drawing attention to the difference between the colonial variety, and the varieties spoken by living Nahua people. This step was taken by one German-born scholar, Franz Boas, who became the first linguist and anthropologist to consider Nahuatl and Nahua people to be more than a relic of Mexico’s pre-colonial past, and worthy of study in their own right. In the 1910s, he visited Mexico in his efforts to establish an anthropological field school there, and while he was there, he personally collected linguistic and ethnographic data in several Nahua communities. In Mexico City, Boas received help from his friend, the German scholar Eduard Seler, who was an archeologist and antiquarian and had worked extensively with colonial Nahuatl documents. Antonio Peñafiel of the Mexican statistical and geographical society also helped Boas. Presumably, Peñafiel played a role in inspiring Boas’ interest in spoken Nahuatl, as he had carried out the only dialect survey of the contemporary Nahuatl language in 1897, collecting wordlists in many hundred Nahua communities.⁸² Boas, however, was the first to approach Nahuatl as a living language, with its own grammatical rules distinct from the colonial literary language, and he was the first to collect

⁸¹ Canger gave this description in a lecture titled “Urban Nawatl, the Language of the Aztec Capital – Classical Nahuatl, Created by Spanish Friars and German Scholars” at UCLA in 2013. The lecture can be heard as a podcast from <http://www.international.ucla.edu/lai/article/151612>

⁸² I have not found references to this dialect survey, and am not sure if it was published, but I have a digital copy of it, which Una Canger has kindly shared with me.

systematic data from Nahuatl speakers with the purpose of describing the language. In Pochutla on the coast of Oaxaca, he spoke with the last speakers of a highly divergent variety of Nahuatl called Pochutec, and produced a short vocabulary and grammatical sketch which was to be the first such description to be written based on language from spoken data. The Selers introduced Boas to Isabel Ramírez Castañeda, a young Nahua woman from Milpa Alta, who had worked as an archeological assistant for the Selers, and who was then working at the Museum of History and Ethnography (Rutsch 2003). Boas recorded a number of folktales from Milpa Alta that Ramírez told him in her native Nahuatl; and he published them first in Ramírez' name at a 1912 conference in London (where Boas probably read Ramírez' paper in her absence). In 1924, he published the folktales again in the *International Journal of Americanist Linguistics*, crediting Hermann Haeberlin, who had redacted the tales as coauthor, and mentioning Ramírez as the informant (Boas and Haeberlin 1924). Through his collaboration with Manuel Gamio, Boas probably also inspired the grammatical study of the Nahuatl of San Martín Teotihuacán by Pablo Gonzalez Casanova (1922) published as part of Gamio's famous study of the population of the Teotihuacán valley.⁸³

Meanwhile in 1915, Boas' student Edward Sapir had demonstrated to everyone's satisfaction that the Nahuatl language was related to the Northern Paiute language of the US Southwest, establishing historical and genealogical relationship between the languages of the Uto-Aztecan language family. Sapir's work used only data from the colonial Nahuatl language. His friend and student Benjamin Lee Whorf, became the next person to write a grammatical description of a spoken Nahuatl variety when in 1934 he wrote a description of Milpa Alta Nahuatl (the variety spoken closest to Mexico City) which was published posthumously in (Whorf 1946). In the subsequent 30 years, little systematic linguistic work was done on Nahuan languages, until the late

⁸³ Gamio's study has become famous as an example of the early modernist anthropology of Mexico. It described the population of the valley in physical-biological as well as in cultural and linguistic terms. Providing a model for the subsequent racial and cultural understanding of the "mestizo" and the process of "mestizaje".

1970s and 1980s when a number of scholars began descriptive work on Nahuatl dialects. Among the scholars who did significant dialect documentation work in this period were Yolanda Lastra and Fernando Horcasitas, Una Canger, Karen Dakin, Leopoldo Valiñas, Lyle Campbell and a number of linguists from the Summer Institute of Linguistics.⁸⁴ These works were all linguistic descriptions (some grammatical descriptions and many vocabulary lists and dialect surveys), and they did not substantially address the social contexts of language use. Like Boas' studies, they were motivated by the felt necessity of describing the Nahuatl dialects before their inevitable disappearance. Typical of the sociolinguistic research in the period before the publication of Fishman's "Reversing Language Shift" (1991), none of them addressed the causes of this expected disappearance or made any suggestion that the process could be averted.

In 1986, Jane and Kenneth Hill published "Speaking Mexicano" the first sociolinguistic monograph on any Nahuatl variety (Hill and Hill 1986). It studied the variety spoken in the Malinche region of Tlaxcala, called Mexicano by its speakers. It was a detailed study of the linguistic practices and ideologies of Nahuatl speakers in the region. In many towns in this area, the process of language shift was already in an advanced stage in the 1980s, and the Hills' study focused on understanding the political dynamics underlying the shift. They noted that the Mexicano variety of Nahuatl was heavily influenced by Spanish, having borrowed words, grammar and sentence structure from the dominant language. To understand the social processes behind this language

⁸⁴ Among the linguists who worked to document Nahuatl dialect diversity and study the history of the language in the 1970s were Una Canger, Yolanda Lastra, Fernando Horcasitas and Leopoldo Valiñas (1979) and a number of linguists working under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Among the SIL linguists were David Tuggy, Earl Brockway, Richard Beller & Patricia Beller, Robert Sischo who collaborated with Ronald Langacker to produce a collection of short sketches of several dialects (Langacker 1979). Canger, in particular, conducted in-depth, long-term studies of several different dialects that had not previously been described. Lyle Campbell wrote a reference grammar of the Pipil Nawat language of El Salvador (Campbell 1985). Important work from this period includes Canger (1978), (1980), (1988); Lastra (1986); Lastra & Horcasitas (1976), (1977), (1979) (1980); Canger & Dakin (1985); Campbell (1985); Campbell & Langacker (1978); Langacker (1979); Valiñas (1979). Earlier contributions by Juan Hasler (1954) (1975) were too unsystematic to serve to advance the field.

mixture, they theorized that the use of language intertwining was motivated by ideologies that tied the two languages to distinct social domains and functions. Because of its relation to the National sphere of politics and power, Spanish was considered a language of power and domination. Consequently, the registers of Mexicano that exhibited the highest degrees of Spanish influence could be used as a 'code of power', used by speakers to position themselves as powerful individuals with important ties in the political sphere outside of the local community. In contrast, the indigenous language was indexically tied to the domestic sphere and to interactions among family members and close friends, and registers that drew heavily on the indigenous grammar and lexicon became a 'code of solidarity'. The Hills' posited that a process they referred to as 'syncretism' served to suppress the distinction between the two linguistic codes in the context of speaking Mexicano, and make it possible for both codes to co-exist in the same utterances. Their study was foundational for the field of sociolinguistic studies of code mixing, and sparked interest in the social context of language shift. A series of studies of language mixing between Nahuatl and Spanish followed the example of the Hills: José Antonio Flores Farfán, a Mexican sociolinguist, published a study of Spanish-Nahuatl code-mixing in central Guerrero (Flores Farfán 1995). Like other sociolinguistic scholars studying language death, Flores Farfán sees language mixing as a stage in the process of attrition affecting moribund languages. Jacqueline Messing, a student of the Hills, continued their studies in the Malinche region, studying the inception of language revitalization projects in the region, and the language ideologies leading Tlaxcalan youths to either abandon or study the Nahuatl language in school (Messing 2002, 2007a, 2007b). The study of the Hills, and the subsequent attention to Nahua communities in advanced stages of language shift, diverted attention from the fact that Nahuatl was still the main language of many hundred communities

across Mexico. To date there are no detailed studies of sociolinguistic practices or ideologies in any of the communities where the Nahuatl language is vital.⁸⁵

Two small studies by Una Canger, have noted peculiarities of the sociolinguistic life of Nahuatl in three communities where she has worked intensively. In two communities she observes that a high degree of influence from Spanish in all registers of the language, but neither language seem to be in the process of shift. In Coatepec Costales, the use of Nahuatl is limited to the sphere of adult interactions in the context of local community politics and the civic-religious cargo system. This compartmentalization of a Nahuatl speaking domain of adult political relations is so strong that people in Coatepec do not teach their children Nahuatl, and have not done so for several generations. Nonetheless, as children grow up, they feel the necessity to learn Nahuatl to be able to participate in the civic life of their town. The children of Coatepec are in effect “learning a second language first,” only acquiring their indigenous language as a second language (Canger 2009). In another observation of the sociolinguistic practices of the Nahuatl speech community in southern Durango, where Canger has also done long-time work, she notes that previous scholars had considered the language already extinct in the region, since they were unable to find speakers willing to share their knowledge (Canger 1998). Canger considers that this is simply because of a strong sense of taboo on using the language, locally known as Mexicanero, outside of the intimacy of the domestic sphere, particularly with strangers. In reality, Canger argues, the Mexicanero variety of Nahuatl is alive and well, being passed on from parents to children, without them needing to use the language outside of the family sphere. The third case Canger has described is from the town of

⁸⁵ Some small, but important, sociolinguistic studies of specific aspects of speech usage have been carried out by some Nahuatl speaking scholars in their native communities. This includes Valentin Peralta’s work on his native Tetzoco variety (Peralta Ramírez 2004), and Refugio Nava Nava’s work on Tlaxcala Nahuatl (the same region studied by the Hills and Messing) (Nava Nava 2003). Presumably, the ongoing work by IDIEZ will provide important sociolinguistic information from the Huastecan community of Chicontepec, Veracruz (see Sullivan 2011 and McDonough 2014). Ongoing work by Jonathan Amith and his collaborators in Central Guerrero and the Puebla Highlands also has not yet been published.

Tacuapan in the Puebla Highlands where Nahuatl is vital and used in all social functions and domains, and with a minimal degree of influence from Spanish (Canger personal communication).

Canger's studies show that an extreme degree of domain-specific sociolinguistic compartmentalization⁸⁶ is possible without compromising the vitality of the language. Furthermore, they suggest that what is crucial in producing language maintenance is that the language remains current in at least one significant domain of social life within a local community, regardless of whether this is the intimate sphere of the family, or the public sphere of civic-religious life. Canger's work demonstrates the importance of understanding the social functions for which a local community uses its language, in order to predict the language's future, and in this way laid the basis for the present study and argument. An aim of this dissertation is to attend to the diversity of sociolinguistic contexts. In this chapter, I attend to the diversity of Nahuatl, describing how historical processes resulted in a diversity of linguistic forms, and an equally diverse gamut of ideologies about what Nahuatl is or should be, and what kind of political community it represents. In the following section, I describe the historical process through which Nahuatl came to be considered "a language".

How Nahuatl became a language: Standardization and the Politics of Diversity

Bakhtin (1981) described the inherent tension between variation and unity as a set of counteracting social forces that are at work in every use we give to language. One force is centrifugal, driven by the heterogeneity of society and by the fact that we all learn our language from a heterogeneous assemblage of "others," whose words we repeat, mangle and mix in new

⁸⁶ In making this specific description, I avoid using the term "diglossia" which has been plagued by definitional troubles since its integration into the literature on sociolinguistic variation first by Ferguson (1959) in one definition and then by Fishman (1967) in another, as described by (Timm 1981). Flores Farfán (1995) uses the term about bilingual Spanish-Nahuatl practices in Balsas Nahuatl, but I think linguistic anthropology has by now developed more theoretically sophisticated concepts to deal with such situations of sociolectal stratification, codeswitching and code-mixing registers.

ways, and pass on to our own interlocutors. The other is a centripetal force, driven by the need to communicate, a force that seeks to hold it all together as a coherent system of signs that can be interpreted by others according to established patterns, and which can be controlled by those in power (Bakhtin 1981:272-273).

Power and the authority to regulate and regiment language, lies at the heart of processes through which languages cohere. Milroy and Milroy (1999 [1985]) have described how the force of centralized political institutions, combined with a prescriptivist language ideology and a strongly class-stratified society, led to the emergence of the register called “standard English”. This register is opposed to myriad “non-standard” Englishes, all valued as inferior to the standard from the perspective of official language regulators. Prescriptivism, and the closely related concept of purism, operate by defining a standard to be followed, and enforcing its use onto other speakers through forms of social pressure and coercion. It is hard to imagine a form of political community that does not operate with a degree of linguistic prescriptivism. Even the least prescriptive political group would probably at least have to carry out some policing of terminology referring to the political collective itself and of which ever other terms it uses to formulate its collective identity. However, in the context of ethno-nationalism prescriptivism extends to the entire linguistic system, from phonology and grammar to vocabulary, orthography and style.

Studying the political process through which a “standard variety” is created, Haugen (1966) analyzed how the standard languages of Europe were created as a part of the rise of the Nation state as the dominant political system. Haugen argues that the label “a language” is an artefact of the glottopolitical process of standardization, which entails three stages. First selecting the dialect features to be taken as the standard; Secondly, codifying it (establishing an orthography and setting down the grammatical standard and a dictionary); Third, promoting it (for example through an education system) until it meets acceptance in the population of speakers who begin to reproduce it. The process that led to the idea of a unified Nahuatl language, has taken a very similar form.

Canger (2011a) has argued that the Tenochtitlan variety was itself a *koine*-like variety that arose among the urban dwellers that flocked to the city from different regions speaking different dialects. With the invasion the colonizers seized on this same variety for the same purpose, further supporting its spread (Pizzigoni 2012; Christensen 2012; Schwaller 2012; Yannakakis 2012). The language was furthermore codified by missionary linguists already beginning in the 16th century, and during the first century of the colony priests were required to study Tenochtitlan Nahuatl before being sent to the provinces, regardless of which language was spoken at their destination (Restall, Sousa and Terraciano 2005, 12-14). The process created a missionary register of Nahuatl, integrating Nahuatl terms into the vocabulary of Catholic theology (Burkhart 1987). This process was not unlike the process that led to the register of Yucatec Maya that Hanks (Hanks 2010) has called "*Maya reducido*".⁸⁷ The missionary register spread with the friars, who introduced new vocabulary to most of the existing dialect area. The spread of Missionary Nahuatl also resulted in the formation of dialect-mixing registers created by ecclesiastics trained in Urban Tenochtitlan Nahuatl, who tailored the Central Mexican variety to address audiences, speaking other local and regional varieties (Madajczak and Phrao Hansen 2016). Additionally, for more than 50 years, from 1570 to 1624, Tenochtitlan Nahuatl had official status in the colony of New Spain by royal decree, and continued in widespread use in the Indian Republics until the mid 18th century, when Charles III prohibited its use in print. (Suárez 1983:165; Hidalgo 2006: 371; Brice Heath 1972).

With independence in 1821, Nahuatl was converted into an object of textual study by non-indigenous intellectuals. During the colony, the mestizo class, one of the racial castes of colonial society, had been considered an ambiguous half-breed that fit neither here nor there within the colonial legal fabric. Nevertheless, after independence the mestizo came to symbolize the unity of

⁸⁷ However, the "reductive" effect through which the entire Maya linguistic universe was reconfigured due to intense contact with missionaries and their civilizing mission, does not seem to have occurred in the same way for Nahuatl. Perhaps this is because Nahuatl was much more diverse than Yucatec Maya, and was spoken in such disconnected enclaves that having the same kind of totalizing effect posited by Hanks.

the European and Indian races, and even the *criollos*, of pure Spanish blood but born in the colonies, turned to the treasure trove of colonial Nahuatl literature for the construction of a national identity and mythology (Miller 2004). Here they found the legend of the foundation of Tenochtitlan (by then Mexico City), which became a centerpiece of the national mythology (Gutierrez 1999:137-42). The other central text of Mexican Nationalism, the legend of the apparition of the virgin of Guadalupe was composed in Nahuatl by a criollo *cleric* (Sousa, Poole & Lockhart 1998). We can take this point in time, as the moment when Nahuatl became in the National consciousness of Mexico, in the words of Walter (Mignolo 1992, 193) "a language (i.e. an object) of the past, rather than a languaging activity of millions of people, suppressed by national languag (ing) es."

With the turn of the 20th century, post-revolutionary nationalism continued the interest in colonial Nahuatl as an important object of scholarly study and general erudition. Pre-Hispanic indigenous civilization was likened to ancient Greece in intellectual sophistication and the phrase "classical Nahuatl" was invented to describe the Nahuatl variety of the colonial documentary sources. While the pre-Hispanic past was elevated to a classical tradition by such scholars as Ángel María Garibay and Miguel Leon-Portilla (Payàs 2004), the contemporary indigenous communities were redefined as a rural proletariat, whose adherence to catholic superstition and lack of Spanish skills kept them on the margins of the modern nation. They had to be integrated into the nation (Gutiérrez 1999), and to achieve this, the deteriorated vernaculars required replacement with either "pure" classical Nahuatl or Spanish. This ideology carried the project of hispanization that was the dominant language policy through the 1940s – 1990s, and which was carried out through cooperation between the Mexican education system and the North American missionary organization the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Hartch 2006).

Clearly, at the base of the Mexican nation, lies a linguistic hierarchy that privileges Nahuatl over other indigenous languages, and which privileges an urban, literary, variety of Nahuatl mastered by mostly non-indigenous scholars, over the rural vernacular varieties spoken by all of

the language's native speakers. This language ideology can be called the nationalist ideology of Nahuatl, and it informs a specific kind of language purism, which I will describe further below in this chapter.

Words and Labels

Until this point in the dissertation, the term "Nahuatl" has been used as if it were an unproblematic term referring to the same kind of well-defined standard that we assume when we use the name "English". However, that is not really the case, and in this section, I will attend to the specific complications of labeling with regards to Nahuatl. The words and labels we use to identify particular ways of speaking or to circumscribe specific groups and communities play an important role in structuring our social worlds. As Paja Faudree points out, "like blotches of color on linguistic maps, ethnic categorizations, simultaneously make some things visible while obscuring others, all the while also creating new realities" (Faudree 2013, 31). The boundaries between language categories and ethnic categories alike are essentially semiotic boundaries. They emerge through the establishment of a label and a "sieving process" (Kockelman 2011) through which we continuously decide whether to include or exclude specific entities under a given label based on how we interpret the bundles of indexes with which they present themselves to us. This process of sieving or sorting the peoples of the world and their different indexes into social categories is the semiotic equivalent of the cultural boundary work described by (Barth 1998 [1969]). Thus, it is useful to reflect briefly on the words and labels we use to identify our categories, before embarking on an analysis of the social meanings of linguistic variation within Nahuatl.

One way of understanding what kind of linguistic unit Nahuatl labels, is to consider it "a language" with many "dialects". To the historical linguist "a dialect" is a regional variety of "a language" that is considered to be a superordinate label of classification, which groups together a

bundle of regional dialects that are potentially in an early stage of a process of divergence to become separate languages. To linguists, “dialect” is a potentially very useful word, that describes a view in which every form of speech represents a dialect, but always a “dialect of” some language” (Van der Aa & Blommaert 2014). In linguistic usage, “dialectal variation” is generally distinguished from other kinds of linguistic variation, such as those distinguishing sociolects or registers, by being tied to a geographic locality or region (Chambers og Trudgill 1998). In historical linguistics on the other hand, a dialect is understood as an intermediary stage in the process of language evolution, in which a local variety is in the process of diverging from its parent language. Here the term describes the fuzzy zone of divergence between two historically related linguistic varieties – before they become so different that they can no longer be considered the same language. In this dual sense, as spatially distributed linguistic variation and as closely historically related linguistic varieties, the concept of “dialect” is a central concept to this entire dissertation.

In Mexico however, “*dialecto*” is a dirty word. It has traditionally been used similarly to the French word “*patois*” to describe, pejoratively, the vernacular languages of the rural proletariat, who in Mexico historically have happened to be largely indigenous and speak indigenous languages. To many Mexicans, indigenous languages are this kind of “dialects”: deficient semi-languages with no grammar and no writing system. In Mexico therefore, one has to use the word with caution – both because of the discriminatory associations of the word, and because it is not always clear where boundaries between dialects and languages can be drawn. To bypass the problem, INALI has introduced a new terminology according to which language labels such as “Nahuatl” or “Mixtec” are considered to name “linguistic groups” (*grupos lingüísticos*) consisting of a number of related “varieties” (*variantes*). Nevertheless, in English, “varieties” is often an imprecise word that can describe any identifiable variant of a language from the idiolect of an individual, to a particular register of a language to a regional dialect. Consequently, though I will try, I will not be able to use

the word “variety” consistently, but will occasionally talk about dialects and dialectal differences – but always in the sense of regional and local variation between closely related language systems.

The language label “Nahuatl” itself, is also problematic. Not all speakers of the languages that linguists call Nahuatl, consider themselves to speak “Nahuatl”. Some do not operate with that concept at all. The ancient Mexicas of Mexihco-Tenochtitlan would say that they spoke *mexicacopa* “As Mexicas”. Whereas, following the colonial tradition of associating the Nahuatl language with the Aztecs of Mexihco-Tenochtitlan, today many Nahuatl speakers refer to themselves and to their language as *mexicano* – pronounced always in Spanish as [mehikano], never in Nahuatl as [mefikano]. In many communities, “Nahuatl” is a new word, introduced by linguists or people who have read some scholarly literature, or more recently by the media and government institutions. But like “Mexicano,” the word “Nahuatl” goes back at least to the early colonial period where it was used to describe a “clear sound,” and interpreters who were able to translate from the many vernacular languages into the most widely used one (Nahuatl) were called *nahuatlahtoqueh* “Nahuatl speakers/clear sound speakers” (in Nahuatl) or *Nahuatlato* (in Spanish). Another great many speakers of “Nahuatl” call their language some variant of the word */ma:se:waltlahtol/* which means “language of the commoners” or “language of the Indians”. This word is based on the root */ma:se:walli/*, which originally referred to a member of the commoner class in Mesoamerican feudal society, but which acquired the general meaning “Indian” in the colonial period. In the area around Tatahuicapan in southern Veracruz, the language is referred to as *mela'tahtol*, “true language,” and one speaker told me that he found the use of the word *masewaltlahtol* to be offensive, because it equated Nahuatl speakers with colonial serfs. For speakers of many of the varieties the word Nahuatl is impossible to use as the endonym for their variety because it ends with the [tl] sound, hence they tend to call their language “Nawat” as the speakers in the Puebla Highlands, Tabasco and El Salvador do. The speakers of El Salvador are also opposed to the use of the label Pipil, which has been applied to many of the Central American varieties at least since the

colonial period, but which for them is derogatory meaning “children”. So, as the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981:293) teaches us, there are no neutral words, no one label that fits all. Given that a neutral term is impossible to find, in this work, following the prevalent usage in linguistics and scholarship, I will use the term “Nahuatl” when referring to all the varieties of the Nahuatl “linguistic group”. When referring to specific varieties, I will try to use the preferred nomenclature of its speakers, whether *Nahuatl*, *Mexicano*, *Masewaltlahtol*, *Mela'tahtol*, *Nawat* or another – but inevitably I will be unable to satisfy everyone's preferences. There is no semantically or grammatically satisfactory way to inflect *Nahuatl* in the plural.

Deep History: The Roots of Nahuan Diversity

Languages change. Even though we all know this, it actually is in contradiction to most of the ways in which we engage with languages as labeled “units” in our everyday lives. We ask each other what languages we speak, we translate from one language into another, we point out when people mix languages in funny or surprising ways, when they make a grammatical mistake, or use a word in the wrong way. We also note (often with disdain) when members of generations younger than ours introduce new ways of using the language, and we may be amused when old recordings of the speech forms of older generations sound old fashioned or excessively formal. It is as if even though language change is all around us we are unable to see it as simply that, and it seems that we all unconsciously cling to an idea that “the language” is invariable and unchanging, and that its norms of usage is something on which we all basically agree, or at least should agree on. Bakhtin’s dichotomy of centrifugal and centripetal forces is useful when trying to understand how languages are able to change fundamentally, while still continuing to be the same, held in place by the centripetal forces; and why at other times they disintegrate into mutually unintelligible varieties and new languages emerge from a single ancestral one. Past processes of diversification and emergence of new languages is traced by historical linguists who use historical sources to compare

different languages that share a common ancestry and propose what a common ancestor may have looked like.

Using the comparative method of historical linguistics, developed by European philologists in the 18th century, in two papers the American linguist Edward Sapir was the first to demonstrate what others had only intuited (Sapir (1913) (1915)). He demonstrated to the satisfaction of all, that the Nahuatl language of Mexico, shared an ancestor with the Paiute language spoken in the North American West, and by extension with the other languages with which Paiute was already known to be related such as Shoshone, Comanche, and Hopi. The name Uto-Aztecan had already been given to the proposed family of languages that united the two language groups, but Sapir was the first to propose a hypothesis of what the shared ancestral language might have looked like based on comparing two specific languages of the family.

Historical linguists like Sapir, generally focus on discovering objective facts about the past, or “what really happened” in Campbell's (1998, 299) paraphrasing of Leopold von Ranke's famous definition of the disciplinary aim of History. They describe history as a sequence of population movements, where groups split up and introduce new ways of speaking, which then break up again. This phylogenetic method produces a picture of “what really happened” that looks like a tree structure – the famous family tree. Using this method historical linguists define Nahuan languages as the descendants of a language that split off from the proto-Uto-Aztecan ancestor long ago, and which subsequently began to change their ways of speaking in different ways gradually making their language unintelligible with those of their ancestral groups. But Sapir's demonstration of the genealogical relationship between Shoshonean and Nahuatl posed a new set of questions: If the speakers of Shoshonean languages, most of whom were buffalo-hunting people of the North-Western plains, shared a common ancestor with the sedentary and even urbanized Nahuatl speaking Aztecs of Central Mexico, then where did that ancestral people live, and what kind of society did they have? Now, a hundred years after the publication of Sapir's article “Southern Paiute

and Nahuatl,” these questions are still being debated by historical linguists. In spite of its pretensions to objectively studying the past of languages, historical linguistics is not an exact science but an interpretive one – and different interpretations of the Uto-Aztecan past persist.

The mainstream view, even before Sapir's work, has been that the hypothesized ancestral language, proto Uto-Aztecan, was spoken by nomadic tribes in the North American Southwest - perhaps in the area around Death Valley. This argument has been supported by the fact that the center of diversity seems to be located in this area, and by the fact that the vocabulary that can be reconstructed for the language points to an area with a similar ecology as the ancestral home. Also the fact that most linguists have held that no agricultural vocabulary could be reconstructed for the proto-language, has been interpreted to mean that it was spoken by hunter gatherers, who only later adopted agriculture through contact with maize cultivators in Mesoamerica. These conclusions have been challenged by linguist Jane Hill in a series of papers, in which she argues that maize related vocabulary can be reconstructed for the the proto-Uto-aztecan language. This, she argues, suggests that a more southern location of the homeland is preferable, perhaps the speakers of the proto-language were agriculturalists who lived within Mesoamerica and gradually migrated north where some groups gave up agriculture in favor of hunting of big game (Hill 2001, 2012). Hill's suggestions have not been generally accepted by her colleagues, but succeeded in creating a renewed interest in the otherwise stale question (Kaufman & Justeson 2009; Merrill 2012; Beekman & Christensen 2003; Caballero 2011; Shaul 2014). One argument against Hill's hypothesis is found in the historical traditions of Nahuatl speakers themselves. Mythico-historical narratives of the Nahuas, recorded in the colonial period tell of a series of migrations from a northern homeland called *Aztlan* “place of herons/eagles”⁸⁸ or *Chicomoztoc* “In the seven caves” where they lived as

88. *Aztlan* is traditionally interpreted as an abbreviation of *aztatlan* “place of herons” *aztatl*, but Karen Dakin (pers. Comm.) suggests that *aztli* may have been an ancient word for eagle.

hunter-gatherers, and describe their arrival in central Mexico where they learned agriculture and a sedentary lifestyle (Smith 1984).

What is indisputable is that today languages of the Nahuan group are spoken in many different forms - as far north as Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, by Mexican migrant communities, and as far south as El Salvador. The bulk of speakers however, are found in central Mexico in the states of Veracruz, Puebla, Hidalgo and Guerrero, and with smaller populations in states such as Morelos, Durango, Michoacan Oaxaca, Tabasco and Nayarit. According to INALI's most recent survey, in 2010 1,544,968 people in Mexico spoke a variety of Nahuatl, making it Mexico's most populous indigenous language group. The number of speakers is rising and has risen steadily since the 1950s, although at a slower rate than the Spanish speaking monolingual population (INALI 2012). INALI divides the Nahuatl linguistic group into 30 different varieties, based on a set of not entirely clear criteria including self-denomination, intelligibility and region. INALI recognizes that its groupings are tentative which is part of the reason why there are in the process of carrying out a comprehensive dialect survey, and why they invited Canger to speak at their headquarters and participate in elaborating the survey tools. Prior to INALI's recent efforts only a handful of linguists were actively researching Nahuatl regional diversity. As mentioned, the main contributions to the field of Nahuan dialectology were made between 1976 and 1988. Since then the field has been relatively quiet until now, when INALI and a number of younger linguists, many of them native speakers, are taking an active interest in understanding the diversity of the Nahuan languages and what it may teach us about linguistic history.

The main results of the dialectological research of the late 20th century previously, was that it provided a good understanding of the degree of diversity among the Nahuan languages, and established a geographical grouping of the languages into dialect areas characterized by shared innovations. The dialect areas are well established, but the historical relations between them remain somewhat sketchy. A general tendency in the historically oriented scholarship on Nahuatl

linguistic diversity, has been to try to distinguish between two waves of Nahuatl migrants into Mesoamerica. Scholars have distinguished between an early and a late wave of migrants. The first wave made it far into central America and participated in the establishment of the city states of Central Mexico in the early post-classic period (ca. 800-1100 CE). The subsequent group of migrants arriving from the North-West in the late post-classic (ca. 1200 CE) participated in the establishment of the Triple Alliance and its empire that dominated most of Mexico at the time of the arrival of Hernan Cortés in 1519. This division into early and late groups of Nahuatl migrants also finds support in the early colonial sources, which describe such a division between the *"Toltecan"* who had established their urban centers in Central Mexico at the arrival of the nomadic *"Aztecan"* of Aztlan. Early historical dialectologists noted that most of the varieties spoken in southern and eastern Mesoamerica lacked the [tl] sound which is so characteristic of the dialect represented in the early colonial sources written in Central Mexico. They took this to mean that eastern t-varieties represented the earliest *"Toltecan"*-Nahuas who were described in the ethnohistorical sources as having entered Mexico first, whereas the tl-dialect of Central Mexico was tied to the Mexica or Aztec migrants. Benjamin Lee Whorf, one of the first linguists to pay attention to the variation of living Nahuatl languages, posited that the [tl] sound was an innovation characteristic of the Aztecs of central Mexico, and that the original state was the [t] found in the southeastern dialects (Whorf 1937). He showed that Nahuatl /tl/ had originally arisen as a development of the sound [t] whenever it occurred before the vowel /a/. This remained the most common view until Campbell and Langacker's work (1978) showed that, in fact, even the t-dialects had vestiges of a former [tl] in some words, meaning that originally all Nahuatl dialects must have undergone the development described by Whorf. This meant that new traits had to be found to distinguish between the earliest historical divisions of the Nahuatl language.

A series of such diagnostic traits was provided by Canger (1978, 1980), who noted that there were consistent lexical, phonological and grammatical differences between the central

dialects spoken in the area around Mexico City and the dialects of the periphery, as well as between the dialects of the Eastern and Western periphery. Among the traits characteristic of the central dialects were a series of sound changes changing the sequences /-nik/ and /-wik/ to /-nki/ and /-wki/ when occurring word finally, the development of a complex system of honorific distinctions in grammar and elaboration of a new series of reflexive prefixes molded on the possessive prefixes and distinguishing the personal category of the subject of the verb as opposed to the peripheral reflexive prefix that was the same for all persons. Canger and Dakin (1985) also noted that a certain group of words had the vowel /i/ in Eastern dialects but /e/ in Western ones. These insights led Canger to propose a model of Nahuatl dialect history according to which the Eastern peripheral dialects, including the dialects of Central America, Southern Veracruz, Central Guerrero and Central Puebla, represented the earliest migrants including the fabled Toltecs. The central dialects represented the Aztecs, a group of migrants from the western periphery who settled in the valley of Mexico where they introduced a number of linguistic innovations that gradually spread from the urban center of Mexihco-Tenochtitlan as their political power grew. And the dialects of the Western periphery represented stragglers from the Western migrations who never made it all the way to Central Mexico and who therefore never adopted the innovations made by their relatives there (Canger 1988). In 2011, Canger further developed this model by arguing that the innovative central dialects emerged as a result of dialect mixture occurring in the urban center of Mexihco-Tenochtitlan where speakers of Eastern and Western varieties lived together (2011). This suggestion had the important implication that the central dialects, which are the best studied, could not be used as models for comparison when trying to trace the linguistic history of the languages. Rather, since the central dialects were mixed, the peripheral dialects should be privileged when considering the language's earliest history.

Beginning from Canger's model, I have recently proposed two further features setting apart the Eastern and Western branches of the Nahuatl language group (Pharao Hansen 2014). One is

that Eastern varieties tend to have personal pronouns *neha/naha* “I,” *teha/taha* “you” and “*yeha/yaha*” “he/she/it,” whereas Western varieties, including the central ones, tend to have *nehwa/tehwa/yehwa*. Because a series of other bisyllabic words show a similar alternation between an /e-a/ pattern in the Western varieties and an /a-a/ pattern in the Eastern varieties, I propose that the Eastern varieties have assimilated a previous /e/ in the first syllable to the /a/-vowel quality of the second⁸⁹. The other trait that I consider to demonstrate the East-West split, is that Western varieties tend to have the negation particle *ahmo*, whereas eastern varieties have a number of other ones, often using several different negations. I consider the exclusive use of *ahmo* as the only negation to be a probable innovation in the Western branch, since we know that proto-Nahuan must have used the negation *ka* (which is now only found in Guerrero, and in certain relic forms in other varieties). By following this path of innovations, I was able to consolidate the hypothesis of a basic East-West split, and to create a phylogenetic dialect classification that rests only on the criterion of shared innovations, in contrast to previous classifications based on

⁸⁹ For example we see pairs such as *yecat/lyacatl* “nose,” *wehka/wahka* “far,” *ehekatl/ahakatl* “wind,” where the a-a form is generally exclusive to Eastern dialects. Not all eastern varieties share the same a-a forms, suggesting that the process of vowel harmony spread from the pronouns to other words with e-a forms similar to those of the pronouns. The Western dialects seem to have innovated the addition of the -wa suffix (and some of the central dialects have additionally innovated the addition of the absolutive suffix). The form /nehwa/, I believe to have been shortened by apocope from an original /*nehawa/. The process of apocope causing loss of penultimate syllables in polysyllables has been described by Canger (1980).

synchronic, areal variation in which deep historical movements are obscured by convergence through recent diffusion, and shared retentions.

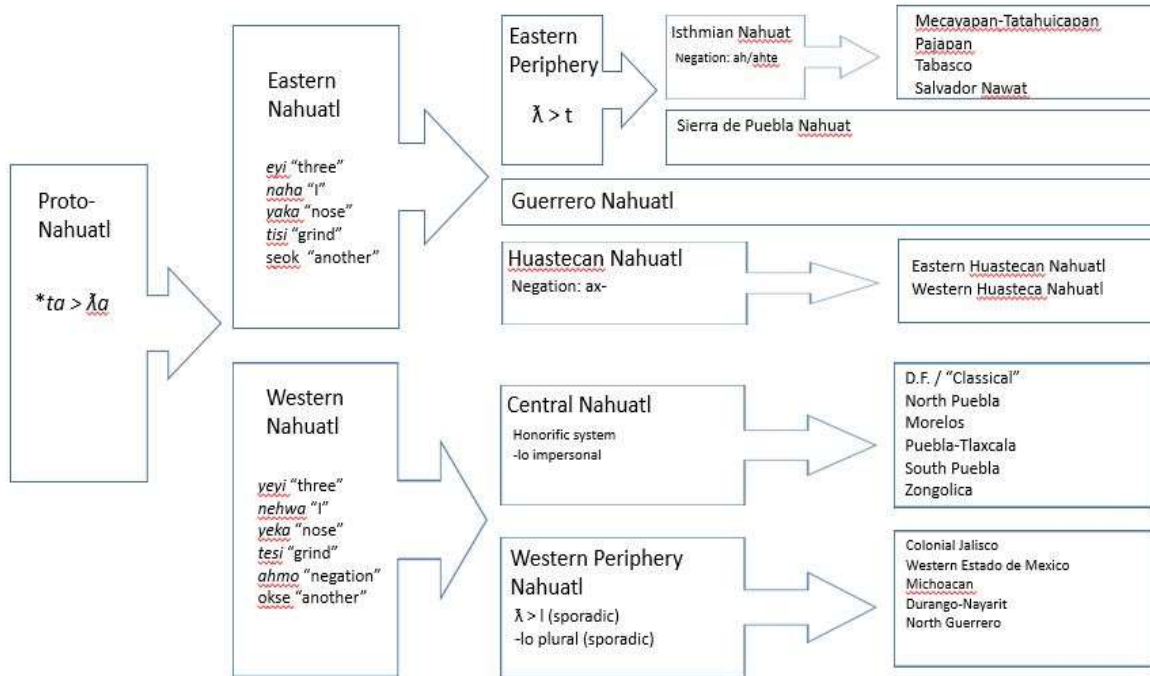


FIGURE 10. Flow chart depicting the Nahuatl subgroups and some of their innovations, based on my 2014 classification. This type of illustration ignores the results of diffusion and convergence, but makes the relations of divergent inheritance visible.

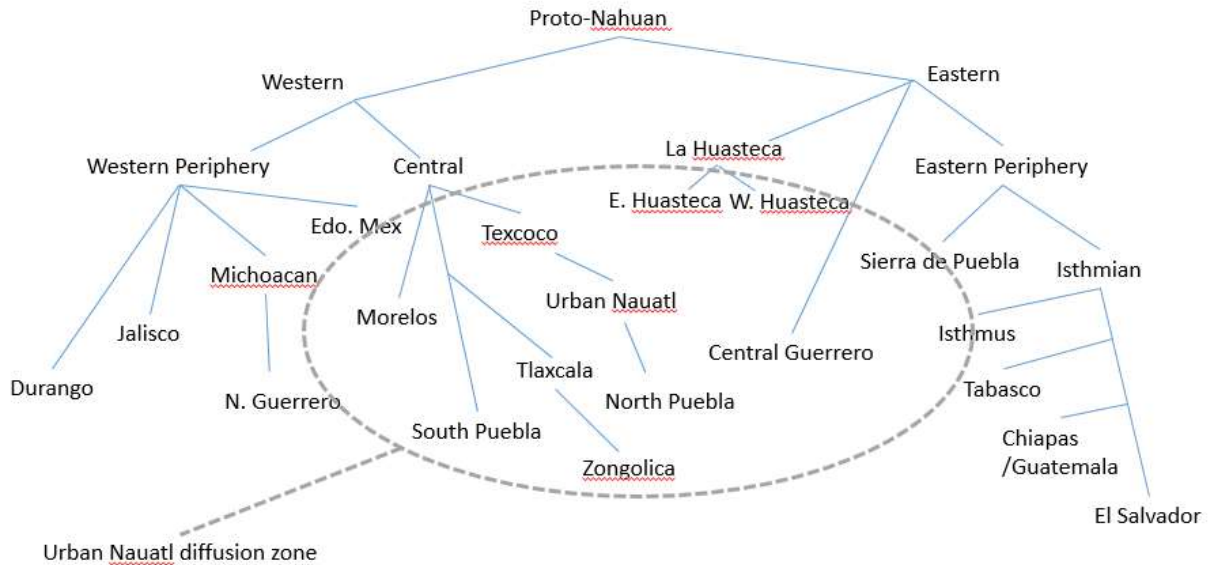
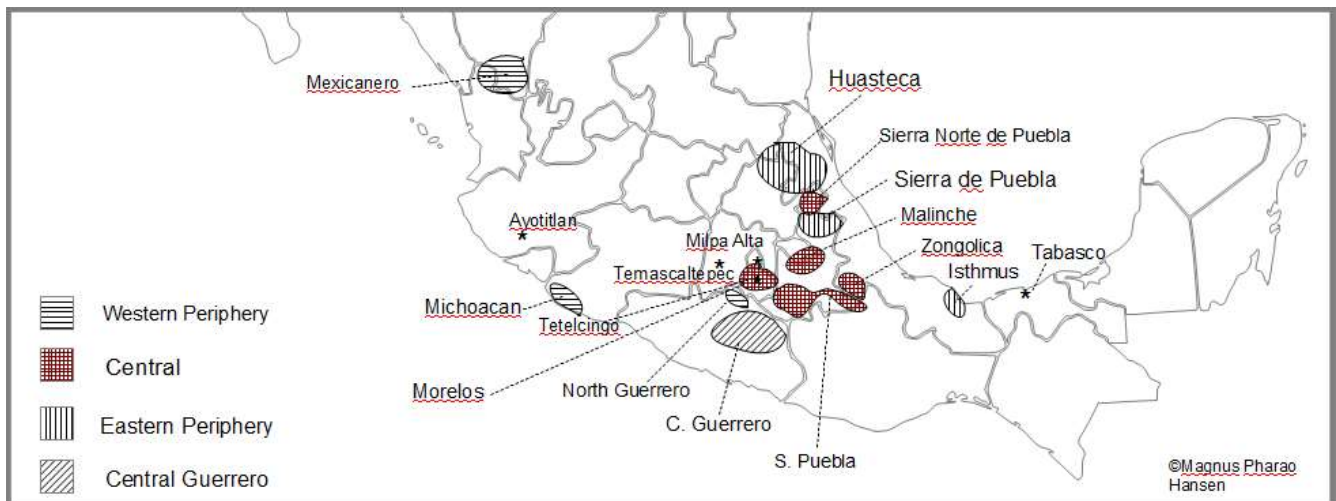


FIGURE 11. Tree diagram w. diffusion zone. This diagram represents the paths of inheritance with lines, but also shows the diffusion zone created by the expansion of Urban Nahuatl from the 13th to 16th century. The diffusion starts in the center and extends towards the edges of the ellipsis. The varieties outside of the circle do not seem to have experienced any influence from Urban Nahuatl prior to the expansion of the language through Spanish colonialism.

Maybe tree-diagrams like this bring us closer to knowing "what really happened" in terms of past population movements, but not to knowing why or how the dialects diverged. Why for example, did the speakers of proto-Nahuatl start changing all their /ta/'s to /tla/'s? Perhaps as proposed by some scholars, it was because they heard the [tl] sound as they came into contact with and mimicked speakers of Totonac the only other language in the area that has such a sound. This could certainly be the case, but on the other hand, most of the Nahuatl varieties that are spoken in areas where Totonac is also spoken no longer have /tl/ but have changed it back to /t/. But maybe again this change happened exactly as Nahuatl speakers tried to differentiate themselves from their Totonac neighbors. These questions require attention to the role of the social contexts of language change, and which strict phylogenetic approaches to language history will never become able to address.

The figure below, Map 1, shows the main dialect areas of contemporary Nahuatl in Mexico, following my classification. It does not include dialects that are no longer spoken. The dialects of Ayotitlan and Temascaltepec belong to the Western periphery, whereas the dialect of Tabasco belongs to the Eastern. Pipil Nawat spoken in El Salvador is not included on the map, but is classified within the Eastern branch. Milpa Alta Nahuatl, spoken in the Federal District, and Tetelcingo Nahuatl of Morelos, belongs to the central branch. The extinct language Pochutec spoken in Pochutla on the coast of Oaxaca is also not included, having split from the other Nahuatl languages very early, perhaps before the East-West split, it would also form its own separate branch. Within each grouping, there is considerable variation, often to the degree of limiting mutual intelligibility, and few of the groups correlate with a shared ethno-linguistic identity of its speakers.



Map 1: Nahuatl dialect areas of Mexico. As Faudree (2013:31) notes, these “blotches of color” render some things visible, while obscuring others. Here for example we see the approximate areas where Nahua populations are concentrated, and whether the varieties spoken in an area tend to belong to one of four phylogenetically defined classes. It tells us nothing about speaker demographics or language vitality, or degree of intelligibility between varieties, and it glosses over the significant diversity within each area.

How different is different?

One thing is to classify the spatially distributed variation into groups and analyze their history, but that does not necessarily tell us much about the degree of diversity between those

groups. It still does not tell us whether Nahuatl is best considered one linguistic entity or many. Even a language such as English, has spatially distributed variation that can be analyzed this way. Dialectologists working on English in Britain tend to distinguish between “accents” and “traditional dialects”. “Accents” are variations in how the Standard Variety (whether British or American English) is pronounced, whereas “traditional dialects” also differ significantly also in grammatical structure and vocabulary (Chambers & Trudgill 1999). In such a scheme, the type of variation among regional varieties of Nahuatl corresponds to the “traditional dialects” of England. They are not mere pronunciation variants of some underlying standard, but refract along historical lines, with substantial differences in phonology, grammar, vocabulary and discourse patterns.

Giving us a sense of the degree of difference among Nahuan varieties, linguist Terrence Kaufman (2001) has compared the internal diversity of the Nahuan language group to the diversity of English when including such divergent dialects as Wexford English of Ireland and Lowland Scots and Cumbrian, or to the Romance languages including Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, French and Italian. The fact that he uses both comparisons is significant (and provocative), because it demonstrates the inherent relativity of scales of classification. One comparison places the internal diversity of Nahuatl at the level of what we all recognize as a small language family; whereas the other places it at the level of what most people would consider dialectal diversity within a single language. By doing so he underscores that the decision of whether to consider Nahuatl to be “a language” or a “group of languages” is arbitrary from a linguistic point of view, and can be based only on political criteria.

Proponents of the view that Nahuatl is a single language often base their argument on the criterion of mutual intelligibility. They claim that Nahuatl speakers are able to adjust and communicate with speakers of other varieties very quickly. There is some evidence for this claim, at least for the speakers of the most commonly spoken dialects of the center of Mexico. IDIEZ, the *Instituto de Docencia e Investigaciones Etnológicas de Zacatecas*, has held a number of interdialectal

encounters, in which participants from different dialect areas participate and communicate about topics of interest exclusively using the language. The encounters are intended to promote interdialectal communication and solidarity, and to make and encourage a culture in which Nahuas communicate with other Nahuas in Nahuatl, and not in Spanish. I participated in one such meeting in January 2014, and it seemed like a huge success. The native speaking participants were indeed speaking and listening across dialectal boundaries, and dialectal differences did not seem to pose significant barriers to communication. However, not all dialect areas were equally represented – and the linguistically most divergent dialects, such as those of Durango, Michoacan, Tabasco, Southern Veracruz (Isthmus) or Pipil were not present at all. The majority of the native speakers of the IDIEZ are speakers of one of the Huastecan varieties, and they made up the largest group of participants, most other participants spoke central dialects from Morelos, Guerrero, Zongolica and Southern Puebla – which are all relatively similar in their phonology and grammar. Following the meeting, some of the speakers of the central varieties told me that they had found the Huastecan dialect quite difficult to understand, and that they had not understood everything the organizers were saying.

Furthermore, intelligibility is a notoriously difficult concept to measure objectively. In the 1970s, linguists did develop methods to measure intelligibility, for example assigning percentages of mutual intelligibility between dialects, by playing recordings of a different variety to native speakers who then stated how many of the words they heard they were able to understand. One finding was that intelligibility was not necessarily symmetric. Sometimes speakers of one variety understood speakers of another quite well, but were not themselves understood by speakers of that variety. At other times, intelligibility measured varied significantly between individual speakers. Some critics of intelligibility studies argued that what was really being measured were in fact a subjective measure of an individual's degree of exposure to other varieties as well as the degree of positive disposition towards them. The Summer Institute of Linguistics carried out a very large

intelligibility survey for all the languages of Mesoamerica and found that for some Nahuatl varieties intelligibility was lower than 50 percent (Egland and Bartholomew 1978). E.g. Huastecan Nahuatl from Cuauhtenahuatl, Hidalgo was only 20% intelligible to speakers of Santa Catarina, Morelos. Nahuatl of Santa Catarina was in turn only 38% intelligible to speakers of the neighboring variety in Tetelcingo, Morelos. The varieties of Azoyú and Acatepec in Guerrero had been understood at rates of 33% and 20% in Atliaca Guerrero. Similar surveys of European languages have measured the mutual intelligibility between Spanish and Portuguese around 40%. Intelligibility of Czech and Slovak is estimated around 90%, yet they are of course still considered distinct languages by their respective speakers and language authorities. Therefore, criteria of mutual intelligibility will not be of help if trying to determine whether to consider Nahuatl one language or many.

Linguistic criteria are also not going to help us. Nahuatl varieties have innovated in very different areas of the language, or innovated the same areas in different ways. Grammatically, for example, the Nahuatl of Tetelcingo (locally called *mösiehualli*), is almost identical to the neighboring Nahuatl of Santa Catarina, Morelos. But because Tetelcingo Nahuatl has been phonologically innovative and changed the contrast between long and short vowels into a distinction of vowel qualities (changing /a:/ > /ɔ/, /i:/ > /ɪ/, /e:/ > /ie/, /o:/ > /u/), the result is that the two varieties sound very different, apparently causing intelligibility to drop below 20%. Presumably, the change in Oapan Nahuatl described by Guion et al. (2010), which led to introducing a system of pitch accent and effectively made the variety a tonal language, will have a similar effect on intelligibility, even with closely related varieties. In other cases, grammatical innovation takes languages further apart. For example, in colonial Nahuatl of Central Mexico there was a suffix *-lo*, used to refer to unspecified subjects in a kind of passive construction. In colonial Mexico City Nahuatl, the use of this suffix shifts the semantic role of the person referred to by the subject prefix from the role of agent to the role of patient. For example *tlakwa* means “to eat something (*tla* is the prefix meaning something),” *nitlakwa* means “I eat something,” but *tlakwalo* means “something is eaten” and *nikwalo* means “I

am eaten” (Canger 1996). However in some contemporary varieties, such as in Hueyapan, the *-lo* suffix now is used in a honorific sense to refer to a particularly respected subject.⁹⁰ For example in Hueyapan, Morelos, *nehnemi* means “he/she walks”, but *nehnemilo* means “someone respected walks”. In a number of other dialects, for example that of Tabasco and those of Michoacan, the same suffix has been adapted to refer to plural subjects so that in Michoacán the corresponding form *nihnimilo* means “they walk” (Hasler Hangert 2004). In Tabasco *-lo* only refers to first person plural subjects, and *nemi* has further changed its meaning to that of “be” so that *nemilo* means “we are”.⁹¹ The use of the same morpheme and linguistic forms to express completely different meanings and grammatical functions, of course can lead to problems in cross-dialectal communication. Particularly prevalent are the lexical differences, so that for almost any word meaning, there will be multiple dialectal variants - not just differences in pronunciation but entirely different words, and often speakers are not familiar with the terms used in other varieties. These differences also occur in basic vocabulary, and even more so in specialized vocabulary. In some varieties house is *kalli*, in others it is *cha:ntli*; in some varieties “my mother” is *nonan*, in others *noye*; in some varieties maize grain is *tlaolli/tlayolli* or *tleol* - in others *sintli* or *sentli*; in some a squirrel is *techalotl* - in others *motto*.

Certainly, the diversity of Nahuatl is wide enough that it could be considered a group of languages on linguistic grounds; But at the same time, it is narrow enough that it could also be considered a single language with a continuum of dialects. The main argument that I make in this chapter, is that recognizing diversity, for example by considering individual varieties to be separate languages, may be more conducive to language revitalization and more supportive of the political projects of Nahuatl communities, than seeking to forge a pan-Nahuan identity by lumping all these different varieties together as a single macro-language. This is the reason this section has taken

⁹⁰ See (Johansson 1989), for a description of the grammar of honorification in Hueyapan, Nahuatl.

⁹¹ Field notes from Cupilco, Tabasco 2013.

some time to describe the existing diversity among language varieties that fall under the label 'Nahuatl'. The following section goes on to describe how diversity and the traits associated with different varieties become important within the context of different language ideologies that are used to motivate different types of language revitalization efforts.

Nahuatl in the Singular: Purism and the Ideological Erasure of Diversity

Having now described how the centrifugal forces of history, migration and social differentiation have worked on Nahuatl, I turn to describing how centripetal forces are leveraged through discourse as Nahuatl is taken up as an element in different political projects. As I noted in the discussion of authority and prescriptivism in language policy, attempts to tie a language variety to a political identity tends to imply also a notion of a "standard" that must be followed, and some measure of activist purism in enforcing it. In the following, I describe how different forms of Nahuatl purism pose different ideas of a standard Nahuatl, and to political projects at different scales – from the Mexican nation state, to a pan-Nahuan ethnolinguistic collective, to regional and local Nahuatl political projects.

A few days after first arriving in Hueyapan, Morelos in October 2003, I was introduced to Javier, a teacher from the town. He was an elementary school teacher in Mexico City, but also taught Nahuatl language at a high school. He was a big gruff man, and when he heard that I had come to Hueyapan to study Nahuatl he became visibly agitated and launched into a diatribe: "No one speaks Nahuatl here! Nobody here knows how to speak real Nahuatl, they just know some words and mix it together with Spanish. If you want to learn Nahuatl you have to go somewhere else. Go to Mexico City, there you can learn real Nahuatl at the University. What people speak here is not Nahuatl!"

This negative attitude to borrowing and mixing between languages is well known to linguists, who describe it as "purism," because of how it sees mixing as a sign of decay and

degeneration. Linguists, including myself, tend to write off people who have purist attitudes as uninteresting, because they espouse a prescriptivist view of language. Linguists tend to think of themselves as descriptive, with the aim of describing how people speak (or more often how “speech communities” speak⁹²), not telling them how they should speak. Purists explicitly refuse to speak the way most other people speak, and linguists therefore consider their usage not to be representative of the speech community as a whole and therefore not conducive to the aim of describing the linguistic system that defines the speech community. Applied linguists working to revitalize endangered languages often find purism to be problematic because it sets a very high bar for how an endangered language should be spoken. Most speakers are both unable and unwilling to meet such a bar, preferring to speak as they usually do without thinking of whether they are mixing languages as they do so.

Purism however has been of central interest to linguistic anthropologists because it provides a prime example of how practice is both different from and influenced by ideology. In their descriptions of purist ideologies at work among speakers of Mexicano (the local name for Nahuatl in the Malinche region of Puebla-Tlaxcala) Jane and Kenneth Hill (1986) show that the purist ideology goes hand in hand with certain other attitudes to identity and society, and with a claim to status and power within the community. Studying the Taiap language of Papua New Guinea Kulick (1992) showed that prevalent purism among the speakers of the language was a contributing factor to its decline and replacement by Tok Pisin. With the work of Michael Silverstein (1976, 1981, 1992, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2014) purism and attitudes about what language is and how it should be used, came to be conceptualized as meta-pragmatic ideologies or discourses, and this reflexive use of normative language to describe language and prescribe linguistic usage became the topic of many subsequent studies. This large body of studies in linguistic anthropology have shown the

⁹² Or for linguists of the generativist persuasion they aim to study how “a completely homogeneous community” of “ideal speaker-listeners” with “perfect linguistic competence” speak. (Chomsky 1965, 3)

important role of meta-pragmatic ideologies, as a nexus of socio-political and discursive phenomena, in giving language multiple layers (or orders [Silverstein 2003]) of social meaning in addition to its merely referential meaning.

Writing about the loss of internal diversity in American English, Michael Silverstein (2014) points out how ideologies that negatively value accents that are coded as 'non-standard' result in a gradual homogeneization and the spread of the accent dubbed 'General American' by sociolinguists. Particularly, he notes the ambiguity at play when overt discourses of the speakers of the majority accent claim to value the authenticity of non-standard accents, but simultaneously punish those who speak them through stereotyping. In this way, even diversity of accents can come to index social groups and iconically disclose their ties to a home region, even though in contrast with dialect diversity accent diversity implies mere differences in pronunciation but little or no grammatical or semantic differences. Silverstein's argument is that linguistic purism need not explicitly devalue the non-standard variety in order to stigmatize it; it is enough to simply mark it off as 'unattractively different'. Such a marking can be unconscious, simply through the indexical association of a given variety with any other concept that is negatively valued, and the converse implicit association of the unmarked variety with desirably valued concepts.

When Javier stated that the language spoken by his neighbors and family was "not Nahuatl" he was drawing on such a set of meta-pragmatic discourses, and in doing so, he was performing multiple actions. One of them was to manipulate the power balance of his interaction with me into one in which he had privileged access to the knowledge I was seeking (and changing his social status from that of a possible "linguistic informant" into that of "a teacher"). Another was to distance himself from an image of Nahuatl as a language of illiterate peasants living in poor pueblos without access to the advantages of modern life, substituting it with one where it is the language of kings and princes, and the object of study for the intellectual elite in Mexico City. In other words, he was both changing the footing (Goffman 1979) of the interaction, and claiming a social identity by

rejecting a particular stigmatized identity that could be indexed by his status as a Nahuatl speaker, and substituting it for a more positive one. Under this analysis, purism is not just an annoying and ill-informed way of thinking about language. But more significantly, it is a form of discourse that performs social work in interactions, by manipulating the contextual values of particular ways of speaking. Purist language practices then, are essentially political.

Purism and other language ideologies perform this kind of social work in interactions, and simultaneously manipulate the way that semiotic boundaries are placed between linguistic varieties, and communities. The political question of whether Nahuatl is one or many, can therefore be rephrased as a question of purism. Drawing back to Bakhtin's idea of centrifugal and centripetal forces, purism is a centripetal force expressed in discourse. Sometimes, linguists see purism purely as the irrational objection to language mixing, but reformulated positively it is an affirmation of the common identity of Nahuatl speakers as members of a single ethno-linguistic group or nation. And consequently, purist discourses do not only serve to claim positions of power relative to speakers that “mix,” but also to sustain particular constructions of imagined communities, and to enforce their boundaries. In order to understand purism and evaluate its social functions, we have to analyze the use of purist discourses in relation to which communities they are trying to construct, which types of boundaries they raise, and which kinds of exclusionary practices and hierarchies they produce and sustain. In the following, I present four types of purism, each of which argue for linguistic purity and ‘oneness’. However, each of them are based on different ways of policing the boundaries of languages and linguistic communities, and have very different consequences in terms of who is included and excluded as members of the community of speakers.

Scholars such as Jane and Kenneth Hill, working in the Malinche region of Puebla/Tlaxcala, and Mexican linguist José Antonio Flores Farfán (1995, 2003), working in Central Guerrero, have studied the metapragmatic discourses that Nahuatl speakers use to manipulate the values of different ways of speaking Nahuatl. They have focused mainly on how these discourses are used to

manipulate the values of different registers of Nahuatl characterized by relative absence or presence of conspicuous Spanish influence. They have made it clear that Nahuatl speakers often use this criteria to enforce social hierarchies between those who know how to speak "good Nahuatl" or "good Spanish" (understood as those who are good at keeping the two linguistic codes separate), and those who don't. Jacqueline Messing, a student of the Hills' who also worked in the Malinche area has additionally studied the ideologies that influence the choice of speaking Nahuatl or Spanish (Messing 2007a, 2007b, 2013). Following the Hills' suggestion that Nahuatl is coming to be used as a language of solidarity and Spanish as a language of power, she shows that for many speakers Nahuatl has come to index social intimacy, whereas Spanish has become indexically associated with public functions, and with claims to political power. She shows that this dynamic has in turn resulted in Nahuatl gradually losing its functions as a language of the public sphere, and becoming restricted to being a language of the intimate sphere of interactions between close friends and family members. She has also shown that the choice of learning and using Nahuatl or not, is influenced by metapragmatic discourses that either assign Nahuatl a negative value as a language of socioeconomic backwardness, or a positive value tied to an pro-indigenous, anti-racist ideology. While the metalinguistic discourses apply to Nahuatl registers with different degrees of Spanish admixture has been amply studied, the way such discourses apply to dialectal diversity has not been explored.

The overt purism of Javier worked by sorting elements based on their etymological origins into either Romance or Uto-Aztecan genealogies. It would motivate the kind of language practice that produces a Nahuatl language rich in neologisms created to refer to all the concepts and objects for which there are no Nahuan etymological roots. We could call this kind of view an etymological purism. Such a view could potentially value any Nahuan variety, as long as it does not include conspicuous Spanish loanwords.

Another kind of Nahuatl purism is what we may call *nationalist purism*. This ideology is closely tied to the view of the Nahuatl as a symbolic vehicle of the Mexican National community and as such the heritage of all Mexicans. Often this ideology sees the “classical” Nahuatl of the Aztecs, as being the only legitimate and authentic variety and infinitely superior to the contemporary local varieties. This ideology sees diversity as detrimental, because it signifies departures from an original source. This privileges a language ideology that sees colonial documentary Nahuatl, often called classical Nahuatl, as the prototype, and sees diversity as possibly problematic deviation. This type of activism was typical of the post-revolutionary indigenist period. Indigenist politician-cum-ethnologists such as Manuel Gamio combined a profound interest in the pre-Columbian past and a genuine interest in the wellbeing of the indigenous population with the conviction that the cultural assimilation of the Indians into the national culture was both a necessity for the stability of a Mexican nation, and in the best interest of ethnic minorities (Gutiérrez 1999). The nationalist ideology that elevates the classical variety today has a presence in certain groups of urban Mexican society, such as the *danzantes* and *concheros* who perform neo-Aztec songs and dances, and organizes in a social system based on the pre-Columbian calpulli system (Rostas 2009). It also exists among new age groups based on the concept of Mexicanidad or Toltequidad, which promote the classical Nahuatl language as a particularly apt way of expressing a pre-Columbian philosophical consciousness. Some proponents of this type of ideology explicitly describe contemporary varieties as degenerated versions of classical Nahuatl. It also exists on the internet where fora dedicated to the Nahuatl language are often predominantly inhabited by middleclass urban Mexicans and Mexican Americans whose ties to the language is only as property of the Mexican National community, but not to any Nahuatl speech communities. The Nahuatl language is also frequently used as a racial or ethnic symbol among Mexican groups in North America, including both Chicano political organizations and certain Mexican gangs such as the *Mexican Mafia* (Rafael 2013). Common to these groups is that classical Nahuatl is used by people with no direct

connection to an local indigenous experiential community as a way of affiliation with a particular aspect of the Mexican nation and its past. With their frequent emphasis on restoration of a pre-hispanic world order, these discourses often see contemporary varieties as degenerated or miscegenated versions of the classical language which is assumed to be pure from such influences. The nationalist ideology also exists among Mexicans in the diaspora, who in the US often choose to identify as indigenous and reclaim the indigenous aspects of their heritage. Many such activists consider this use as a way of expressing solidarity with indigenous groups rather than as a way of appropriating indigenous culture – and consider that by engaging with the indigenous culture and language in this way they are part of an indigenous community, based on a cultural or biological heritage or phenotype (Villareal 2011). A further result of this nationalist ideology is that ownership of Nahuatl is removed from its native speakers who tend not to have access to the colonial standard, and gives it to the generally upper class, non-indigenous scholar-experts who do have this access, coupled with the institutional legitimacy to make claims about what Nahuatl is or should be. This leads to the process that Jane Hill has called “disauthentication” (Messing 2007b), which strips Nahuatl speakers of the ownership to the authentic version of their own language turning it over to the Mexican national community and its representative cultural experts.

Another purism, which we may call *Pan-Nahuan purism*, promotes the use of standardization and dialect leveling to promote the formation of a pan-Nahuan community. This kind of purism, which I have found most commonly expressed by Nahuatl intellectuals such as the ones involved in the IDIEZ project (Sullivan 2011) may lead to the dismissal of Nahuatl internal diversity as inconsequential or detrimental, and to the promotion of standardized orthographic and grammatical conventions for speakers of all varieties. Like nationalist purism, this pan-Nahuan purism works through erasure of regional variation (Irvine & Gal 2000), and promotion of a superordinate metalect meant to represent an imagined community encompassing all Nahuatl speakers.

This type of activism recognizes the validity of contemporary diversity, but tends to de-emphasize its importance and scale in order to promote cross-regional solidarity between speakers. It seems to be more attractive to indigenous intellectuals and indigenous political radicals, perhaps because it promotes a possibility for class-based politics. One might see the *koiné* variety used by Natalio Hernández in his translation of the Mexican Constitution as an expression of a pan-Nahua ideology. However, the pan-Nahua ideology is basically the inverse of nationalist activism and has the same risk of promoting ideologies of homogeneity and supremacy. For Nahuatl, the first project employing this type of activism is the IDIEZ project founded by the American academic John Sullivan, who studied classical Nahuatl with philologist and historian James Lockhart (described in Sullivan 2011). In collaboration with researchers at the University of Warsaw, IDIEZ is now launching a series of monolingual publications in different contemporary varieties of Nahuatl, with the stated aim of revitalizing the language. Another goal of IDIEZ is to make the colonial documentary sources available to native speakers, through providing education and workshops in colonial Nahuatl. Most of the indigenous intellectuals who participate in the IDIEZ project are speakers of the Huastecan variety of Nahuatl, which Sullivan also himself speaks fluently. Sullivan clearly distinguishes between colonial/classical and modern Nahuatl, but frequently he uses the phrase “modern Nahuatl” in a way that equates it with the Huastecan variety, ignoring or downplaying the degree of diversity among other contemporary varieties. For example throughout the 2011 paper, the phrases “Modern Nahuatl” and “Modern Huastecan Nahuatl” is used seemingly indiscriminately as the former is frequently used to refer to IDIEZ’ work with the latter, and the diversity of contemporary varieties is never mentioned. The pan-Nahuan stance is also implicit in the critique that the director of the INALI experienced when language activists accused the INALI of dividing them into small groups, when really they felt as a single ethnic nation.

All of these three types of purism work by attempting to manipulate the relative value of different linguistic varieties and competences in what Bourdieu (2001) called a “unified linguistic

market” where linguistic capital can be exchanged for other types of symbolic capital. But a fourth type of purism makes an opposite argument, namely that specific local varieties of Nahuatl should be the standard of purity and that different local Nahuatl varieties are not interchangeable. This ideology, which I call localist purism, considers local varieties to be the vehicles of social cohesion at the community level, and resists attempts to standardize Nahuatl or promote dialect mixture as a way of promoting a pan-Nahuan community. This view in effect sees any identifiable local variety as a language unto itself, and as the unique symbolic vehicle for social cohesion and continuity. This purism leads to a rejection of other varieties of Nahuatl, even highly similar ones, as foreign, and to the appreciation, and sometimes even exaggeration, of traits considered to be characteristic of the local way of speaking.

Local patriotism has a long history in Mesoamerica, and ethnohistorians frequently point out that in pre-Columbian times, town-community (Nahuatl *āltepētl*, Yucatec *Maya cah*, Mixtec *ñuu*, Old Otomí *andehent'øhø* (Restall 2004, 73)) affiliation was the main source of political identity for Mesoamericans, and not ethno-linguistic affiliation. In the pre-Columbian period, this local isolationism increased already existing dialectal variation at the town-community level, as local speech patterns diverged over time. In the post-conquest period, this divergence was exacerbated by the fact that communication between indigenous communities was increasingly carried out in Spanish. Local community patriotism persists in many rural communities in Mesoamerica, particularly in indigenous communities that often still have communal land holdings and a social organization system based on “*usos y costumbres*,” often revolving around a cargo system in which all adult townspeople are expected to participate. At the same time, many rural towns have frequent conflicts over land and water rights with neighboring communities that often come to take up the role as the main “other” against which the local public identifies. In this way, the town-community is often the main source of social identity for Mexican indigenous people, more so than the particular linguistic group to which they belong, as the ethno-national ideology would have it.

This does vary a lot though throughout Mexico, and some ethno-linguistic groups, particularly ones inhabiting continuous territories such as the Yucatec Maya or the Yaqui, have a much more developed sense of ethnic solidarity than Nahuatl speakers tend to have. Some Nahuatl speaking regions have also developed ethno-regional forms of solidarity, such as the Nahuas of the Upper Balsas region in Guerrero, who developed increased ethnic solidarity in response to a governmental hydro-electric project that threatened to dislocate several Nahuatl communities in the region (Hindley 1999, Flores Farfán 2011)

With or without the support of institutions such as INALI, CDI (the commission of development of indigenous communities), the newly founded Intercultural Universities, or local government, several Nahuatl-speaking communities have established their own revitalization projects aimed at strengthening their local varieties. This kind of purism has hardly been discussed in the literature, except implicitly in the many reported cases where Nahuatl speaking communities are critical or dismissive of bilingual teachers or Nahuatl textbooks because they use a non-local variety. It is also implied in some cases where Nahuatl revitalization projects are hindered by the impossibility of accessing the exact variety previously spoken in a specific town. While each of the other kinds of purist discourse a circulated in public discourse and media of different kinds, localist purism, being based in individual communities often counting few thousand speakers or less, does not. It is not propagated by local media, nor by intellectuals or institutions, nor does it even really constitute a discourse until the moment when a “foreign” variety is introduced into the local discursive universe. For example, in the town of Ayotitlan, Jalisco, Nahuatl was not even spoken in town anymore, only a few rememberers kept memory of the language alive. But when a revitalization project was proposed and a Nahuatl teacher from the Huasteca region was brought in to teach local youths, localist purism appeared out of nowhere as the elderly rememberers rejected the Nahuatl of the youths as “not our Nahuatl (Yáñez Rosales, et al. Forthcoming). A similar situation took place in Acaponeta, Nayarit, where only six speakers of the local variety remain and

revitalization efforts were carried out by a teacher also from the Huasteca region. The project had to be abandoned in spite of a strong local interest in reclaiming the language (Saúl Santos pers. comm.). Avilés Gonzalez (2009) also describes a localist revitalization such project in the town of Santa Catarina Zacatepec, Morelos, and others are described in the Malinche region of Tlaxcala (Messing and Rockwell 2006) and in Oaxaca. All of these projects are community-based in the sense that they do not involve any collaboration between towns, and in that they aim specifically at reinvigorating the particular variety that is traditionally tied to one town-community. Often this is prompted by a sense of loss as the languages fall out of use among the youth of the town, and it is often driven by local activists who for some reason consider the local variety to be valuable and worthy of being "saved." Such projects often involve offering classes to youths taught by locals, and in producing small textbooks or grammars, sometimes in collaboration with linguists, and sometimes written by locals with or without linguistic training. This type of project seems to draw participation particularly from speakers who grew up speaking the language, and who often have a limited educational background, and little acquaintance with or interest in larger indigenous issues beyond the boundaries of their local town-community. The value of the language is often formulated by participants in terms of the connection that the language embodies between the place, the people who have historically inhabited it, the ancestors, and the ways of understanding and experiencing and acting in the world. Native speakers may feel that the value of the language resides in the way that it encodes highly local meanings, such as words for particular plants or foods that are traditional to the place, particular local sayings or narratives, or in the way that particular social relations are encoded in the language. The ideologies employed by the activists who work in such projects may vary in the degree to which they contain a chauvinist element. Some projects are based on the premise that the local variety is the only true and pure language, and its worthiness of being saved is measured against that of other varieties. This approach is even antagonistic to the possibility of cross-community collaboration. Others simply define its worth by

the fact that it is “ours,” and recognize that other varieties have equal worth to their own communities, which enables some degree of collaboration and solidarity between communities.

Because of the often staunch support of the local variety and its ideological elevation relative to other varieties, the localist “splitting” approach does have the risk of foreclosing the possibility of any joint political project between speakers of different variants. Under a cynical perspective, this may be the reason why this approach seems to be the main approach of the Mexican government - it does promote a kind of fragmented multiculturalism that can be seen harmless from the perspective of the nation-state because of its inability to form a wide base for political projects. Historically, the existence of ethno-linguistic diversity and lack of ethnic coherence has for example been used to argue against the existence of collective rights for indigenous ethnic groups by indigenist social scientists (Gutiérrez 1999:105).

In chapter 5, I describe how ideologies of localist purism are used in the revitalization project in Hueyapan, Morelos. In Hueyapan, localist purism is so strong that some locals would discard others from being possible teachers of the language if they had at some point lived in or taught in another Nahuatl speaking town, or even if they were married to a speaker of a different variety. Even for native speakers born in the town, such contact with speakers from other communities could be considered as having contaminated their usage with ‘foreign traits’. Such a highly critical attitude to who can be considered to speak authentically may obviously pose challenges to any attempt to teach or otherwise promote the Nahuatl language in the town. I consider the prevalence of localist purism to demonstrate how political communities may grow organically from experiential communities, in a process where political solidarity roots itself in the commonality of experience. In such a relation, the minutiae of linguistic form, such as accent, localisms, become potent icons for the local public, making almost any word spoken a shibboleth of belonging.

In summary, the four types of purist language ideologies that I delineate above, are used to circumscribe imagined speech communities at four different semiotic scales. By sorting language by the genealogies of its words, etymological purism reiterates the basic difference between American indigenous people and European conquerors. By elevating the imperial and colonial variety of Nahuatl, Nationalist purism reinforces the Mexican National (or racial) community. By propagating a common standard variety, Pan-Nahuan purism aims to conceive a pan-Nahuan ethnic community. Localocentric purism ties microdifferences to the identity and pride of the local face-to-face making language the inalienable asset of the specific community. Nevertheless, purist ideologies are not simply political discourses that people consciously reproduce to promote political ideologies, and construct social identities and communities. In many cases, they also have a strong affective component. In the following section of this chapter, I describe how ideological diversity and different forms of purism, plays into the concrete task of choosing how to write the Nahuatl language.

Alphabet Wars: The practical and ideological implications of writing

Nahuatl/Nawatl/Nauatl

One area in which language ideologies about what Nahuatl is or should be and how this relates to the idea of what types of communities it represents, are often made explicit is the question of orthography. As is the case for many indigenous languages of the America there is no single orthographic standard for writing Nahuatl, but rather many different orthographic conventions exist and compete, each of them aligned with particular ideologies and perspectives. In recent work, Paja Faudree (2015a) and Daniel Suslak (2003) have described how contestations over orthographic choices about how to write indigenous languages of Oaxaca are politicized. In the Oaxacan context such choices come to index membership and allegiance to different reading and writing publics, to interest groups, such as writer's collectives or organizations, or to specific local

communities and their phonological variants. Nahuatl has a deeper history of literacy, and a much larger and more diverse base of speakers, readers, and writers, than the Mazatec and Mixe languages studied by Faudree and Suslak. Nevertheless, there has been no attempts at comparing the various different writing systems in use for Nahuatl, or at analyzing how they play a role in Nahuatl glottopolitics. Faudree specifically approaches Mazatec writing with the aim of “ideological clarification” (Kroskrity 2009), and as I have already laid out the major structures of metalinguistic ideologies about Nahuatl in the above, I can now continue to tie them to orthographic choices.

In the discipline of linguistics, when writing about languages that have no established writing system, it is a convention to give a short description of the orthographic convention used in the work, usually in the form of a key that ties specific graphic symbols to their related phones or phonemes. Such an orthographic key is often given in a footnote somewhere on the first page and then that is considered to have been taken care of. Since I will be writing a good deal of Nahuatl in this work, it seems to be in order to give such a key. However, given that when writing Nahuatl any choice of orthography is itself an ideologically laden statement, it makes sense to spend a little bit more than a footnote to reflect about the possible choices and their ideologies. In this section, I will show how the choice of orthography forms a powerful nexus that intersects both with the fact of linguistic diversity, and with ideological choices about how and whether to represent it. This section will also serve to introduce the reader to the different ways of writing Nahuatl, many of which will be used throughout the text when quoting or otherwise representing the language.

The history of representing the Nahuatl language with the Roman alphabet began already during the earliest phase of the conquest when Cortés wrote his letters home representing names of Nahua people and places. Nahuas had been representing their language using iconographic

representations, with a degree of phoneticism already before European contact. There is evidence showing that the earliest response of Nahuas to contact with European writing, was to increase the degree of phoneticity of their autochthonous iconographic script (Lacadena 2008). Nevertheless, the Roman alphabet prevailed and within few decades after the arrival of the Spanish, Nahuas had adopted alphabetic writing as their own. Young Nahuas were trained in writing by friars who also produced a series of "artes," (grammatical descriptions), through which they established a loose set of conventions for writing and analyzing the Nahuatl language. All of these writing conventions were developed from those that were in use at the time for writing Spanish, but just as there was no fixed orthography for writing Spanish, there was never a single convention for writing Nahuatl in the colonial period.

The reason that Nahuatl required a set of orthographic conventions that are different from those used for writing Spanish, was of course that the Nahuatl language uses sounds that do not correspond to any sounds in the Spanish language. This difference prompted the friars to make decisions about how to represent those new sounds, and each scholar made different choices. The result was that the orthographic conventions employed by Franciscan Andrés de Olmos in his 1547 *Arte para aprender la lengua mexicana* (which was the first grammar of an indigenous American language), were not the same as those used by his Franciscan colleagues such as Bernardino de Sahagún and his indigenous collaborators who wrote the Florentine Codex (Anderson & Dibble 1950-1982). Which were in turn not the same as the conventions of Alonso de Molina, who wrote the classic 1571 *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y Mexicana* (Molina 1970 [1571]). Their orthographies differed in turn from the Jesuit tradition of writing Nahuatl which was started by Antonio del Rincón (a native Nahuatl speaker) in his 1595 *Arte mexicana* and further elaborated by Horacio Carochi in his 1645 *Arte de la lengua Mexicana* (Carochi 2001 [1645]). Even the individual friars themselves were not fully consistent in their orthographic choices. For example, they often used letters u/o or i/y/j/ interchangeably, and the sound [w] can be found written in several

different ways, for example in the Florentine Codex and in Molina's dictionary with the graphs <hu, uh, o, u>. The same author may write even the same word differently on different occasions.

Colonial authors also frequently abbreviated and used shorthand, suggesting that for them the issue of convention was merely an issue of practicality of communication and not a question of choosing a single standard and sticking to it.

When linguists started writing about Nahuatl in the early 20th century, they had to establish conventions for how to represent the sounds of indigenous languages. They strove to make sure that data about different languages were compatible, so that the same speech sounds were given the same letters regardless of the language in which they appeared. Their ambitions were to make a single global system for the representation of all human speech. In the US one such system was developed by American linguists working with indigenous languages, this system dubbed the Americanist Phonetic Alphabet was used by the earliest scholars publishing about spoken Nahuatl varieties, such as Franz Boas (1917) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1946). Meanwhile in Europe phoneticians were developing a different phonetic alphabet the International Phonetic Alphabet, which eventually became the standard used by linguists in writing all of the world's languages. Today one occasionally finds new texts that use the APA, but the vast majority of linguistics texts use IPA when giving phonetic representations of language.

Another question is whether the part of language to represent in writing is the pronunciation of the word. Linguists distinguish between two different levels of abstraction in the representation of word structure in writing. The phonetic level is the level of pronunciation, and phonetic transcriptions aim to capture objectively the sounds produced in a specific instance of speaking, each letter representing a specific position of the speech organs. The phonemic level in contrast is a representation of an abstract level based on a phonological analysis, and a phonemic orthography only represents those differences in pronunciation that are considered to differentiate between different referential meanings in the language. In notation, linguists distinguish between

phonemic and phonetic writing by putting the former between slashes (i.e. /fo'ni:mɪk/) and the latter in square brackets (i.e. [fə'nɛtɪk]). There is wide agreement among linguists that in designing a writing system, it is desirable to aim for a relatively phonemic rather than phonetic representation. This is both because a phonemic analysis produces the minimal number of discrete phonological units necessary to reproduce all the sound contrasts that create meaning in the language, but also because there is good evidence that phonemic writing systems are easier to learn and use for native speakers. This is presumably because they represent the specific contrasts that speakers learn to focus on during the process of language acquisition. Now, in principle, a phonemic orthography can use any set of random symbols to represent the phonemes of a language, but in practice the choice of which symbols to choose is based on adherence to some already existing convention. That is, we can create a phonemic orthography based on the symbols of the APA or the IPA, or creating it by adapting Spanish orthography or one of the conventions used by colonial grammarians. Unsurprisingly, this is where the discussions begin.

To understand the intricacies of these choices, it is necessary first to know a little about the phoneme inventory and phonological structure of Nahuatl. First, we must point out that the different varieties of Nahuatl in fact have different phoneme inventories. This fact itself is not always recognized, and when people discuss Nahuatl orthographies, it is often assumed that it is possible to establish a single convention that can represent any variety of Nahuatl. When taking into account the phonological diversity of contemporary Nahuan languages, it becomes clear that this is not necessarily the case. Typically, discussions of Nahuatl orthography start from the phonemic inventory of the variety of Nahuatl represented in the early grammars. This variety was a central dialect, based specifically on the way that nobles spoke in the polity of Tetzcoco, and it recognized only fifteen different consonant phonemes. The consonants of late Medieval Tetzcoco Nahuatl are represented here using the IPA sign corresponding to their most common pronunciation /p, t, k, kw, s, ʃ, ts, tʃ, tl, l, m, n, w, y, ?/. It recognized four vowel sounds /i, e, o, a/,

with a contrast between long and short vowels, making a total 8 different vowel phonemes. Other varieties differ from this inventory, some having fewer, and some having more, distinct phonemes. In the table below, I represent the consonant phonemes of Nahuatl languages using IPA: the letters in parentheses are phonemes that are only found in certain dialects, whereas the letters with no parenthesis are to my knowledge found in all dialects.

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p	t		k, (k ^w)	(ʔ)
Voiced stops	(b, b ⁹³)	(d)		(g, g ^w) ⁹⁴	
Fricatives	(f, v) ⁹⁵	s	ʃ		(h) ⁹⁶
Affricate		ts, (tʃ) ⁹⁷	tʃ		
Liquids		l (r)			
Glides	(w)		j		
Nasals	m	n		(ŋ) ⁹⁸	

Table 1: Nahuatl consonant phonemes

For most phonemes, the choice of a letter is uncontroversial because there is wide agreement about how to represent them, but particularly the ones that are characteristic of the

⁹³ Found in Mela'tajtol Nawat of Pajapan where it is a development of the phoneme /k^w/ which this variety now lacks.

⁹⁴ Some varieties have introduced voiced stops through Spanish loanwords, but in some varieties they are no longer limited to loanwords, but have become integrated into native vocabulary.

⁹⁵ Some varieties in Zongolica have no [w] sound, but only the sounds [v] and [f] corresponding to the voiced and unvoiced allophones of the phoneme /w/ in other varieties. It would be justified to argue that such varieties have a /v/ phoneme but no /w/.

⁹⁶ Some varieties have [h] others have [ʔ] as an expression of the phoneme often called 'saltillo', but the dialects of the Isthmus have both since they have h for the original *saltillo* and have introduced /ʔ/ as a reflex of previous /k/ in syllable final position.

⁹⁷ /tʃ/ has merged with /t/ in the dialects of the Sierra de Puebla, the Isthmus, Tabasco, and El Salvador. And it has merged with /l/ in certain dialects in Morelos, Guerrero, Michoacán and Durango.

⁹⁸ Considered a marginal phoneme in Pipil Nawat of El Salvador by Lyle Campbell and Alan R. King

phonology of Nahuatl as opposed to Spanish, are the ones that tend to cause controversy. The most controversial phonemes are by far the “*saltillo*” (the phoneme that is a glottal stop in a few dialects and a glottal fricative in most others), the bilabial glide, and the velar stops. But before we proceed to describe how the different orthographies handle these phonemes, I will describe the different ideological bases for choosing how to represent them.

There are three different logics that scholars, educators and speakers use when deciding how to write Nahuatl. If we approach the question from an analytical perspective, as for example linguists typically do, it seems obvious that each phoneme should ideally correspond to a single letter. Under this criterion, most rational alphabet is one that is maximally economical and uses a single symbol (or combination of symbols) for a single phoneme everywhere this phoneme occurs. Such an orthography is economic in terms of the different symbols used, and it represents the phonological structure of the word directly. Linguists know that such a structure is also easier to learn for the native speaker. This type of orthography tends to avoid the Spanish style digraphs such as using the combinations <qu> to write the sound [k] before certain vowels and <c> before others, or using <hu> to write the sound [w]. Linguist Maurice Swadesh who was a student of Edward Sapir, and who lived in Mexico during the 1940s where he worked closely with the indigenist scholars who were working to promote indigenous literacy, was the first to advocate this approach.⁹⁹ Perhaps due to Swadesh's influence, the Nahuas who participated in the First Aztec

⁹⁹ Swadesh describes his preference for an APA based orthography in a 1940 letter to Robert Barlow, located in the Barlow Papers of the the archive of the Universidad de las Americas in Cholula, Puebla. He proposes that Nahuatl words in Spanish publications should use a simplified version that doesn't mark glottal stop, and which uses j for h, and which uses s for x. He follows the Asambles de Filologos y Linguistas - not the Aztec Congress. He argues that the alphabet should be for Aztec monolinguals, and that it follows that the alphabet therefore need not follow the Spanish conventions, also it so for them to know modern science, not to know their history, so following tradition is also not an issue, only ease of learning the script. He also critiques Juan Luna Cárdenas idiosyncratic orthography which proposes to use the letter <3> for the /tʃ/ sound and <ç> for /s/. This shows the interaction between American scholars like Barlow and Swadesh, and Mexican nationalist scholars like Cárdenas. As mentioned below, Barlow's Nahua friend and collaborator from Hueyapan, Miguel Barrios Espinoza, championed the APA based alphabet, which had the virtue of neither being based on the Spanish convention nor incorporating letters not found on a standard typewriter as Luna Cárdenas' orthography did (although it did include the “English letters” <k> and <w>). (Barlow papers: [182.2-9])

congress held in Milpa Alta in 1940 adopted such a convention as official. Today this system is advocated by linguist Andres Hasler, who has played a role in promoting this tradition in some Nahua speaking areas notably in the Zongolica region. In addition, some Chicano groups prefer it, perhaps as a rejection of Spanish type digraphs as part of a decolonization approach. Nahua linguist Miguel Barrios Espinoza, who studied linguistics with the American linguist Robert Barlow and promoted the use of the language in the 1940s, also considered the rejection of Spanish orthography to be important, he wrote "*inin totlahtol okse, tleka tikihkwiloskeh kemen kaxtillan?*" "This our language is different, why should we write it as if it were Spanish?"¹⁰⁰ Hence, this orthography can be motivated both by an ideological interest in representing each phoneme with a single grapheme, but also by an ideology that consciously rejects the colonial, Spanish-based orthographic convention as foreign.

However, if we were to adopt a perspective from the disciplines of history and literature, we might conclude that there is no need to introduce a new analytical orthography that differs radically from how the language was written during the colonial period, when so many written materials were produced. Instead, under this perspective, the most rational solution would be to simply adapt the many colonial conventions into a single convention that allows us to read the many colonial documents written in Nahuatl with as little adjustment as possible. This way of writing assures that contemporary writers can see themselves as part of a continuous tradition of writing from the colonial period and up to now. Furthermore, it facilitates indigenous readers' access to the colonial sources, since they do not have to learn a new orthographic convention. Finally, the fact that this writing system was highly successful in the colonial period, could be taken to show that there really is no need to introduce one that is simpler, or which claims to be easier to learn. Proponents of historically based orthographies may sometimes argue that using other orthographic types

100. Barrios Espinoza, Miguel. 1950. "Mexihkatl," Mexihkatl itonalama. Vol 1. p.1

constitute a deliberate attempt to sever the sense of historical continuity between contemporary Nahuas and their colonial ancestors, in order to deny them of a sense of shared history and political community with the Nahuas of the past. This ideology is particularly common in the strand of scholarship that Paja Faudree (2013:18-22) calls the “belletristic” approach, and which likes to draw direct links between pre-conquest poets and contemporary Nahuatl language authors (Faudree 2013:213).

Some proponents of historically based orthographies also object to the use of <k> and <w> on aesthetic or political grounds, for example calling them “American letters,” or say that using them is too complicated. Historian John Sullivan (2011:152) who is a vocal proponent of Andrews’ historical orthography for use with contemporary varieties, objects to the “modern” orthography (with k and w) saying that “the new convention confuses the concept of everyday writing with that of phonetic documentation.” Such an argument is not in fact meaningful, since the removal of digraphs is entirely unrelated to the degree of phoneticity (pronunciation nearness) of the language, but it does demonstrate the degree of displeasure that the use of a “new” letters may provoke in someone with a different orthographic socialization. Sullivan (2011:152) summarizes the argument for using the historically based orthography by underscoring the feeling of historical continuity that it provides: “We feel that spelling is the product of tradition and not of science. We are proud that our work builds on the great works of our fellow researchers, both past and present. Further, the conventions of the linguistic tradition are so different from older writing that they constitute an obstacle to the reading and study of the great corpus of works that constitute the written cultural legacy of the Nahua civilization.” In this way, Sullivan’s historically based orthography forms part of an ideology of pan-Nahuan nationalism that values giving contemporary Nahuatl speakers understood as a collective access to the historical sources. In this perspective, a diversity of orthographies, or even a difference between the colonial and the contemporary orthography becomes an obstacle for the pan-ethnic project.

Nonetheless, even among the proponents historically based orthographies there are ideological differences that map onto the choice of orthographic conventions. Today, two historically based approaches to writing Nahuatl are in use, both of which have proponents who are linguists who have studied the classical language, and both are developments of the system originally developed by the Jesuits. One system was promoted by American grammarian and historian J. Richard Andrews (1975, 2003) whose work has been immensely influential in sparking renewed interest in colonial Nahuatl among American scholars, particularly historians. The other system is used by the French linguist Michel Launey, whose 1986 monumental 1600 page *thèse d'état* was based on analysis of the Florentine Codex (Launey 1986). Both of these orthographies use the Spanish digraphs such as <hu> for /w/ and <qu>/<c> for /k/, but they differ in how they represent the “saltillo”. Andrews and his followers write it with the letter <h> which makes sense since this letter tends to be pronounced as [h] by English speakers, and since [h] that is how most Nahuatl speakers pronounce the “saltillo”. In colonial texts, one does occasionally find the use of <h> to represent the saltillo, although no texts use it systematically. Launey on the other hand uses the system proposed by Carochi which represents the saltillo with an acute accent over the preceding vowel when in the middle of the word, and with a circumflex accent when word final. This way of writing the *saltillo* makes sense in reference to the Tetzcoacan variety of Nahuatl, which had a glottal stop and not a glottal fricative, and which many colonial linguists considered not to be a distinct consonant segment but rather a type of accent. Both Andrews and Launey adopt Carochi’s convention of using a macron above the vowel to indicate vowel length. Today, Andrews’ orthography is in wide use in the work of most North American historians who work with colonial sources. It is the standard adopted in Karttunen’s important “Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl” (Karttunen 1983), which gives it considerable weight. Since Launey’s pedagogical grammar was only available in Spanish and French until 2012, his orthography has been mostly used by Mexican and European scholars, and when it was translated to English it was negatively received by some

followers of Andrews (McCafferty 2012). Launey's work and orthography also seems to be primarily defended by linguists, some of whom publicly defended his work against its negative reception (Amith 2013). This is probably because Launey works within a standard linguistic theoretical paradigm, whereas Andrews builds his own theoretical approach to analyzing Nahuatl grammar that is not compatible with mainstream linguistic approaches to description. So just as in the colonial period where Franciscans and Jesuit promoted different orthographies, the disciplinary backgrounds and intellectual genealogies of scholars continue to play a role in the choice of which orthography to promote.

A further place of discussion is the representation of the phoneme [w], which Launey and Andrews both write as <hu> when syllable initial and <uh> when syllable final. Danish linguist Una Canger (2011b) has argued that although this convention of writing the sound [w] is in fact found in many colonial source, it is based on a misunderstanding of the orthography of Andrés de Olmos. Olmos was a careful listener and sometimes recorded differences in pronunciation that were below the phonemic level. For example, in most Nahuatl varieties the voiced consonant phonemes /l/ and /w/ are devoiced when occurring word-finally where they are then pronounced as [ɬ] and [ɰ] respectively. These devoiced variants of the phonemes Olmos wrote as <lh> and <uh> respectively with a final <h> which represented the sound of aspiration. This suggests that Olmos had decided to write the /w/ sound with the letter <u> except when it was devoiced when he added the h. Nonetheless, subsequent writers did not understand this subtle distinction of Olmos, and instead started using <hu> as a digraph representing /w/ in all contexts, instead of the simpler and more economic way Olmos had envisioned. Canger thus advocates a return to Olmos' original intent and no longer writes <nahuatl> but rather <nauatl>. This proposal also avoids the fact implicit in Andrews system the letter <h> is used both to write the saltillo, and in conjunction with <u> to

write the sound /w/¹⁰¹. Her proposal has not yet gained widespread recognition, although it represents a significant simplification of the writing system, and simultaneously builds on tradition.

The use of colonial type orthographies tends to privilege the variant sometimes called “classical Nahuatl” which is usually exemplified by the Nahuatl of the colonial grammars, and based on the early colonial Tetzco dialect. Proponents often assume that the standardized classical orthographies can be directly applied to all Nahuatl dialects. This is however not necessarily the case. For example, it requires some significant accommodation to represent varieties that have introduced new vowel distinctions such as the variety of Tetelcingo Morelos. In addition, given the use of <h> to represent both glottal stops and glottal fricatives, it becomes difficult to accommodate varieties that have both the stop and the fricative as distinct phonemes such as the Isthmus varieties of Southern Veracruz. These are all issues that do not emerge as long as one works only with colonial texts or with the most widely spoken contemporary varieties such as those of the Huasteca, North Puebla or Guerrero, which tend to have phoneme systems fairly similar to colonial Tetzco Nahuatl.

In spite of the large amount of scholarship produced in North America that uses the Andrews/Karttunen orthography, a third perspective on how to write Nahuatl is even more influential among native speakers. This third perspective we may call the “practical” perspective, since it is primarily concerned with making a writing system that is acceptable to native speakers and easy for learners to acquire. From this perspective, it makes most sense to have a writing system that accommodates to the learners preferences, and which does not necessarily mark all phonological distinctions if these can be omitted without disturbing the reader's comprehension of the text.

¹⁰¹ This in turn causes orthographic ambiguity with the way of writing the phoneme /tʃ/ as <ch> in contexts where the sequence /kw/ is written <chu> - Canger's proposal avoids this ambiguity.

“Practical” orthographies of Nahuatl have been produced within the Mexican system of indigenous education often by linguists working for the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and promoted by SEP (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*) since the 1930s. In the case of Nahuatl most of them have been based on using only the letters that children are assumed to already know how to use from having acquired Spanish literacy.¹⁰² That means that they often do not use <k> and <w> which are not taught to children in Mexican elementary schools since they are not generally used in Spanish. They also tend to use the letter <j> for the sound [h], since Spanish does not have [h] and the j represents the sound [x] which is the closest equivalent. Today, some SEP orthographies do use <k>, but few if any use <w>. SEP orthographies also have local variants to accommodate dialectal variation, so that for example in the Isthmus area where most dialects have both a glottal stop and a glottal fricative <j> is used for the fricative and <'> for the stop. Practical orthographies generally do not mark vowel length, since in Nahuatl this feature very rarely distinguishes between word meanings, and can generally be inferred from context by native speakers. In some local SEP orthographies, vowel length is marked by underlining vowels, or by doubling them. During the 1950s to 70s, the American missionary organization ILV (*Instituto Lingüístico de Verano*) was responsible for the development of indigenous orthographies for use within the Mexican education system. They often based their decisions about orthographies on surveys of the ease with which learners acquired the orthography, which formed the empirical basis for their orthographic choices. But at a more cynical level one might question whether the consistent choice of Spanish style orthographies were not also related to the fact that the educational goal of indigenous language education during this period was to make it easier for monolingual Indigenous language students to acquire Spanish. Literacy in the indigenous language was generally conceived as a medium to acquiring Spanish, not as an end in itself. Today, the SEP often advocates SIL-style orthographies and they are used by many bilingual teachers in the education system. Some important Nahuatl

¹⁰² SIL states this as one of their basic goals in orthography development (Benton 1999).

language authors such as Natalio Hernández and Ildefonso Maya (both of who have a background as teachers), continue to use and promote these SEP orthographies. They are preferred by many Nahuas both because they are easy to acquire for those who already know how to write Spanish, and because it is likely to have been the orthography first encountered by those Nahuas who have encountered written Nahuatl during their basic education.

Finally, a large number of Nahuatl speakers have never encountered written Nahuatl during their education. When they decide to write their language they have no choice but to improvise their own orthographic conventions – a process that has been named “grassroots literacy”(Blommaert 2007a). The process in which Nahuatl speakers reinvent their language as a written language, can be observed online when native speakers begin to use the language on the internet. These intuitive orthographies tend to have some aspects in common. First, they tend to be pronunciation near, that is, they reflect the pronunciation of the specific writer, without passing through a phonological analysis. This is probably because most non-linguist speakers are not consciously aware of the abstract structure of their language, and therefore do not have a concept of a phonemic structure that differs from pronunciation. Secondly, they tend to be primarily aware of those aspects of their languages sound structure that are significant in Spanish, the language in which they have learned to write. This means that intuitive writing systems often do not represent sound contrasts that do not exist in Spanish, such as vowel length. They also often over-represent contrasts that are important in Spanish, but which are not a part of the Nahuatl sound system, such as the difference between voiced and unvoiced stops, or the difference between [u] and [o] (contrasts that are only found in some Nahuan varieties). For some reason, intuitive orthographies often use the letters <gu> to represent the sound /w/ (which is usually written as <hu> in historically based orthographies), this may be because in Spanish this convention is quite frequent, found in words such as *Guadalajara* [wadala'xara] (a city), *güey* [wey] ”dude,” *pingüino* [piŋ'wino] etc. And because this is the spelling that Mexican primary schools teach as the “standard”

representation of the sound [w] in first grade – even though the Spanish language also represents it in several other ways, e.g. with <hu> in *huevo* [weβo] “egg” or *huacal* [wakal] “wooden box”.

Interestingly these intuitive orthographies also frequently do not use the letter <x> to represent the palatal sibilant sound [ʃ], but often uses <sh> instead as in English. This is probably because many contemporary Nahuatl speakers are aware that these letters are used in English for the same sound as the one found in Nahuatl, but unaware of the tradition of writing this sound with the letter <x>. Today many Mexicans, including Nahuatl speakers, pronounce the letter <x> as either [ks] or [s] when it occurs in Nahuatl derived words and names. For example the place name <tlaxcala> originally pronounced [tlaʃkalla:n] in Nahuatl which is now often pronounced [tlaxskala] or [tlaskala], or the name <xochitl> meaning “flower” in Nahuatl and pronounced [ʃo:tʃitʃ], but today generally pronounced [soʃitʃl] by non-Nahua speaking Mexicans (among whom the name is most frequent). Intuitive orthographies also often do not distinguish consistently between words affixes, so that bound affixes are often represented as separate words, if they correspond to a word in Spanish. For example the subject prefixes, corresponding in meaning to the Spanish personal pronouns which are free words, are often separated from the verbs that they are part of with a space, even though they cannot be moved into any other position relative to the verb, nor be pronounced separately as a meaningful word. This shows that when a person who has learned writing in Spanish begins to write in Nahuatl they are generally only aware of the linguistic contrasts that they have encountered and learned how to represent in Spanish, which means that they unconsciously introduce Spanish influence in the way they write the indigenous language. The unconscious nature of this process of Spanish language influence means that it may sometimes contrast with conscious ideologies seeking to avoid Spanish influence. Finally, when writing intuitively, native speakers of course use the letters that they feel best represent their specific local pronunciation. A speaker of a dialect that has only [v] but no [w], may choose to use the letter to represent this sound, since is used interchangeably with <v> to represent that sound in

Spanish. A speaker of a dialect that voices the phoneme /k/ when occurring between vowels may choose to write that sound with the letter <g> even though it is not phonemic et cetera. This all makes the intuitive orthographies enormously diverse and sometimes very difficult for others to read.

The differences between the main orthographic systems can be demonstrated schematically like this:

Analytic/Hasler /Aztec congress	Carochi/ Andrews	SEP/SIL	Carochi /Launey	Colonial	Intuitive
W	hu-/-uh	u	hu-/-uh	hu, uh, o, u	gua/guo/g üe/güi, - uh, u
K	qui/que, ca/co	k,qui/qu i/ca/co	qui/que, ca/co	qui/qui, ca/co	k, qu
S	ci/ce/za/zo	s	ci/ce/za/zo	ci/ce/za/z o, ç	s, z, c
h/'	H	j, '	é, ê	-	j, h,
X	X	x	x	x, s	x, sh
-	Ē	ee/-	ē	-	-

Table 2: Nahuatl orthographies¹⁰³

Different orthographic choices emerge from different perspectives on what task is the most important functions of writing, from different aesthetic preferences based on the socialization and

¹⁰³ Here I compare the orthographies side by side, writing the Nahuatl phrase, "I will write, you write too!".

IPA	<i>nehwa nitʰahk^wilo:s</i>	<i>tehwa fitʰahk^wilo:s no imki</i>
APA	<i>nehwa niʔahkwilo:s</i>	<i>tehwa šiʔahkwilo:s no: iwki</i>
Colonial style:	<i>nehua nitlacuiloz</i>	<i>tehua xitlacuilo no iuhqui</i>
Analytical style:	<i>nehwa nitlahkwilo:s,</i>	<i>tehwa xitlahkwilo no: iwki¹⁰³</i>
Andrews style:	<i>nehhua nitlahcuilōz,</i>	<i>tehhua xitlahkwilo nō iuhqui</i>
Launey style:	<i>néhua nitlácuilōz,</i>	<i>téhua xitlácuilo nō iuhqui</i>
Simple SEP style:	<i>nejua nitlajcuilos,</i>	<i>tejua xitlacuilo no iujqui</i>
Complex SEP style ¹⁰³ :	<i>nejua nitlajkuiloos,</i>	<i>tejua xitlakuilo noo iujki</i>
Intuitive style:	<i>nejua ni tlajcuilos,</i>	<i>tejua shi tlacuilo no iujqui</i>

experience of individual scholars and writers, and also signify adherence to broad ideological movements and arguments. When I have taught Nahuatl grammar to Nahuatl speakers, I generally tell them that they can use any writing system they like, but that I prefer they stick with one and use it consistently. I also tell them that regardless of which system they choose to use, they will eventually meet someone who will tell them that they are using the wrong one.

Given that there is no neutral choice of orthography, I feel that in order to be fair in my representation of the different ideologies of the Nahuatl speakers and writers that I describe in this dissertation, I will have to adopt a stance of “orthographic relativism”. This means that I will not choose a single writing system to use consistently throughout the dissertation: When I quote written Nahuatl I will use whichever orthography is used in the original; when quoting spoken Nahuatl I will try to use what I believe to be the preferred orthographic convention of the local community that the speaker’s language represents. This means that when writing Nahuatl from Zongolica, as I will in chapter 6, I will use an analytical system that uses <w> and <k>, because that has become the preferred system in most of the region due to the influence of linguist Andrés Hasler and the local collective of Nahuatl authors and activists *Xochitlahtolli* (Xochitlahtolli n.d.). When I write Hueyapan Nahuatl as I will in chapter 5 I will use a local convention that is closest to the intuitive system (for example representing the phoneme /k/ as <g> between vowels). The reasons for choosing this unconventional system will become clear in that chapter.

The Political Significance of the Plural Nature of Nahuatl

This chapter has described the linguistic diversity that the label ‘Nahuatl’ encompasses. It has also shown how this diversity is given meaning within the framework of various metalinguistic ideologies each of which are in turn closely tied to different political ideologies. Rather than understanding purism as a single type of ideology as it is often considered in the context of

sociolinguistics, the concept is better understood as encompassing glottopolitical ideologies that seek to create, or reinforce political communities at various scales - racial, national, ethnic, or local. The chapter introduced the notion of localist or localocentric purism, to describe the ideology that values the local language of the local face-to-face community and whichever linguistic traits are considered to characterize it.

Faudree approaches the question of orthographic politics through the lens of authenticity within a framework of indigenous language literacy and authorship. She notes that in the context of Mexican *indigenismo*, indigenous language literacy has come to be “heavily mythologized as a prime mover of social change, and notes how some indigenous intellectuals have problematized this fetichization of alphabetic literacy (Faudree 2015a:181). Still, it is common, both among linguists and language activists, to see literacy as encapsulating the gold standard of language vitality, and the construction and promotion of standardized orthographies as the key to achieve this.¹⁰⁴ The fact that Chaucer and Shakespeare laid the foundation of English literature without a standardized orthography, just as colonial-period Nahuas wrote thousands of texts and participated in a culture of vibrant indigenous language literacy without one, somehow does not disturb the mythical importance of standardized writing.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, while Faudree focuses on how choices of orthography involve ideologies about authenticity, I would prefer to focus instead on the way that linguistic practices - written and spoken - participate in creating locality. Choosing to write “with an accent,” using an orthography that preserves the indexes of one’s local language variety as conspicuous shibboleths within the

¹⁰⁴ Sullivan (2011) is again a point in case for this view, another is (Brambila-Rojo 200X). See also discussion in (England 1996) for the role of standardization in Mayan language revival in Guatemala.

¹⁰⁵ Nor does the lack of a single unified writing system seem to present a major obstacle for present day Nahuatl authors to express themselves in literary forms. Coon’s (2015) and McDonough’s (2014) recent analyses of the works of contemporary Nahuatl language authors, attest to the vibrancy of contemporary Nahuatl literature, as do the many young authors who contribute to the Nahuatl language magazine *Toyolxayak* at the Intercultural University of Veracruz, and at Victoriano de la Cruz Cruz’ online journal *Yolitia* (www.vitepoxteco.org).

text, is a way of tying oneself to a political community. But it is also a way of preserving in writing, some of the flavor of the language that one grew up speaking, and which is the foundation of one's experiential community. The choice of letters, in this perspective, is not just a political statement, but also a way of embedding the affective and emotional relation between the author and the language within the text. Thus, the process of creating locality through language is not only a political scale-making project, but also a project of enregistering "intimate grammars" (Webster 2010), in order to subjectively and intersubjectively tie individuals and groups to places in their shared life-world.

In Hueyapan, I have a friend, whom I will call Don Rogelio. He is a farmer by trade specializing in fruticulture. Behind his house, he tends to his blackberry vines with large purple berries clinging to wires strung out between wooden poles, and to his orchard of sweet peaches and large Hass avocados. But he also likes to read and debate, and whenever we meet we discuss everything from astrophysics and theology to European and Mexican history. He is bilingual in Spanish and Nahuatl, but he strongly prefers Nahuatl, and if he had a choice, he would use Nahuatl all the time. I often have to switch to Spanish when I can no longer find a way to make my limited vocabulary sustain a discussion about evolutionary theory or digital technology. He has used his acute linguistic awareness to develop his own system for writing Nahuatl. He is the only speaker of Hueyapan Nahuatl that I have met who is consciously aware that vowel length is a phonemic feature of Hueyapan Nahuatl, and who strives to mark it when he writes. Just as the Jesuit priest and Nahuatl native speaker Antonio del Rincón did in the 16th century, Rogelio has chosen to mark the *saltillo*, which in Hueyapan is realized as an [h], with an acute accent on the preceding vowel. He also consistently writes the allophonically voiced stops, which the people of Hueyapan consider typical of their variety. Once, when we were discussing his orthography and the Nahuatl course taught in Hueyapan, he expressed worry that one of the teachers in the course had lived for a while in another Nahuatl speech community. "They shouldn't be bringing in influence from other places"

he said, “because if we are reviving a Nahuatl that doesn’t belong to us, then what is the point?

[Spanish: *¿que caso tiene?*]

4. THE DECLINE OF THE NAHUATL PUBLIC SPHERES: REREADING THE HISTORY OF NAHUA-SPANISH RELATIONS FROM THE 16TH TO 21ST CENTURY

In this chapter, I provide a reading of the political history of Nahua people from the beginning of the 16th to the 21st century. I develop an account of local Nahua publics and their changing relations to the imperial, colonial and national publics that have worked to exercise different kinds of political and cultural hegemony over them. In developing this narrative, I rely crucially on Habermas' reading of the historical development and decline of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1962) [Eng. (1989)], and I use his concepts (or at least my own mangled versions of them) as I frame my argument. One crucial difference is that in my conceptualization the bourgeois public sphere, characterized by "rational debate" aimed at posing political claims on a monarch, is simply one of an infinite number of different types of public spheres, characterized by their own communicative forms and political relations. These public spheres may coexist, parallel to each other, or they may overlap each other, or be hierarchically embedded within each other, and their mutual relationships change and transform over time. I will start out with a historical vignette, describing how one town in Veracruz, which I consider an example of a Nahuatl public sphere, has negotiated its relation with the neighboring city of Orizaba.

Ixhuatlancillo originated as a settlement of indigenous refugees who had been pushed out of the previously indigenous Orizaba in the early decades of the independence period. It seems that the long history of antagonistic political relations between the two communities has contributed to the continued vitality of Nahuatl in Ixhuatlancillo, in contrast to other communities in the surroundings of Orizaba where the language has become lost. Ixhuatlancillo to me is one salient example (but far from the only one) showing how language vitality seems to be tied to the type of politics that exists in a local community, and particularly to the role of the language as the language of an antagonistic politics.

Having described the history of Ixhuatlancillo, I proceed to give a broader political history of Nahuatl publics, which I seek to locate within the historical record through the ways that the presence of Nahuatl audiences and publics are indexed by historical sources in the Nahuatl language. In choosing this approach, this chapter may be considered an example of the approach that Michael Silverstein has called 'ethnohistory of communication' (1996) consisting in the critical analysis of the relations between different types and scales of communities, different language varieties and changing political formations. As Silverstein argued for the case of North America, also in Mexico the relation between 'language' and 'community' is more complicated than the Herderian ideology of one nation one language would have it. Historically, there has never been an ethno-national Nahuatl public sphere (a language community), but rather there have been a multiplicity of local publics (speech communities) using their local varieties as the vehicles of communicative action – and each of them have pursued their own political tactics in dealing with the forces of colonial, national and state hegemonies.

Historical vignette: Ixhuatlancillo, Veracruz - a Nahuatl counter public

On April 5th 1997, Angelina Rosas Mencías the municipal president of Ixhuatlancillo, a mostly Nahuatl speaking municipality in central Veracruz, led a large group of Ixhuateca citizens in a march from their town center and to the center of the city of Orizaba. There they protested the plans of Tomás Trueba Gracian, President of the municipality of Orizaba, to legally abolish the municipality of Ixhuatlancillo, incorporating it into the territory of the city of Orizaba, and they denounced the illegal presence of Orizaba municipal police at a water processing plant within the municipality of Ixhuatlancillo. Rosas, herself illiterate, weeks earlier had been quoted by the local news media as saying "Tomás Trueba, in spite of all your education you are an ignorant man" and that "The mayor's attitude is an act of aggression against the sovereignty of the municipality. He thinks that he can do anything he wants, and even more so when he is dealing with indigenous

people, but they are not alone and they know how to defend their rights, without acting in ignorant ways as Tomas Trueba is doing.¹⁰⁶” On the march and during the encounter with Tomás Trueba, Angelina Rosas brandished the Mexican tricolored flag, never letting it go – and she wore the traditional Ixhuateca dress with a skirt of fine handmade lace. In her meeting with the press and the Mayor of Orizaba she spoke Spanish, her native language. But participating in the discussions and deliberations among the Ixhuatecos that led up to the march, Angelina spoke Nahuatl, her second language which she had learned after arriving in the town at age 14¹⁰⁷. In the 1990s, Nahuatl was the language in which all local politics were carried out in Ixhuatlancillo, it was also the language of everyday interaction among Ixhuatecos, and the language that was used to express allegiance and solidarity with the community of Ixhuatlancillo, in the face of the oppressive politics of the Orizabeños. The words she spoke in Spanish that day are recorded in the news press of the time and can be read in the municipal archive of Orizaba, but there are no records of the debates and discussions in Nahuatl that took place in Ixhuatlancillo. The Orizabeños did not succeed in incorporating Ixhuatlancillo, which is still an independent municipality, but the municipality of Orizaba continued to slowly encroach on Ixhuatlancillo territory. A subsequent municipal president erected a statue of an Ixhuateca woman inside what was then Ixhuatlancillo territory – many considered the statue to represent Angelina, although most people in Ixhuatlancillo now call it “La Simona” in reference to the president who erected it whose name was Simón. But today, only 10 years later, the statue stands within the territory of Orizaba, since through a series of deals between state governors, and municipal presidents of both municipalities a large fringe of Ixhuatlancillo territory was ceded to Orizaba.

¹⁰⁶ *El Sol de Orizaba*, march 19, 1997, “No permitiremos que Ixhuatlancillo sea una congregación de Orizaba ARM” by Jose Luis Camacho Carreón

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Angelina Rosas Mencias, 21st & 22nd of July, 2014, Interview transcription given in Appendix I

The history of Ixhuatlancillo, of which the story of Angelina Rosas Mencias only represents a single chapter, provides a strong example of the way that political relations between indigenous and nonindigenous communities have developed in Mexico. In 1519 when the Spanish arrived in Mexico, Orizaba was called *Ahuilizapan /awilisa:pan/* “place of playful water” a thriving Nahuatl town founded by people from the city-state of *Tlaxcallan /ʎaʂkalla:n/*. Today, as I will describe in more detail further into this chapter, Ixhuatlancillo, makes up the remnants of Ahuilizapan, the result of a long process of political and social marginalization (García Márquez 2003).

Ixhuatlancillo is also today the only town in the fertile lowlands around Orizaba where Nahuatl is still spoken, in contrast to all the other towns in the area, where the language has disappeared.

Conventionally, sociolinguistic models of the gradual disappearance of Nahuatl in Mexico, see the process of decline as being mostly a question of the increasing intensity of contact between Nahuatl speakers and Spanish speakers (e.g. Lockhart 1992). They see contact between a minority and majority community as gradually causing the displacement of the minority language from different social domains, usually beginning with the political domain and ending with the household domain. This analysis works well as an overall explanation of the process of decline of indigenous languages, since it is clear that in some regions where Spanish presence began later and was generally of lower intensity, such as the Huasteca region, the North Puebla Highlands or the Zongolica Highlands south of Orizaba, Nahuatl is still vigorous. But this proposal does not explain why communities such as Ixhuatlancillo which has been in intense contact with major non-indigenous communities for centuries, nonetheless sometimes maintain a vigorous use of the Nahuatl language within their communities. This requires us to pay attention to the conditions that allow indigenous languages to conserve better in certain communities than in others. My argument here is that a main condition determining the conservation of the indigenous language is not the proximity to Spanish speakers or the intensity of contact, or even the degree of socioeconomic

marginalization of the community relative to non-indigenous communities, but rather the relative presence or absence of a Nahuatl language public sphere. Here, as I defined the concept in the introduction, I understand the Nahuatl public sphere a social domain of communicative action that uses the semiotic resources offered by the Nahuatl language, the local cultural practices, and their entailed ontological commitments, to constitute itself as a political community.

Communicative action constitutes the public sphere: by addressing an audience through discourse, the audience becomes a potential public. Therefore, the study of public discourse, the way that audiences are addressed, becomes a primary site where evidence for the absence or presence of a Nahuatl public can be found.

Giving a full treatment of public discourse in Nahua life is outside the scope of this dissertation, but in the following section, I give a superficial treatment of the historical interactions between Nahuan lifeworlds, Nahuan public discourse and Nahuan political history. I start by describing what is known about the pre-Columbian situation, and by reconstructing a set of themes of “common concern” that can be argued to have characterized the Nahua public sphere as it existed in indigenous communities prior to contact with Europeans. In order to position myself in a way that I may become better able to hear the voices of the submerged public, I will focus on Nahuatl language historical accounts. While I do not intend to give primacy to the written word, since I believe that most indigenous publics have been and continue to be mostly oral, I have to rely largely on written sources for describing the historical process that has led to the decline of the Nahuatl public spheres. Because of the possibility of oral publics, the absence of written sources in Nahuatl cannot be interpreted as the absence of a Nahuatl public, but contrariwise the presence of written sources strongly suggest the presence of one, at least when they are addressed to a Nahua audience. Furthermore, several of the sources I use for 20th century history are written versions of

oral testimonies by participants in historical events, and of local oral tradition as it has circulated in specific communities.

The Rise and Fall of the Nahuatl Public Spheres: A Summary of this Chapter's argument

At the time of European contact in 1519, Nahuatl was the language of an expanding empire. Though there are of course no census data to confirm this, it seems safe to assume that the speaker base was increasing. There are good ethnohistorical data to suggest that Nahuatl was gradually displacing other indigenous languages whose speakers found themselves within the sphere of dominance of political hegemonies carried by Nahuatl speakers. Today, although the absolute number of Nahuatl speakers is increasing, the relative proportion of people in the Mexican population who speak Nahuatl to those who speak Spanish is waning, suggesting a slow decline. Hundreds of communities that spoke Nahuatl at the turn of the 20th century have since abandoned the language, and in many communities where it is still spoken, the language is in advanced stages of language shift, with younger generations no longer learning it. In many such communities, the process of contraction has seen a gradual change in the spheres of life in which the language is used, with the language now being used only in intimate contexts between family members or close friends. Nonetheless, in other towns the language remains highly vital, spoken by people of all ages including many monolinguals. It is also used in politics, religious worship, and most public functions within the town.

The phrase “decline of the indigenous public spheres” describes my conceptualization of a general historical process through which the individual members of indigenous publics in Mexico have gradually reoriented themselves away from local conceptions of community and politics and towards the conceptions that exist in national space. I posit that this process has occurred at differentially rates in different communities with some indigenous publics beginning the process of reorientation already in the colonial period and having completed the process already by the early

independence period, and others beginning the process of reorientation much later, never completing it. The process of reorientation operates as conceptualizations of “we-ness” and the common good that exist in the national public sphere, gradually come to command the attention of increasing numbers of participants in the indigenous public. This shift of attention, can be conceived as a form of “defection” – although it is in general an unconscious process. Either indigenous or non-indigenous intellectuals can play a catalyzing role in the process of defection, as all that is required to do so is to somehow convince others to attend to the conceptualizations of we-ness that exist outside of the local public. In addition to these dynamics of shifting attention, the tendency towards decline is further exacerbated by demographic processes that disrupt the possibility of continued existence of separate local intimate publics, such as war, and rural to urban migration.

An important reason that the process has happened at different pace in otherwise comparable communities, is that some communities have a stronger local hegemony with local intellectuals who are not oriented outwards, and with strong local discourses of the public good formulated in ways that are not directly commensurable with or reducible to a national public good. Such publics, I consider counter publics in the sense of Fraser and Warner.

I consider that indigenous languages and the lifeworlds to which they are indexically tied, are a key factor in maintaining strong local counter hegemonies, because as long as they remain in public use they constitute a membrane through which outside discourse much pass, which results in external ontologies becoming in effect subsumed into the local ontology. It is certainly possible for a political community to sustain a strong local counter public in the absence of a distinct local language, but that requires other political dynamics to countervail the pressures to reorient towards the national public.

In addition to linguistic and cultural practices that contribute to the maintenance of a vigorous counter-lifeworld, there are other elements that play a role in maintaining strong local publics. One such element is the dynamics of antagonistic local politics that force the indigenous public to take a strong stance against oppressive forces operating at the local level. The existence of an outside threat against which the counter public organizes, consolidating a local concept of the common good, is one such factor. Situations in which indigenous communities become “outlaw publics” (Urla 1995) may have the same consequences.¹⁰⁸ I point towards important differences between such counter publics that have been galvanized through resistance to external threats, and indigenous publics where local political discourse are more inwards oriented.

Here I give a brief outline the nature of the process that I will describe in more detail below: It began in the moment of European contact when an indigenous process of cultural and political expansion was interrupted, when one of its counter publics (the confederation of Tlaxcallan) allied with the newly arrived Spaniards. In the colonial period indigenous publics continued to exist, recognized externally in the wider colonial public as *Repúblicas de Indios* and internally as the same *altepetl*-community that existed before the colony. With the liberal laws of the early 19th century and the struggle for independence, the balance changed, and indigenous communities were reconceptualized as non-publics from the perspective of the newly founded national state, which basically conceived of local communities and cultural differences as elements belonging to the private sphere.

This privatization of the indigenous publics from the perspective of the national public affected the role of intellectuals within them. Intellectuals from the indigenous elite continued to

¹⁰⁸ In chapter 5, I argue that Hueyapan has maintained its language as long as it has partly because of its status as an “outlaw” community in the 1970s-80s. Hill & Hill (1978:151), make a similar argument when they note that San Miguel Canoa was generally “conservative” and maintained the use of Nahuatl in all cultural domains, and that they had the fame of being a “closed” community, after an incident where the townspeople lynched a group of students that they suspected of being thieves and communists agitators in 1968. In that case, as in the case of Hueyapan’s “Marihuana public,” “outlaw” status correlates with language persistence.

pursue their goals (sometimes individual, sometimes communal) within the national public. But internally oriented indigenous intellectuals worked to reorganize communities as counter publics, using a new social infrastructure rooted in the local lifeworld. This infrastructure became the primary sites for the maintenance and circulation of indigenous counter ontologies. It included the kinship solidarity idiom of the cargo system, and its main medium of propagation was as oral folklore. With the liberal abolition of communal property some indigenous communities saw themselves faced with formidable outside threats to their existence, which also caused the indigenous public to actively resist domination through open rebellion. In some cases, the necessity for military defense of local publics required local intellectuals to orient themselves towards national level discourses in order to gain support, but did so with the ultimate goal of achieving objectives within the local, not national public.

The Zapatista revolution in Morelos can be considered one such rebellion. In the Zapatista revolution, indigenous publics in Morelos organized around the Zapatista ideology which presented itself as an agrarian reform movement in the national public sphere, but when examined closely it becomes clear that internally, it was driven by the participation of local rebels fighting for local causes. The population loss of the Revolution caused the physical disruption of most of the indigenous public spheres in Morelos, and the urbanization trend that followed, continued the process of disruption. However post-revolutionary governments, realizing the force of indigenous resistance to erasure, reversed the national policy of reconceptualizing indigenous publics as standing outside the sphere of politics by seeking instead to coopt them into the national public as an discrete electorate, and hence as clients of the nation. This same process continues to operate today in the form of coopting indigenous semiotic resources through state-sponsored, nationalist, multiculturalism (see chapter 2). However, indigenous publics still have the option of maintaining, reviving, or creating local counter publics.

In my historical summary, I focus on indigenous agency, both in the form of indigenous representations of public interests in writing, but also in the form of collective action such as rebellion or other forms of organization. I show how different indigenous intellectuals have served in different historical moments either to organize indigenous publics internally, or to mediate between the national and indigenous publics and their discourses. I also argue that when we see indigenous manifestations of nationalism, that may not necessarily mean that the political community has begun to reorient towards the national public sphere, as long as such manifestations are internally conceived as an instrument with which to achieve the common good of the indigenous public.

Each hegemony comes with its own subalterns. A counter hegemonic movement cannot be simply understood as a movement of subaltern liberation and empowerment; it also necessarily suppresses the subaltern experiences that it subsumes within. In this sense indeed, Spivak was right when she concluded that the subaltern cannot speak – or at least is not heard (Spivak 1988). By proposing indigenous publics as an ideal form of governance for indigenous people, I must do so with the caveat that far from all indigenous people would agree with this. Indigenous women for example would often not consider the form that indigenous publics have taken through history to be ideal, since it has frequently excluded them, or subordinated them to the wishes and wills of indigenous men. Indigenous youths, might also not agree since indigenous forms of social organization are often based on the older generations organizing and leading labor by younger generations in hierarchical and authoritarian ways. The indigenous underclass, often have not been happy with indigenous publics in which public opinion is sometimes produced by elites looking out for their own interests first.

Language, Locality and politics in Nahua Mesoamerica

A full presentation of hegemonic processes and public formation in Precolumbian Mesoamerica is outside of the scope of this work. In this section, I will simply present the basics of the relations between political hegemony, local community and account superficially for the ontological and linguistic systems in which they were embedded. Politically, Mesoamerican societies consisted of networks of autonomous territorial city states, which were themselves corporate entities composed of more intimately related subgroups, united for example by common descent, common ethnic origins, common religious worship or other forms of symbolic community.

In the Nahuatl language the city-state unit was named *altepetl* /a:ltepe:ʎ/ literally meaning “water-mountain,” and the subgroups were called *calpolli* /kalpo:lli/ (pl. *calpoltin*), literally meaning “large house”. The name *altepetl* clearly evokes the territorial resources necessary for agricultural subsistence. It is convenient to consider the concept to be related to the way that Mesoamerican peoples often have a special relation between the town-community and a mountain or hill which is believed to be the source of the community's water resources, and which is frequently the location of prayers for water and fertility rituals. There is also a clear symbolic relation between the temple structure which formed the center of most Mesoamerican city-states, and which is often thought to have been considered a man-made mountain. This places the relation between territory, subsistence and religious mediation between the divine realm and the community at the center of the way that ancient Mesoamericans conceptualized the public. The ruler, in Nahuatl *tlahtoani* /ʎahtoa:ni/, literally “speaker” (pl. *tlahtohqueh* /ʎahtohkeh/), was at the head of the political community, mediating both the community's political relations with other city-states and the relations with the religious realm - relations which were probably not considered distinct at all. Both types of relations were characterized by the same kinds of transactions – namely the prestation of body and labor of the lower ranking to those of higher rank. Humans

providing sacrifice as payment (in Nahuatl sacrifice is */ne:ṣ̌la:walli/*, literally "payment"¹⁰⁹) to the gods for their provision, and commoners providing labor services for the nobles in payment of their mediation among sacred and earthly realms. This "payment" was conceptualized in both cases as a sacred service, which contributed to the cycle of life and rebirth and to the collective sustenance. In this way the political ontology included supernatural and political relations, and maintained an effective system for the production of coercion and consent. Aspects of this worldview and political ontology still exist in many indigenous communities in Mexico, where syncretic religious practices blend Catholic and Mesoamerican ritual practice (prominently described for the Mixtec community of Nuyoo by John Monaghan (1995)). Aspects of this is contractual relation between earth and peasant community are also found in Nahuatl speaking communities. For example in the *Xochitlalistli* ritual practiced in the Zongolica (described in chapter 6), and similar practices are described ethnographically in the regions of the Huasteca (van t'Hooft 2007) and the Sierra de Puebla (Lupo 1995).¹¹⁰

In pre-colonial Mesoamerica, land ownership was complex, as multiple regimes of collective and individual ownership coexisted. Some lands being held collectively by *calpoltin* or lordly houses (Nahuatl, *teccalli /te:kʷkali/*), others held individually by specific nobles or even by individual

¹⁰⁹ I disagree with Ulrich Köhler's (2001) argument that *nextlahualli* means simply sacrifice and is unrelated to the concept of "payment". Köhler's argument is based primarily on the use of the word in one instance in the Florentine Codex, where it clearly does mean "sacrifice," but he ignores the close etymological relation between the verb root and the word for providing payment – and rereads the word's gloss in Alonso Molina's dictionary in the restricted meaning of "fulfilling an obligation". In all Nahuatl varieties I know the verb *ixtlāwa* on which the word is based is related to payment, and I know of no reasonable argument for why this would not also have been the case in precolonial times. While clearly using a different concept of "debt" than Christian mythology, Nahua myths describing the instigation of the institution of ritual sacrifice also unequivocally describe it as a debt relation towards the gods who sacrificed themselves for the sake of providing humans with sustenance. Specifically the earth was formed by the body of a large crocodile called *Cipactli /sipaktli/* (lit. 'crocodile') or *Tlatēcūtlī /tla:ltekwtli/* (lit. "earth lord"), who required humans to moisten her body, the ground, with blood in order to provide fertility. (Cosmogonic account from "*Historia de los Mexicanos por sus Pinturas*"). The myth clearly centers the relationship to the earth as the single most important topic of common concern for all humans, and describes the relation as one of debt.

¹¹⁰ These practices were also part of local custom in Hueyapan, through the practice of the *kióhtlaskeh* [rain petitioners] who summoned the rain from the mountain of Quetzalpetl, where a formation of ten crosses represent a map of the springs belonging to the community. Today the people of Hueyapan do not generally practice rain petitioning, and the only remaining *kióhtlaski* has not been able to find an apprentice.

commoners. But likely any sense of individual ownership was superseded by a sense of stewardship over resources granted by metaphysical entities, and the collective dependence on them for continued fertility of the land.

In the political relations between *altepetl*, power was enforced through threat of military might, and usually involved tributary relations between powerful and weaker *altepetl* communities. State-level formations could also emerge as networks of *altepetl* either with the objective of military expansion, as in the case of the famous Aztec triple alliance of the *altepetl* *Mexico-Tlatelolco*, *Tlacopan* and *Tetzaco*. Or they could emerge with the objective of common defense in reaction to expansion by others, such as the case of the alliance of the *altepetl* confederation of Tlaxcallan, comprised of *Ocotelolco*, *Quiahuiztlan*, *Tizatlan* and *Tepeticpac*, which successfully defended their territory against the Aztec alliance. It seems that the negotiation of these types of alliances were carried out only within the noble *pilli* class, literally “child/prince” (pl. *pi:piltin*).

The internal political relations of Mesoamerican communities were not democratic, and are generally considered to have been fairly dictatorial with the *tlahtoani* and the *pipiltin*, having almost uncontested power over the commoner class of *macehualtin* /*ma:se:waltin*/(sg. *macehualli*). Nonetheless, we know very little about the possible means at the disposal of the commoner class for contesting state power. Doubtless, everyday consent was generated through both religious ideology and forms of identity politics, but on the other hand, some sources do suggest a degree of autonomy at the *calpolli* level. The *calpoltin* were territorial and/or descent based and worship based units, and they had their own internal forms of leadership. Probably the *calpolli* level was where public opinion was formed and circulated, and the main political choice was likely whether a *calpolli* should continue to support a specific *altepetl* level governance or not. There are for example mentions of *calpoltin* deciding to leave their territory to take up residence in another *altepetl*. Presumably, the many recorded examples of discourses of power, such as the politico-religious

ontologies with which the ruling class justified itself recorded in a multitude of codices and post-conquest narrations, coexisted with subaltern discourses challenging the former. However, because they only circulated within the intimate sphere of the *calpolli* and household these discourses have not been recorded. One possible candidate for a genre of discourse tied to the subaltern realm is the cycle of narratives about the opossum, found in many Nahuatl speaking communities today. The opossum, in Nahuatl *tlacuatzin* (/ʎak^waʒin/), is a prometheus-like trickster figure that challenges and subverts power.¹¹¹ In the form of an animal fable, narratives might have been better allowed to circulate unchallenged by the hegemonic forces, while nonetheless providing a discursive outlet for verbal forms of resistance to domination.

The focus of public concern in Mesoamerica was the fertility of the territory, as mediated by the gods and the ruling classes. The concept of the *altepetl* tied together local territory and sustenance with hierarchy and religious practice into a complete ontology of relations and identities. This ontology was localized and politicized so that there was a solidary relation across class and *calpolli* divides between all the members of an *altepetl*, who were collectively responsible for the maintenance of the relation between the specific territory that they inhabited and the fertility granting powers. This sense of collective responsibility for the continued sustenance of the collectivity, in both physical and metaphysical sense, can be considered the main element of common concern that we find within the Mesoamerican public.

Indigenous Publics during the Colony

Historians writing about the political organization of indigenous towns in the colonial period have stressed the continuity of *Altepetl* allegiance as the main source of social and political identity for indigenous people in Mesoamerica. This continuity was supported by the fact that the

¹¹¹ See Alfred López Austin (1996) for an analysis of the centrality of the opossum to Nahua cosmology. The opossum narrative cycle still circulates in Nahua communities. See Appendix II for a cycle of Opossum stories collected by me in Nahuatl in Hueyapan, Mexico in 2009.

Spanish system of Castas which prescribed the political independence of Indian republics as the main political unit in indigenous society. The notion of the republic as the form of indigenous government conserved and reified the status of the *res publica* of the Indian as separate from that of the Spanish empire, and as separate from that of other Indian republics. This in essence continued the Aztec strategy of “divide and conquer” by maintaining the divisions between the individual *altepetl* groups, and having the only ties of political allegiance be between the local community and the imperial center. This prevented the emergence of a general indigenous collective conscience and put the indigenous groups in a position where their main political antagonists would be local, such as the *encomenderos*, their neighboring communities and at times their own governors. These local problems could be solved through the appeal to the higher authority of the empire, which by the very act of the appeal was reified as a legitimate authority. The petition, directed at the imperial officials often Nahuatl which was then translated for the officials, was an important genre of indigenous language written literature in the colonial period. Meanwhile other written genres existed representing the indigenous public to itself. Primary among these political genres of Nahuatl writing were the *anales* (annals), which represented indigenous history presumably for local consumption. But important in this regards, were also the *títulos primordiales* (primordial titles), which represented indigenous history and ownership of territory. These documents were meant for consumption by two distinct audiences, both by the indigenous public which saw (and often continue to see) it as legitimizing their own political sovereignty of their territory, as well as to imperial courts that often accepted these documents as valid demonstration of collective territorial ownership in land litigation. In this sense, the *títulos primordiales* as a genre relied on the double voicing that made it legible both internally in indigenous publics and externally in the wider colonial public, and their producers could be considered organic intellectuals. Within the indigenous political organization the scribe, whose job it was to represent the republic in writing, along with the *nahuatlato* /*na:waʎahtoʎ*/ (lit. “nahuatl speaker”), who was the translator, and any

Spanish speaking *cabildo* members, were the only persons to be able to have a voice in the colonial external colonial public sphere. We may assume that internal intellectuals continued to exist, but that their expressions are not available to us, except in the form of traditions that have been transmitted orally from the period, or in forms that were at some point textually reproduced by literate intellectuals. This makes the genres of *anales* and *títulos* particularly interesting because we can assume that they include voices of indigenous intellectuals. Both genres demonstrate the existence of strictly local conceptualizations of the "common good," and hence suggest strongly the possibility of a local public.

A couple of standalone documents contain even more obvious representations of indigenous ontologies, demonstrating their continued circulation internally in the communities far into the colonial period. One such document, is the Florentine Codex with its odd bricolage of Nahuatl and Spanish voices, juxtaposed and in clear dialogue to the one who can read both (Anderson & Dibble). It makes a fascinating example of a polyphonic and double voiced document, created through the process of Christian Nahuatl youths both reporting the discourse of Nahuatl elders in Nahuatl, and then translating it into the hegemonic discourse in the Spanish language folios. Other important examples of representations of indigenous ontologies are the inquisitorial documents, such as the treatise of inquisitor Ruíz de Alarcón who collected as evidence of idolatry a treasure trove of Nahuatl incantations prayers and religious discourse in Nahuatl from Morelos and Guerrero (Andrews & Hassig 1987, Coe & Whitaker 1982). And also the inquisitorial processes against Nahuas such as Tetzcoacan noble Carlos Ometochtli, and the "man-gods" such as Martín Ocelotl, Andrés Mixcoatl; Gregorio Juan, Juan Coatl, and Antonio Pérez, all of whom were indicted for the crime of reproducing indigenous religious ontologies in public in the period between 1537 and 1761 (Gruzinski 1989). We cannot but assume that the political potential of the discourses produced by all of these individuals, including the Florentine Codex, was part of the rationale behind their proscription and punishment. Except for Ruíz de Alarcón's representations of local

religious practice in individual communities, all of these examples of subaltern ontological production stand out for the way in which they had the potential of transmitting ontologies between altepetl communities. It seems that it was the circulation of such subaltern ideologies that was perceived as a threat by the colonial system, whereas they were tolerated as long as they were restricted to the local public spheres and did not cross between the two domains.

This seems to support the argument that the colonial system relied on the independence and isolation of the indigenous publics, and also suggests that in this way it contributed to the continuation of relatively isolated local publics.

From Public to Private Sphere: The case of Ahuilizapan/Ixhuatlancillo

Recently the indigenous participation in the struggles that led to the end of the colony have received renewed attention (Van Young 2001; León-Portilla & Mayer 2010). While long ignored or minimized, today there can be little doubt that indigenous people participated in the independence struggles to a comparable degree as all other segments of the Mexican population. This fact can be used to make the argument that indigenous people were also swept up by national and liberal ideologies that originated among the criollo elites, or alternatively it could be interpreted to mean that indigenous people saw the independence movement as a way to achieve their own objectives and participated primarily as temporary allies. Probably both of these arguments would be true – indigenous people did not form a homogeneous class, and their motivations for their participation in the independence struggle must have been varied.

In the Mexican historical imagination, the independence struggle has been understood as the result of the emergence of a new public sphere of *criollo* intellectuals who imagined into being a new public of independent Mexicans. As Eric van Young (2001) has amply demonstrated this narrative leaves out the role of local publics, often indigenous, that strived primarily to resolve local

grievances against the hegemonical order, and seized on the new political ontology offered by the independence discourse as a way of inserting their local struggle into a broader political movement. The independence movement however turned out as a double-edged sword for indigenous communities. The introduction of the liberal Cádiz constitution in Spain in 1812 abolished the *casta* system and constituted indigenous groups as Spanish citizens. This status was retained in the Mexican constitution of 1824. This entailed the abolition of Indian republics and the dissolution of Indian cabildos and the constitution of new bourgeois cabildos in which participation was a function of property ownership. In effect, this led to the decapitation of the indigenous publics, as indigenous elites such as governors and their families who had better access to economic resources and to the Spanish language than lower-class indigenous people, became able to participate in the new national public sphere. This led to a split within indigenous communities where elites increasingly oriented towards the hegemonic system in which they had access to an unprecedented degree of social mobility, whereas the lower classes had to remain in place, now functioning as a working class of peons for the landed elite.

A case that demonstrates dynamics of the transition from colony to independence is the history that changed the Indian Republic of San Miguel Ahuilizapan into the city of Orizaba, Veracruz. This history has been thoroughly investigated and described by Mexican historian, Agustín García Márquez (1994, 2003), and by Irma Cruz Soto (2002). Located at the foot of the Zongolica mountains on the fertile tropical savannah, and on the main road between central Mexico and the gulf coast ports, Orizaba had all the bases for becoming prosperous. The Indian cabildo used its communal lands for tobacco production, an excellent business that made the republic very wealthy. The coffers of the Indian Cabildo were eventually so full that they were able to invest overseas in Europe, effectively loaning money to the Spanish crown through investments. The cabildo also founded its own scribal school training translators and Nahuatl language scribes. The wealth attracted Spaniards, who, although they were not legally allowed to settle within the

territories of Indian republics, gradually did so anyway, until in 1644 they were allowed to do so officially on donated lands. Since Spaniards had no representation in the Indian cabildo, as their numbers grew, in 1764 they established their own cabildo within Ahuilizapan. The Spanish cabildo had jurisdiction only over the resident Spaniards but no territorial jurisdiction. The settled Spaniards thrived through business and through renting land for tobacco-production from the Indians. They continuously petitioned the viceroy for land grants and a title, but at first, their petitions were denied, as the viceroy sided with the Indians who were against such competition. Nonetheless, competition between the two cabildos gradually increased, for example concerning the question of whether Indian or Spanish elites should be allowed to occupy the most honorable seats in church, and whether Indian governors could be buried inside the church. Spanish tobacco growers began to pressure the Indians into restricting or prohibiting the celebrations of their feasts, as they interfered with productivity. In 1774, the city of Ahuilizapan/Orizaba was recognized as the third most significant town in New Spain after Mexico City and Puebla. By then, the Indian cabildo provided free schools and basic education for the entire population.

In 1812, the independence movement arrived in the Orizaba region. The priest of Zongolica, Juan Moctezuma y Cortés, a descendant of indigenous Nahuatl and Popoloca Nobles from Tepexi, Puebla, led the Nahuatl Indians of Zongolica in the assault on Orizaba, routing the 500 Spanish soldiers there, forcing them to flee to nearby Córdoba (Cruz Pazos 2011). The royalists soon took back the city of Orizaba, and the next year the Spanish liberal Laws of Cádiz were introduced in Mexico. These laws, although still within the colonial regime, already gave a taste of what independence would be like for the Indians. They abolished the *casta* system and the existence of Indian republics and cabildos, recognizing instead all Spanish citizens as equal regardless of racial status. The Cádiz constitution was only in vigor for a year after which the Indian cabildo was reestablished for another 8-year period before being finally abolished with independence in 1821. With the 1824 constitution, collective landholdings were made illegal, and only privately held

property was officially recognized. This meant that when the new cabildo of Orizaba was convened only those who held private property in the city were allowed to participate, this excluded *a priori* most of the Indian whose property was communal and who were thus disenfranchised. This in turn generated a strong pressure to privatize communal lands to enable political participation. Within the first few decades of independence the former Indian neighborhood of Ixhuatlan experienced a severe population decline as Indians having sold their lands, moved out of the city many of them settling in the small town of Ixhuatlancillo northwest of Orizaba. Here they started making a living as day laborers, often kept in debt bondage on the haciendas that now worked the fertile land of the Veracruz savannah. The criollos of Orizaba quickly erased all memory of an Indian origin of their town and created a strongly hispanista local identity. Local wisdom has it that Orizaba was founded by Spaniards in 1774, a claim found even in important works of history such as that of Joaquín Arróniz (1867), but exposed as false by García Márquez (2003). As described in the introduction of this chapter, Ixhuatlancillo persists as an indigenous independent municipality in spite of continued encroachment on their territories by the city of Orizaba, and the unsuccessful attempt in 1995 by the mayor of Orizaba to abolish its independent status and absorb it into the municipality of Orizaba. Even though Ixhuatlancillo is only 10 minutes away from the town center of Orizaba, Ixhuatecos of all ages continue to form a strong counter public sphere clearly developed in contrast to that of Orizaba. Ixhuatecos of all ages speak Nahuatl and the language is used for most public functions including politics, just as distinct forms of social organization and cultural practices are maintained very strongly within the town. The persistence of the indigenous political community of Ixhuatlancillo seems a clear example of a counter public emerging directly through the process of indigenous public disenfranchisement in the 19th century.

The formation of Indigenous publics in the private sphere

The early national period also saw the development of the widespread social organizational principle of the *mayordomias/cofradías* and the cargo system, into a quintessential form of indigenous social organization. The origins of the cargo system has been much debated, but it seems established by now that while it clearly has particular functions in indigenous communities and a degree of fusion with pre-columbian cultural practices it is best understood as a relatively recent introduction in its contemporary form (Chance and Taylor 1985). Colonial Cofradías seem to have been primarily a network of religious education, whereas they come to take up a much more political form in the post-independence period. I consider this development a response to the political decapitation of the indigenous publics, in which the lower classes regroup, organizing themselves in mutualistic collectives within the private sphere. The *cabildo*, the church staff, and the *cofradía* have been described as the three main pillars of social organization in the colonial Indian town, but because the liberal laws defined the religious domain as lying outside of the public sphere, the latter two were not affected by the abolition of the indigenous public. This made it possible for Indian communities that had never practiced a distinction between politics and religion in the first place, to use the *cofradía* as the space for the establishment of a new public. Therefore the practices of the cargo system has the effect of locating indigenous politics, in the sphere that looks like a private sphere when observed from the perspective of the national public. This perspective has produced the view that indigenous communities in the independence period had no public spheres – a view implicit in the work of Redfield (1930) who saw indigenous communities as characterized by apolitical folk-culture. But also in the work of Lewis (1951) who sees indigenous communities to be political only in so far as the distribution of individually owned material assets is publicly contested – reducing indigenous politics to conflicts among private individuals and cliques, with no overarching concept of the public good. Rather, we should see the *cofradía* system as the main locus of the social reproduction of indigenous lifeworlds, and

simultaneously as a venue for the formulation of ideas of the public good as well as their contestation. In this perspective, we become able to understand the processes that allowed so many indigenous communities to maintain their own intimate political cultures and identities throughout the 19th century, in spite of having no political presence in the national public.

The *cofradia* system has the peculiar trait that it is organized as a colonial *cabildo*, a hierarchical structure with officeholders, but since it operates through voluntary association (at least in principle) and within the religious domain, it was and is not generally considered a forum of public politics. At least not within the mainstream public. Nonetheless, in many contemporary communities there is clearly a significant overlap between public politics and the cargo system, since successful cargo holders are often more likely to become elected officials of the public. Similarly, the related system of *compadrazgo* also seems to have taken on political functions in this period as the venue for the establishment of individual client-patron relations, under the guise of mutual solidarity (Nutini & Bell 1980). The cargo system, in which members share goods and services within a religious framework, is precisely organized around a collective discourse of the common good, phrased both in religious and material terms. It seems logical to conclude that while the cargo system tends to be seen as a private sphere organization from the perspective of the national public, it frequently has the potential to become a public sphere, or at least an important part of it, from the perspective of the indigenous public. One way of understanding the emergence of the cargo system in the post-colonial period then, is as a reconstitution of the indigenous public as subaltern, covert publics, that combined a colonial conception of political organization, the *cabildo*, with traditional conceptions tying together religious practice and mutual sharing of wealth. Following this Kropotkin-inspired interpretation, the civic religious organization of indigenous communities originated as a form of resistance and protection, in the face of political disenfranchisement. This is the inwards-oriented, corporate organization of Indian towns that prompted Wolf to posit his theory of the “closed corporate community” (E. R. Wolf 1957). The main

critique that has been leveled against this concept, is that internal political divisions along class lines also exist within indigenous communities. This is of course a fact, but I think it can be explained by seeing it as a result of the process of 'decapitation' of the Indigenous public sphere, where the Indigenous elite has access to privileges in the National public. Politics in the indigenous public sphere, even today, often involve a division between an elite who are hopeful of upwards social mobility outside of the local community, and a laboring class that has few such aspirations and therefore feel better served by participating fully in the corporation.

If we accept the cargo system as the locus of indigenous politics, the invisibility of the indigenous public to the historical record is a matter of its communicative practices. In contrast to the Indian cabildo, which required the scribe and the translator to be able to communicate externally with the colonial public sphere, the *mayordomía* or *cofradía* has no need to perform external functions, and hence its communication tended to be oral and face-to-face. The change from a lettered, externally self-representing public sphere to an inwards-oriented oral one also occasioned changes in the way that the indigenous languages were perceived. The role of Nahuatl as a language of public administration had already declined through the last years of the colony, as cabildo members became increasingly likely to be proficient in Spanish and skip the process of translation in their written communication. But it was only with the abolition of the Indian cabildos that Nahuatl was reconceptualized entirely as a language of the private sphere from the point of view of the national public. Relegated to the private-religious sphere of local *gemeinschaft*-type communities, the social functions of Nahuatl came to be circumscribed to the domains in which solidarity and mutuality was expressed: the family, the *mayordomía*, and interactions between communal landholders. Today many Nahua communities still have specific spoken registers, characterized by extreme formality and reverentiality, used specifically for communication among *mayordomía* members and *compadres*. These registers present the paradox that they express solidarity using a hierarchic idiom. But this may seem less surprising if we accept the hypothesis

that the political expressions of pre-hispanic and colonial hierarchical civic organization was transferred to the sphere of private relations in the process described above. This would account for the mixture of hierarchic and solidary idioms both within the cargo system organization and its discourse forms.¹¹² So even, though the cargo system-as-public sphere did not leave a paper trail of Nahuatl language sources for historians to follow, its discourse patterns live on today in the ways that Nahuatl discursive practices often encode the political in the idiom of kinship, and encode the domain of kinship in a political idiom.

Nahuatl Text Production and Indigenous Intellectuals During the Reform Wars

As often noted, text production in indigenous languages experienced a hiatus during the 19th century, relative to the preceding colonial period. The use of Nahuatl for *cabildo* purposes had already waned during the last century of the colony, but in the new world without public recognition of a class of indigenous citizens it seems to have almost ceased. Nahuatl was simply not a language that could be used for functions in the national public anymore. Anderson (1983:29-30) gives examples of how the Mexican criollo elite published novels such as Fernandez de Lizardi's *El Periquillo Sarniento* which contributed to inciting public sentiment against the colonial rule, but he

¹¹² Here I depart from the interpretation of Hill and Hill (1978), who tie the use of honorifics to the existence of "prestige functions" within the Nahua communities, because of the heavy use of honorific language in the religious and ritual domains. They consider the persistence of honorific usage as a sign that Spanish has not usurped the most prestigious social domains in the community. They argue that in communities where Nahuatl has been reduced to a language of "indigenist solidarity," the use of honorifics will decline. Rather, I would suggest that the transfer of honorific usage from the domain of the official political hierarchy to the domain of the civic-religious domain of *compadrazgo* kinship, demonstrates a shift from a hierarchy enforcing to a solidarity building. In Hueyapan for example, the elaborate honorific system is used primarily to encode generational differences, and respect for family members of older generations, such as parents and grandparents. Hence, honorifics do not serve a "prestige function" in the sense of operating in a prestige domain or enforcing hierarchy, but rather tends to carry out a function of encoding respect and solidarity in verbal interactions involving family members (whether ritual or biological). In Hueyapan, and other communities where I have observed the use of honorifics, the honorifics are not in fact used to enforce hierarchies of prestige, but to verbalize an appreciation of a social relation. In that sense, both the giver and receiver of honorific forms are "honored" by their use. Furthermore, honorific forms, especially the elaborate ones, are typically not used by "purist" speakers, nor by speakers who are Spanish dominant bilinguals (As Hill notes, these two categories overlap to a surprising degree). In this way also, they become a powerful index of "orientation towards the local public".

also correctly notes that this lettered public did not in fact include the “lower classes” of Indians and Afro-descendants (1983:48).

Nonetheless, contrary to the picture traditionally given by histories of indigenous literature, Nahuatl texts were published with clearly public functions in the 19th century, and it is informative to look at them. These texts show some of the functions taken on by literate Nahua intellectuals during this period. As in the colonial period, one of the functions that Nahua intellectuals performed was that of representing Nahua interests in the national public. Now that indian *cabildos* no longer existed and communal land claims had little weight, there was no official platform from which to address communal grievances. This meant that communities had to find new ways to access the public sphere and its officials, and to forge alliances with people and institutions in power. During the 19th century the main political division in the Mexican national public was between conservatives and liberals, and throughout the middle of the century Mexico was waging war, either between the liberal and conservative factions, or between the faction in power and external invaders such as the US or France. In order to find a platform for advancing indigenous concerns, Nahua intellectuals had to ally with different sides that they believed to be best able to provide solutions. Typically, the problems faced by indigenous communities in this period were land conflicts, as haciendas and corporations aggressively encroached on indigenous communities. In some cases, land conflicts between communities were fueled by the legal basis for the privatization of communal lands, which also allowed for the recuperation of lost patrimonial lands of communities, which could be reclaimed and then redistributed into privately owned plots. Because different liberal factions interpreted liberal legislation as either prohibiting communal landholding entirely and mandating disentanglement, or as simply making it a possibility for communities to switch to private ownership, it was sometimes in the best interest of indigenous communities to side with the liberals, and sometimes with the conservatives in the quest for maintaining their land bases (Mallon 1995).

Most of the texts published in Nahuatl in the 19th century are in the form of propaganda – in that sense they are similar to the texts created by criollo authors. They are official texts issued by the diverse factions invested in the struggles to determine the future of Mexico and they address Nahua people as an audience. In the 19th century when Indigenous people still made up a significant percentage of the Mexican population the Nahuas were an important constituency. Even in the 1910 national census, *monolingual* speakers of Nahuatl alone counted above 500,000 and made up more than 3% of the country's total counted population (there is reason to believe that Indians particularly were undercounted). The few examples of Nahuatl texts published in the 19th century I therefore consider examples of Nahua intellectuals trying to leverage this constituency in favor of one of the political parties vying for hegemony. In 1810, just as the independence struggle was breaking out in earnest, a series of broadsides in Nahuatl were published by the liberal royalists of urging the Indians to rally around the legitimate authority of the King of Spain (Morris 2007). Just before Mexico finally achieved independence, Carlos Maria Bustamante had collaborated with the revolutionary forces of Jose Maria Morelos y Pavon ending up in prison in Veracruz with the fall of the Morelos revolution. From prison, in 1820, he wrote a manifest directed to the nation's *indígenas* urging them to support the cause of independence (Horcasitas 1969). Bustamante titles his treatise “The Malinche of the Constitution” referring to the Nahua woman who served as translator between Cortés and the Nahuas during the Spanish invasion. Its argument is a call for the Indians to recognize the liberating force of the national constitution, which Bustamante states will set them free from the abuses of the *hacendados*. It also includes an exhortation to dutifully take up the responsibilities of a Mexican citizen, refraining from alcoholism and embracing education and civil virtues. Today the document reads as a surprisingly explicit mixture of patronizing racism and liberal rhetoric. The opening paragraphs read:

*”Mazehualzizinti nancate ipan inin Cemanahuac ihuan nan motlatotl
mexicacopa, ihuan amo nan quimati caxtelancopa sanhuel yehuatl
tianguis tlatole. ¿Nanquimati clen quitos nequi Constitucion? Amo*

nanquimati, ihuan amo nanquimatisquiaya semicac tia ipan nan motlatotl amo nan mechilhuisque. Xicaquica noso clen axcan nan motechi monequi, iquac mocentlales mochin clamancle ihuan nan ixclamatisque.”

”Macehuales [Indian commoners] you who dwell here on earth and whose language is that of Mexico, and who do not know the language of Castile, just that marketplace language. Do you know what the word ”constitution” means? You do not know, and you would never know unless someone will tell you in your own language. Listen here to what you will need to know now, as everything will be put together henceforth, and you will know.” (My translation)

The identities of the Nahuatl speakers who translated these tracts remain unknown, but clearly they must have been native speakers allied with opposing sides of the independence movement. It has been suggested that the 1810 royalist broadsides were translated by Rafael Tiburcio Sandoval, an indigenous priest in the parishes of Ecatzingo and Tetela del Volcan, and who also published a grammar of Nahuatl in 1810. Sandoval, if he was the translator of the broadsides, was not simply a loyal supporter of the crown. In his 1810 grammar, he severely criticized King Felipe's decree that abolished the use of indigenous languages in the mission, and in fact, its very publication defied the decree (Morris 2007:450). Horcasitas has also proposed that Bustamante's letter was translated by a Nahuatl speaking fellow prisoner, who might have been one of the many Nahuas who took up arms for José Maria Morelos' rebellion.¹¹³

¹¹³. There are a number of irregularities in the orthography of the Bustamante letter that makes me think that whoever wrote it had never before written in Nahuatl and improvised the orthography – for example the /tl/ phoneme is consistently written with <cl> (the most similar sound in Spanish to the Nahuatl tl) and words are frequently divided setting prefixes apart from the roots. This is all quite similar to how native today's Nahuatl speakers intuitively write their language when they have only received training in writing Spanish. The translation itself is clearly written by a competent speaker. This suggests that perhaps the translator was a Nahua person who had participated in Morelos' independence movement and ended up a prisoner in Veracruz alongside bustamante. Another oddity in the redaction is the writing of the phoneme /l/ as <tl> when it occurs in word final position and becomes automatically devoiced. This usage I have only ever encountered in the community of Cuentepec in Southwestern Morelos state, and we know from Van Young (2001) that Xochitepec, the municipality where Cuentepec is located, was actively involved in the independence struggle. So perhaps the person who translated this was a Nahuatl speaking rebel from the Xochitepec area.

During the Reform Wars and the French intervention, Nahuatl again emerged as a language of public calls on the indigenous constituency to take sides. Best known among these are the propaganda treatises in favor of the Emperor Maximilian, and Maximilian's decrees issued in Spanish and Nahuatl. The person behind them was the emperor's personal translator and Nahuatl specialist, Faustino Galicia Chimalpopoca. Probably the single most significant Nahua intellectual of the 19th century, Chimalpopoca was a descendant of the noble lineage of Tetzcoco. Before his involvement in politics, he was a member of the Society for Geography and Statistics, which was the main official institution that dedicated attention to indigenous languages in 19th century Mexico, and he was a professor of Nahuatl. He is well known for his controversial translations of Nahuatl codices, and also for having translated a series of decrees by the French Emperor of Mexico, Maximiliano into Nahuatl, as well as redacting a *proclamo* in Nahuatl urging Nahuas to join and support the Emperor against the liberals. In her 2014 description of Chimalpopoca's life and times, Kelly McDonough (2014) represents him as a true organic intellectual working actively to defend the rights and interests of Nahua people in the national public sphere. She describes how on several occasions he was consulted by representatives of Nahuan communities who sought his help in land disputes. She argues that it was exactly his interest in defending the rights of indigenous communities that led him to become a close collaborator of Maximilian whom he considered to be much more in tune with indigenous needs and interests than the liberals. In the end, this alliance cost him dearly when the liberals led by Benito Juárez ousted the French and executed the emperor. Chimalpopoca, who himself barely escaped execution, was basically written out of the intellectual history of 19th century Mexico, his translations were disparaged and his other writings forgotten.

Another member of the Society for Geography and Statistics was Miguel Trinidad Palma, a priest from Puebla who published a Nahuatl grammar in 1886, and who also in 1888 produced a translation of the 1857 liberal constitution into Nahuatl. He dedicated the translation to Porfirio Díaz, the hero of the war against the French, who had by then been president for over a decade.

Contrary to Chimalpopoca, Trinidad Palma seems to have picked the winning horse, and his translation can be considered a victory tribute to the liberal cause, more than a document aimed at an indigenous public, which by 1888 was unlikely to be literate in Nahuatl. Cifuentes (2002) has described Trinidad Palma's primary interest to be that of educating and civilizing indigenous peoples, rather than advocating for their rights. Under this perspective, the Nahuatl translation of the constitution could be understood to be similar to Bustamante's simultaneous admonition to indigenous peoples to be good and decent citizens while holding up the promises of the liberal constitution as a guarantee being treated as citizens once a sufficient state of civility has been achieved. I have not been able to ascertain whether Trinidad Palma was a native speaker of Nahuatl. To me, his translation comes across as less colloquial and fluent than for example those of Bustamante and Chimalpopoca. He uses many neologisms created to describe the institutions of government and its processes, and the grammar seems stilted. This could be a result of translating the highly stilted and formal register in which the constitution is written, or it could be a sign that the translation is overly literal suggesting insufficient colloquial competence of the translator. If Trinidad Palma can be considered an indigenous intellectual, he was clearly an intellectual operating primarily in the national public sphere, aimed at representing national discourse to the indigenous public. More likely is that he is not addressing an indigenous audience at all, but is rather carrying out a work of cultural production within the national public sphere (as it was also argued in the chapter two that Natalio Hernández did with his 2011 translation).

During the porfiriato, *indigenista* intellectuals, such as those working in the Society of Geography and Statistics, worked to harness the indigenous past to provide a legitimizing foundation for the nation. This started another ideological process tied to independence, namely the usage of Aztec imagery and the Nahuatl language by Criollo elites as a symbol of national identity. Mexican elites, some of whom saw themselves as descendants, either in literal or figurative sense, of prehispanic Aztec royalty, began to promote an image of the Aztecs based on the

stereotype of the noble savage - bronze skinned and muscular, tragic heroes clad in feathers and gold ornaments. Simultaneously, what had until then been a popular cult of the virgin of Guadalupe was taken up as a national symbol which was based on texts in Nahuatl (Sousa, Poole, Lockhart 1998).

This fetishism of a particular kind of Indian imaginary, diffused from the urban elites to rural towns and communities, sometimes prompting local indigenous intellectuals to reframe their own indigenous identity in line with these stereotypes. Lomnitz (2001) describes how this process took place in Tepoztlan where the Rojas family, hailing from the lineage of colonial governors promoted an indigenous identity in line with mainstream discourses and imaginaries. One example of a prominent indigenous intellectual who used his knowledge of Nahuatl to advance in the National public sphere of the Porfiriato was Mariano Jacobo Rojas (1842-1936). A native speaker of Nahuatl from Tepoztlan, and an advocate for Nahuatl language teaching, he became a teacher of Nahuatl at the *Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Ethnografía* [National Museum of Archeology, History and Ethnography], and in 1927 wrote a well known “manual” of Nahuatl (Rojas y Villaseca 1927). The variety described in the manual was Colonial Nahuatl, not his native Tepoztecan variety (de Reuse 2010). Gillingham (2011) shows how this tradition of nationalist indigenism diffused even to the backwaters of Northern Guerrero. Here, in Ichcateopan, local elites created a tomb, complete with bones and a fake plaque, stating that it was the last resting place of Cuauhtemoc the last Aztec emperor executed by Hernan Cortés in 1525. In this way, the locals worked to secure a place for their town and themselves within the narrative of the Mexican nation. Similar movements (although without the hoax) have been described in Milpa Alta by van Zantwijk (1960). Karttunen (1994) describes how another Nahuatl intellectual, Luz Jimenez of Milpa Alta, was recruited by the post-revolutionary nationalist movement to serve as a living symbol of the Nation’s Indigenous soul. Moving within the circles of Mexico City’s cultural elite, she modeled for Diego Rivera and other revolutionary artists, and became a supplier of folkloric narratives for

which she was rarely credited. She was also credited as a linguistic informant by Benjamin Lee Whorf (McDonough 2014). In her partial autobiography told in Nahuatl to linguist Fernando Horcasitas, she describes how her initial wish was to become a schoolteacher, to provide the local Milpa Alta children with prospects for a better life (Horcasitas and Jimenez 1968).

What seems ubiquitously true is that in the late 19th century neo-Aztec revivalism was a cultural fad driven by nationalist cultural elites, rather than by Indigenous communities. When indigenous people and communities participated in this kind of nationalism, their aim was often to amass social capital for themselves and their communities within the national public sphere. Within the mainstream public sphere, the indigenista and hispanista versions of Mexican Nationalism were competing, and it seems that particularly rural indigenous intellectuals often saw the political advantage of supporting the indigenist version even if it meant having to assume the role of the noble savage. This is the process that Friedlander (1975) identified and described as “forced identity”.

These social processes that both began with Mexican independence produced the ideology that opposes between a “Classical” Nahuatl¹¹⁴ against a conglomerate of Nahuatl vernaculars (often called “Modern Nahuatl”). Each of these two language entities mapped recursively (Irvine & Gal 2000) onto different scales of publics (national public vs. local private spheres/counter publics), different media (written/oral), different linguistic codes (16th century elite language of Tetzaco vs.

¹¹⁴ The first occurrence of the qualifier “Classical” applied to Nahuatl that I have been able to find, is in the work of Eduard Seler, who in his *Gesammlter Abhandlungen* (Seler 1902-1932) (Collected works, published from 1902-1932, but written over the last decades of the 19th century) frequently refers to *die klassische Sprache* (the classical language) referring to Nahuatl varieties found in different colonial documents, and once refers to it specifically as *klassische Aztekisch* (classical Aztec). During the next decades a couple of occurrences are published by Franz Boas who in his famous 1917 paper on Pochutec states that it differs from the *mexicano clásico*. Boas was of course visiting Seler in Mexico, and it was through Seler's help that he traveled to Pochutla to collect data on the Pochutec language. In 1919, Caecilia Seler-Sachs (Eduard's wife) published the work *Frauenleben im Reiche der Azteken* [“Women's lives in the Aztec Realm”] (Seler-Sachs 1919) where she refers repeatedly to the language as *klassischen Nahuatl* - these are to my knowledge the first combinations of “classical” with “Nahuatl” instead of with “Mexican” or “Aztec”. Eduard and Caecilia Seler were some of the many German scholars and scientists who arrived in Mexico under the rule of Porfirio Diaz.

languages of a rural peasantry), and different periods (an idealized past untainted by Spanish intrusion vs. a co-eval but degenerate hybridized present). All of these indexical mappings conspired to produce the common understanding that “Classical Nahuatl” was a “language” whereas the contemporary spoken varieties were mere “dialects”. From the view of the indigenous public however, the values attached to the mappings were reversed, and vernacular Nahuatl became languages of intimacy, solidarity and community, tied indexically to intimate social relations, and to local lifeworlds and the semiotic system in which they were embedded. The “classical” ideology of Nahuatl entered into the indigenous public sphere through the mediation of intellectuals (some indigenous some not), many of whom tended to orient towards the national public, and who diffused the ideology in order to be able to promote an “indigenist” representation of the community outwards into the national public. The “classical” conceptualization of Nahuatl went on to form its own discursive genealogy, that lives on today in Mexican public culture, in different forms of Mexican nationalism and to a certain degree in academic scholarship.

Rebellion as Communicative Action

Apart from documents that index the indigenous audience as a public, another possible sign that points to the existence of indigenous publics is the rebellion. In this section, I analyze the history of armed uprisings by Nahua people, both in times of peace and war, arguing that the “long” 19th century was characterized by rebellions in which indigenous publics contested the National hegemony by force. I show that although in wartime indigenous rebellions were often aligned with government forces (whether domestic or foreign); they were generally fighting to achieve local objectives, formulated as the common good of a local public.

As demonstrated in the preceding section, the use of Nahuatl in written media in the 19th century is closely tied to the construction of the national public sphere and the coöptation of

indigenous groups into it, either as constituencies of political factions or as mere symbols of national independence. Taken on its own, this might suggest that indigenous publics had ceased to function as their basic common concern and public good, their land bases had been dissolved. But this was in fact not the case. There is ample evidence that indigenous communities fought actively to resist the consequences of the liberal reforms or to harness the reforms to their own local political causes. In her detailed review of the "peasant rebellions" in Mexico from 1819-1910, Leticia Reina (1980) demonstrates that throughout the 19th century, wide tracts of territory were in open armed rebellion against the state. Among historians these rebellions have generally been considered "peasant rebellions," but it is clear, both given the ethnic composition of the rural population of 19th century Mexico and from the sources presented by Reina, that these peasants were largely indigenous people fighting to preserve their local landbases. Comparing Reina's maps of the areas in which the rebellions were most frequent and intense with contemporary maps, we see a significant overlap between the rebellious regions and the regions that have the highest density of indigenous groups today. The most rebellious regions in the period described by Reina are: Central Guerrero (inhabited by Nahuas and Me'phaa (Tlapanec) people), the Huasteca highlands (inhabited by Nahuas, Totonacs, Otomies and Teenek (Huastec) people), the Puebla Highlands (Nahua and Totonac peoples), Southern Puebla (Nahua, Mixtec and Popoloca peoples), Central Veracruz (Totonac people), Morelos (Nahuas), Nayarit (Cora, Tepehuan and Mexicanero Nahuas), Southwestern Hidalgo (Hñähñu [Otomies]); as well as the states of Chiapas and Oaxaca with their significant and highly diverse indigenous populations. These lesser known rebellions are in addition to the well known indigenous rebellions by the Yaqui of Sonora and the Maya of Yucatan, which are generally recognized as having been centered in local and ethnically separate publics. The only one of these regions that does not count with a significant indigenous population today is Morelos. I consider this to be the result of the devastating demographic effects of the Mexican revolution, and I have argued elsewhere that before 1910, Morelos was a majoritarily

Nahuatl speaking state (Pharao Hansen 2015).¹¹⁵ I describe the Morelos Revolution of Zapata in greater detail below, suggesting that it was also characterized by a considerable indigenous and localist element.

The constant presence of local rebellions in indigenous communities, clearly point towards an active concern for the local public good in these communities, and clearly must have required the presence of some kind of intellectuals to be able to take form. But these intellectuals were not the kind who left behind writings in indigenous languages, probably because writing was not the medium through which these counter publics sustained themselves. Rather they must have existed largely within the intimate sphere of face-to-face contact between family members, neighbors, friends, *compadres* and *cofradía* members, and sustained themselves in the medium of spoken language. Apart from the names of some of the leaders, we know very little of the local intellectuals, who organized their towns in armed uprisings.

One exception is the case of the Puebla Highlands during the Reform Wars, which for various reasons has become the best documented of all the armed conflicts in which indigenous peoples participated in the 19th century. Particularly the work of Florencia Mallon (1994, 1995) has provided a detailed account of the dynamics of political engagement by peoples in the Puebla Highlands. She describes how Nahua people of the towns surrounding Zacapoxtla took up arms three times in the 19th century. First, they fought against the local *hacendados* (hacienda owners) in 1850-1855, and then subsequently allied with the liberal side during the Reform Wars (1857-

¹¹⁵ I demonstrate that studies that have claimed that the indigenous population of Morelos was between 10-15% based their numbers on a misreading of the 1900, and 1910 censuses (e.g. Womack 1969). They assume that the number given for speakers of Nahuatl include all speakers, but in fact, the figure only included monolingual Nahuatl speakers, suggesting that the majority of the state's rural population spoke Nahuatl. I also show that authors writing in the period, recognized Morelos peasantry as indigenous (e.g. Gamio 2010 [1916]). The drastic drop in indigenous population was therefore a direct result of the Huerta and Carranza's scorched earth policies against the Morelos Zapatistas. Their policies were at times phrased in clearly genocidal rhetorics, suggesting for example to empty the state of Morelenses through forced resettlement, massacres and deportations of prisoners (Womack 1969:162, 165, 168), and they even suggested to planters that they would bring in 30,000 Japanese workers to replace the lost indian laborers (Womack 1969:174).

1860). Then they fought on the nationalist side against the French during the French intervention (1861-67), where they won national recognition as they played a decisive role in the Battle of Puebla on May 5th, 1862, in which the French army was routed. The town of Xochiapulco, from which many of the indigenous "National Guards" came, received a land grant and political independence as a municipality, thus rewarding their loyal support of the liberal and nationalist forces, even to the point of burning down their own town instead of allowing it to fall into enemy hands.

While Mallon's main argument is about the active participation of rural peasant communities in the construction of Mexican nationalism, her book can also be taken to suggest that the nationalism of the people of Xochiapulco and the Zacapoaxtla region was secondary to their sense of town loyalty. While the Xochiapulquenses did destroy their own town rather than let it fall into the hands of the French and Austrian troops, the objective for which they were fighting was clearly the right to independently manage and control their lands. The people of Xochiapulco had originally allied with the liberal cause because of a local liberal leader who interpreted the new laws as warranting the local community's right to reclaim and redistribute tracts of ancestral lands claimed also by another town. This led to the division of towns in the region into conservative towns, organized against the expropriation and redistribution of lands, and liberal towns who believed they stood to gain from the redistribution. Under the leadership first of Manuel Lucas, a Nahua merchant from Zacapoaxtla, and subsequently under his son, the schoolteacher and later general Juan Francisco. The family had lived for a while in Veracruz, where Juan Francisco took his education, but returning to the town they became leaders first of the uprising against the *hacendados* and then against the conservatives and French. This dual background which meant that they were intimately related to the local culture while also able to function in the national public sphere, could well have been what enabled them to take the role as organic intellectuals and leaders of the local political community.

Mallon does not discuss the role of the Nahuatl language in organizing the rebellion, but it is clear from her descriptions that political fault lines in the Highlands often coincided along ethnic lines, between Nahuas and Totonacs or Nahuas and Mestizos and Criollos. If we accept that in cases indigenous communities explicitly aligned with national level discourses, the underlying concern tended to be the control of communal land bases, then we may take the prevalence of armed rebellions in the North Puebla Highlands, to be a sign that indigenous publics continued to be alive and struggling throughout the “long 19th century”. Moreover, Brewster (2003) has argued that the *cacique* hegemony of the Nahua Barrios family in the 1920s was a direct continuation of the tradition of ethnic localism of the 19th century, and that though they fought loyally under the banner of the federation, they were in reality engaged in local resistance. His argument further supports the significance of ethnicity and localist conceptions of community in military mobilization in the North Puebla Highlands.

The rebellion itself is one aspect of how a local community orients itself in relation to the national public, but another aspect is how the rebellion lives on in local memory. The physical act of rebellion and militarism is short lived, and generally is ultimately destructive for the local community. More important and persistent is the impression of the rebellion that remains in the local memory, and the way that this motivates future orientation towards, or away from, the national public. Regardless of whether the rebellion is ultimately able to achieve the goals of the local public as in the case of Xochiapulco, or whether, as was more frequently the case, it was violently stamped out by the state, it may still motivate communities to take up the stance of the counter public. Whether it does so or not, would seem to depend on the way in which memory of the rebellion is entextualized in local tradition.

In this regards we also have particularly interesting data from the Puebla Highlands. Mallon herself in her description of the events in the 19th century draws on local histories. She employs the

account of local Axochiapulco historian Donna Rivera Moreno, who in turn drew on eyewitness testimonies recorded by Pozos in 1900. Mallon demonstrates that in Xochiapulco the history of the conflicts is framed in contrast to official nationalist narratives that have recruited the people of Zacapoaxtla, the *cabecera* town of Xochiapulco in the 19th century, as the indigenous defenders of the Nation, erasing the participation of Xochiapulco. Xochiapulco historians actively reinscribe their town into the narrative. Just as the original rebellion did, this narrative looks as nationalism to the outside, but also has the simultaneous function of promoting a local version of community that is rooted in the local counter public tradition. This demonstrates how the history of the conflicts in which the people of Xochiapulco participated, as well as the local level political divisions that motivated them, are still alive in the community today, and continues to motivate a local construction of the public. In this way, just as national histories have their foundational epics, and their stories of war and conflict with external enemies, indigenous stories of rebellion can serve as a communicative action through which local public spheres are sustained.

The narratives of the independence period and Reform Wars in fact form a local body of historical knowledge circulating within Nahua communities in the North Puebla highlands. Comparing the historical narratives from Xochiapulco with those from the town of San Miguel Tzinacapan in the Cuetzalan region north east of Xochiapulco is informative. The following narrative is one of those included in a collection of oral history from San Miguel Tzinacapan (Taller de Tradición Oral 1994).

*Ualajkaj nikajkuín tateuianij analtekos
franceses uan kichiuujkej miak eliuisyot,
kinimiktiayaj maseualmej uan ininka
mauiliayaj siuamej. Motalijkej Sakapoastan.
Tein ompa rikos iniuantiaj in analtekos, maj
kinintamiskej in maseualmej. Pero
moyolchikauj ne general Juan Francisco Lucas
iniuan ome Juanes para kinintokaskiaj.*

Overseas-people, soldiers from France came here, and they did a lot of evil: they killed the maseuales [indians] and pleased themselves [raped] with the women. They set themselves up in Zacapoaxtla. The rich people over there made friendly with the overseas-people, in order to finish off the maseuales. But the general Juan Francisco made his heart strong [resisted] in order to follow them along with the two Juanes [two other famous Nahua generals named Juan]

Ipapán ne Juan Francisco Lucas, kimiktijkej in analtekos ne noxolal Komaltepek. Satepan yajki in general kininsetilito xochiapolkah, sayoj amo kipiayak toni ika moteuiskej.

Entos in analtekos kichijchiujkah se kali ueyi omenepan, ompa ne Sakapoastan, kampa yetoyaj in soldados uan ompa kieuayaj ininteposuan.

Ne analtekos moinkitskilijkej seki siuamej uan kiniukakej itech ne ueyi kali. Sayoj ne siuamej ipa kiniluijkaj ya toni in ompa kichiuaskej. Yejua ika mosenkaujkej uan kiniluijkej in soldados maj kininchiuilikan tein yejuan kinekiskiaj.

Mientras ne takuatoyaj, in siuamej kijtojkej youij plasaj kikouatij toni in kikuaskej uan yajkej, sayoj kikoujkej se tamamal chiluak uan seki lometas de aguarras. Ijkuak mokepatoj, kitetenkej talpan chiluak uan kuali kitetekilijkej aguarras, kixotaltijkej uan siuamej niman kiskej nochin. Nimantsin ne soldados nionó uel moijyotiayaj ok tsikuinteujkej tatastuij, kitemotiuij kuali ehekat. Ompa kininchixtoyaj in maseualmej uan kinintamikokototskej ika machetej. Satepan yejuan kuali kalakkej uan kininkixtitoj nochi in teposmej. (Taller de Tradición Oral 1994:120-21)

Juan Francisco Lucas' father was killed by the overseas-people over in Comaltepec. Then the general went to unite the people of Xochiapulco, although they didn't have anything with which to fight.

So the overseas-people made a big, two-story house over there in Zacapoaxtla, where they stayed and kept their irons [arms].

The over-seas people grabbed some women and took them to the great house. But the women had been told what to do there. They let themselves entirely, and told the soldiers that they could do what they wanted with them.

While they were eating, the women said they were going to the marketplace to buy something to eat, and they left, but they only bought a bunch of dry chile and some bottles of turpentine. When they came back they filled the floor with dry chile and poured out the turpentine, they set it on fire, and then quickly all the women ran out. Right away the soldiers couldn't even breathe anymore, they ran out, they went coughing, they went searching for air. Outside the maseuales were waiting for them and they finished hacking them up with machetes. Afterwards they could go inside and grab all the arms.

This narrative representation of the French intervention, demonstrates how Nahua communities in the North Puebla Highlands have kept the history of the events in an emplotment very different from the one that exists in the national public sphere. First of all in the Nationalist myth of the battle of Puebla the native forces of the 6th battallion under Juan Francisco Lucas are called 'Zacapoaxtecas', an emplotment of the events that erases the fact that the mainly mestizo people of Zacapoaxtla were allied with the French, and it was the townspeople from Xochiapulco who headed the resistance. The emplotment also does not align mestizos and Indians against the foreign French enemy – but rather explicitly aligns rich mestizos with the French overseas-people, against the poor but resourceful *maseualmej* (used here as a pan-ethnic category of indigenous, though proto-

typically Nahua, people). It also does not frame the struggle as a nationalist struggle, but as an entirely locally based resistance to abuse by outsiders. It is not the case that the people of San Miguel Tzinacapan remember the indigenous participation in the reform war as a participation in a national struggle. Hence, though the national public sphere emplots the Nahua of the North Puebla Highland as a particular kind of nationalist Indian subject – this emplotment is not found in the version history that is reproduced for the consumption of the Nahua public of the Sierra Norte de Puebla.

Nahua Counterpublics in the Mexican Revolution

Nahuas also participated significantly on different sides in the Mexican Revolution, though it has proved a controversial question to answer what they were fighting for. Did they fight as a segment of the agrarian sector for agrarian reforms, or did they fight as members of local indigenous publics to recover land that had been taken over by the haciendas? Some scholars have argued that indigenism was not significant in the revolution, because there was no general movement that identified itself with a general indigenous cause. John Womack, whose history focuses on the Zapatista revolution in Morelos, considers Zapatismo to be an agrarian movement, and he argues that the Nahua population of state of Morelos was negligible at the time of the revolution. Historian, Alan Knight (1986) also downplays the role of local Indian parochial sentiment as a force in the revolution, distinguishing between “*serrano*” and “*agrarian*” rebellions – where only the former had an indigenous element. To me is a wrong-headed perspective, since indigenous publics are historically characterized exactly by their localocentric nature, and have no history of engaging in broader pan-ethnic or racial struggles. The following section analyzes the ways that indigenous participation in the revolution has been represented, and argues that it has been largely erased from, or downplayed, in historiography.

In any discussion about Indian rebellions and their legacies, the Zapata revolution in Morelos looms large. The question of the possibility of an ethnic element in the Zapatista movement during the Mexican revolution has been contentious, and there are two distinct traditions of representation. One tradition sees Zapata as an indigenous leader of an indigenous community who defended his town's interests by allying them to a wider agrarianist social movement and the anti-porfirian revolution. This tradition started with the scholarship of Sotelo Inclan (Sotelo Inclán (1970) [1943]) who depicts Zapata as the chosen representative of the traditional Nahuatl council of Anenecuilco and the keeper of ancient Nahuatl language titles. And the "Indigenous Zapata" tradition continues to live on in the contemporary Zapatista movement with its clear coupling of the agrarian struggle with different forms of indigenous worldviews, as well as among Mexican academic *indigenistas* and in the traditions of many indigenous communities. The other tradition sees Zapata as a Mestizo agrarian leader whose success partly owed to his ability to recruit the indigenous segment of the population to his cause. This tradition was founded by John Womack's seminal book "Zapata and the Mexican Revolution," in which he argues that Zapata was a mestizo, who knew no Nahuatl, and that consequently the driving force behind the revolution in Morelos was the agrarian segment, making it basically a class conflict with only negligible or occasional ethnic elements. Womack's framing of the revolution in Morelos as an agrarian uprising with no significant indigenous element has become the standard in historiography.

Womack (1969:71) dedicates but a footnote to the ethno-linguistic composition of Morelos at the turn of the 20th century, and to the question of Zapata's possible relation with the Nahuatl language. He cites a 1962 UNAM master's thesis in geography that analyses census data in Morelos from 1900 to 1930. From this work, which I have not been able to consult, he deduces that Nahuatl speakers only made up 9.29% of the population of Morelos at the time the Revolution broke out. He also cites Sotelo Inclán's account of Zapata traveling to the village priest in Tetelcingo to get his help in deciphering the ancient Nahuatl titles of Anenecuilco, as evidence that Zapata did not know a

word of Nahuatl. He claims that when the morelenses heard Madero's statement that he would return the lands appropriated by the haciendas to the Indians, they interpreted "Indian" to be simply the way city people referred to the rural peasantry, but that they otherwise did not recognize their state as particularly Indian.

The 1900 Mexican census did collect data about indigenous languages spoken in each state. The census questionnaire provided a field with the title "Idioma nativo o lengua hablada," the instructions to the person administering the census stated clearly the procedure for filling out the field: "*En la columna 11 debe escribirse el nombre de la lengua nativa ó hablada comunmente, como castellano, francés, inglés, etc., ó bien el nombre del idioma indígena, como por ejemplo el mexicano ó nahuatl, el zapoteco, el otomí, el tarasco, el maya, el tzental, el huasteco, el totonaco, etc., etc. A la persona que hable el castellano y un idioma indígena, como el otomí ó el mexicano ó cualquier otro, se le anotaré de preferencia el castellano.*"¹¹⁶ These instructions meant that for bilingual persons only Spanish should be noted, which in turn means that the percentage figure given for speakers of Nahuatl includes only *monolingual* Nahuatl speakers, whereas bilingual Nahuas (and any ethnic Nahuas who did not speak the language) are counted as Spanish speakers. In 1900 using this way of counting, the number of speakers of indigenous languages was 16,9% monolingual Nahuatl speakers. Today, there are few communities with percentages of monolingual speakers of indigenous languages as high as 16% and in those communities the vast majority of inhabitants tend to speak Nahuatl as a first language and Spanish as a second language. Towns with similar numbers of monolinguals are found in for example in the Zongolica region, where census figures today suggest that a breakdown of 10% monolinguals would correspond well to a demographic breakdown with 10-20% monolingual speakers of Spanish and 70-80% Spanish/Nahuatl bilinguals.

¹¹⁶ "In column 11 should be noted the name of the native or commonly spoken language, such as Spanish, French English etc. Or also the name of the indigenous language, such as Mexicano or Náhuatl, Zapotec, Otomí Tarascan, Maya, Tzeltal, Huastec, Totonac etc. For the person who speaks Spanish and an indigenoys language such as Otomi, Mexicano or any other, **Spanish will be noted by preference.**" [my emphasis].

Given that the state of Morelos had 161,000 inhabitants in 1900, that would suggest a composition with approximately 16,000 monolinguals, and at probably least 100,000 bilingual Nahuas in the state.

However, in the 1910 census, which seems to have used the same questionnaire, for some reason the number of Nahuatl speakers in Morelos declined to 9%, only to jump back up to 14% in the 1930 census, the first one after the revolution¹¹⁷. There is no record of any events in Morelos that would have plausibly caused the Indigenous population to drop by almost 40% in the ten-year period between 1900 and 1910. The same abrupt jump in the reporting of indigenous people is found in most of the states in the 1910 census. This seems to suggest some kind of irregularity with the 1910 census. Probably this means that the census for practical or logistical reasons did not adequately sample the rural population at this time. In any case, the figure of 9% is an anomaly that seems to underrepresent Nahuatl speakers by about 5%. At the same time, contrary to what Womack clearly believes, it does not pretend to provide the total number of Nahuatl speakers, only the number of monolingual speakers. This of course means that when Womack takes the percentage of monolinguals to refer to the total number of speakers he is vastly underestimating the number of Nahuatl speakers of Morelos. In contrast to his glib assertion we would be justified in

¹¹⁷ In the 1930 census the questionnaire gave the possibility of recording two languages, first whether the respondent spoke the national language or not, and then in the second slot which other language they spoke. This means that for 1930 the figure of 14% Nahuatl speakers includes both monolingual and bilingual speakers. The total population of Morelos in 1930 was 130,000, 30,000 less than before the Revolution. Based on the percentages of Nahuatl speakers we can estimate the indigenous population of Morelos at ca. 100,000 in 1910 (possibly more, including both bi- and monolingual speakers), and we can show that after the war it had been reduced to less than 20,000 (also including both mono and bilinguals).

Given the relatively modest decline in the total population from 1910 to 1930 this figure of an 80% indigenous population loss may seem exaggerated. But the population loss is hidden in the censuses because they don't take into account the influx of out-of-state people in the 7 years following the Revolution. The fact that indigenous population loss was much greater than what the raw population figure suggests is also shown by cohort analyses that show that the people counted in 1910 are not the same as the ones counted in 1930. For example, of the 90,000 women counted in Morelos in 1910 only 35,000 were counted again in 1930 (McCaa 2003) This points to a drastic decline in native born (mostly Nahuatl speaking) Morelenses and their replacement of people from other states after the war. The argument could be further supported if the portion of Morelos residents born out of state could be shown to have increased drastically from 1910 to 1930, but unfortunately I have not been able to find this piece of information in the census even though the census did ask for state of birth.

considering at least 70% of the population of 161,000 people, perhaps as many as 80%, to have been Nahuatl speakers.

In his statement that Zapata did not speak a word of Nahuatl, Womack also ignored or was unaware of evidence to the contrary, namely the widespread oral tradition in Morelos' indigenous communities that has it that Zapata spoke to the locals in Nahuatl whenever he visited. This tradition is found for example in Hueyapan, which is located close to the Zapatista headquarters in Tochimilco, and also in the Nahuatl speaking town of Cuentepec southwest of Cuernavaca. The best known testimony of Zapata speaking Nahuatl is that of Doña Luz Jimenez of Milpa Alta, in the Federal District, recorded by Fernando Horcasitas in the 1950s (Horcasitas og Jimenez 1968). Here Doña Luz states unequivocally that when Milpa Alta received the Zapatista forces in 1916 most of them spoke Nahuatl, and that Zapata himself spoke Nahuatl with the people of Milpa Alta. This does not necessarily mean that Sotelo Inclán is wrong when he states that Zapata needed help to read the Primordial Titles of his town, since as any linguist or ethnohistorian knows speaking a language and being able to read colonial manuscript documents in that language are two very different types of skill.

All accounts agree that Zapata's own engagement in the revolutionary fight stemmed originally from his responsibilities towards his own town of Anenecuilco, where he had been elected by a local council to be president of the defense committee, and in charge of the effort to regain lost land and water rights. But where historians such as Womack have generally tended to see the Zapata revolution in terms of its relation to the simultaneous national struggle, and consequently foreground the ways in which Zapatismo articulated with other revolutionary movements and with national intellectuals, it is also possible to look at how Zapatismo articulates with local community based movements in Morelos. One feature of the organization that is not generally explored is the relation between Zapatista generals and their home communities. Such an exploration is beyond the scope of this discussion also, but it should be noted that several major

Zapatista generals were based in local Nahua communities and tended to undertake most of their fighting in their own local areas. Genovevo de la O fought around his native Huitzilac, Agustín Cázares around indigenous Jumiltepec, Refugio Sánchez in Nahua Tepoztlán, Fortino Ayaquica in the Northeast of Morelos around the Nahua town of Tochimilco close to his native Atlixco, Amador Salazar around Atlihuayan (also an important site of rebellion in the 19th century) and Zapata of course around Anenecuilco and Tlaltizapán. All of these generals seem to have been originally, and continuously, motivated by the desire to defend and serve their own communities. Perhaps then, an alternative perspective on Zapatismo would be to see it as a loose confederation of towns each under their own leader and with local objectives who joined forces temporarily to achieve the greater common good. Two further events provide support for this type of interpretation.

One of the enigmas of the Zapata revolution is the question of why Zapata, having taken the capital and celebrated his famous meeting with Villa in 1914, seemingly turned his back on the national revolution turned towards rebuilding Morelos and failed to provide the necessary support for Villa's operations, eventually causing the downfall both of the radicals. Womack ascribes the decision to disenchantment with the relations with Villa's men, but if we think of Zapata's revolution as primarily a localist movement, it becomes perhaps more easy to explain: he simply had no interest in the Northern revolution or in securing the presidency for any particular faction. In 1915, the Zapatistas circulated a text in northern Guerrero trying to recruit rebels to their cause, the headline read "*No peleamos por la presidencia. Nuestra revolucion es la revolucion del Indio*"¹¹⁸. This strongly suggests that Zapata's constituency had little or no interest in National level politics, they only wanted to live free and work their ancestral lands. They were not willing to support the Northern Revolution by risking their lives far outside of their own territories.

¹¹⁸ AGN, Zapata archives, reference kindly supplied by Gerardo Rios

Another critical junction for Zapatism was the relations with the Nahuatl rebels of Domingo Arenas in Tlaxcala. Arenas had first been allied with Zapata, but had since switched sides to support Carranza. This was a blow to Zapata who had probably counted on the Arenistas to keep Carranza busy in the valley of Puebla. Zapata's reaction was to circulate letters written in Nahuatl among the people of Tlaxcala, describing in grim vocabulary the Carrancistas and their cause. But the Tlaxcaltecas continued to be loyal to Arenas, until he was killed in a botched parley with the Zapatistas near Tochimilco. From the Zapatista perspective, Arenas is often depicted as a traitor, but more likely it seems that he was simply loyal to his own local community and their local objectives, and that it was this perspective that led him to consider an alliance with Carranza to be more desirable¹¹⁹. In this way, by understanding the ethnic relations and community allegiances of the Zapata rebellion, we can explain also why it eventually failed, because the local ties of its supporters simply made it too difficult to form a sufficiently broad base on which to continue the struggle. The close relation to the land and to their home communities was what the Zapatistas shared, but it was also what divided them.

This interpretation, is also supported by the testimony of former Arenista soldier Santiago Ávila Vázquez recorded by Miguel Leon-Portilla in 1983. Vázquez describes the Arenista uprising both as a somewhat reluctant service to the nation, but primarily a desperate measure by a local community confronted with violent external threats and internal scarcity:

"Por in Domingo Arenas omahcoc, otechpalehui itech in totlaxical, barrio, que ye oquinec otechtlalihqueh in tomiquiliztempan para bien den nación mexicana. Ammo timahcohque por ce interés, únicamente den otimapostarohqueh den tonemiliz para nochi in tlacayome den región, den México huan de Tlaxcalla. Para ma ye cualli huan ma

Well, Domingo Arenas rose up, he helped in our barrio, as he wanted, and he placed us at the edge of our death for the good of the Mexican Nation. We did not rise up out of selfinterest, we just risked our lives for all the people of the region, of Mexico and of Tlaxcala. For it to be good, and for all the property and all the things things that the government took away to be set in order. That was what we fought for,

¹¹⁹ This is the argument of Gerardo Rios whose dissertation analyzes the Arenista movement in Tlaxcala.

mamecasentaro nochi den inhuaxca nochi den cosas quicuiliaya in gobierno, ye nun tehuan oticpeliarohqueh para in cualtzin de nochi in tlacaticpac intlaxical barrios.

Bueno, tehuan oticdefenderohqueh para ammo quinperjudicaruzquia in tropa den Porfirio Díaz den Cahualtzin, huan yehuan otechpalehuih queh ica toalimentos. Huan nun tiempo ammo oyeya totlaxcaltzin por que ammo quiahua huan ammo quiz semilla, ticuahqueh hasta in cebada, ticcuahqueh este, hasta in quiyotl den metl. Huan entonces nepa techtocatinemia ica balazos, mejor inon ticholohqueh, tiyahqueh tech in tepetl de Malintzin... Entonces Emiliano Zapata, huan Domingo Arenas, yo monechicohqueh, yu quihtohqueh: "Pos axan quema marmarohqueh para ticyecahuizqueh nin huey tlahtlachuanime quen quichihua impampa in tlaxical pueblos. Pos axan tehuan ammo ticcahuazque huan amehuan ¿ tlen anquihtoa ce valor? Pos ni modo una vez yu timocalaquihqueh, ticxicuzque hasta tlahman tlamiz inin chisme, inin zazanilli" (Leon Portilla 1996:146)

for the good of all the humanity in the barrios.

Well, we defended it from the loss, so that the troops of Porfirio Díaz would not harm it, and they gave us our food. And at that time we had no tortillas because it didn't rain, and seeds didn't grow, we ate even the barley, we even ate, this, the stalks of the maguay. And then they were following us with gunshots, so we instead we fled, we went to the Malinche mountain... So then Emiliano Zapata and Domingo Arenas they got together and they said "well now they armed themselves for us to flush it out, what these great eaters what are doing to the barrios of the towns. Well now, we won't let it be, what about you all? What do you all say – any courage? Well anyway, once we're in we'll have to keep on until this thing, this story is over."

Finally, when Womack argues that the word "Indian" was used indiscriminately by city folks to describe the entire peasantry regardless of ethnicity he may have a point. At least we cannot expect Madero, who as a rich man from the state of Coahuila, probably had never been really acquainted with indigenous people to use the word accurately. But he was not the only one by far, who identified a significant indigenous element in the revolutionary base. A man whom probably all would agree was more qualified to assess the ethnic categorizations of Indigenous Mexicans was Manuel Gamio, the father of Mexican anthropology. As a young man, Gamio had lived on his parents' hacienda by the rio Hondo in the Zongolica region and there he had learned Nahuatl speaking with the workers. Gamio's well known foundational treatise of Mexican Nationalism is *Forjando Patria* (Gamio 2010 [1916]), which was written in the Federal District in 1915 while Zapata and his men were fighting the Carrancistas less than 100 kilometers to the south. In his book, Gamio describes what he considers should be the basis of the Mexican nation, including an appreciation of the

indigenous past, and an actively incorporating policy towards the country's Indians. He considers that with education and positive social policies most Indians could be incorporated into the Nation as productive citizens, maintaining their culture and language, but adopting also the common language of nationalism. But he lists three "Nationalist problems" which must be solved to successfully "forge the nation". Each of them is a group that has a history of militantly resisting incorporation into the nation: The Yaquis of Sonora, known for their protracted struggle with Porfirio Diaz' regime; The Maya of Yucatán who had only recently become reincorporated into the nation after the Caste War; And the "Population of Morelos". Gamio analyzes the problem of Zapatismo, breaking it into three kinds of issues: *"The first of these is simple banditry, which in Morelos, as in other parts of the republic, often hides behind the face of revolution. Second, there are surviving elements of the previous regime that have taken advantage of the eternal disorientation of the Indian and sent him off on nefarious adventures. Lastly, there is the legitimate Zapatismo, which could better be called Indianism. Zapatismo is a localist and temporary denomination that is bound to disappear, whereas Indianism has persisted vigorously in Mexico since Cortés placed his standard on the sands of Villa Rica."* (Gamio 2010:158). In this way, Gamio equates Zapatismo (of the "legitimate" kind) with Indian resurgence. Gamio, writing in close proximity to Morelos and with intimate knowledge of Nahuatl and Nahua culture, considered the Morelos Revolution to be a primary example of the "Indian problem," and to be fueled by Indians with legitimate grievances against the process of colonization and the Mexican national state. In the face of the evidence given above, I consider that there is sufficient testimony to interpret that indigenous counter publics fighting for local goals formulated in local languages, formed a significant aspect in producing the Zapata revolution in Morelos.

The consequence of the Revolution however, was a total disruption of most of these counter publics. Communities were decimated by violence and starvation, and populations moved as refugees to cities or deep into the countryside, or forced to resettle in the newly established camp

towns. Womack describes in vivid detail the genocidal aspect of Díaz', Huerta's and Carranza's scorched earth campaigns against the people of Morelos (Womack 1969:141-48). When the planters complained about the military operations leaving them without workers, government offered to replace the Indian workers with 30,000 imported Japanese workers (Womack 1969:162). The scorched earth strategy meant the total disruption of local forms of social organization and of the ties between land and community, and it meant that communities that before had been relatively isolated came into contact with people and discourses from other parts of the country. When the revolution was over most of the indigenous people in the valley of Morelos were simply forced to reorient towards the national public, because the local ones were gone. In indigenous towns in the highlands such as Tepoztlán, Tetela and Hueyapan, the revolution upset the social hierarchy, shifting it in favor of those who through their outside connections were able to take advantage of the chaos of war to sell products, or to take lands or property into their possession through whatever means. In Tetela and Hueyapan this were those who had the network to market marijuana, and those who were able to import basic marketable commodities into the communities – oil, flour, soap, beer, tools, building materials (Arias og Bazán 1979). They were often outsiders who had settled in the town prior to the revolution. Even if highland communities had a better chance of maintaining local oppositional publics, the process of land redistribution required them to orient towards the national public, which by now had positioned itself as their benefactor. More than anything, I believe that this changed dynamics of state-community relations was what made it impossible to sustain the oppositional identity in most indigenous communities.

In other Nahuan regions, communities responded in the same localist way to the revolution, which caused them to end up in different camps. In the North Puebla Highlands for example, the people of San Miguel Tzinacapan joined the constitutionalists because they were led by local Nahua cacique Gabriel Barrios, and because their traditional rivals in Cuetzalan had joined the villistas and raided their town:

"Kijtouaj ika nikan uin Kuesalankopa in viyistas amo katka tein semi pobres kemej itech in okseki xolalmej, amo tateuiayaj para maj amo kinintajyouiltikan in maseualmej, nikan in viyistas katka in koyomej de Kuesalan tein mero kinixyekantoya ipopauan kipiayaj ueueyij talmej yan kichiuayaj in refinaj, semi miak miak kininchiuilijkej in maseualmej. Yayaj ipa tachtekitij, kinintitilasayaj in siuamej uan kinimiktiayaj nochin maseualmej tein nemiaj nikan uin." (Taller de Tradición Oral 1994:485)

"They say that here around Cuetzalan, the Villistas wer not the poor as in other places. They didn't fight so that the maseuales should not suffer. Here the Villistas were *koyomej* [mestizos/outsideers] from Cuetzalan who were being led by heads of family who had large landholdings and made cane alcohol. They did a lot to the maseuales. They robbed, they raped the women, and killed all the *maseuales* who lived around here."

The result of this particular history of struggle, was that in the North Puebla Highlands, in a sense Nahuas came out of the revolution well. Just as their local Nahua leaders had been considered loyal supporters of Porfirian liberalism, their revolutionary cacique Barrios was seen as an ally of the revolutionary regime in the national public sphere – able to command respect internally and to represent the region externally (Brewster 2003). The same happened in Morelos, where the former Zapatistas were able to ally closely with the government of Obregon, and begin the country's most ambitious program of land reform. However, the alliance with the government came at the cost of increasingly orienting away from the local publics and towards the national public as the provider of the 'common good'. Thus the post-revolutionary transition instituted the client-patron relation between indigenous communities and the state apparatus that characterized the *indigenista* period of Mexican history, and which is still evident in the way those relations play out today.

Nationalizing Nahuatl Publics: Lázaro Cárdenas and the Indigenous Constituency

Following the Revolution, Mexico entered a period of nationalist reconstruction, with ideologies of nationalism, populism and agrarian-socialism reaching its height in the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas. More than any previous period of Mexican Nationalism, Cárdenas presidency saw

explicit elevation of indigenous culture, and its integration into the nationalist imagination. Some scholars, like Lomnitz (2001), have tended to focus on the post-revolutionary indigenismo's use of indigenous history as national symbolism. Nonetheless, I think that in the 1930s, particularly during the Cárdenas presidency, the national engagement also with living indigenous culture and language, and with their political interests, was intense. Indeed, I consider the 1930s to be the only period in the history of the Mexican Nation, in which the state has dedicated similar amounts of attention to indigenous peoples and their cultures and interests as they do in the current period. I also consider it the only period in which the intensity of indigenous political organization compares to the one we see today. Following Dawson (2004), I consider it likely that Cárdenas made an explicit political choice of approaching the indigenous population as an electoral constituency, and that his close attention to indigenous interests reflects this choice, rather than a superficial use of Indians as national symbols.

In Morelos, it has been said that the Zapatistas won the revolution. Many of the leading revolutionaries were incorporated into state and national governments. Through this alliance many of the promises of Zapata's revolution resulted in concrete policy – most significantly the expropriation and redistribution of hacienda land to the indigenous communities. During the first decades after the revolution, almost all communities in Morelos filed requests for *ejido* land grants. These grants were distributed through a laborious process in which lands were measured and expropriated, it was calculated how many persons could each receive a small *ejido* plot, large enough to sustain a family, and the land were then distributed among the eligible individuals in each town. The process required a high degree of patience, organization and political shrewdness from communities, as they had to find the ways to represent themselves to the state in the right way, demonstrating their necessity, justifying their claims to being the original owners of the lands they were requesting, documenting their eligibility. This in itself required a much more active relation between local community and state than ever before.

Nevertheless, starting with the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, the change in indigenous policies also produced noticeable changes in many indigenous communities. Cárdenas recognized that the Indians, just as the union workers of CROM who had supported Obregón, formed a powerful constituency, which if leveraged in favor of his socialist revolutionary agenda, could prove a crucial pillar of support. Aligned with indigenista social scientists like Gamio, he considered that the objective of nationalism should not be to eliminate the Indians and the cultural diversity they represented, but rather to create a place for Indians within the construction of the Nation (Dawson 1998, 2004). Cárdenas worked actively with social scientists to find ways to include indigenous communities into the nation, and two of the most significant strategies were by promoting education, and socio-economic development in indigenous regions. For the provision of education, Cárdenas allied himself with the North American missionary and amateur-linguist William Cameron Townsend and his organization the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Hartch 2006). They became instrumental in the efforts to provide indigenous communities with primary education in their own languages, including the creation of education materials, curricula and basic literature in many indigenous languages. Being a missionary organization, although covertly so, they also became instrumental in further undermining local socio-religious organization in many indigenous communities creating the first in-roads of protestantism in indigenous communities all over Mexico.

Cárdenas also published two decrees in Nahuatl: One of them, titled "*Jn ciapopotl*" (Hernández de León-Portilla 1988) (using the non-standard orthography of amateur linguist and engineer Juan Luna Cárdenas who translated it), explained the nationalisation of the petroleum resources carried out by the president for a Nahuatl readership. This continued the 19th century tradition of publishing select propaganda material in the country's major indigenous language. And it also continued the tradition of publishing Nahuatl language materials in ways that were not easily

accessible or intelligible to native speakers, and without having a specific speech community in mind as audience.

The relation between Cárdenas and indigenous people has been a focus of many analyses. Particularly salient has been his subsequent status as a kind of local saint in many of the communities that he visited in person and to which he frequently was directly instrumental in promoting the first visible signs of modernization. Cardenas' image among the indigenous population as the first president to take an active and sincere interest in their situation cannot be ignored when considering the subsequent change in orientation of many indigenous communities towards a national public. A clear example of this process is the situation of the Nahua town of Tetelcingo in Morelos. Ravaged by the revolution, the community was barely reestablished in the 1930s when Cárdenas became president. Having recently left Guatemala, William Cameron Townsend chose the town as his first location for a missionary operation in Mexico, and established a residence there with the blessing of Cárdenas and gradually established a protestant community in the otherwise traditionalist town (Hartch 2006). In 1936, Cárdenas held a much publicized conference in the town in which he promised to bring the benefits of modernity to the town and pledged his allegiance to the indigenous cause. Over the subsequent years, Cárdenas did indeed take a special interest in Tetelcingo (and some other indigenous communities, such as the Purhépecha communities in his native Michoacán). A particularly fascinating testimony of Cárdenas' relation with Tetelcingo is the narration of Martín Méndez Huaxcuatitla, or Ru Martín. Méndez was an orphan and former revolutionary fighter (having fought on all sides) who had resettled in his native Tetelcingo after the war eventually becoming the local *ayudante* (main town authority). He was the one who had welcomed Townsend into town and became one of the most active leaders of the protestant community there. When Townsend left Tetelcingo, he was replaced by the missionary linguist Richard Pittman, who continued work with Méndez. Méndez learned to read and write his native language Mösiehuali as the Tetelcingans call their local highly distinctive

variety of Nahuatl, and on Pittman's suggestion, he typed an account of his meetings with Cárdenas and his impression of Cárdenas legacy. The following two excerpts express the relationship well.

¹²⁰*Ye cuaqinu naja niyeya de tlajtohuani ipa topueblo. Ipa inun tunalte oncä oyejyeya profesores amo tlamachtiyäya. Pero oyejya esfiela; ompa ochajchamtijtaya. Belis otiyejyeya quiemi a las diez de ca isi cuac naja niyehuataya ipa ämäyetl ixpa ayudantía, cuac sa de repiente oniquijtac sente quixtiyäno ohualäya ca notlac, de tejano, de pantalo, hua de chaquieta. Naja amo onicchi cäso de yaja. Naja nicseguiro niyehuatica ipa ino ämäyetl. Por fin omopacho notlac hua oniechtlajpalo. Nuyijqui naja onictlajpalo, pero niyehuatica. Ye cuaquinuju oniechilfi inu quixtiyäno - ?Amo tiniechixomati?, Naja oniquilfi, -amo, señor. Yaja oniechilfi, Naja niPresidente de la República, Lázaro Cárdenas. Ye cuaquinuju onoquestiquis hua onitielfi ca en castilla. - "Señor Presidente !perdonemé! No le conocía."*

....

Mientras Don Guillermo [Townsend] ilohuaya ompa miexhijco oajsico Profesor Uranga, ca Ingeniero Juan Soto, ca iorden del señor Presidente Don Lázaro Cárdenas. Sanima opiejqui tejtequiti. Sanima oquinunutsqui Comisariado. Cuac inuju oyeya yaja Carrillo. Profesor Uranga sanima oquicu tläli de Miguel Bobalillo. Nuyijqui oquicu tläli de Tules Gadea. Quiplantärojqui miyac tareas de aläxoxocujme ipa inu cämpe de Mätaliyu. Oquichijchijqui unte calme, sente para sente motor eléctrico, hua inu ocsente para mochäntis äqui tlajpiyas ipa inu aläxoxocujcamac. Ipa inu cali para motor eléctrico, santequitl oquisencäjqui huan oquichijchijqui oquihualicaqui inu

And at that time I was speaker (ayudante) in our town. In those days there were teachers who didnt teach. But there was a school; there they were living. Maybe it was around ten in the morning, when I was sitting on an amate tree in front of the ayudantía (town hall), when all of a sudden I saw a Christian (an outsider, a mestizo) came towards me, in a cowboy hat, trousers and jacket. I didn't pay him any attention. I just stayed sitting on the amate tree. At last he came closer to me and greeted me. I greeted him back, but I was sitting. Then that was when he asked me "don't you recognize me?" I said "no, sir." He told me "I am president of the Republic Lázaro Cárdenas". Then in that moment I jumped up and told him in Spanish - "Mr. President, please excuse me, I didn't recognize you".

While Mr. William was away in Mexico, professor uranga came with the engineer Juan Soto by order of the President Lazaro Cardenas. Right away they went to work. Right away they called the commisioner (of the town communal lands) At that time it was this person Carillo. Right away, Profesor Uranga bought land from Miguel Bobalillo. He also bought land from Tules Gadea. They planted many tasks of orange trees on the field of Mataleon. They made two houses, for an electric motor and another for the person who took care of the organge grown to live in. In the house for the electric motor, as soon as they finished it and they made it, they brought that motor. With that motor they gave electricity to our

120. This text is written in Tetelcingo Nahuatl, or mösiehualt, which is characterized by its divergent phonological system. Where other dialects distinguish between long and short vowels, in Tetelcingo this contrast has become one of quality, so that the variety has seven vowel qualities instead of four as most varieties. The orthography used here the same one used by Méndez used ä to write the vowel [ɔ] which corresponds to long /a:/ in other varieties. It does not represent the distinction between [i] and [ɪ] – writing both as <u>. Otherwise it follows a SEP/SIL convention with <qu/c> for [k] and <j> for [h]. The English translation is mine.

motor. Ica inu motor quitiemacaya tläbili para topueblo. Nuyijqui oquitimacaquie sente camiyu de cärga. Oquichitijqui sitlali. Oquihualicaqui sente mierco para tlapajtis. Profesor Uranga omonunutz ica Casaniero Ru Antonio, hua oquicubili ocsente tläli para Martín Méndez (naja). Oquicubili aproximada mente como 26 tareas. Pero inänca tareas de tläli omoxixelo para tli cachi porubejte. Profesor Uranga oquitläli Ingeniero Juan Soto para ma quitietequi por lotes. Inu lotes oquisqui quiemi ca nänäbi tareas cara sente lote. Nuyijqui oquitlälijqui sente cäye de majtlactli mietro ca patlähuac hua quiemi näbi cientos ca biyac. Nuyijqui oquicujqui alämbre motsacuasqui cada sente lote. Oquinchijchijqui calme de adubes. Oquicujqui tijeaste hua madera para techos, para pobiertajte hua ventänajte. Cuac ye oquinsencäjqui inu calte, cara sesen tläcatl oquinmajmacaqui escrituras. Oquitlälijqui nuyijqui sente internado de agricultura. Oncä oyejteya unte ingenieros para inu enseñanza. Ipa inu tiempo otlapaliebiloc nuyijqui yejuatsi Lic. Genaro Vázquez. Ipa inu tiempo oyilohuaya de Procurador de la Nación. Oquitlälijqui sente cañería desde Pasolco asta aläxox cuajcamac. Oquixixelojqui tläli de riego. chichicuasien tarea oquintocäro cara sesen tläcatl de Tetelcingo. Nochi ini nänca omochi ipa topueblo de Tetelcingo, Porque Don Lázaro Cárdenas otiechtlasotlac por causa de Don Guillermo C. Townsend, äqui nechäntiluco ipa topueblo. Tlä äxa miyactie de tochä tlagozärohua de camiones, de coches de tractores, de molinos hua de nochi ocsequi sästantli, ma tiemotlasojcämatilicä Dios ca tiehua Don Lázaro Cárdenas ca tiehua Don Guillermo C. Townsend, Americano que tohua nechäntiluco. Martín Méndez otieseli hua otietläli inähuajcopa topueblo para ma quipaliebicä. Yaja inu tequitl oquichi Cárdenas san tlasojtli. (Méndez

town. They also gave the people a cargo truck. They called it "The Star". They brought a doctor to practice medicine. Professor Uranga called the man from Casasano Mr. Antonio, and bought another piece of land for Martin Mendez (me). He bought approximately around 26 tasks. But those tasks of land he divided, for those who were the poorest. Professor Uranga put the engineer Juan Soto to divide it up in lots. Those lots came out in four tasks each lot. They also laid down a street, ten metres wide and about four hundred meters long. They also bought wire to close in each lot. They made adobe houses. They bought tiles and wood for roofs, for doors and windows. When they had finished those houses, they gave each single person the deeds. They also put down an boarding school for agriculture. There were two engineers for the teaching. And at that time the lawyer Mr. Genaro Vazquez was also helping out. At that time he was the Attorney general of the nation. They put down piping from Pazulco all the way to the orange grove. They divided out irrigated terrains. Each and every person in Tetelcingo received 6 tasks of land. He did all that for our town tetelcingo, because Don Lazaro Cardenas loved us for the sake of Don William C Townsend who had come to live in our town. Ig many of our households now enjoy trucks, cars and tractors, grinding mills, and all the other things, then they should thank God along with Don Lazaro Cardenas and Don Guilleromor C Townsend, American, who came to live with us. Martin Mendez welcomed him and set him down in the middle of our town so that he might help it. This, the work that Cardenas did, was just love.

*no date*¹²¹)

The first excerpt sets up the meeting between Martín Mendez and Lázaro Cárdenas, that seems to build on the religious trope of the disciples meeting the resurrected Jesus but not recognizing him (e.g. John 20:11-18). This savior metaphor resounds throughout the narrative. The second section describes the concrete benefits of modernization of Tetelcingo, the advent of electric light, motorized corn mills, irrigation and workable lands for all the people of Tetelcingo. One way of reading the text is as a prompted statement of gratitude to William Townsend for mediating contact with Cárdenas (and implicitly with God), and this explains the many ways in which Townsend is positioned in the text as a mediating figure. But there is also another element present in the text, in which Méndez positions himself within the local community and uses his ability to receive and invite these figures into town as a source of authority and prestige for himself. The narration of the relation between Cárdenas, Townsend, Méndez and Tetelcingo, points towards a new role of the Nahua politician and intellectual, one in which the success of an indigenous leader is measured by the degree to which he is able to form client-patron relations with powerful figures and channel resources from the national public sphere into the local community. This quickly became the primary political dynamics in PRI Mexico, which was not challenged until the election of 2001.

Apart from the obvious nationalism inherent in the sanctification of Cárdenas, Martín's language also demonstrates his own orientation towards the national public. His language use is populated with Spanish borrowings, but even more so with Mösiehuali calques of Spanish idioms and syntactic constructions. Sometimes expressions are almost schizophrenically “double voiced” (Bakhtin 1981) combining Nahuatl and Spanish grammatical constructions into a single sentence.

121. Original text, translated and edited by David Tuggy accessed online at <http://www-01.sil.org/~tuggyd/tetel/F001i-Cardenas-nhg.htm>. The translation given here is mine, not Tuggy's.

Examples of a clear Spanish calque is the "*amo onicchi caso de yaja*," a direct calque of the Spanish phrase "*no hacer caso*" (pay no attention to). Another example is the phrase "*oquicubili ocsente tläli para Martín Méndez*," (literally "he bought it for him, one more land, for Martín Méndez"). Here, the verb is in the applicative form, already including the recipient, but nonetheless the recipient is also marked with the Spanish preposition "*para*," making the construction redundant by using both the Spanish and the Nahuatl strategy for including a recipient into a transitive phrase. On the other hand, it is clear that Méndez is grammatically proficient in Mösiehuali, using many of the complex verbal constructions that one rarely finds in the speech of semi-fluent speakers. For example, in referring to Cárdenas and Townsend, he consistently uses the highest degree of the honorific register (Tetelcingo Nahuatl has three levels of reverentiality in contrast to most varieties that have only two), which employ very morphologically complex forms. This suggests that the use of Spanish syntactic calques is not simply a consequence of low proficiency in Nahuatl, but suggests that it is a register influenced by the communicative situation. It would not be surprising that Méndez' might employ a register of Mösiehuali with a high degree of Spanish influence. In a quantitative analysis of Spanish syntactic influence in Hueyapan Nahuatl (Pharao Hansen 2010b), I found that Spanish influence was consistently higher for individuals who were highly literate and used Spanish language literacy in their everyday lives. Mithun (2007) have also found that syntactic influence from English is higher in written text production when Mohawk speakers who are used to writing in English begin to write in Mohawk. Apart from the interference from the written medium and the fact that Méndez was probably an avid reader of Spanish language materials, the politics of representation may also play a role. Jane and Kenneth Hill (1986) describe a "Register of Power," employed by Nahua authorities who are performing power within their community, and which is exactly characterized by a higher degree of Spanish loans and syntactic influence than common everyday language between family members. The existence of such a register, may be taken as further evidence for the argument that indigenous intellectuals in the mid 20th century had to

increasingly adopt an outwards orientation towards the national public sphere and its discourse forms, in order to perform the role as a mediator of between the state-as-patron and the community-as-client. The use of high degrees of Spanish influence in Nahuatl political discourse then becomes necessary in order to demonstrate the ability to perform this mediation.

Another element of Cárdenism, that suggests that Cárdenas viewed the indigenous population as a constituency was the proliferation of Indigenous Congresses. Dawson (2004) describes how, during Cárdenas' presidency indigenous peoples began holding regional and ethnic congresses in which indigenous intellectuals and representatives met and discussed their local and collective needs and requested, or even demanded, attention from the government. One such conference was the First Aztec Congress, celebrated in Milpa Alta, D.F. Between the 13th and 18th of August 1940, during the last few months of Cárdenas' term in office. Nahuas from different areas in the Mexican republic attended the conference – at least representing the Huasteca region, the D.F. and Morelos. A copy of the minutes of the congress are found in the Collection of Robert Barlow at the *Universidad de las Americas*, with detailed information about the decisions of the different committees that were in session during the congress, and the petitions of the delegations from different areas. There were two main points in the agenda of the congress: First to establish a forum for creating a forum for the formulation of a general political will of the *raza aztekatl* (“Aztec race,” which was the way that the Nahua pan-ethnic group is named throughout the minutes). The aim of the congress was to constitute itself as the sole legitimate voice of the “Aztekah” in relation to government. The Congress for example claimed the right to decide an official orthography for the language to be followed by all (using k, w, kw, and s), and to be consulted about artistic and architectural decisions for all state sponsored building projects in Nahua communities. Regarding education, it demanded that Aztekah communities should be served by Nahuatl-speaking teachers, and that education should be culturally and linguistically appropriate for Nahuatl speakers. It also requested specific government action in relation to infrastructure, focusing particularly on

connecting indigenous communities to the road-net and to assure fast and efficient postal communication, and for the establishment of specific educational *internados* (as the one mentioned by Martín Méndez in a series of Nahuatl communities). A subcommittee on women's rights exhorted the congregants to work to impede that Aztecan women should increasingly take on agricultural tasks fit only for men, and impede that they should continue to migrate to the cities to become domestic servants. Permanent committees were established to work for greater integration between the Aztecan and the other native "races," to fight for ending discrimination of Indígenas in the cities, and also a permanent subcommittee "*De Lucha Contra el Vicio*" [To Combat the Vice (presumably of alcoholism)]. The demands and concerns of the congress represented a will to become full national subjects, integrated into the Mexican nation state, with voice and vote, and with the same access to the benefits of as other segments in society. A series of appended speeches by members of the congress stressed the cultural importance of using Nahuatl in the Mexican educational system. Invoking Nezahualcoyotl and Cuauhtemoc as founders of the national community, they pointed out that the study of Nahuatl etymology was no less relevant for Mexican Spanish speakers than the study of Greek and Latin etymology which was a required subject at all universities. At the congress at least three speeches were given in Nahuatl, one by Felipe Cerecedo López from Chicontepec in the Huasteca region of Veracruz, one by Arnulfo Ahuizotl Velasco from Milpa Alta, D. F. and one by Emilio Sánchez of Tepoztlán. Each of them was recorded word for word in the minutes, though none of them in the official orthography chosen by the congress.

The political resurgence of indigenous communities as they worked to insert themselves in the national imaginary was surely a key moment in their history. More than ever before, they were able to engage in a relation with a state that recognized them as communities with political rights, and not just as minors to be cared for. Nevertheless, the moment was brief. When Cárdenas left the presidency in 1940, the inclusive *indigenista* agenda was sidelined, and only the basic programs of rural development were maintained, but the active political inclusion of Indians as a constituency

quickly disappeared. This was no doubt because of the changing demographics, that starting in 1940 gradually made rural and indigenous populations a less significant electorate. Rather than engaging with ethnic communities as political collectives, the attention to development of rural areas was undertaken by the INI, and by the different rural branches of the PRI all of which worked with a thick bureaucracy and very limited possibilities for local community involvement. If during Cárdenas, there was a possibility for Indians to organize around ethnic spheres of interest within the national public space, by the end of Second World War this possibility was gone and they had ended up as clients to a patron state. Dawson (2004), in his analysis of the *Congresos Regionales Indígenas* emphasizes how the congresses was a forum in which indigenous peoples had to demonstrate loyalty to the revolution and proficiency in the revolutionary political idiom, even while emphasizing and promoting local autonomy. The client-patron relation that quickly replaced the inclusive *indigenismo* as the main form of political relation between Indians and state might have been the only possible outcome of this double-bind situation.

I believe that more than any other factor, this change in the relationship between state and indigenous political communities embodied by the INI, SEP and CNC, is what caused the accelerated decline of public use of indigenous languages, and the disappearance of indigenous symbolic idioms across Mexico in the 20th century. The primary function of these symbolic forms had been the maintenance of independent indigenous public spheres opposed to the hegemony of the national public, but when indigenous publics were now incorporated into the national public sphere as client publics, they became unnecessary. The demise of most indigenous public spheres happened in a process that is surprisingly parallel to the process Habermas describes as the decline of the Bourgeois public sphere. By taking up a client position in relation to a benefactor state, it lost the ability to be a counter public with its own locally distinct ideas of the common good and local strategies for achieving it. In the end, because of the demographic decline in the 20th century, Indians lost the possibility of becoming an important voice within the national public sphere.

Modernity and the Continuing Decline of the Nahuatl Public Spheres

The decline of the Nahuatl public spheres need not be viewed as simply detrimental to indigenous communities. The enforced ethnic separation of the Indians that characterized the colonial period, and the counter publics that emerged from the liberal economic oppression and erasure of indigenous communal experience in the early national period are certainly not periods of glory to which indigenous people would be likely to want to return. On the contrary, indigenous activism in contemporary Mexico often takes the form of movements to reinscribe themselves into national history, in this way gaining a voice in the national public. The slogan, “never again a Mexico without us,” used by Zapatistas and other indigenous political activists is exactly based on redefining culturally distinct indigenous people as a recognized class of national citizens, with rights to self-determination at the local level as well as rights to participation in the national public.

Perhaps because it was the period in which the nation listened the most to indigenous voices and demands, many indigenous people do continue to idealize the Cárdenista period. However, the clear drawback of the form of inclusion indigenous peoples experienced in the Cárdenista period and the subsequent decades was that it was paternalistic, motivated by a desire to bring Indians into modernity, without regard as to whether that was really what they wanted. And it was clientelistic, with government subsidies being exchanged arbitrarily in favor of political support, which suppressed the possibility of pursuing local political objectives and made it impossible for communities (indigenous and non-indigenous alike) to pose demands on the state.

While I believe the decline of the indigenous public spheres can be considered a broad and general process starting with independence and accelerating with the nationalist policies of the 1940s, it is not the case that indigenous publics have disappeared. Indigenous communities continue to form local publics, and to organize to obtain local political objectives through the different means at their disposal. Usually this is done at the level of a single town-community, but there have been times in the second half of the 20th century when, as in the 19th century, entire

regions have organized temporarily to pursue shared political goals. The most significant of these is obviously the 1994 Zapatista rebellion of Chiapas, which continues to exist as a regional indigenous counter public today, 20 years later. Nevertheless, other examples have taken place among Nahuas. In the 1970s, a group of Nahua communities on the Balsas River organized against the planned Tetelcingo dam which would have flooded most of their communities and required their forced relocation. The organization was successful in temporarily creating a shared front among the different communities, but disorganized as soon as the threat of the dam had been defeated (Hindley 1999; Flores Farfán 2011)

Also in the 1970s, in the Huasteca region of Hidalgo, Nahua communities began a process of reclaiming land from cattle ranchers. As in Chiapas, in the Huasteca, the end of the revolution had not brought about any significant redistribution of lands from non-indigenous landholders as it had in Morelos. The movement was community-based as groups of indigenous townspeople simply armed and the squatted the lands of ranchers that they considered their communal patrimony. However, as the practice of squatting spread from town to town in the region it eventually required enough critical mass that the government ceded to some of their claims, officially redistributing lands through a regional plan. Nahua historian Rafael Nava Vite (1996) summarizes his town's involvement in the Huasteca land reclamations of the 1970s:

“Ken nesi ipan in ni tlajkuiloltekitl, nopa maseualolinilistli pejki ika ueuejakajtsij, pampa amo iuikal ken kintekiuiuyayaj maseualmej ipan se tlali, uan ken kintetesopayaj ipan sekinok tlali tlen ni Uextekapan. Pero kemaj sekij chinankomej pejke kikuij tlali tlen uejkajya kinkuilijtoyaj nopa tominpiyanij, sekij maseualmej pejkej kinpaleuiyayaj uan mosenitskijkej iniuaya, maskej chikauak kinteuijkej nopa tominpiyanij inintekixpoyouaj, tlen nopa tlauel kinmauliyayaj ipan ni tlali. Kejni, nopa maseualolinilistli mosemanki ipan nochi ni tlali. Nopa chinankomej mosenitskijkej mosenpaleuijkej ipan innemilis pampa san

As it appears in this work of writing, the *maseualli* (indian/campesino) movement began in an incoherent fashion, because it was not the same how the maseuales were being worked on one land, and how they were being oppressed on another land, in the Huasteca. But as some communities began taking land that had been robbed by the rich long ago, some maseuales began helping them and joined with them, even though the rich fought their companions violently. In this way, the *maseualli* movement extended across the entire land [region]. Those communities united entirely and helped each other entirely with their lives, because they just asked for land.

nochi motlajtlaniyayaj tlali.

Ni olinilistli nelia monelnekiyaya, pampa miakij maseualmej amo kipiayaj tlali uan sekij tlen kipiayaj nelia kueketsitsij eliyayaj, uan kemantika amo kuali tlali kipiayaj. Yeka kampauei on tekpanouayayaj, kemantika on tlapaleuiayayaj ipan potreros uan kemantika on ouatekiyayaj kampa nopa asukarchiuaj. Kemaj ni maseualmej kiitakej para nelia kuali sampa kitekiusej nopa tlali tlen kinkuilijtoyaj, ayok kinelijlamijkej, kampauei kampa mosentiliyayaj nopa maseualmej achtoui kiitayayaj kenijkatsaj kikusej nopa tlali. (Nava Vite 1996:79)

This movement truly was needed, because many maseuales had no land and some had too small plots, or sometimes had bad land. For that reason they worked where they could, sometimes helping at the cattle ranches and sometimes they worked the cane where they make sugar. When the maseuales saw that indeed they could take back the lands that had been taken, they didn't finish thinking about it. Wherever the maseuales met, the first thing they looked at was how to take back those lands.

Clearly, like those of the North Puebla Highlands, the Nahuatl publics of the Huasteca maintained a significant counter hegemonic force well into the 20th century and probably to this day. Nava Vite's book, and the fact that he is a PhD graduate of the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, and a current tenured professor at the Intercultural University of Veracruz, also shows that a new type of Nahuatl intellectual has been emerging over the second half of the 20th century. Like the indigenous priests of the colonial era, Nava Vite works in a Nahuatl context outside of his own native region, interacting with students who speak a different variety of Nahuatl from himself. In this way, as we will see in chapter 5, the current intercultural education system, may hold the possibility of fomenting forms of regional and pan-Nahuatl counter public formation.

However, with the end of the agrarian laws that supported land redistribution with the neoliberal agrarian reform of 1992, the possibility for indigenous communities to pressure the state to redistribute lands disappeared. Similarly, the energy reform passed by Enrique Peña Nieto in 2014, severely restricts the ability of indigenous communities to counteract expropriation of indigenous lands for state projects. This aspect of the reform leaves indigenous publics with few recourses to achieve local political objectives through oppositional politics, restricting them to pursuing their goals through electoral politics, which in turn requires an even greater incorporation into the national public sphere. Unfortunately then, current government strategies point towards

the probability of a further decline of the indigenous publics in the 21st century. Unless new spaces of possibility are opened.

Nahua society, language, and history

This chapter has demonstrated why it is that there has never been a pan-Nahuan ethnopolitical community. Before the Spanish invasion, Nahuatl city-states were politically divided into warring factions and loose alliances. The Spaniards famously used this division to their advantage, but so did many Nahuas who were able to tie themselves to the upper tiers of the colonial political world, making alliances, and forging strong independent Indian republics. The national resurgence of the independence period combined with the liberal dissolution of traditional collective identities, all but precluded the formation of any new Nahua publics – relegating politics of Nahua communities to the “private sphere” of the religious domain and informal household networks. Nonetheless, some Nahuatl publics managed to leverage nationalism for local purposes, forging local regional publics formulated internally in Nahuatl symbolic idioms, but expressed externally in the idiom of nationalism. Throughout Mexico's tumultuous “long 19th century,” Nahuas operated within the national public sphere taking sides based on local political necessities and forging their political identities through contrasts at the local level, sometimes in racial, ethnic or class based terms but usually in terms of town-community solidarity. Nonetheless, within the national public they seldom drew explicitly on any forms of Nahua ethnic collectivity, focusing rather on taking positions in the national hierarchy by virtue of their political affiliations within that public sphere. For the Nahua then, we may suggest that often expressions of Mexican Nationalism was a strategic nationalism, meant to position their local communities advantageously within a national public sphere.

However, as strategic uses of nationalism proved effective in generating national support for local causes, it often gradually became indistinguishable from genuine nationalism, causing a slow reorientation away from the indigenous public and towards the national public as the main sphere of political action. As independence had reconstituted indigenous publics as private spheres

relative to the national public from which they were excluded, nationalism in turn assimilated indigenous publics as political constituencies within the national public. But where the hostile and oppressive denial of indigenous political identity in the independence period sparked violent opposition and frequently ended up galvanizing indigenous political identities, the benevolent inclusion of the postrevolutionary national project caused a weakening of indigenous communal identity, turning hundreds if not thousands of Nahua communities into communities of “Mexicans” over the course of the 20th century. The places where indigenous identity continued to thrive were those where local identities had a tradition of being the most entrenched. And in those communities that benefited the least from their increased inclusion into the national public sphere, which sometimes continued to define themselves in opposition to it.

In the following two chapters, 5 and 6, I describe two cases in which Nahua political identities seemingly have endured and are experiencing a revival in the beginning of the 21st century. In Hueyapan, Morelos, an oppositional identity was maintained through a process of conflictive relations with the Mexican nation as represented by the army and police, and through political exclusion and marginalization at the municipal level. Hueyapan provides an example of the persistence of indigenous identity through the formation of a counter public. It also provides an example of a context in which the Nahuatl language becomes both a symbolic form of resistance and identity, and an idiom of political solidarity. Today the state of Morelos is actively taking an interest in supporting the formation of indigenous political communities, as well as in strengthening the Nahuatl language.

In the Zongolica region, where political relations with outsiders and with the Nation has been less intense, indigenous publics seem to have existed relatively undisturbed since the colony. Nahuatl remains a viable language of public expression in many contexts. While it does function as a buffer, protecting local publics from being absorbed fully into the nation, it also frequently becomes an obstacle for Nahua people whose aspirations are located within the national public.

Current national education policy is to facilitate the aspirations of indigenous youths for social mobility within the national public sphere, by providing forms of education tailored specifically to their needs.

This chapter has presented historical evidence to demonstrate the existence and persistence of Nahuatl publics in the 19th and 20th centuries. The historical record however offers only a limited range of indexes of the existence of Nahuatl public in the past. This has limited my ability to discern the existence of local Nahuatl publics to those cases in which a localized Nahuatl public engaged in types of explicit and overtly political practices salient enough to be recorded (e.g. rebellions and other kinds of armed struggle). Or, where they were addressed as the audience of different forms of written political communication (e.g. propaganda). Nonetheless, many of the kinds of political action that a public may engage in, are much less explicit and visible, and do not leave traces in the historical record. This is the case for example with the cargo system and its *cofradía* brotherhoods, which it was suggested emerged as, and continue to be, venues of a covert politics. Also many other practices and sites of sociality may be fora in which forms of “we-ness” and public opinion may catalyze. For example, in a similar context, that of the Sierra Mazateca of Oaxaca, Faudree (2013, 2014) shows that regional song contests, or internet fora such as youtube (Faudree 2015b), may serve to cultivate new forms of sociality, identity, and locality for Mazatec people.

The next two chapters, therefore, turn towards the present. Here, the inquiry is no longer dependent on the existence of “traces of the past” (Munslow 2010), but can use ethnography to uncover political meanings and significances of practices that are not conspicuously political within the two local communities under study. Such practices include all of the aspects through which locality is produced (Appadurai 1996, Silverstein 1998). The specific aim of these chapters is to understand the relations between Nahuatl revival projects and local politics, in order to discern

whether Nahuatl revival may go hand in hand with the formation of new Nahuatl publics or with the strengthening of existing ones. They also attend overtly to political practices, such as those found in the system of electoral politics, in lobbying for state resources or recognition, or in public contestations of authority within a local public sphere etc. But simultaneously, they strive to uncover the way that seemingly apolitical or mundane practices may carry in them the seeds that may grow into new local publics.

5. BEING INDIGENOUS IN HUEYAPAN: THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC REVIVAL IN MORELOS

Introductory Vignette: Language on Stage

There were at least five hundred persons in attendance at the Teatro Ocampo in downtown Cuernavaca for the event. Billed as a “Celebration of the Linguistic Diversity of Morelos,” it was the *clausura*, the official closing ceremony, of the first year of state sponsored Nahuatl classes in the state of Morelos. The floor of the old theater was packed. Most of the audience were families and relations of the youths and teachers who were going to be on stage, but on the front rows were dignitaries such as the state Governor’s wife, representatives of the state secretaries of education and culture, and even the director of the INALI (*Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas*). After an introduction and welcome given almost entirely in Nahuatl by the announcer, a teacher from Cuentepec, a group of teachers and students from the municipality of Ayala performed the Mexican national anthem, singing in Nahuatl and in Mixtec about roaring cannons and the cry to war for the fatherland. Then the stage filled, as more than 100 children from an elementary school in Cuentepec organized in neat rows. Dressed as little Aztecs, in with white garments and golden plastic headdresses, they demonstrated an awesome musicality and discipline. They played precuauhtemic¹²² instruments such as conch shell trumpets, *teponaztli* slit-drums and upright standing *huehuetl* drums, never missing a beat, and going from sounds as soft rain to violent thundering crescendos. The percussive sound of wood on wood and wood on skin was colossal. During the performance, one of them, a girl of about 12, stood up and recited a prayer to the four world corners, mentioning them with the classical Nahuatl terms, and invoked the Aztec deities of *Quetzalcoatl* and *Tezcatlipoca*. In her speech, the Governor’s wife stressed that this was an attempt at revitalizing the Nahuatl language, not through folklorization, but through engagement with the everyday indigenous reality. I was waiting to see the delegation from Hueyapan present their performance, a short dance-theater representing the traditional wedding ceremony of the community, and they went on last. The students wore the traditional colonial style Hueyapaneca¹²³ dress, the girls in *huipil* blouses

¹²² This term, switching Columbus for Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor, as the fixture relative to which European contact is dated, is currently the politically correct usage in Mexico.

¹²³ I use the term *Hueyapaneca* to mean “from Hueyapan” – it is a construction based on the Nahuatl word “*Hueyapanekatl*” with the suffix *-ekatl* meaning “inhabitant of X place”. This is not a commonly used term, and mostly people use the term *Hueyapeño* in this meaning. However, Judith Friedlander (pers. comm) has told me that some of her informants found this term to be offensive and encouraged me not to use it. I have not myself ever encountered this view, and no one I know in Hueyapan that I have asked have shared the concern. Nonetheless, I opt not to use the term based on the Spanish *-eño* suffix, using instead the form based only on Nahuatl morphemes, even if it is much less common in everyday speech. Usually the *-ekatl* suffix is translated into *-eco* in Spanish discourse removing the Nahuatl absolutive suffix *-tl* and changing the *a* for an *o* indexing the masculine (and in Spanish neutral form) (e.g. Chiapaneco from the Nahuatl *Chiapanecatl* “person from Chiapas”). In the interest of gender neutrality, I retain the Nahuatl */a/* for both masculine and feminine referents. The plural form is *Hueyapanecah*.

and black woolen *tzinkweitl* skirts, the boys dressed in white cotton pants and shirts, with woolen ponchos and sombreros. Their performance represented a version of the traditional ceremony of bride petition in Nahuatl. The groom and his parents asking the bride's parents, then the family collected and brought the bride-wealth, dancing slowly, swaying from side to side, with their sandal-clad feet stomping the rhythm. All the 80 students from Hueyapan were on stage, although only about 10 of them had speaking parts. The wedding music, played from a tape, was a Huastec son played by a trio of violin, *vihuela* and *guitarrón*. A beautiful performance, it was obvious that sincere efforts were put into achieving the feeling of an authentically traditional wedding. Nonetheless, I could not quite escape the feeling that there was something wrong about all this. Afterall, what did this fancy show for state dignitaries and patrons, have to do with true community revitalization of the indigenous languages?

This chapter analyzes one particular community-driven Nahuatl revitalization project, as it played out in Hueyapan, Morelos in 2013-14. The focus is on analyzing how the project fits into political contexts at the national, state, municipal and town levels, in order to understand how different types of political motivation undergird the project. It shows that while there are important ways in which the project depends on the increased support for indigenous cultural expressions in the Mexican public sphere, it also plays an important function in the town's own political projects and some participants seem to use it strategically to achieve local goals. The first part of the chapter traces the history of Hueyapan in the 20th century, describing the social and political context under which the locals gradually stopped transmitting the language to younger generations. Drawing on the concepts and processes posited in chapter 4, this chapter describes the development of Hueyapan as a public sphere. The process that led to language shift happened as the Hueyapanecah gradually reoriented their political attention away from the local public sphere and towards the national one. This occurred through a political process in which the interests of the faction of political progressives prevailed over those of the community's conservative faction. The progressive view of economic progress favored greater integration into mainstream society, including the introduction of government run schools, health clinics, and infrastructure. But the interests of the conservative faction lay in maintaining a degree of isolation, both for ideological localocentric reasons, and because the relative isolation benefited the economic

interests of those who were engaged in marijuana production and trade. Following a military intervention of the 1980s and '90s, the conservative faction disintegrated, and Hueyapan entered a period characterized by US-bound migration, and a resulting surge in prosperity and a turn away from the local community as a political domain. The second half of the chapter describes the current state of affairs (from 2006 to the end of my fieldwork in the fall of 2014), focusing on the Nahuatl revival project and its social context provided by ongoing political resurgence and the current fashionable status of Nahuatl in Mexico as described in the chapter 2.

The argument is that just as the process of language shift was initially caused by an abandonment of the local public, the process that has led to the current period of cultural revival is motivated by a number of political factors: First, it has been supported by the resurgence of the local public sphere as the center of political identity. This resurgence, in turn, has been caused by a socioeconomic and political florescence of the town relative to its traditional antagonist 'other', the Mestizo town and municipal *cabecera* of Tetela del Volcán. Secondarily, it has been supported by the emergence of nostalgia, idealization and local patriotism springing from the experiences of Hueyapan's many expatriates and migrants, as well as their understanding of the town as the locus of a cohesive community with a shared assemblage of cultural resources.

But in order to provide the background for understanding how language, community and identity fits together in Hueyapan, the chapter begins by describing the Nahuatl language as it is spoken in Hueyapan, and the way that it serves as a nexus of indexical relations between community and territory. Then it goes on to describing the history of political relations between Hueyapan and the Mexican state in the 20th and early 21st century, before finally describing the current revival project and how it fits into this history of relations.

Language, space, and community in Hueyapan

On of the way in which locality is produced is through language. We use language to talk about space, using it to create places and geographies, and at the same time the structure of language needs to incorporate spatiality in order to tie our descriptions of events to physical space. Hence, space and language are inextricably tied together. Discourse creates divisions in space, associating different regions or places with meaningful practices such as specific words, languages, or ways of speaking. Language itself gets its referential meaning from the patterns of co-occurrence between words and expressions with different entities and activities in space. These indexical associations between spatial contexts and discursive practices are constantly reinforced through habit, and gradually become conventionalized, creating grammar and symbols. This is the semiotic ecology that serves to make our surroundings, the landscapes and its places, our interlocutors and their social relations, meaningful, and which in turn crystallizes into grammatical and semantic structures that maintain those meanings relatively stable.¹²⁴

In this way, the current grammatical and phonological system of Hueyapan Nahuatl is a crystallization of the communicative practices of the people who lived in Hueyapan in the past, as well as their distant ancestors who migrated there. Every syllable, word, place name or idiomatic turn of phrase, has the structure it has because of the way these ancestors spoke. In this single way out of many, language is powerfully tied to communal identity. Nonetheless, on a day-to-day basis it is probably the constant reinforcement of indexical patterns between language and space that make up the main way that everyday experiences of community are linguistically constituted.

¹²⁴ See (Hanks 1990) for the most ethnographically sophisticated and empirically solid exposition of the relation between human social activity and spatial language. These next paragraphs is intended as an application of the same approach, although on a micro-scale and with only anecdotal data.

Sto. Domingo Hueyapan (“On Great Water”) is divided into five barrios. As the town itself, each barrio has the name of its patron saint as well as a secular descriptive name in Nahuatl: Barrio Centro or San Miguel (*Plasah* “the Plaza”), San Andrés (*Xonagayohkan* “Place full of onions”), San Felipe (*Poxahko* “In the cul-de-sac”), and San Bartolo (*Analko* “across the water”), and San Jacinto (*Kwahnallan* “Place among pine cones”). There are also a number of colonies, such as *El Olivar* (“Olive grove”), *Matlahkohtlan* (Place of ten trees”), *Tlalkomolko* (“Place where ground turns”), etc. Each barrio is further divided into named places, usually named for some salient feature of the landscape (e.g. *Tepisillan* “by small pebbles,” *Ohtenko* “edge of the road,” *Sapotitlan* “by sapote trees,” *Pahtlan* “by medicinal plants”) and into named streets (e.g. “*Calle Constitución*,” “*Calle Cinco de Mayo*”). Streets are always named in Spanish, but named places are generally named in Nahuatl. The naming pattern is testimony to the fact that Hueyapan has two languages: Nahuatl and Spanish, and in each of these languages, Hueyapanecah have their own ways of speaking, ways of associating places and discourse patterns. A linguistically aware Hueyapanecatl may be able to tell what barrio an interlocutor is from, whether they are speaking in Nahuatl or Spanish. The intonation and the turn of phrase will give them away. So will their degree of knowledge of the names of places and people that belong to the store of local knowledge of each barrio.

Discursively tying people and places, and bonding through shared local knowledge is the formula for small talk in Hueyapan. Whether among old or young, whether in Nahuatl or Spanish, a major component of all small talk is to reinforce shared identity through demonstrating shared knowledge of local places, people, and words. A typical conversation between acquaintances, one of them accompanied by her nephew unknown to the other, may sound something like this:

- *Agin yeh?*
- *Yeh nosobrinoh, Guille igonen.*
- *Ah, Guille igonen, chántia noi hki ompa tlapechko?*
- *Ahmo, chántia de yerno, ompa Analko. Malintzin Laredes imon, ompa xochtepetl.*

- *Ah, kwallegah*
- Who is that? (pointing towards an accompanying youth)
- That is my nephew. Guille's son.
- Ah, Guille's son. He lives over there in Tlapechko?
- No, he lives with his in-laws over in San Bartolo. He is Malintzin Laredes' son in law, over there on Xochtepetl.
- Ah, alright.

This type of exchange, in which knowledge of a person is triangulated through shared knowledge of their social and spatial relations, is ubiquitous as a discourse type in Hueyapan, both in Nahuatl and Spanish. It constitutes another one of the ways in which language creates experiential communities, by tying words, places and people together into a shared network of relations. This is the semiotic infrastructure of the lifeworld that Schütz called the "common communicative environment".

Another way discourse structures space and produces locality is through the use of greetings. Traditionally everyone in Hueyapan greet each other when passing within interaction distance in public space. With the growth of the town, this practice has come under some pressure, but is still maintained by most. Certainly, everyone is expected to greet someone that they know personally, which generally is at least a couple of hundred people in town, especially the ones they are most likely to meet when walking around in their own barrio. The exception to the rule is the central barrio where greeting is optional. This is of course exactly a function of the central barrio's role as the political center of Hueyapan, where people from all the barrios and colonies gather for formal purposes such as political meetings, celebrations, and for market day. In the center, interactions are often more formal and more hierarchical than in the other barrios. Furthermore, people here are simply often too many for greeting to be practical, and many of them are people you are unlikely to know. Again local knowledge of space and language practice constitutes the town center as a political and formal sphere, and the barrios as informal and solidary spaces where greeting is expected. A specific greeting is used when you pass someone who is going in the same

direction as you, in Spanish “*vámonos!*” and in Nahuatl “*man tiyagan!*,” both meaning “let’s go!”. Traditionally, highly formal greetings, couched in a high-pitched voice, phrases replete with honorific grammar and lots of attention to the interlocutor’s positive face, were used between *compadres*, and between adults and their elderly relatives. These greetings now are mostly reserved to mark certain ritual occasions. In the *barrios* greetings generally take place in Spanish, unless they are between people who know each other well and feel comfortable speaking Nahuatl together. Over the years, as people in Hueyapan became aware that I understood and spoke Nahuatl, some neighbors began greeting me in Nahuatl on the street. Typical informal greetings in Nahuatl also serve to tie places and people together. The most frequent informal greeting is “*kan tiyoh?*” (Where are you going?), a rhetorical question that generally is answered curtly and in non-informative terms, e.g. “*tlakpak*” (up/north), “*nan tlatzintlan*” (south of here/down from here) “*san nanik*” (just around here), “*plazah*” (to the central plaza), *millan* (to the cornfield) , *nigwagwitin* (I am going to fetch firewood). Generally, unless they are close acquaintances or relatives, people will not give an accurate answer to the question, but just an answer that is vague enough not to be a lie without letting the other know one’s actual plans. For example even if one is going to Cuautla or Tetela, one will say only *tlatzintlan* “downwards/south,” if one is headed up the mountain to illegally cut lumber one will say simply *tlakpak* “upwards/north”. Rather than functioning as a genuine, inquiry about people’s whereabouts fact that there is a spatial element to the greeting serves to reinforce a shared body of spatial knowledge, a cosmology, demarcating general areas and directions, and forms of human activity. In this way, knowledge of names of places and people and their relations and of social conventions for greeting and polite engagement in formulaic language are a significant part of the ways that Hueyapanecah, reinforce the experiential community through everyday linguistic practices. But while discourse norms are a powerful engine that produces these ties, the same processes exist at the level of grammar and phonology.

In some languages, such as most European ones, language is only grammatically tied to time: verbs obligatorily inflect for tense and aspect, categories that describe an event in relation to the flow of time and the time of speaking, each verb denoting pastness, presentness, or futurity as well as duration. In contrast, spatial positions and paths of motion of events are not usually encoded through grammatical categories. Spatial information is only encoded semantically in the meaning of the event verbs themselves, or lexically with independent words (e.g. here/there, towards, against, sideways) or syntactically through prepositional phrases (e.g. “next to the tree,” “above us”) added to a sentence to describe location. But many of the world’s language, and almost all languages in Mesoamerica, including Nahuatl, also grammatically tie verbs to space, and are able to grammatically mark the location of motion path of an event through inflection (de León & Levinson 1992; O’Meara & Pérez Báez 2011). In Nahuatl, the *origo*, the anchor point relative to which the location of an event is marked, is always the location of speaking, and events are described relatively to the speaker, either as indicating movement towards or away from the speech situation.¹²⁵ While grammatically optional, these markers are in extremely frequent use in discourse: *xitlagwagi!* “come and eat!” the imperative form used to call people to come eat, does not in fact include a verb with the meaning “come,” rather it is simply the verb “eat” with the suffix *-gi* indicating that the person ordered is at a distance from the speech situation, which is where the action of eating will subsequently take place. The opposite form, with a suffix *-tin*, indicating movement away from the speech situation, is used in those situations where the construction “going to” would be appropriate in English. Except that where English has even coopted the movement verb “go” to have a mostly temporal meaning of futurity, the Nahuatl construction always implies movement (as well as futurity, implied by the fact that the action of the inflected

¹²⁵ Grammarian Horacio Carochi (2001) refers to these forms as “*gerundivos de ir y de venir*” (“gerunds of coming and going”). Launey refers to them as “introvert” and “extrovert” forms. I thank Michael Silverstein for point out that there is a tradition in North American linguistics of calling similar forms “cislative/cislocative” and “translative/locative,” but this tradition has not found its way into the tradition of Nahuatl grammar.

verb will take place in a different location from the speaking location). For example, the verb *nitlagwitin* “I will go grab something,” uses this form and the function of the suffix *-tin* is simply to convey that the act of grabbing something will take place in a location that is “not here”. The same suffixes have past forms that indicate “having arrived to carry out an action here” (*onechittago* “he has come to see me”), or “having left to carry out an action elsewhere” (*-to*, e.g. *otlagwato* “he went to eat”). Another set of prefixes *on-* and *wal-* describe actions that take place in one location but have their result or object elsewhere. For example the verbs *xogonitta* “look at it there (from here)!” or *owalgis* “it came out here (from inside there)”. Consequently, most Nahuatl utterances and conversations are tied to a conception of space that divides the world into an inner circle of “here, where we are,” and an outer periphery “there, away from us”.¹²⁶

Not infrequently in conversation, the conceptualization of community emerges through the use of these spatial inflections to manipulate scalar imaginations. The inner zone of “here” can be extended to include the entire town of Hueyapan, as opposed to the “outer world” implicit in the “there”. For example one may hear a conversation like this on the combi-van:

- *Kan otonyah?*
- *Onitlagowato Tetellan*
- *Ah, kwallegah, axan towalgopaskeh tochan*
- Where did you go (there)?
- I went (there) to buy things in Tetela del Volcan
- Ah, that is good, now we will return (here) to our home

¹²⁶ This is not in itself abnormal, since this is indeed the minimal possible division of space, but what makes this definition central to Nahuatl grammar is that the there-here distinction is the only way of describing paths of motion. This is because all Nahuatl motion verbs encode movement using the here-there distinction (as in English come/go) and movement verbs are the only way that Nahuatl encodes path of motion. Nahuatl grammar does not for example allow a speaker to describe a complex movement “I went from x to y,” except by encoding it as two separate events “I left x, and I arrived at y”. This is also the case for Yucatec Maya (Bohnemeyer 2003).

Nahuatl grammar divides the world into “here” and “not here,” and in another way, so does pronunciation. Michael Silverstein (1981) has drawn attention to the fact that when we speak about language we are often only partially and selectively aware of the elements of our own speech. We tend to focus selectively on certain elements of sameness or difference that become objects of conscious uses, for example as errors to be corrected, or norms to be enforced. Hueyapanecah often comment on their own variety of Nahuatl as being different from others, and when they do so, they tend to focus on details of pronunciation that to a linguist are trivial, particularly as the fact that they consistently voice certain stop consonants when occurring between vowels. For example the phoneme /k/ is pronounced as [g] between vowels, the phoneme /k^w/ is pronounced [gw], and the phoneme /w/ is pronounced as a soft [β] (as in Spanish “baba”) in the same position. “*Nosotros hablamos con la g*” (Here we speak with the g sound), is the way that Hueyapanecah typically characterize their own speech. In my above representations of Hueyapan Nahuatl, I have systematically represented the [g] sound where it occurs naturally in local speech, exactly because this is one of the ways that Hueyapanecah themselves see their speech as standing out from other varieties of Nahuatl. The conscious awareness of this particular distinctiveness of their speech, makes it possible for the people of Hueyapan to consider their language to be the collective property of their own local community, and to occasionally enact purist norms that aim to exclude not only Spanish loans and influence, but also influence from other varieties of Nahuatl.

These ties between language, locality and community, at the discursive, grammatical and phonological level, all come to the fore when trying to understand the role of the Nahuatl language in constructing a local political identity in Hueyapan through language revival. In the following, before returning to the current revival effort, I describe how the Nahuatl language has been tied to identity struggles and changing conceptions of the community as a public throughout the history of the town.

Friedlander's Hueyapan

A couple of generations of anthropologists are familiar with Hueyapan as it was described by Judith Friedlander in the 1970s, and it makes sense here to summarize Friedlander's argument and the observations that she based it on. I consider Friedlander's account to probably be an essentially accurate depiction, but nonetheless partial in the sense of describing a view centered in the part of Hueyapan with which she was most familiar, namely the Central Barrio in the early 1970s, particularly the Barreto family with whom she stayed. Because of my different vantage point, my own perspective differs from Friedlander's on some points, as I shall describe below.

In relation to language shift, the 1970s were a crucial period in the history of Hueyapan, because it was the generation of Hueyapanecah who were parents between 1970 and 1980 who stopped teaching their children Nahuatl. The process started earlier, probably as early as the 1950s, but during the 1950s and 1960s a good deal of Hueyapanecah children, most in fact, were able to learn Nahuatl without being exposed to it from their parents, instead picking it up from their playmates, and friends.

Friedlander's main argument, for which her book became famous, was that the category of "indian" or "indio" in Mexico, did not simply have the function of labeling an ethnic or racial group, characterized by shared cultural markers with a history going back to the pre-hispanic period. Instead, she argued, it was a thoroughly political category, used as a tool by the nationalist Mexican state to marginalize the groups so labeled by forcing them into a particular role in relation to the Mexican nation – a role that was at once considered subordinate and inferior to the national community yet commonly used a symbol of it. She argued that in order to be considered by the state, "Indians" were forced to assume the Indian identity and its emblems, such as speaking the 'traditional' language, wearing the 'traditional' dress, making 'traditional' crafts, making a living

through 'traditional' subsistence patterns etc. This idea of 'tradition' she argued was largely fictitious, since many aspects generally considered 'traditional' were in fact at least partly of colonial origin, and often not exclusive to communities identified as indigenous. In this way the discourse of 'tradition' and 'history' worked to deny groups coeval status with the Mexican national society and trap them in role as historical relics and living symbols of the national past. As I show in chapter 2, this is a process that continues to this day – albeit now within the discursive regime of the *indígena* and not that of the *indio*.

In 2006, Friedlander published a second edition of the book, which included a foreword in which she rearticulated her critique in the light of the political changes brought about by the Chiapas uprising, and its apparent success in formulating an oppositional indigenous politics that challenged the states monopoly on defining Indigenous identity. In the foreword, Friedlander recognized the way that these developments had vindicated the potential of indigenous identity politics as a platform of radically transformative movements, but she remained skeptical of the sincerity of the state's involvement in Indigenous politics, and wary of its continued engagement with the circulation of ethnic symbols and identities. It should be clear, that I share Friedlander's fundamental skepticism regarding the involvement of the state in ethnic revival. At the same time however, I also am wary of the risk implicit in writing off indigenous communities' work with defining, and developing their own tradition as a form of complicity in producing their own 'forced identity', when such work may be leveraged in the pursuit of political strategies. In the following, when I describe Friedlander's view, I refer mainly to her original argument, which has been extremely influential in anthropology and merits critique for that reason, but the reader should be aware that some of the more radical views have been tempered in the 2006 edition.

Friedlander's forceful critique centered on her ethnographic observations in the town of Hueyapan, and in Mexico City where she worked with a Nationalist Movement using indigenous

symbolism before traveling to Hueyapan. Her research was originally supposed to study indigenous political mobilization, but the movement she had chosen to study turned out to be a group of middle class nationalist radicals using the indigenous past as a symbol of national heritage, but who had no connection to living indigenous communities. Meeting this group disillusioned Friedlander, who decided instead to travel to a 'real Indian community'. In Hueyapan, however, she found people to be generally reluctant to assume the identity as 'Indians', which they considered to be largely a stigma, associated with lack of status and material resources. She found that the interaction of local townspeople with the representatives and symbols of national society had generally been exploitative. Particularly, a couple of decades before her arrival, the town had been visited by the founders of the same movement that she had studied in Mexico City, who had attempted to convert the locals to a neo-Aztec religious practice and to change their ways of speaking to conform with the norms of 'classical Nahuatl'.¹²⁷ Just as the Indigenista education practices of the SEP, and their Cultural Missions, most interactions between the national community and the Hueyapanecah seemed to be aimed at turning them into something else, and telling them that what they were was not good enough. Understandably, to Friedlander this was unacceptable, and decided that it was the very category of Indian that was at fault because however it was defined it would end up being used as an instrument with which to oppress people labeled with it such as those in Hueyapan.

Just as Friedlander's original perspective on Hueyapan and its people and identity processes was colored by the way it contrasted with her experience of the Indigenist-nationalist movement in Mexico city and her ideological convictions, her perspective was also colored by the particular people she associated with in Hueyapan, who seem to have mainly identified with the group of

¹²⁷ In (Morayta Mendoza, et al. 2011) Alfredo Paulo Maya recounts the testimony of a Hueyapaneca man who states how the group of followers of the "revival" movement shrunk from 150 to a mere handful when the leaders proposed beginning to worship the Aztec deities – both evangelicas and catholics left the movement at that point.

political progressives. She stayed in the central Barrio in the house of Zeferina Barreto who was also her closest interlocutor and provided many of the examples and perspectives that Friedlander emphasizes. Barreto was far from well off, but the fact that she lived in the Central Barrio and that her sons were teachers, situated her in the circle of Hueyapan's cultural elite. Social mobility in Mexico was, and continues to be, largely associated with adopting National norms for education, manners and consumption and repudiating norms and practices associated with the rural and urban underclasses. Since colonial times the classifier '*indio*' has of course been associated with a restricted social mobility, and with rural underclass consumption patterns and social practices. Hence, it would not be surprising that the acquaintances Friedlander made in the Barreto home and in their social circles might be less than positively disposed towards the elements associated with this identity. Friedlander's perspective situated in the progressive faction, comes through for example in her description of the struggle between the progressive, PRI-aligned teachers and the conservative supporters of the CCI (*Central Campesino Independiente*) (Friedlander 2006:76-79), in which she clearly aligns with the perspective of the teacher Rafael Vargas. Friedlander's perspective was also limited by the fact that she did not speak Nahuatl, and conducted all her interviews and most conversations in Spanish (Although she did achieve basic conversation competence (Friedlander pers comm.)). This excluded a priori many of those persons who might have been most likely to identify positively with the language and its associated practices and identity markers.

This means that there is every reason to consider Friedlander's representation of Hueyapan to be accurate, as well her analysis of the way that her interlocutors in town experienced the pressure to conform to stereotypes of the 'Indian', but it is not the only story one could tell about Hueyapan in that period. If it were, then the current cultural revival could hardly be understood as anything more than the continuation of the process of forced identity: identity as a "hot house phenomenon" (Faudree 2013:237) - this time fueled by discourses of multiculturalism and

indigeneity rather than *indigenismo* and *indios*. This perspective cannot simply be abandoned, for that its explanatory power is too significant, but I do wish to suggest that the meaning of the current cultural revival movement in Hueyapan cannot be reduced to this single narrative.

By taking some vantage points not explored by Friedlander from which to approach the history of Hueyapan, I aim to provide additional nuances to the story. Continuing the perspective developed in chapter 4, I approach Hueyapan as a potential public sphere, characterized by the way its inhabitants formulate ideas about we-ness and the common good. Friedlander focused on the process of identity making in the interaction between people of Hueyapan and discourses and actors representing the state, including the 'cultural radicals' who propagated indigenista ideologies and discourses in the town. In contrast, I will emphasize the relation between Hueyapanecah and their neighbors in the municipal *cabecera* of Tetela del Volcán. Where Friedlander described the internal politics of Hueyapan as motivated largely by interactions between outsiders and locals, I will look at how internal social and economic divisions motivated how Hueyapanecah reacted differently in their contact with the state and representatives of the national public sphere.

My argument is that the ways that Hueyapanecah have used their language, and the ways in which they have thought and spoken about it, is closely tied to local political developments. The long period, in which Hueyapanecah retained their language relative to other communities in the state of Morelos, I ascribe partly to the town's lack of political integration with the national public sphere. The decline of the use of Nahuatl accelerated beginning in the 1950s with the steadily increasing political integration of the town. Nonetheless, because there were powerful political forces within town working against such integration, the turn towards the national public was never complete, and a separate vision of Hueyapan as a local public opposed to the local political authorities co-existed side by side with the push towards greater integration. In the 21st century

two things changed: First, as described in chapter 4, the attitude towards indigenous peoples and languages in the national public sphere became increasingly positive (though as described in chapter 2, not necessarily less problematic). And secondly, Hueyapan's status in political relation to the surrounding communities changed, as did the way in which Hueyapanecah saw themselves relative to these communities. These changes meant that where enacting local political identity through the use of the Nahuatl language, was previously a strategy exclusively used by those who opposed the town's integration into the national public, it also became a viable strategy through which the local political community could articulate a specific, favorable, position for itself within the national public sphere.

Hueyapan in the 20th Century: What caused the Decline of Nahuatl?

As I described in chapter 4, in the state of Morelos, and in the rest of Mexico, the general historical pattern is for previously indigenous towns to have shifted to Spanish, becoming then classified as mestizo towns. In Morelos, the genocidal disruption of the Revolution caused indigenous languages to almost disappear from the state except for a handful of localities, one of which is Hueyapan. This makes the main questions to be answered, why it survived in Hueyapan as long as it has, what eventually caused the population to shift away from Spanish, and what has now caused them to seemingly wish to revitalize Nahuatl again.

Tetela and Hueyapan in the 1920s-40s: In the aftermath of the Revolution, Hueyapan became part of the municipality of Tetela del Volcán, founded in 1937. Tetela del Volcán was itself a rural town with indigenous roots, but in contrast to Hueyapan it had a local elite that was not indigenous. Its elite was composed by two families, the Monteros and the Anzures, who had established themselves in Tetela as merchants during the second half of the 19th century, and during the Revolution they succeeded in maintaining good relations with both the Zapatistas and the

Government, ensuring their continued prosperity.¹²⁸ The two elite families in Tetela each had a small grocery shop from which they sold market goods such as soap, tools, alcohol, foodstuffs and other things that Teteleños had not previously had easy access to. Most Teteleños were impoverished subsistence farmers, and had very small plots of land. The main natural resource in the area was the dense forests on the slopes of Mt. Popocatepetl, but before the Revolution most Teteleños had sold their communal lands to the paper factory of San Rafael in Tlalmanalco. Only a small group of *comuneros* (peasants who continued to work their land communally, refusing to privatize it) had refused to sell to the factory and instead managed their forest plots cooperatively, selling their lumber to the paper factory. In Hueyapan, however, the majority of the population had refused to sell to the factory in spite of its insistence and maintained communal ownership of their land, although the factory gradually encroached on their holdings (See Arias and Bazán (1979) for Tetela's relation with the factory, López Méndez 1974 for the late 19th and early 20th century history of Hueyapan, and Warman (1980) for the relations between haciendas and communities in Eastern Morelos).

For subsistence farmers in both Tetela and Hueyapan a major cash crop was Marijuana. Marijuana had become popular among the lower classes in the 1890s, and during the revolution its use exploded among the soldiers, boosting prices and sales. Marijuana was introduced by the Spanish as a source of fiber in the 16th century, but they later gave up that project. Hereafter it became a part of the indigenous ethnobotanical kit, so the indigenous communities in the region were well prepared to exploit this crop as it gained value. Following the revolution, in 1923 Marijuana was prohibited simultaneously in the US and Mexico (Campos 2012). This naturally only raised its value and did little to deter indigenous communities with few other cash crops from

¹²⁸ This information about the political history of Tetela in the mid 20th century, comes first from Arias & Bazán (1979), but, except for the role of Marijuana, I have been able to independently corroborate of it most through interviews with members of the Montero family, and through documents in the Agrarian archive in Cuernavaca and in Tetela's municipal archive.

producing it. The inaccessible location of Tetela and Hueyapan made it particularly easy to avoid government attention. According to Arias and Bazán (1979), in 1928 when the *federales* launched their first anti-Marijuana raid on Tetela, one of the local elites were warned through his political network, and helped all the local farmers stash their crops. Hueyapan was even more difficult for government troops to access than Tetela, which made it easier for them to produce the crop, but harder to market it.

Given that both communities based their economy on small-scale subsistence agriculture, with marijuana and lumber being the only cash sources, the advantage Tetela had over Hueyapan in this period was not primarily an economical one. Rather it was political: The two families of merchants who had arrived in Tetela to run a business, were well connected to powerful factions in the post-Revolutionary state, and these political connections would become important for the constitution of Tetela del Volcán as an independent municipality (Arias & Bazán 1979).

Tetela itself, as well as Hueyapan, was at this point part of the municipality of Ocuituco. In the 1930s when things had calmed down after the revolution, the elite families of Tetela and Hueyapan led a movement for municipal independence. One of the Monteros had an important political position in the municipality of Ocuituco where he was the tax collector (until he was lynched by counter revolutionary rebels in 1937), but the Monteros of Tetela were dissatisfied with being part of the Ocuituco municipality. The *cabecera* was at some distance from Tetela, and the locals felt that the municipal government consistently overlooked them, and that they had insufficient access to participation. Meanwhile during the 1920s and 1930s, the people of Tetela and of Hueyapan were working hard to have their traditional lands that had fallen into hacienda hands during the *porfiriato*, returned to them as ejido land grants. The process required a good deal of communal organization, documenting the original ownership claims, filing petitions, doing censuses documenting the population and so on. Both in Hueyapan and Tetela, local committees

were organized to lead these efforts, and in both communities the committees were headed by the most powerful families. In Tetela, this was the Monteros and Anzures families who were not originally from the community, whereas in Hueyapan it was families with members who had come out of the Revolution on the winning side.¹²⁹

Quite possibly, it was the process of organization for requesting land grants that also created the motivation for the elites of Tetela and Hueyapan to request to be separated from Ocuituco to form an independent municipality. Both the land grants and municipal independence were granted to the communities in 1937 during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas. The new municipal status, however, came on two conditions: the municipality would not be eligible for state resources, and it would not be allowed to levy taxes. The question of which of the two towns would become the *cabecera*, was not difficult, even the people of Hueyapan realized that Tetela with its local elite would be the logical choice. The Hueyapanecah even signed a document known locally as *El Pacto*, “The Pact,” in which it was stipulated that the presidency of the new municipality would always be occupied by a Teteleño, and that Hueyapan would only be represented in the *cabildo* with two syndics (*síndicos*). There were two main reasons this was agreeable to the people of Hueyapan at the time, one was that they were self-conscious about the fact that hardly anyone in Hueyapan had any formal schooling. In the 1940s, the town had two small rural schools, the one in the Barrio Centro was run by local teacher Elígio Pérez, the other in San Bartolo was founded in 1941 and run by a teacher from Tepoztlan, Melchor Ayala Campos. But probably no one in Hueyapan at that point – including the teacher – had received more than elementary school education. Secondly, Hueyapan was physically severed from the *cabecera* by the wide gorge in which the river Amatzinac flows,

¹²⁹ The agrarian archive of Cuernavaca have all the original documentation of the process through which the communities of Tetela and Hueyapan applied for their ejidos in the 1930s and 40s, including censuses of those eligible. Interestingly, the several members of the Montero were deemed ineligible for ejido land exactly because they were among the only families not to be subsistence farmers. I consulted the archive in 2009, but unfortunately, I have since lost the specific records of the documents.

making the trip to non-remunerated town meetings in Tetela strenuous and time consuming. In the 1950s Hueyapan in fact the two *síndicos* from Hueyapan filed a formal complaint about having to travel to Tetela so often, in which they stated that they would not attend any more meetings, since the costs in lost labor time made it too hard on their families¹³⁰.

In this way, the political arrangement between the two towns meant that there was very little political integration of the municipality. Hueyapan was in effect an isolated town, dependent on Tetela for administrative purposes, but receiving little or no resources from Tetela, and having little or no representation in municipal politics. As Friedlander (2006:77) describes, in Hueyapan there were two main attitudes to this arrangement, one progressivist and one conservative. The progressive faction saw it as imperative that Hueyapan develop the tools to contest Tetela's hegemony by emphasizing education and the building of infrastructure. Whereas, the conservative group considered continued isolation the best strategy. In her description of the conservative faction, Friedlander describes it as the unwitting instrument of a radical political party the CCI (*Centro Campesino Independient* [Independent Peasant Central]) whose representatives inserted themselves into the local debate to gain political clout in the region.

In important ways, the mode of production in Hueyapan, at least for many people, was, in fact, partly sustained by the town's isolated status. Because the stability of marijuana production relied on the fact that Hueyapan was inaccessible to the government, the political and geographical isolation of Hueyapan was beneficial to the *marihuaneros* (Marijuana growers), a significant and powerful segment of Hueyapan's population. Marijuana production was concentrated in the town's outlying barrios, whereas the central barrio was the seat of the town's cultural elite, including those with church affiliations and the teachers. The division between progressive and conservative

¹³⁰ Letter located in the Municipal Archive of Tetela del Volcan, scan of the letter attached as appendix D

political views mirrored this spatial division.¹³¹ So did the decline of Nahuatl: It was the families of the town center, who tended to be more outwards oriented and who valued education and the relations with the outside world, who first started emphasizing Spanish and deprecating Nahuatl. The families in the outlying *barrios* have generally maintained the language longer. Nevertheless, even well into the 1970s, Nahuatl was still the native language of most people in the central barrio, and a crucial medium in which local political identity, as distinct from that of Tetela, was embedded.

The division between progressives and traditionalists was also tied up in other kinds of politics, particularly associated with gender and forms of social control related to gendered norms of propriety. The lifestyle in Hueyapan was highly gendered, with a distinctly gendered division of labor and space. Women were considered to have the responsibility of the domestic realm, including managing the household budget, the production of food and clothing, and the caring for children. Men were expected to work outside of the home in the fields or in the woods or marketing their products. Many men worked also as seasonal laborers in the tropical lowlands.¹³² Men were also expected to provide their wives with everything necessary for the household's consumption, whether in the form of food or money with which to purchase it. By all accounts women's work was traditionally much more burdensome than men's work, including for most women many hours of grinding cornmeal every day, as well as the job of fetching water at the streams down in the deep ravines, and often fetching firewood, and some types of foraging (e.g. for mushrooms in the rainy season). But with the gradual introduction of modern services such as plastic tubes for water, and motorized corn mills for grinding, women were freed up to participate in other activities outside of the home, becoming able to supplement their income through commerce, or to study. This

¹³¹ Friedlander (2006:77-78) notes this spatial division, but does not ask why the outlying *barrios* tended to be more conservative.

¹³² See appendix VII for a narrative told by Hilarin Montiel Benitez about his work as a seasonal laborer in this period. As Friedlander notes, a good deal of Hueyapanecah women lived and worked as domestic servants in the cities, but this was a somewhat stigmatized occupation.

development brought new kinds of conflicts with it. For example when the school teacher in Hueyapan required all pupils, male and female, to do physical education wearing shorts, that clashed with the traditional sense of propriety, and a large group of parents ran off the teacher, after which the school was closed for several years (Friedlander 2006:136-40)¹³³. It seems logical to think that women, who may often have been to benefit most from the introduction of modern values and technologies, would in some cases have been more progressively minded than their husbands. One would likewise expect traditional mechanisms of social control to have been largely aimed at controlling women's behavior in this period of social change. Indeed that does seem to have been the case, and accusations of witchcraft for example seems to have been commonplace in the 1920s and 30s in Hueyapan.¹³⁴ In 1937 in a letter to the municipal *ayuntamiento* [municipal government], Inés Tapia, a woman of Hueyapan, asks the *juez menor* (the local judge) for assistance in stopping a witchcraft rumour about her, circulated by a man from the neighboring town of Xochicalco. In the letter she stresses that the belief in witchcraft is contrary to the rational and enlightened ideals of the revolution, and she points out that such rumors were particularly dangerous, reminding the judge of an unfortunate incident in the previous year when someone was killed as a result of witchcraft accusations¹³⁵. Such a situation reminds us that modernity, far from being simply an oppressive and intrusive force in the life of indigenous people, also offers new discourses and technologies that can be used to promote equality and escape various customs that are experienced as oppressive by some members of 'traditional' societies. The increased integration

¹³³ My description of the incident differs slightly from Friedlander's in that the one person that I interviewed who remembered this incident (Petra Ariza Jimenez) remembered that it was the use of gym shorts for girls that came across as inappropriate to the community. She herself stopped going to school after this incident.

¹³⁴ See Nutini (1993) for an in-depth study of Witchcraft accusations in the Nahuatl speaking region of Tlaxcala.

¹³⁵ Document originally consulted in the Municipal Archive of Tetela del Volcan, 2009, scan of the document appended in appendix A. Witchcraft stories, including executions of suspected witches also figure in the narratives published in Tlalocan by Miguel Barrios Espinosa (1949).

of Hueyapan into the national public then was also a way to escape marginalization, and to attain forms of social change that might not previously have been possible.

Also in the realm of religion, discourses of modernity held the promise of social change for some. In the 1930s and 40s a number of Hueyapanecah started converting to protestant Christianity, or to become simply areligious.¹³⁶ This would not have been a feasible position earlier within the town that organized around the civic-religious hierarchy of the cargo system. The post-revolutionary regime was highly anti-catholic, and sought to prohibit local religious feasts and celebrations. In Tetela in the 1930s, requests for permissions to celebrate patron feasts by the communities were routinely denied¹³⁷, although it seems that in Hueyapan feasts were still celebrated regardless of lacking permissions. Similarly, through the 1940s the municipal government filed several complaints that the local priest was conducting baptisms and marriages without procuring the necessary permissions from the *ayuntamiento*. The anti-catholic sentiment of the officials must have caused a good deal of resistance in Hueyapan and the other indigenous communities.

Within the religious complex in Hueyapan the *costumbre*, the syncretic religious rituals that combined pre-hispanic and catholic rituals, figured prominently. In this religious tradition, women were frequently the main practitioners: Midwives and healers (*tepahtihkeh*) and rain petitioners (*kiohtlaskeh*) were all predominantly female in the 20th century Hueyapan.¹³⁸ So ironically, women

¹³⁶ In my conversations with Modesta Lavana and her brother Isabel “Chavelo” Lavana, they told that their father was among the town’s first protestants in the 1930s, and that he and a group of friends formed a small study group that the rest of town referred to dismissively as “*los cuatro gatos*” [the four cats]. See (Morayta Mendoza, et al. 2011) for more details on the experiences of Hueyapan’s first protestants, as told by Don Chavelo Lavana’s sister Balbina to anthropologist Alfredo Paulo Maya.

¹³⁷ Appendix B is a scan of a document from the Municipal Archive of Tetela in which the *ayudante* of the town of Tlalmimilulpan files a hand written petition to celebrate a feast on the following day. Appendix C is the response from the municipal president denying the permission.

¹³⁸ In the mid 20th century the most important ritual specialists in town were María “*kolotzin*” Pérez (*tepahtiki* [curer]) and Teofila Flores (*kiohtlaski* [rain petitioner]) and several *parteras* [midwives]. Today the only curer and *kiohtlaski* is Doña Vicenta Laredes.

were both in a significant way considered the keepers of tradition within the community, but were also the group that had the most to gain from abandoning it. The use of Nahuatl then, in religion, in personal relations and in public, came to stand as a symbol of tradition, and it was also the medium through which the separation between the traditionalist public sphere and the forces that would rather turn towards the national public, were separated. The progressives in Hueyapan were strongly against the use of Nahuatl and of syncretic religion, which for them signified everything that held back progress – superstition, illegality, ignorance, the hallmarks of the *indio*. But as long as Hueyapan remained physically, politically and legally isolated from the national public sphere, these backwards practices would remain.

Nonetheless, gradually the progressives won the day. In the 1950s, they succeeded in building a paved road to the neighboring community of Tlacotepec, providing much easier transportation between the town with the rest of the state, and permitting the establishment of a bus connection to Cuautla. The road-building project was promoted by the teachers, who formed a *comité procarretera* (pro-road committee), that lobbied the state government for resources. They only received dynamite and a truck, but no laborers. The teachers then used the school children as a source of labor, working on the road with picks, shovels and dynamite in class time¹³⁹. Hueyapanecah who participated tell about these experiences as a formative moment in their sense of community. With the help of the SEP and the Cultural Missions they also brought more schools to town, and by the 1940s several locals were studying to become teachers. In the same period, Hueyapan started being serviced by the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), who provided some services and economical support, but which required the community to be visibly “Indian” (in the

right way) in order to qualify for handouts (See Friedlander (1975) for a critical analysis of this process).

Simultaneously with the arrival of the INI and the SEP in Hueyapan, a group of neo-Aztec cultural activists arrived in the town, with the aim of making Hueyapan the center of a renaissance of neo-Aztec religion. Their leader Juan Luna Cárdenas was a relatively well-known and well-connected nationalist intellectual of the period¹⁴⁰, and he was an exponent of the nationalist purist language ideology. He founded a small movement in the town, of young men who rallied around him to hear him tell of how they were really the inheritors of the great Aztec civilization, which they could reclaim by adopting pre-columbian linguistic and religious practices. In this way, representatives of the urban Aztec nationalism movement took it as their responsibility to ensure that the Indians of Hueyapan were the right kind of Indians – and legible to the state as such. This dynamics of a culture-based patron-client relation between the state and the community, led to the paradoxical situation described by Friedlander as “forced identity”. Gradually Mexican nationalism also coopted the cargo system, replacing it with a kind of competing civic cargo system. In order to access the goods and services promised by the state Hueyapanecah had to organize. They organized in committees: Committees for construction of the market, of the school, for the celebration of the *fiestas patrias* (independence celebration), or the *dia del maestro* (day of the teacher), or the organization of the school. In a 1981 article, Friedlander argued that this new wave of committees and civic organizations constituted a deliberate attempt by the state to make the traditional catholic

¹⁴⁰ Originally from Yautepec in Morelos, Juan Luna Cárdenas trained in Europe to become an engineer. Returning home, he adopted the ideology of the indigenista nationalist movement, and began to identify as an “Aztekatl” and study Nahuatl. Connected to President Cárdenas (with whom he shared a name but no relation) he was the translator of the President’s two decrees in Nahuatl on the nationalization of the petroleum industry. He was also made director of Cárdenas’ institute of indigenous languages. His circle of followers in Hueyapan centered on Don Eliseo Cortés, and included also Don Lino Balderas a local musician who sang and recorded in Nahuatl, and Don Cenobio Castellanos whom I knew and interviewed about the cultural movement between 2003 and his death in 2010. Luna Cárdenas had to leave the town after he fell out with Eliseo Cortés, but he left a legacy of nationalist linguistic purism in the town, as well as a number of Hueyapanecah named after Aztec deities and rulers. (Friedlander (2006:171-75) describes Luna Cárdenas and his legacy as an external movement of “cultural radicals” turning locals towards the indian identity promoted by the state.)

based social organization of rural communities obsolete (1981). Surely, it was partly intended as a strategy meant to incorporate local communities into the national community, but while it substituted a nationalist symbolic idiom for the previous Catholic one, it also promoted new form of localized barrio solidarity. The group of progressives gradually came to dominate, because their strategy consisted exactly in tapping into networks of power at the municipal, state and national levels, and in consistently presenting an argument for the desirability of development. This argument was hard for anyone but the most successful *marijuaneros* and Catholic-syncretic traditionalists to reject.

Hueyapan as an Outlaw Public (1970s-2000)

At the time when Judith Friedlander wrote her ethnography of the community, the progressive ideas were clearly dominant, particular in the town center where she lived in a family of teachers. In the progressive view, being an “Indio” was clearly and unequivocally a bad thing. Teachers were encouraging parents not to speak Nahuatl to their children, so that their schooling would be easier and they would have a better chance of succeeding in the national labor market. Many Hueyapanecah who were children in the 1960s and 70s, tell that their parents spoke only Spanish to them, although they spoke Nahuatl among each other. Frequently people born in the 1950s tell that they only learned Nahuatl “in the streets with my friends”. At this point, Nahuatl was no longer a language of politics in Hueyapan, only a language of intimate relations among friends, compadres and family members. The local public sphere in which political discussions were carried out was Spanish speaking.

But simultaneously with the opening of Hueyapan to new ideas, technologies and infrastructure, the Marijuana industry became more lucrative and more violent. A few families had prospered particularly from the trade, and they began feuding. While the connections for marketing marijuana may have also become increasingly important, and hence important to try to

monopolize for any given marijuanero family, it seems that most of the violence and feuding was motivated by personal disputes, as well as by the extreme culture of 'macho' honor that also characterized the traditional gender system of the community. Feuds, duels and murders hardly needed a reason besides a slighted male ego. It was common for a family suddenly embroiled in a feud with a stronger family to pack up overnight and leave town before experiencing serious casualties. Such an incident was what caused the Barrios family, including the local school teacher and folklorist Miguel Barrios Espinoza, to leave town in the mid-1940s, after a party turned into an assault and, in turn, into murder.¹⁴¹

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, violence was endemic in Hueyapan, and in the other towns in the area it got the reputation of being a closed-off narco-town. The town had its own justice system, based on lynchings of outsiders who committed crimes in the community, and in some periods police presence was not tolerated. Consequently, it was the army that conducted the frequent drug raids, arresting what must have been many dozens of Hueyapanecatl men in the 1990s. In a period of several years in the late 1990s, the town was occupied and controlled by the military. This was what finally ended the marijuana business in town, but it also sent a large number of Hueyapanecah searching for other places to live and other places to work. Many hundreds, or perhaps even thousands, of them traveled to the U.S. as undocumented migrants, and began sending money back to their families. Given that Nahuatl had exactly been best preserved in the rural barrios where Marijuana production was more prevalent, the anti-drug campaigns and feud violence between marijuanero families had the effect of undermining the last stronghold of Nahuatl in the community.

The linguistic life of Clara Espinoza and her family

¹⁴¹ Interview w. Desideria Barrios, Jonacatepec, January 2, 2014.

Traces of how violence and illegality participated in the process that finally caused the dissolution of the Nahuatl outlaw public in the 1990s, can be found in many Hueyapan life stories. In the following, I will use the life history of the Espinoza family, the family I have the longest and most intimate knowledge of as a prism for understanding how life experiences interact with language choices in significant ways. Through their experiences, I will also seek to illustrate how the outlaw public with its internal and external conflicts was experienced, and how these experiences motivated individual choices about life and language.

When I first met the Espinozas they were a group of 4 siblings living with their mother in a large adobe house. Their mother, Maria (51), had become the owner of the house when her husband died and her mother in-law went to live with her daughters. The four children who lived with her were Clara (30), Renato (27), Ronaldo (24) and Celia (17). The remaining three siblings lived elsewhere: Ana (23) in Cuernavaca where she worked as a maid and caretaker of a mansion, Adan (21) in New York working in a Manhattan restaurant, and the eldest, Rodrigo (33), working as a cabdriver in Xalapa, Veracruz.¹⁴² I first met Clara, and through her, I came to know the rest of the family. I was in Hueyapan to study the Nahuatl language, and that was an interest I shared with her. Most of my detailed knowledge of the family and its history comes through her perspective, although I have of course talked to all of the other family members to understand theirs.

Maria and her husband León, had met when they were both in their teens. She was the daughter of a family from Hueyapan's central San Miguel Barrio, the home of the local class of cultural progressives, the teachers, the few intellectuals and the local authorities. Her father, though hardly a devout Catholic, was the church deacon. From childhood her mother taught her to cook, to spin woolen thread on the spindle whorl and to weave on the back-strap loom – all the

¹⁴² These are all pseudonyms assigned to protect the privacy of the family.

skills of a traditional Hueyapanecatl woman. Her parents spoke Nahuatl as a first language, but limited their communication with their children to Spanish following the advice of the school teachers who argued that that was the best way of making sure that the kids would do well in school. Nonetheless, Maria and her siblings quickly picked up Nahuatl in the streets playing with their friends – most of them becoming fully bilingual. León on the other hand grew up in the Barrio San Andrés further up the hill. San Andrés was the home of a group of pioneering farmers who had been the first to move up and cultivate the slopes of *Xonagayohkan*, as the barrio is called in Nahuatl. The *campesinos* of San Andrés planted corn and beans, and raised cattle in the wooded hillsides, but a significant number of them, also produced Marijuana. León's father was one of them, and that was how he had afforded the construction of the two story adobe house in which he lived with his wife, and son and three daughters. He was known as a fierce and violent man, who was generous to his friends and ruthless to his enemies. He was stabbed to death in a fight when Leon was a still young boy. León then grew up alone with his mother, and he learned to take care of the land, and took over his father's Marijuana business. While bilingual, his first language was Nahuatl, his father had spoken little Spanish and his mother none at all. That was not uncommon in the outlying barrios of Hueyapan at that time in the 1960s.

He met Maria and the two fell in love, and without asking her parents for permission he brought her to live with him in San Andrés in the act commonly called "*robarse una novia*" - stealing a bride. Maria, still in her teens came to live with her husband and his mother, in the subordinate role that has traditionally befitted the in-married wife in rural Mexican culture. As was customary, León gave all the money he earned to his mother, and except for what she could earn by selling her own crafts, María had to ask her mother in-law for money for everything from food to baby clothes. Rodrigo and Clara were born in the early-1970s while their parents were still in their late teens.

In the late 1970s, and early 1980s, after the period described by Friedlander in her book, Hueyapan changed. One of the things that changed was that as a result of the “War on Drugs” declared by the US, Mexican government undertook frequent military raids to find and confiscate marijuana crops and drag the *campesinos* who produced it off to jail.

Among Clara’s earliest memories is such a raid. She remembers soldiers barging in the door and rummaging through her parent’s belongings, finding and confiscating a wad of money that her father had received that day for the sale of a few pigs. Her father ran up the stairs and jumped off the balcony, kicking over a soldier and escaping into the deep ravine on the other side of the road. Making good use of his intimate knowledge of the landscape of xonagayohkan and its many hidden paths, he managed to evade the patrols and get away. The soldiers, not content with León’s escape, came back a few weeks later to arrest his pregnant wife Maria as a hostage, in an attempt to force León to turn himself in. She was carried off to the women’s correctional facility in Mexico City, with her three months old baby Renato wrapped in her shawl. Rodrigo and Clara, five and three years old respectively, were raised the next couple of years by their grandmother, until their father, tired of being on the run, finally turned himself over to the police, and Maria was released. Living now with their grandmother, Rodrigo and Clara grew up in a Nahuatl monolingual home, using Spanish only in school – and with those of their friends who didn’t speak the language. In the Nahuatl language, their grandmother taught them the rules of proper living, how to dress, how to speak and act with respect, and how to venerate the saints.

Today, Clara is ambivalent in her feelings of her upbringing with her grandmother. She treasures the part of her upbringing that she feels instilled a close relation to nature in her. Her grandmother would take the children on long hikes through the mountains looking for mushrooms, berries, medicinal plants and firewood. Teaching them to tell time by the movements of celestial objects, and to respect the resources offered to them by the natural world. She also told the children stories, some with in Christian themes others of a clearly syncretic type mixing indigenous

oral tradition with contemporary themes. One story that Clara remembers her grandmother telling is a version of a widespread indigenous myth, in which a humble peasant meets a yellow haired girl crying in the field and helps her – only to discover that she was the personification of the maize plant, who blesses the man’s family with abundant crops.¹⁴³ The main theme is that the farmer must demonstrate respect and gratitude for nature in order to receive its bounty – a central theme in pre-columbian Mesoamerican religion. But, Clara also was affected by her grandmothers stern religious instruction, inculcating devout respect for the images of saints, and for the symbols of the catholic church. Clara eventually began to resent the intense veneration for the dead images, and eventually rebelled, beginning a period of religious seeking.

When Clara remembers her grandmother’s words, they always resound in Nahuatl: From the admonishment to always sit as a proper girl with her legs closed (“*ammo xitlagahkalo!*”), to the correct and respectful way to talk about the sun and the moon (*tonaltzintle* and *metztzintle* respectively, always with the honorific suffix *-tzin-*), and to not point one’s finger at the rainbow lest it should swell up (“*ammo xikmapilwihtimimi in kosamalotl porkeh timahpilotztiyas!*”).

Even when their mother came back from prison, the two eldest siblings remained close to their grandmother. As adolescents both switched to mostly speaking Spanish, but the sound of Nahuatl stayed with them in the memory of their grandmother’s words, and more than any of their siblings they learned to both understand and pronounce it.

Renato, born in prison but now a toddler, grew up listening to Nahuatl between his elder siblings and grandmother and between her and his mother, and though they never spoke it much, he was fully able to understand it. León came back from prison in 1985, and the next siblings were born in rapid succession. Ana and Adán grew up in a household that was now increasingly Spanish speaking, and consequently they only picked up set phrases and the most common vocabulary.

¹⁴³ The story as retold by Clara in Nahuatl can be read in its entirety in appendix V.

León still working to sustain his growing family by all means necessary, quickly ran into trouble as new families had now taken over the Marijuana trade in an increasingly violent Hueyapan.

In the 1990s, a feud started between María's family and a powerful Marihuanero family from the Barrio Centro, and León stood on the side of his brothers in-law. He barely survived several assassination attempts, and the family lived in constant fear, as several of their uncles and cousins were gunned down in shoot-outs. Clara remembers that once when she was around 14, she was given the task of secretly carrying a rifle to some of León's allies. Disguised as a man with sombrero and woolen poncho she carried the weapon through the night. Other nights were spent hiding with her younger siblings and cousins in the attic, trembling at any sound that might signal a coming drive by shooting by the other family. Yet other nights passed sleepless, to the sound of loud music and drunk singing in the patio, when her father was celebrating with his friends.

The marijuanero way of life was made possible by the absence of the national justice system in the community. Instead, the community protected itself through its ability to project itself as a dangerous place for outsiders to come. Once, Clara remembers, a couple of youths from another town were caught stealing a radio from a house, but were caught red handed by the owner who alerted the neighbors. The church bell sounded the call to alarm, and soon an angry mob had gathered on the plaza, yelling and beating the defenseless miscreants. Some suggested to burn them, others to hang them, but finally a rope was tied around the feet of one of them and he was dragged after a running horse through the cobbled streets. Clara still remembers his bloodied face, no longer screaming, as he was dragged by her mother's shop that she was attending that day. The other thief got away and probably alerted the police in an attempt to save his friend. His friend was already dead when the police came, and the mob of angry Hueyapanecah rolled the patrol car on its side and lit it on fire, barely giving the police officer time to escape the flames. These were strong signals for both criminals and law enforcement to stay out of Hueyapan. In turn the town received a

not undeserved reputation as a fierce and violent outlaw community in the rest of the state of Morelos¹⁴⁴.

During this period of violence in the community Clara and Rodrigo decided to abandon the Catholic religion. One of their aunts had converted to the newly arrived religion of Jehovah's Witnesses some years earlier, and through her they had become acquainted with the religion and its beliefs and practices. María their mother had taken an interest in the religion and brought them to some meetings, but she soon abandoned it. Clara and Rodrigo nonetheless found something they had been looking for and which provided an escape from the violence and fear that characterized their home. The pacifist Witnesses repudiate arms, violence and drugs, and their practices and doctrines focus on using critical reasoning and active evangelization as the path to God, in contrast to what they see as the more mysticist and exuberant catholic practices. Clara had been a baptized Witness for several years defiantly opposed to her father's irresponsible lifestyle, when he was killed in an ambush by a group of gunmen from the opposing family. His death constituted a dramatic change in the family lives. Her brother Rodrigo at first had been actively involved in the feud, but had abandoned that life when he became a witness. Nonetheless, he was considered next in-line at his father's death, and he had to leave town to avoid becoming further involved. The youngest brother Adán, now 16, was a young hothead with a knack for getting in trouble and the family convinced him to go north to the US, hoping that that would keep him out of trouble (which it did). Ana had been hired as a maid and caretaker by a rich family with a weekend home in Cuernavaca.

Clara dedicated herself to her religion, and particularly enjoyed the evangelization aspect of its practice: This required her to visit people in Hueyapan many of them old and Nahuatl-speaking,

¹⁴⁴ Compare also with Hill & Hill's 1978 description of San Miguel Canoa, which received a similar reputation due to a highly publicized lynching, and in which the language was also maintained longer than in surrounding communities.

talking about her religious beliefs and teaching them to read the scriptures. This caused her to take up the Nahuatl language again, re-learning much of what she had by then forgotten. The Hueyapan Witnesses began to take up Nahuatl as the main language of their religious meetings, making their Nahuatl skill even more meaningful and valuable to Clara and Rodrigo. Beginning in 2004, the congregation decided to make Nahuatl the official language of the congregation, beginning what is arguably the first step towards the wider community revitalization movement. In another work, I have described this process, and how it drew on the particular social dynamics of the witness community (Pharao Hansen 2010a). As an elder of the faith, Rodrigo now traveled to other states to give speeches and religious instruction in Nahuatl communities. Clara for a while traveled as a missionary to a Nahuatl speaking community in Hidalgo, improving her fluency, which had suffered from many years of speaking mostly Spanish.

This was what the family was like when I met them in 2003, and Clara brought me to visit many of the elderly people whom she was teaching about the doctrines of the Witnesses – they became my first teachers in Nahuatl. She experienced significant successes as an evangelizer, which she herself ascribes to her use of Nahuatl. Eventually Rodrigo returned home to work as a carpenter and an Elder among the Witnesses, Renato left to join his brother in the US. After fifteen years in the US Adán speaks English fluently, though Renato is still learning it.

Today in the Espinoza home Nahuatl is used sparsely, Clara sometimes speaks it with her mother, and her mother speaks it with her own siblings, contemporaries and neighbors, and she often resorts to Nahuatl words when they fit better with her ideas, even in conversations with those of her children who have only passive competence. One may for example hear her say on the phone *“Es que el ya está bien kwatepasol”* (“It’s that he is very longhaired now,” using the Nahuatl word for a longhaired unkempt person) – and no one finds that odd or needs to ask what it means. Celia the youngest of the siblings, never learned to speak or understand Nahuatl, but her 5 year old

son attends the bilingual kindergarten and sometimes answers simple questions in Nahuatl even when they are asked in Spanish.

When I arrived in Hueyapan in the fall of 2013, a lot of new things were going on with the Nahuatl language. A new, leftist governor had been elected, who had made promises of helping indigenous communities, by giving them status as independent municipalities, and by implementing programs of Nahuatl revival across the state. At the same time increasing federal funds were destined to projects of social development in indigenous communities, many of them in the form of start-up funding for small crafts businesses and cooperatives. Ana told me about her experiences trying to access those funds. Her project of producing preserved fruits and jams had been rejected by the CDI, on the grounds that she did not live in an indigenous community, but in the city of Cuernavaca where she had worked since she was 18, and that she did not speak an indigenous language. She was clearly upset at this rejection which she found unfair, and basically a declaration that she was “not indigenous enough” to deserve help. That spring she stopped dying her hair blond, and started wearing “indigenous style,” embroidered cotton blouses instead of the American clothes sent to her from her brothers in the US. She also asked me if she could have copies of my Nahuatl materials, to start learning the language on her own. I asked her if this change of attitude had anything to do with the rejection by the CDI, but she said it didn’t, it was just because her work had wound down and her children were a little older now, which gave her time enough to take up aspects of her family heritage that she felt she lacked.

For some of the Espinoza siblings, Nahuatl proved to be irrelevant in their lives. Their aspirations and interests drew them in directions where the language was not useful or necessary. This is probably the main way through which the shift in orientation away from the local public sphere and towards a national or even global public sphere takes place: Not through a conscious

decision to remove the language from one's life, but through a decision to participate in forms of we-ness that do not require it.

The lifestories of the Espinozas also demonstrate how language exists within the lived lives of its speakers. It flows organically from our social interactions, embracing us with its sounds, its patterns and its concepts, and comes to stand as both an icon, an index and a symbol of our social relations. To me it seems that, perhaps more so than language ideologies, this subjective feeling, in which language practices gives an embodied experience of group membership, provides language with an important part of its social significance.

In his piece on dialect and accent obsolescence in the US, Silverstein (2014) points to a "race from place". This "race" describes a process in which language forms indexically coded as 'local' are positively valued within the overt discourse of many Americans, but nonetheless negatively valued in terms of the practical life affordances the varieties labeled as non-standard offer their speakers. Speakers of 'local varieties' tend to experience a feeling of standing outside of the wider US public because of the way that their speech is experienced by others as tying them to a place, and the stereotypes it indexes. Hence, they will continue to conform, consciously and unconsciously, to the speech patterns that index full membership of the national public.

I use the stories of the Espinozas to argue that the fact that language practices are the embodiment of socialization experiences makes the everyday language of the speech community a privileged vehicle for political action at the local level. As Silverstein has established, speech communities are experiential communities, whereas language communities are ideological – imagined – communities.¹⁴⁵ From this point of view, language revitalization requires the re-

¹⁴⁵ For Silverstein the "language community" springs from a referential ideology of language that privileges the community of speakers considered to be sharing a single denotational code. Whether or not this ideally code is meaningfully shared in actual practice is another question, which is why the "language community" is abstract and imaginary, as opposed to the concrete, shared interaction of the experiential community.

establishment of community, and of language practices as community practices – racing back towards the places that we identify with. In the next section, I describe how the political and economic circumstances of Hueyapan realigned in the early 21st century, in a way that produced the perfect conditions for such a process of re-establishment.

Migration and Development in the 21st century

At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, Hueyapan was very different from the town described by Friedlander 40 years earlier. The physical aspect of the town had changed, transformed by a constant flow of dollars from the hundreds of Hueyapanecah now working in the United States. The adobe houses that had characterized the local architecture were torn down and replaced with cement and block, as the narrow cobbled streets originally made for walking and riding were replaced with broad paved roads allowing the passage of trucks. Whereas earlier commerce had been carried out on the Sunday market, and in the few small shops run by the well to-do, now there was a small grocery store for every four or five houses on the main streets, all of them selling the same snacks, soft drinks, alcohol and basic food products. Where earlier, the steep ravines could be crossed only by foot, and the only way to come from one barrio to the other was walking, now paved roads connect all but the most remote dwellings and make the passage easier. At least fifty local taxis is now servicing the small community, not to mention the collective minivans that run to Tetela and Cuautla every 20 minutes throughout the day. Every week, Hueyapanecah come home from abroad, or from Mexico City where they live and work, bringing with them new ideas. Every evening Hueyapanecah talk on the phone with their family members in the US, or in the Barrio Centro where there is internet connectivity, they may even do video conferences through Skype. So while Hueyapan was never completely isolated from the rest of the

world, except to the degree that the locals wanted it to be, today it is surely more thoroughly connected than ever.

This new phase of connections and transformations, might seem guaranteed to finally accomplish what the aggressive indigenista assimilation politics of the 1950s – 1970s could not: the final incorporation of Hueyapan into the national public. But instead, I would argue, it has in fact been in 21st century, that the local political and cultural identity has finally been transformed into a resource for the people of Hueyapan. This happened because of a strange convergence of circumstances at all the different levels of Mexican society: from the nation, to the state, to the municipality and to the community.

Chapter 2 described how in response to the need to formulate an attractive and authentic national identity, Mexican elites have taken up the country's indigenous cultures as a rich trove of symbolism. In this way indigenous symbolic resources have become a natural resource, which can be used to market the nation abroad, but which also importantly allow individual upper and middle class Mexicans to take up different political and ethical stances. As shown above, this creates a lot of processes that can best be understood as appropriations of indigenous cultural resources. But it also means that indigeneity and its symbolic expressions has experienced an increase in value, which provides indigenous communities with opportunities for using this new capital in different ways. The following section describes how the people of Hueyapan have made use of the fact that the practices and signs that were previously tied primarily to the experience of stigma, have now gained an amount of political currency that they have lacked at least since 1940.

In 2012, the state of Morelos elected a new governor. Amidst corruption charges against the PRI candidate and former mayor of the state capital Cuernavaca Manuel Martínez Garrigos, the electorate chose the PRD candidate Graco Ramírez, marking the first time the left-wing party held

the governor's seat in the state. Running on a social democratic platform, Ramírez' government promised a break with previous dedication to neoliberalist policies of development and the introduction of a neo-structuralist framework akin to those found elsewhere in Latin America, which pragmatically combine state-sponsored forms of community organization with more traditional neoliberal approach to development. In spite of the fact that Morelos' indigenous population is quite small and accounts for less than two percent of the population, his election platform prominently included several promises aimed at the state's handful of indigenous Nahua communities.

Among his election promises was a commitment to the state's indigenous communities which he vowed to give the chance to become independent autonomous municipalities, governed under *Usos y Costumbres* [Customary Law], and with direct access to the federal funds for development of indigenous communities. This offer came in recognition of the fact that as minor satellite communities within larger non-indigenous municipalities indigenous communities are frequently at a disadvantage. They cannot, for example, access certain of federal funds for indigenous development directly, but must do so through the mediation of the municipal government, which is frequently not particularly interested in playing that role, or which in different ways may even prevent the funds from reaching the destination communities. He appointed Francesco Taboada as director for "indigenous municipalization," in charge of providing indigenous communities with the information they need about how to take advantage of the offer of becoming municipalities, and the requirements they must fulfill in order to do so.

Another of Ramirez' initiatives as governor was the establishment of a scholarship program for youths called *Beca Salario*, under which youths receive a state stipend for college level studies, contingent on the completion of 10 months of community service. Conditioned cash transfers has been one of the main social policies with which the Mexican state has promoted social development

and education, and the Oportunidades program has been considered widely successful in promoting education. The difference between Ramirez' Beca Salario and Oportunidades, is that in Oportunidades development is seen as a family based process and the conditions are imposed at the family level. In the Beca Salario program, development is community oriented and sees participation in community based projects as a way to improve community cohesion and promote development. And furthermore, the specific projects that counted towards receiving the stipend were decided by the members of the community. The question of what would constitute "community service" was purposely vague, and open to local ideas and initiatives. Some of the communities usually designated as "indigenous," reasoned that the community service for their local youths could consist in taking Nahuatl classes. In all of Morelos indigenous communities except one, the indigenous language is endangered and only spoken by adults. By making youths take classes the sense of indigenous heritage could be strengthened, and the number of speakers of the indigenous language could be replenished. This would in turn increase the communities' chances for a bid to become independent municipalities. In several of the Nahuatl speaking communities, as well as in communities where the language had not been spoken for decades, the community requested support from the state to organize language classes teaching Nahuatl to the youths, which would then count towards their stipend. Responsibility for organizing these courses fell to Taboada, since it was argued that in order to qualify for status as indigenous municipalities having a living indigenous language in the community was a requirement. In this way, the state tied both individual access to economic resources for youths as well as the political project of becoming independent municipalities to the teaching of Nahuatl – creating a strong incentive for communities to start Nahuatl revitalization projects, and for youths to participate in them. This initiative significantly did not come from the director of indigenous issues, but from different local community actors with different motivations, only some of which aligned with the Governor's plan

of municipalization. This gives a good idea of the complex ways the language game of indigeneity is played on the ground.

If Hueyapan were to become an indigenous municipality ruled under customary law that would entail a shift to the use of “customary” rather than the electoral democratic processes for appointment of local authorities. In Hueyapan such a ‘customary’ process is currently used to appoint the municipal *ayudante* and the persons in charge of the different committees of water, of communal and ejido lands. These officials are appointed through direct elections at public meetings. There is no process of candidature, the gathered community members simply appoint the person they find most fit, whether or not that person is interested in the office. Appointments are obligatory, and service has until recently been entirely unremunerated (today a small salary is provided by the municipality), in contrast to the positions of the candidates elected through the national electoral process all of whom receive healthy salaries. Being an independent municipality would also entail the need to leverage taxes in order to pay for all communal expenses, and given that there are few potential taxpayers in Hueyapan where most are employed in subsistence agriculture or informal commerce balancing the economy of an independent municipality of Hueyapan would likely be a challenge. In short, becoming an independent indigenous municipality would mean giving up all the political advances that the community had fought for, exactly at the moment when Hueyapan had finally proven itself to be worthy equals to their traditional rivals in Tetela. Ten years ago, when Hueyapan was still unsuccessfully fighting to gain political representation in the municipal government the offer of independence and autonomy would have been much more attractive. When I asked her what she thought about the municipalization plans, Patricia the municipal vicepresident, also from Hueyapan, answered that she was unsure, “we need more information about what the advantages will be”.

At a social event, I told Mario Soberanes, Tetela's first municipal president from Hueyapan who ended his term in 2009, about the classes. He answered with a scoff: "They should rather teach them English. Learning Nahuatl will get them nowhere". For him this kind of cultural "development" was laughable, and clearly a poor substitute for socio-economic improvements. While most other people I have talked to about the program consider it a good thing, they would likely agree with Soberanes if considering the program as form of community development. The people of Hueyapan do think the language should be "saved," but they do not consider this a kind of development. When asked to evaluate whether becoming an independent municipality would be a good thing, they generally base their evaluation on whether they believe that Hueyapan would be better or worse economically – not on whether the town would have a higher degree of cultural autonomy.

Rather, the organizers of the Nahuatl classes in Hueyapan framed their participation as a kind of community service, aimed at conserving a valuable communal property that is in danger of becoming lost: the local language. It was not the indigenous language in general that was considered valuable by the organizers, but the language as it was spoken in Hueyapan. This way of understanding the value of the language seems to be shared by most people in the community. Following my appearance in the inauguration ceremony several young Hueyapanecah, although too old to be eligible for participation in the course, approached me to say that they wished they had learned Nahuatl, it was after all a part of their heritage as Hueyapanecah. One young woman told me that she had started speaking some Nahuatl to her five-year-old son, and told me that it seemed to her that besides it being "our roots" it also seemed to her that if her son spoke an indigenous he might grow up to more opportunities, than if he was raised monolingually. One day in the break between Nahuatl classes a woman came up with her eight-year-old daughter presenting her to the teachers and the coordinator. The girl spoke fluent Nahuatl the mother said, as she had grown up

with her grandparents.¹⁴⁶ Maybe as a Nahuatl speaking child, perhaps the only one in Hueyapan, she was entitled to some kind of support? The coordinator agreed and said that if she would come by next week they would bring her a *despensa*, a foodbasket, from the municipal government. The girl herself was too shy to speak, but she obviously understood everything that the teachers said to her in Nahuatl. Likewise, in the municipal organization there is a clear awareness that speaking the language means being indigenous, and that being indigenous is desirable. More than once, I heard a municipal official state that "the next time the census bureau comes, we must tell everyone to check the box saying that we speak Nahuatl". This tactic is the logical response to the state's sudden favoritism towards indigenous communities, and clearly motivates the fact that state sponsored Nahuatl classes are being taught also in communities such as Coatetelco where the language has not been spoken for decades. The question however is whether this type of motivation, seeking opportunities for individual betterment can realistically result in a broader social shift towards maintaining the language. The following section posits that that is unlikely: achieving a significant impact requires a kind of motivation with a broader social basis, and such a motivation is political.

Local Politics: Identity as a Resource

However, the fact that Hueyapanecah suddenly embraced their traditional language in this way cannot simply be explained by reference to the incentives implicit in national and state level policies. That would evade the questions of why the community would be interested in political independence in the first place, why they would precisely choose language revival as the strategy to achieve this, and why 80 individual youths among the different options for social work would

¹⁴⁶ Hill (1998, 179) has described this phenomenon as the "grandparent effect"; the same effect significantly affected the life of Clara Espinosa and her older brother.

choose language learning. There must be something about language revitalization that makes it a particularly attractive choice.

As described above, the decline of Nahuatl in Hueyapan is linked to the process of collective reorientation towards the national public and its values, discourses and political networks, and also to the processes that have promoted out-migration of Hueyapanecatl people to cities and to The U.S. Ironically, the effects of both of these processes are now reversed, so that where they previously discouraged the use of indigenous languages they now encourage it. Firstly, the prominence of positive discourses in relation to indigeneity and indigenous languages in the public sphere means that where Hueyapanecah who oriented towards the national public would previously be most likely to come into contact with negative discourses about their cultural roots, they are now more likely to meet positive discourses. This process is quite simply the way that linguistic ideologies in the national public sphere trickle down into the communities changing local behavior starting with community members who are most closely integrated into the mainstream public, i.e. primarily the local elites.

But more significantly, the process of emigration also seems to have provided some of the political basis for the revival. First, migration produced a new set of economic processes in the community, specifically cash flow in the form of remittances. This cash flow produced economic growth, increased access to education and increased social status of the community of Hueyapan as a whole relative to the *cabecera* community Tetela del Volcan. This economic resurgence of Hueyapan relative to its old rival, sparked a renewed confidence in the community's ability to pursue political objectives. The year 2001 was the first time a Hueypaneca broke the pact and decided to run for municipal president; and the 2006 election of Mario Soberanes representing the party Nueva Alianza was the first time a Hueyapanecatl succeeded, as well as the first time a non-PRI president was elected. And in 2012, the second Hueyapanecatl president, Javier Montes Rosales

was elected. Teteleño presidents had previously used clientelistic practices such as vote buying with success, and the different parties had established local clienteles in Hueyapan that supported them in the elections, but the general community now realized that if they grouped together and supported a local candidate they actually had a chance of gaining power.

This new political situation also completely changed the power balance between Tetela and Hueyapan, with Hueyapan now threatening to take the lead. Municipal budgets are always delicate, and Teteleño presidents had often counted on federal and state resources dedicated to development of indigenous communities to fund infrastructural projects in Hueyapan, whereas the municipality's own funds were largely allocated in Tetela. The new presidents from Hueyapan broke with this policy. Instead they took advantage of the fact that Hueyapan, but not Tetela was eligible to receive funding from CDI, to undertake large development projects in Hueyapan, while also allocating significant municipal sources to the town for normal every day expenses. This threat to Tetela's political and economic dominance prompted old conflicts between the two communities to be rekindled, especially over water rights and state transportation concessions. These conflicts had violent outcomes in several instances, which created a strong incentive in Hueyapan to embrace community identity. But where Hueyapanecah had previously been easily cowed into submission, they now actively used discourses of Indigenous rights to defend themselves, and in the public debate that ensued Tetela came out looking like an aggressor and a colonial power. The use of indigenous rights discourses became an important political tool with which Hueyapan could address local grievances – and move towards a goal of political independence of Tetela. The goal of independence that the Hueyapanecah could not even imagine just fifty years ago, was now within reach.

The administrative actions of Javier Montes of Hueyapan who took office in 2012 symbolized this change. Among his first acts in office was changing the municipal motto to the

Nahuatl phrase “*titekítigan tonochtin sejkan*,” meaning “let’s all work together”. Ironically, the new lemma was a plea for reconciliation between Tetela and Hueyapan, but phrased in Nahuatl it also symbolized the new political status of the indigenous community of Hueyapan, and the political importance of indigeneity itself. For Teteleños, a Nahuatl municipal motto was likely interpreted as an effort to promote the municipality’s only Nahuatl speaking community, giving it an increased presence as an emblem of the entire municipality. But it was also understood as a way of branding the municipality as indigenous to outsiders. This was a significant new opening in the language game by the Hueyapanecah, one that must have been felt by the people of Tetela, the traditional rivals of Hueyapan, and the ones who had in the past labeled Hueyapan a pueblo full of *indios huarachudos* “sandal wearing Indians”.

Beca Salario and Municipalization

At the same time, something was happening among the Hueyapanecah abroad. Many of them had now been outside of the community for decades, many of them only maintaining contact with their families and community through phone calls. Most Hueyapanecah in the U.S. are located in New York City and here a small ex-patriate community started to emerge, using the internet as a platform for cultivating hometown nostalgia. Websites and facebook pages with idealized photos of Hueyapan started appearing around 2010, and throughout these media expatriate Hueyapanecah engaged in ‘diversity talk’ (Faudree 2015b, Faudree & Schulthies 2015). Some of them even took contact to Judith Friedlander, and when the Hueyapanecatl Municipal President of Tetela visited the migrant community New York in 2013, Friedlander participated in the reception. She was dressed in the Hueyapanecatl *tzinkweitl* dress that is emblematic of the town’s female *traje tipico* (folk dress).¹⁴⁷ The combination of nostalgia, and localocentric pride, motivated a renewed

¹⁴⁷ Friedlander herself gives an excellent description of the dress’ origin in the colonial dress code, in her book – critiqueing its use as an essentialist symbol of indigenous identity. Today, the *tzinkweitl* is only used by a handful of women outside of ceremonial or folkloric contexts, or in the context of online beauty contests

perspective on their cultural traditions among the Hueyapanecah in the U.S. – who increasingly came to idealize their local heritage and tradition. In total the year of 2013-2014, in which I was in the field, saw no less than three town-wide celebrations of Hueyapan’s indigenous heritage: A festival of local gastronomy, in which the virtues of local cuisine was exalted as the people flocked to the central plaza tasting and selling each others’ mole chili-sauces, pickled fruits, and tacos. A banner, welcomed visitors from other towns in Nahuatl – “*ximopanoltitigan toaltepechan*” [Welcome to our home-town]. A festival of the language, celebrated on UN’s international day of indigenous peoples. And finally, at the annual celebration of the patron feast of Sto. Domingo in 2014, the folkloric element took a new importance as the feast was advertised as “first national festival of folklore”. The celebration including several performances by locals in the Nahuatl language, among them the youths of the Nahuatl course. All of these celebrations were partly funded through contributions from Hueyapanecah migrants in the US, most of whom were only able to participate by watching the videos online.¹⁴⁸

Many of the individuals who have participated centrally in the current wave of ethnic resurgence in Hueyapan are also themselves migrants, who have had the experience of seeing and remembering Hueyapan at a distance. The initiative to the language course was taken by Alex Nava, a youth who had himself grown up in New York, and returned to Hueyapan. Among the three teachers in the project was Alejandro’s mother who had also lived in New York for 10 years before returning. The other was a local teacher who had taught in the indigenous bilingual school system and had taught several in the community of Cuentepec – the only fully Nahuatl speaking community in Morelos. The third teacher had taught two years in a Nahuatl language academy for Chicano children in Los Angeles. The fact that these individuals had grown up in Hueyapan, left and

for Hueyapaneca girls, which have been held annually at the Facebook group “Mi Hueyapan Morelos” the past couple of years.

¹⁴⁸ Three such videos can be seen at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_pZ8djh6Xs and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eG8W_VLMo6o and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDTjMyh12XA>

are now “returning to their roots,” puts the effect of migration, education and economic development into focus, and shows the role of education and experience outside of the community in making locals reconsider the value of the language. It also means that whereas in the 1970s the Nahuatl language was associated with a lower class peasant identity, it is now connected to a middle-class identity and seen as a sign of cosmopolitanism and educational ambition, but also a sign of local community values and a solidarity.

Beca Salario and Hueyapan’s Nahuatl project

Alex Nava took the initiative for the language course, in the summer of 2013. Twenty-four years old, he had been given the position as *Secretario de Asuntos Migratorios y Indígenas* (Secretary of Migratory and Indigenous Issues) in the municipal government of Tetela del Volcán. This post was a promotion from a position in the DIF, (*Desarrollo Integral de la Familia*), the branch of government devoted to social development, the least prestigious branch, traditionally headed by the wife of the elected leader of government (whether municipal president, state governor or president of the republic). Because of his young age and his former position, which he held only shortly, he had a close collaboration with youth groups in Hueyapan, and therefore he was tuned into the development of the Beca Salario program, and to the wishes of the youths. The Beca Salario program required youths to participate in a community based project in exchange for a scholarship, but in Hueyapan there were few obvious projects of that nature. The only one seemed to be the local health clinic where some youths had already been participating in light volunteer work as part of their required social services, and other in exchange for their Oportunidades family stipends. However the number of youths eligible for the program was much too large for them to all volunteer at the clinic, and many of them had no interest in doing so. So, drawing on his own personal interest in the cultural heritage of the community, he took the initiative to ask the liaison in the program at the state level, Francesco Taboada, whether it could be possibly to create a program of Nahuatl classes for youths which could then count towards the Beca Salario

requirements. Taboada was in charge of the implementation of the municipalization program which was Governor Graco Ramirez' main initiative in indigenous policy. The creation of Nahuatl classes fit well with his vision of cultural development in the indigenous communities, which he saw as best driven by local identity and what he describes as the reintegration of the community through rekindling traditional forms of social organization and cultural practices. Taboada supported the creation of the program and promised to pay the salary of one teacher, if the other could be paid by the municipal coffer.

Alex Nava was born in Hueyapan to a single mother, but when he was ten years old, the little family of his mother, himself and sister, left Hueyapan for the U.S. After passing under the border in Arizona through the sewers, and wandering through the desert, he arrived in New York in early September 2001. His first week of school in the US was marked by the chaos of 9/11 and his experience of being unable to communicate. Need being the best teacher, he quickly learned English, and became a good student taking elementary school through high school in Queens, New York. He participated in the community of Hueyapanecatl expatriates in New York, feeling with them the nostalgia for their hometown, their families, their traditional dishes and celebrations. Then in 2012 his mother decided, that she had saved up enough from her work in a beauty parlor that she would return to Hueyapan and set up a business of her own. Alex and his elder sister followed her home to the town they had not seen since they were kids. Arriving in Mexico, Alex realized that he hadn't brought his official high school diploma, the one he had was not accepted by Mexican colleges and his plans of starting an education (which as an undocumented migrant he couldn't have done in the US either) fell apart. Luckily, in 2012, Javier Montes was elected president, and Montes being a relative of his mother, Alex was offered a job in the *ayuntamiento*. Here his will to work, his contacts to the New York expatriate community, his experience as a migrant, and his social engagement as well as the fact that he spoke fluent English, made him a

good choice for one of the many positions in municipal governance that entails lots of tasks and responsibility and little remuneration.

I had just arrived in Hueyapan in early October 2013, when Alex Nava called me to ask if I would be willing to teach the Nahuatl course. He knew that I was a linguist who had studied the Nahuatl language in Hueyapan for the past decade, and I assumed that that was the main reason he was asking me. However, my plans at that point didn't include staying in Hueyapan, I was intending to carry out the main part of my field work that year in the Zongolica region. Furthermore, while I was thrilled with the idea that someone was starting a Nahuatl course, I was reluctant to take up the role as the teacher. Friedlander had described the Nahuatl revival of the 1940s, which was also driven by an outsider who came to Hueyapan to teach the locals how to speak "real Nahuatl," and I had come to consider that movement to have had a particularly negative effect on the vitality of Nahuatl in the community. I knew that if the course was taught by an outsider there was a large risk that people would expect me to teach a Nahuatl that was "correct" or "pure" and that some people would likely feel that their own Nahuatl would be inferior to the "official Nahuatl" taught by the outside teacher with university training etc. I also knew that a lot of other locals would simply turn their backs on the course and say, the Nahuatl he teaches is not our Nahuatl, and he doesn't even speak it that well (which would of course be true). Therefore, I decided to decline the offer, and I recommended to Alex Nava that instead he contact local people. I told him that anyone who speaks the language natively would be able to teach it better than me. But that in case they wanted my advice on pedagogical or technical matters I would be happy to support them as a consultant. As I learned more about the project, it struck me as particularly interesting, and I decided to split my time between Zongolica and Hueyapan. I tried to attend the classes every Saturday, sitting in the back and observing them, but also sometimes being invited to speak, mostly about issues of grammar and orthography. After class, I usually met with the two teachers and Alex Nava, and they would tell me about their plans and we would discuss the day's class. I would offer encouragement

as well as advice and suggestions from a linguistic perspective. I also talked to the students, conducting formal interviews with about 10 of them about their motivations for participating in the program, and their interest in Nahuatl and their ideas for what the course might help them achieve.

The two teachers eventually chosen for the course were Erminia Nava, Alex Nava's mother and Fernando Castellanos one of Hueyapan's few bilingual teachers. Doña Erminia had never taught before, but during her stay in the US, she had grown particularly fond of her native language, often speaking it with her friends and relatives of her own generation. This motivated her interest in encouraging the use of the language, and the feeling of community among the youths. Her Nahuatl was fluent, and her pronunciation unmistakably Hueyapaneca. Mtro. Fernando, was born in

Hueyapan's San Felipe barrio, but without acquiring more than passive knowledge of the language. However, upon graduating as a teacher, he was stationed in Cuentepec, the only community in Morelos where Nahuatl is the main community language, and he taught the children there for more than a decade, learning fluent Nahuatl in the process. When he got the chance to return to Hueyapan to become the sole teacher in the tiny indigenous primary school of the colonia "*Matlakohtlan*," he took it. The children there did not actually speak Nahuatl when he arrived, but the school was run by the DGEI (General Direction of Indigenous Education, the Indigenous Education branch of the Ministry of Education) making it officially a bilingual school. Fernando, with his experience from Cuentepec took this seriously and in fact taught the children Nahuatl. Back home in Hueyapan, it cost him some efforts to adjust to the local dialect, which differs from that of Cuentepec in several ways, but he actively sought out conversation partners and worked to adopt a more local accent.

A few other persons in town would have been obvious choices for teaching the course, but were not chosen. One who could have been a logical choice was the community doctor who had led a small revival project in the 1990s. It could also have been his wife is a native Nahuatl speaker

from the Huasteca region and the director of the community's only bilingual kindergarten in San Felipe. Another possibility was Evia Ramirez of San Felipe, who was finishing her studies as an indigenous teacher and had carried out her period of practice in the bilingual primary school of the Colonia Olivar. One of the original participants in the project of the doctor, she had been involved in many subsequent revival projects, and was known as a musician and singer, often performing songs in Nahuatl at community celebrations. At first I did not understand why these obvious choices had not been explored, but with time I started understanding, why they would probably not have been good choices in a project with the social and political function that this particular project was meant to undertake. I think the reason the three teachers were chosen to the exclusion of other possible choices, was because they were politically neutral, in contrast to the other three choices all of whom have participated in radical leftwing politics and are considered "divisive" by many in the community. In the case of the doctor however, others explained he had not been asked because his Nahuatl was influenced by that of his wife, who is a native speaker of Huastecan Nahuatl. Hence, what I think was essentially a pragmatic political choice of finding teachers who could garner a broad base of support in the community, was rationalized as a linguistic choice, specifically focusing on the risk of contamination by varieties of Nahuatl considered foreign.

Alex Nava was able to convince Javier Montes, the municipal president to pay the salary of one of the teachers, and Francesco Taboada's *Dirección de Asuntos Indígenas*, paid the other salary. The teachers received 200 pesos (approximately 16 USD) for each three-hour class, which they gave every Saturday. Initially 80 students signed up for the course. The students who participated in the course were students of the *bachillerato*, a college preparatory high school for youths typically between 16 and 20 years of age. They were nearly all locals, except for a youth from the neighboring community of Alpanocan, Puebla. They represented all the barrios of the town, but given that not all students continue on to the *bachillerato* after finishing their *secundaria* [secondary school], they can be assumed to represent those students who achieved well

academically in primary and secondary school. There were also representatives of all social classes in Hueyapan, from subsistence farming families of the *colonias* and outlying *barrios*, to youths from the Barrio Centro as well as families that could be classified as “middle class”.

I was highly surprised that so many youths showed interest in the course, and suspected that many of them were just considering it an easy way to meet the requirement for the *beca* salario. And probably for some of the students that was the main motivation. Others however participated without even being eligible for the *beca*, and others clearly articulated that their reason to participate was a genuine interest in the language as an expression of local identity. And others stated that they believed that learning to speak Nahuatl would be an advantage for them in the subsequent careers, and that by being from an indigenous community yet not speaking the indigenous language would mean missing out on scholarships, and job opportunities.

The organizers invited me to the inauguration of the course, and asked me to speak about the importance of Nahuatl and the course. The event took place in the *ayudantía*, the administrative building in front of the central plaza of Hueyapan. I was seated at a long table with the dignitaries, the teachers, Don Pedro Sanchez the *ayudante*, the municipal secretary the *licenciado* Filiberto Hernández of Hueyapan, and Francesco Taboada representing the state government. The municipal president had declined to participate, apparently not considering the event important, he had sent his secretary instead. After the opening remarks, I gave a small speech that I had prepared, emphasizing the importance of Nahuatl as a local heritage, and characterizing it as something valuable and unique for the community. My aim was to put the attendants into the mindset of thinking about the language as something valuable and positive. That was clearly something that I had not needed to do. My experience in Hueyapan had been that most people did not think of the language as something valuable, something to be studied, taught, or protected. But that was not the case among the people in the audience of the inauguration, they were already convinced of the

importance of Nahuatl and merely nodded and agreed with my statements about the language. Then continued the speech of Francesco Taboada, and that surprised me even more. All I knew about him in that moment, was that he was a representative of the state government, and I expected him to deliver the drab and empty opening speech of a bureaucrat or politician. But instead he spoke as an anthropologist would, and as I had tried to avoid to speak myself for fear of alienating the audience. He emphasized the colonial context of language death, lamented the concerted efforts of previous governments to destroy the indigenous languages, the utility of the Nahuatl language for resisting the state hegemony and rebuilding the social tissue of the community. The course, he insisted, was the first piece in a profound cultural and social reform of the indigenous communities (*“reforma profunda de la estructura cultural y social de las comunidades indígenas”*), which would bring them back to their original roots as strong, independent communities with embracing their local identities and cultural distinctiveness. I wondered if the community were interested in such a profound reform of its social structure, but everyone in the audience seemed happy at his presence and his speech. Then we all cut a pink ribbon, and the course was formally inaugurated.

Teaching Nahuatl as a Heritage Language: The Nahuatl Course in Hueyapan

From the inauguration in October and until the *clausura* closing ceremony the following June, students and teachers met every Saturday in two small classrooms in the administrative palace on the Hueyapan’s central plaza. During the week, the rooms were used as improvised for classrooms by the bachillerato of Hueyapan, which does not yet have its own installations. The rooms are the same rooms where the first elementary school classes in Hueyapan were given in the 1930s and 40s.

In total, some 80 students were enrolled in the course, but generally only around 60 would attend any given Saturday. This was probably a good thing because even with this number of

students the two rooms were overcrowded. The ceilings in the rooms are high and the walls are plastered concrete, creating a soundscape where every whispered comment or squeaky chair resounds and echoes, requiring the teacher to raise their voices frequently, and ask the youths on the back rows to be silent.

The weeks before the beginning of classes, I met frequently with the teachers, discussing didactics and approaches to teaching, the expectations for what students should learn, and also the elements of Nahuatl grammar and writing. Particularly Doña Erminia who had never taught before sought my help, inviting me to coffee in her little café in a locale she rented in the center of town. I shared with her and Fernando my written materials, a sketch of Hueyapan Nahuatl grammar that I had elaborated years earlier in Spanish meaning to publish it, and my list of vocabulary, and also a number of texts I had recorded and transcribed over the years. In our discussions, I emphasized the importance of stimulating oral competence through the natural method and conversation exercises rather than emphasizing the written language, and I warned about the danger of relying on a too narrow standard of correctness. These were views that I had myself arrived at through seeing the problematic consequences of purism in the literature on language revitalization, and in the past of Hueyapan where the classical Nahuatl purism of Juan Luna Cárdenas' Neo-Aztec movement had estranged many of the locals who were told their colloquial Nahuatl was not good enough. The teachers had no illusions about the prestige of classical Nahuatl and rather emphasized that the students should learn to speak exactly the local variety – with no admixture from outside sources. I advised the teachers to avoid the question of orthography altogether by emphasizing the spoken language, only introducing writing at a later state when students had already acquired the basics of the spoken language. I also introduced them to the basics of language didactics such as the Natural Method, and the Total Physical Response Methods, and I advised them to try to make the classroom monolingual to give an immersion-like environment.

Nonetheless, as classes progressed it became clear that my advice was either not practically applicable or otherwise did not agree with the teachers' own visions for the class. Rather the class was taught in traditional classroom style with the teacher writing basic vocabulary on the blackboard, students repeating word or phrases one after one, and the teacher correcting their pronunciation, or asking students to translate single words from Nahuatl into Spanish or vice versa. The result was that during the three hour class each student spoke Nahuatl only one or two words at a time and only a couple of times during class; The rest of the time other students were repeating the same words, or the teacher was giving instructions. Sometimes, the teachers would use exercises where students would form conversation chains using greetings, or asking for each others' name or stating and asking about what something is called:

- *Nehwa notoga Jaime.* [turning towards another student] *Kenin timotoga?*
- *Nehwa notoga Alicia.* [turning towards another student] *Kenin timotoga?* (etc)
- "Me, I call myself Jaime. What do you call yourself?"
- "Me, I call myself Alicia. What do you call yourself?" (etc.)

Or

- *Ken otlatwilivak?*
- *Kwalle tlasohkamati.* [turning towards another student] *Ken otlatwilivak?* (etc.) - How did it dawn?
- Well, thank you. How did it dawn?

We usually met after class over coffee talking about how it was going, and they would ask me for my advice. Responding to my concern that the methods did not allow students to practice much, the teachers would both state that they would focus more on conversation next time.

Another way in which my ideas about the contents of the course and the didactics of language did not coincide with those of the teachers concerned a difference in what we each

considered to be the important elements of language. For me, the most important aspect was to be able to understand the language's grammatical structure and its differences from the structure of Spanish in order to be able to form grammatically and syntactically correct Nahuatl utterances. I continued to emphasize that pronunciation is naturally variable and relatively unimportant to correct explicitly as it is likely to self-correct eventually with exposure and practice. The teachers' could not disagree more (although they did so politely), they maintained that it was the specificity of the local pronunciation of that makes the language "ours". They would meticulously correct the students pronunciation of the voicing of the intervocalic /k/'s to [g]'s, and the lenition of the /w/'s to [v]'s, as well as the strong pre-aspiration of /l/'s and /w/'s to [hʔ] and [hʔM] after other consonants. For example, an exchange would go:

-Student: *Nikneki nitlakwas* [I want to eat]

-Teacher: *Ammo. Ihkon: "niknegi nitlagwas"* [No. Like this: "I want to eat"]

Sometimes they would even hypercorrect, and pronounce /k/ as [g] word initially (e.g. *genin* "how"), where the consonant is not generally voiced except in rapid speech after words that end in a vowel. This is an example of the process of differential iconization described by Irvine & Gal (2000), in which a feature of variation is taken to be a sign representing the group iconically (i.e. through direct similarity).

The teachers also rejected my orthographic recommendations (which were to write as little as possible, and if writing not to enforce a single system, and to consider using the linguistic system with k and w, since it makes it easier to recognize the phonological structures of words). Instead, they used an intuitive system, which consistently marked the voiced and lenited allophones (lenited /k/ written <g>, lenited /w/ written and the aspirated allophones of /l/ and /w/ written with an inserted <j>). Writing the [g] like this caused additional complications since in Spanish the letter <g> represents the velar fricative [x] when occurring before the vowels /e/ and

/i/. This required the teachers to do as in Spanish and insert the letter <u> before these vowels, to force the correct pronunciation of the [g]. And this in turn required them to introduce an umlaut over the subsequent <ü> when representing the phonemic lip rounding in the labialized velar stop /kw/ [gw]. Hence, the possessed form of /kalle/ “house” was <igal>, the verb /*λakwa*/ “he eats” was written <tlagua> and /i:kwe:/ “her skirt” was written <igüe>. These are the complications that arise when Nahuatl speakers intuitively adapt Spanish orthographical conventions to the sounds of Nahuatl.

Their writing system over-represented the sound system, by specifically providing extra information about sub-phonemic pronunciation contrasts. And it did so only in those cases where the contrast was ideologically emphasized as “typically Hueyapanecah” (and ironically, also only when it coincided with sounds they were accustomed to recognizing and writing in Spanish). Hence, detailed linguistic awareness originally acquired through the habituation to the phonological contrasts of Spanish, was recruited to fulfill a political function of differentiating the “local” Nahuatl taught in class from other “foreign” Nahuatl varieties. In the same way Erminia, who was sometimes insecure in her role as a teacher, often emphasized that her main quality as a teacher was exactly that she had the local pronunciation with no outside influence.

Sometimes classes would not involve conversation or practice at all, but rather took on the shape of lectures about aspects of local culture: the names and histories associated with places in the community, the traditional ways of celebrating different feasts, the genealogies of certain persons, or the way that social participation worked in the past. These lectures would often involve cultural key words and phrases in Nahuatl, such as place names, kinship terms, the names of foods or the verbs describing their preparation etc.

A few weeks into the course, the teachers decided that they were going to ask the students to learn the Nahuatl place names around their homes, and bring them to class to make a list or a

map of the places. This project required students to engage with their parents or grandparents, and to learn about the local toponymy where they lived. Doña Erminia had planned that the students should make signs to be placed around town with the Nahuatl names of the different localities. She organized wooden boards and paint, bought with their own money, and with the students they created some 40 colorful signs to be posted around town. The multicolored handwritten signs read “*Ojtenko*” (Roadside), “*Tlalokan*” (Tlalok Place), “*Tzitzintitlan*” (“Aile-tree Place”), *Pajtlan* (Medicine Place) etc. and when placed in their locations would provide visual proof of the re-Nahuatization of the community. I could immediately see the educational value in having the students engaging with their local environment through Nahuatl, reclaiming in this way the local cosmology. But there was another aspect of the exercise that I had not considered.

For the inauguration of the signs, Doña Erminia again invited Francesco Taboada from the state government, and also the local delegate of the *Comisión para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (CDI), as well as inviting once again, the municipal president Javier Montes. Both Montes and the delegate had been invited before to see the course, and Doña Erminia had been disappointed when they canceled in the last minute, after she had cooked and organized gift baskets of local produce for the dignitary visitors. But with the inauguration of the signs she knew that they would be more likely to come, figuring that the possibility of a photo opportunity and ribbon cutting would be irresistible. Particularly, the municipal president Montes, had been annoyed at not having been personally present at the inauguration of the course when he saw the amount of media coverage it generated. She was right, they did come for the inauguration of the signs. In front of an audience of community members including many of the students’ parents, Taboada gave a speech similar to the one he had given at the inauguration. The president also spoke emphasizing the Nahuatl motto of the municipality “*tiktekítigan tonochtin sejkan*”. Both promised additional resources for the course. Montes promised that for the next year he would

pay for ten more teachers, and he would have official signage created in Nahuatl to match the signage created by the students. Neither promise has been kept so far, but the fact that he would make them, shows that at that point the Nahuatl course was seen as a source of political currency. The CDI delegate brought T-shirts printed with a Nahuatl logo for all the students, and talked briefly about the importance of the course, and stated that she would continue to support it in the future whenever something was needed. The delegate did keep her promise, and later supported a request for money for a class trip to the Cacahuamilpa caves later in the season. The outcomes of the ceremony showed how well considered Doña Erminia's idea had been. By making sure the politicians felt that they had something to gain from supporting the class, she was able to garner additional resources that would not otherwise have been forthcoming. Clearly, I was the one who had something to learn about the practicalities of Mexican educational politics.

I also gave a speech myself - Doña Erminia had asked me to. Speaking in Nahuatl in an attempt to engage the local audience while excluding the politicians, I proclaimed that the Nahuatl language belonged to the community, and that they ought not to rely on government support to keep it alive. Translating language endangerment discourses into Nahuatl, I exhorted the audience to think of their language as a valuable asset of their local community, that they could cultivate themselves by providing support for the course, also in the absence of government funds.

At the time, I was not too happy about the course. I felt that the students weren't really learning the language and that it was all a farce of phony indigenism aimed only at playing Indians for the authorities in order to get better access to resources by positioning themselves as clients of political patrons. I thought that Doña Erminia was seeing the course as a way to network an advantageous position with the political authorities. I was disappointed that it looked as if Friedlander and Kuper were right in their arguments that contemporary indigenous politics were just as racist and manipulative as the indigenism of the past. Over the next months, gradually I

started paying less attention to the language course, participating less frequently. While I still maintained contact with the teachers and discussed pedagogical strategies with them, I felt that the linguistic knowledge that I could contribute was not that useful to the kind of project they were carrying out. Consequently, I started spending more time in Veracruz, where a very different engagement with the language was taking place.

In late May, I returned from Veracruz, after a three-week stay, and I attended the Nahuatl course again. A couple of things caught my attention. The number of students was smaller, and the students who were there, were more focused. They were very comfortable in the class and very attentive and engaged with each other and with the teacher, and they were clearly enjoying themselves. The conversation was happy, almost in tones of banter. A good handful of students were able to converse in basic Nahuatl and to translate most of the words asked by the teacher. The most attentive and engaged of the students had clearly been able to advance as Nahuatl speakers, in spite of the difficult learning environment.

When talking with the teachers afterwards they told me that they had been very active lately. Two of their students had participated in a competition of Nahuatl oratory organized by the CDI in Cuernavaca, and one of them had won third place in his age category – winning an Ipad. They had given him special preparation outside of class, and he had practiced intensively with his parents before the competition. They also said that a delegation of students had traveled to Cuernavaca to attend some ceremony at City Hall where they publicly thanked Governor Ramirez for his support of the course – making the speech in Nahuatl. And they said that now they were organizing a dance drama, representing the traditional wedding ceremony of Hueyapan for the official *clausura*, to which they invited me. The students had organized traditional dress from their parents, found the props for the dance in their houses (clay pots, metate grind-stones, woven reed petate-mats and other traditional tools and artefacts), and they met to rehearse the dance in the

Doña Erminia's house several times a week. At least for a good number of students, I figured, participation in the class was not simply a way to access the 800 monthly pesos of the *beca salario*, but had to be also giving them something else. Furthermore, the parents of the students in the course had organized a support committee, aimed at providing support for the teachers, and to lobby for more resources with the authorities, and in case of no resources being offered, to cooperate to cover the costs of the course. The course was apparently taking on the shape of one of the many civil society organizations and committees that people in Hueyapan participate in, most of which combine elements of collective bargaining with a cooperative economy similar to the traditional cargo systems. Just as when the people in Hueyapan had built the road to Tlacotepec, and the *comité pro-carretera* had lobbied the government for technical and monetary support, but eventually constructed the road with their own labor when their lobbying efforts did not bear fruit. Today the public good that they were organizing around was the language course.

Thinking about these new developments, it struck me that perhaps the objective of the course had never been that youths in Hueyapan should start speaking Nahuatl fluently, or to dramatically expand the social domains in which Nahuatl is used. Maybe the language was simply a medium to achieve another set of political goals: A way of formulating a new idea of the common good for the entire community of Hueyapan, and of actively integrating local youths into a new local public sphere. In such a project, achieving linguistic fluency would not be a requirement, only achieving – “cultural fluency,” in the sense of being able to feel a part of the cultural and linguistic traditions that the community has defined as its own, and of being recognized as competent participants in that local tradition.

Doña Erminia and Alex Nava, having spent ten years abroad, understood that the local community was threatened, as youths oriented their perspectives outside of Hueyapan to find their sources of identity. By reconstituting Hueyapan as a public sphere, with a body of cultural heritage

as a common resource, and a new set of discourses of community, they were taking on the threat that the Hueyapan might disintegrate into a mosaic of political factions, special interest groups and rootless youths waiting around for a chance to leave town. The acquisition of the Nahuatl language then, and particularly its locally specific idiosyncrasies such as the accent, the toponymy and the 'culture words', described in the beginning of this chapter, came to serve as a way of mending a fractured community. The acquisition of discursive and grammatical fluency in Nahuatl, came to be only a secondary objective of the language course. But the main goals were to use the language to re-integrate the students into an experiential community of local practices, and to use this integration for achieving the larger political goals such as promoting the community's interests in relations with outsiders or even becoming an independent municipality.

Conclusion: From Outlaw Public to Indigenous Pride

The history of Hueyapan in the 20th and 21st century, provides a case in support of my argument about the way that language loss and reclamation is often tied to developments at the local scale. In Hueyapan Nahuatl has been meaningful to its people because of the way that it provided a medium of social cohesion and protection before an abusive state. Then, as Hueyapan turned towards the national public sphere as the source of political identity its usefulness declined, only to be revived again at a moment when the language was tied to the community's ability to leverage political currency in the national public for use in the local political relations with their neighboring communities. And undergirding this wider political development is the flux of Hueyapanecah lives and feelings: Meetings with national and global publics, as Hueyapanecah migrate or as these publics enter into Hueyapanecah lives in other ways, cause appreciation for the safety and comfort offered by experiences felt as intimately tied to the local. The Nahuatl language, at least to that majority of Hueyapanecah who have heard it in their homes as children, or who know the names of

the places around their houses, becomes such a vehicle through which a connection to something intimate and local is felt.

It seems that political developments at all levels, have converged to produce a situation in which many Hueyapanecah are increasingly interested in signifying their local identity and in using Nahuatl to do so. Among the most important components in this change at the different political scales involved, I have identified three main processes:

- Changing discourses at the global and national level (described in chapter 2).
- State and federal policies encouraging communities and individuals to revitalize languages through economic incentives.
- Political and economic resurgence at the community level, which decreased Hueyapan's political and economic dependency on Tetela and increased the value of cultural difference as capital.

If viewed through Roland Terborg and Laura Garcia Landa's (2013) ecological model of competing pressures, the changes look like the result of a simultaneous reversal of pressures against the Nahuatl language that had impeded its use at several different levels of the ecology. Terborg's model is individualistic in its focus on social pressures and its effects on the linguistic choices on individual speakers. Such a speaker-centered, rational-choice based model may well be used to explain why Ana suddenly developed an interest in the language, or why some of the youths who were interested in the beca did. But it is harder to explain within a model centered on the individual actor how a group of people came together in what appears to be a shared interest in relating to their community through language. That is, it begs the question of what social processes preceded, and produced the circumstances for, the chain of "individual choices". The model posits that language choice happens in an ecology of pressures, and consequently it explains language

change as a result of changing pressures – but it does not allow us to understand what sparks a change in the ecology, and which pressures are more likely to become decisive.

Rather, my observations of Hueyapan suggest that instead of focusing on how social pressures mold individual behavior, it may be relevant to look at language shift and its reversal, less as a psychological process, and more as a political one. We might look at it as a process in which individuals orient towards or away from a specific community, and adopt whichever language that community uses to formulate itself. While we can see each of the political changes taking place did create new motivations for individual choices, they would have been unlikely to manifest in the form of the current revitalization project except within a sociopolitical context where it was a feasible strategy for Hueyapan as a community to use its language as an ethno-political marker.

The fact that the Mexican state plays an active role in creating a political climate that makes it feasible for indigenous people to feel pride, joy or nostalgia for their community and its traditions, and to express that publicly, can hardly be a cause to dismiss the entire project as a “hot house phenomenon” or an expression of “forced identity”. Today, with the strengthened political position of Hueyapan relative to Tetela and to the state, the Hueyapanecah seem to be in a quite strong position from which to negotiate. Now they are able to decide how and when they want to inhabit the indigenous slot for the sake of others, and when they want to do it for the sake of strengthening their own social bonds.

We should of course not forget that this is not the case for all Indigenous communities in Mexico or worldwide. Anthropologists should stay attentive to the ways that the state manipulates indigenous people by supporting Indigenous communities’ freedom of cultural expression while stifling their freedom to political expression. But we should not scoff at the possibility that they might choose to pursue local political goals, through the strategic use of ethnic essentialism, or nationalism. It seems that language revival can be an effective instrument with which to

simultaneously pursue political goals in the local public sphere and in the national public. Here, I want to return to the conclusion of chapter 2, that the Mexican state's cultural policy towards indigenous communities is basically an extractive policy, in which symbolic capital is expropriated from community ownership. I posit that by the same token, if we prohibit indigenous communities from profiting from the increased value of their semiotic resources on the world market, we would also be committing an injustice against them.

Final Vignette: Backstage – intimate revival:

When the show was over the dignitaries were called on stage one after one to receive their diplomas and rounds of applause: first the politicians and subsequently the teachers. Now Doña Erminia and Mtro. Fernando would get their chance to enjoy the spotlight. But when the Hueyapan teachers were called, no one came to the stage. After calling a couple of times the announcer said their diplomas would be given at another occasion, and proceeded to call the next group of teachers. I went down from the balcony where I had been sitting, through the backstage area and down into the cellar where the performers had their dressing area. And there they were, the teachers and the students, smiling, talking and playing, sitting around on the floor and on their props. When the teachers saw me they beamed, happy that the performance was over and that I had seen it: "you came! We thought you didn't make it." They offered me homemade mole poblano, tamales and fresh tortillas brought from Hueyapan by the parent group, who had organized an entire feast around the excursion. We sat around for a while talking about the event, and about their performance, and we took group photos of the students and teachers and myself. "But now," said Doña Erminia, "this was just the rehearsal. They didn't even let us finish here, they only gave us 15 minutes. The real performance will be at the town feast in August. We will perform the entire wedding ceremony on stage there."

And so it was. In August, when Hueyapan celebrated the feast of Santo Domingo, its patron saint, the students performed the full version of the wedding dance in Nahuatl, in front of a crowded plaza full of Hueyapanecah, most of whom understood the words in Nahuatl, and remembered the traditional ceremony from their youths. There were no dignitaries or politicians present then to perform for, just the community, enjoying the performance as an expression of something that was uniquely their own.

6. SPACES OF POSSIBILITY IN A REGION OF REFUGE: INTERCULTURALITY, EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS BOOTSTRAPPING IN CENTRAL VERACRUZ

The Man Who Visited Tlalokan:

Once there was a man whose wife was in love with St. Anthony. She had an image of the saint, and he was her lover, and she gave him food to eat. This St. Anthony ate human food and was alive. Every day she would send her husband to hunt for deer, because venison was the favorite dish of the Saint. The husband sought out deer far and wide in the woods and mountains, bringing only his faithful dog to help him, and they were not allowed to return home unless they brought meat for the Saint to eat. One day he was stalking a stag through the hills, and gulleys, but without him realizing it the stag led him into a cave. Inside the cave, the man suddenly found himself in Tlalokan, the underworld kingdom where Tlalokan Tata and Tlalokan Nana guard all the wildlife. The stag itself was Tlalokan Tata, lord of the underworld and scolded the man for having killed so many of his deer, and he told him to cure all the animals in Tlalokan with the same herbs that he would use as a condiment when cooking their meat. The dog, being complicit in the killing, was beaten, by all the animals, which down here in the underworld appeared to the man as humans. One of the animals, the frog, advised the man to use the leaf of the avocado tree to cure the animals. He had to toast the leaf and have it ground on the metate by the women of Tlalokan along with ashes. Smearing this powder on the dead and wounded animals, that he had hurt as a hunter, they would come back to life. Tlalokan Tata charged the man with the task of growing corn to make up for his crimes against the animals. He worked the earth, sowed and hoed the corn. But one day when the tall stalks were just about to flower the wind blew so hard that it broke all the cornstalks. The man found them lying on the ground and he despaired and went to tell Tlalokan Tata about the misfortune. The lord of the underworld told him to use forked sticks to raise up all the cornstalks, but the man refused. "That is impossible," he said. Tlalokan Tata then told him to go gather two bags of the insect called tzintijeras, earwigs, and to empty one sack at the edge of the cornfield and one in the middle. The tzintijeras helped the man raise all the broken cornstalks – and that is indeed their job in the cornfield until this day. Soon the cornflowers became cobs and the man harvested many sacks of corn. Tlalokan Tata released the man from his obligations of penitence, and gave him a sack of money to take with him back to the human world. But when the man returned to tlaltikpak, the surface world, he found that not one, but seven worldly years had passed, and his wife had taken him for dead deciding instead to marry her lover St. Anthony. The wedding was planned for the next Sunday. Confused and frightened the man called once more on the animals of Tlalokan to help him. The ground squirrel came to him and told him to make a wooden mask, resembling the face of a stag. He also brought him food, xokotamal, sour tamales, and some meat. He made the mask in time for the wedding, and arrived there wearing it. The other guests asked him to lend them the mask so that they could dance with the bride, but he refused. "Bring me the couple, and they will wear the mask," he said. And so it was done, the couple came and put on the mask and started dancing to the wedding song. But the man pulled out a stick and struck them each once, and before the astounded guests the bride and groom turned into deer and

ran out of the house into the wilderness. That way they paid their crime of having made the hunter kill so many deer.

This narrative is a retelling in English of a story that Adán Sanchez Rosales, of Tlaquilpa, Veracruz heard in Nahuatl, his native language, from two different sources, and which he himself retold in Spanish in his BA thesis which he submitted to the Intercultural University of Veracruz (UVI) in July 2014.¹⁴⁹ His thesis was an exploration of the agricultural ritual cycle in his home community, based on ethnography and interviews with local elders. In his thesis, the narrative supplies a description of the relation between humans and the earth, as mythologically represented by the underworld of *Tlalokan* where the animals dwell and is cared for by their owner *Tlalokan Tata*. This is just one of many possible uses of this evocative narration. In the context of this chapter, it is meant as an example of how intercultural education at the UVI motivates students to engage their local cultural traditions. But it is also as an example of how in doing so they may find new perspectives on the relations between indigenous and national culture that go beyond the way that the concept of interculturality is formulated at the university.

This chapter argues that the framework of Interculturality does hold the promise of improving the lives of some indigenous peoples, and provide a platform on which they can towards new forms of local autonomy. These promises persist, even in spite of the many structural constraints that limit its ability to achieving its stated goals, not to speak of even more ambitious goals such as political and social equality for indigenous peoples in Mexico. Concretely, I consider that Interculturality as practices in the UVI seems to be providing indigenous youths with new options that may make their goals of socioeconomic mobility more compatible with an interest in

¹⁴⁹ The entire text in Nahuatl collected and transcribed by Adan Sanchez is given in the appendix III, with translation into English by myself.

participating in the maintenance and development of local cultural values and traditions. And in providing this option, intercultural universities in particular, may hold the promise of becoming the loci of the construction of new indigenous public spheres, where indigenous people can discuss their own shared affairs using language, concepts and perspectives developed by themselves and based on their own lived experience. Using space as a central analytical concept, the argument attends to the ways that spaces are read and semiotically coded by their inhabitants. Some ways of reading spaces constrain possibilities and force specific courses of action, whereas others create openings for different kinds of possibilities within them. In Adán's narrative, two different views of the landscape and the wild space of the Zongolica mountains are in conflict – one that sees it primarily as a source of resources to be harvested and another that sees it as the visible surface of a much larger space beneath, a space in which everything is possible for the one who adopts the appropriate perspective on life.

Of politics and spaces

A number of scholars in different disciplines have theorized the relation between the semiotic coding of spaces and social, economic and political practices on the one hand, and the forms of experience they generate in their inhabitants. From Foucault's focus on man-made spaces in relation to discipline (Foucault 1977) and the creation of politically docile subjectivities, to Harvey's *Geographies of difference* (D. J. Harvey 1996) – such scholarship has tended to look at how spatial politics play a role in strategies of dominance and hegemony. In anthropology, Biehl (2005) introduced the concept of “zones of abandonment,” in his description of how the absence of political investment in certain areas and their inhabitants, creates conditions of life that are stripped of everything but the barest necessities – making Agamben's “bare life” the only form of life possible.

In Mexican anthropology, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's concept of "Regions of Refuge" (1967) is a similar concept that focus on the historical process of violent marginalization as the force that creates populations who inhabit spaces depleted of options. His concept is in many way similar to the concept of the frontier zone, used by Taussig (1987) and others who describe the frontier as the a space coded as empty from the perspective of power, its emptiness making it a creative space in which resources and inhabitants come to be seen as open and accessible to colonial penetration. Providing further nuance to this account, Tsing (2004) describes how spaces between political, cultural and economic zones are typically zones of friction, between practices and worldviews based on opposed systems of logic.

While such critical examinations of power and its workings are necessary for any movement towards change, an excessively pessimistic or skeptical perspective may be a hindrance, rather than a help when looking at budding social movements. By focusing on the ways that all progressive initiatives are necessarily limited by structural constraints inherent in the hegemonic status quo, change for the better may come to look like an impossibility, and any initiative as naïve and futile. Working to avoid this danger, and perhaps building on Harvey's (2000) formulation of a utopian optimism in *Spaces of Hope*, economic geographers, J. K. Gibson-Graham (2006) in their book "A Postcapitalist Politics" presented an approach they termed the Politics of Possibility. Rather than resigning to Gramsci's "pessimism of the intellect optimism of the will" and its Quixotic hope, they advocate a hands-on kind of optimism, performed through action. This approach was partly inspired by post-Marxist social movements such as the Mexican Zapatists, who have abandoned the revolutionary struggle to subvert the regime by seizing the state apparatus at some point in the future, in order to strive to create bubbles of social and political improvement in the present. Such changes may be smaller in scale and scope, but at the same time closer to people's lives, closer to the here and now, and hence more amenable to immediate action. Gibson-Graham

refer to such political bubbles as spaces of possibility – spaces in which it is possible to exercise power by analyzing, rethinking and reframing the constraints creatively.

Other scholars have since adopted the idea of spaces of possibility. For example, Khasnabish (2008) uses it as a central concept in his analysis of the attraction of the Zapatista politics outside of Chiapas and Mexico. Where the spaces of possibility come to stand for the freedom of choice within the restriction of the autonomous Zapatista *Caracoles*. But the term has also been applied to spaces that are not so radically autonomous as the Zapatista communities, for example to spaces within the institutional structure of the state. Accounts of educational contexts, particularly drama education, have described classrooms as spaces of possibilities, and the teacher as the catalyst whose mediation can allow students to explore and extend the limits of their own possibilities (Gallagher 2001). Discussing design and urban planning Folkmann (2011) notes that the physical design of space may trace immanent spaces of possibility, sparking new forms of inhabitation within it. In my account, I will posit that institutions too, may become spaces of possibility, and that this is particularly the case if their infrastructural basis contains elements that support, or encourage, rather than thwart alternative imaginaries. I consider certain elements of the Intercultural University of Veracruz and the way that it currently works to be one such space.

Space, place and indigeneity in the Zongolica Highlands

The Zongolica Highlands (Sierra de Zongolica), the inhospitable margin between the fertile plains of Veracruz and Puebla, was one of the areas defined by Aguirre Beltrán as a region of refuge. Short on natural resources and inaccessible due to the rough terrain, in the colonial period it never attracted many Spaniards, and consequently experienced relative independence from the colonial world. This relative independence came at the price of material hardship though, as the cold rugged climate and meager soil provided only enough for basic subsistence.

The relation between tradition, subsistence and identity is at the root of many contemporary discussion of indigeneity. The relationship between indigenous peoples and their ancestral territory figures prominently in the official definitions of indigenous peoples by the bodies such as the ILO and UNESCO. In ordinary language understandings the world indigenous itself is often understood to mean “direct descendant of the first inhabitants of a territory”. But the relation between the place and the indigenous people is also controversial, both because any concept of indigenous rights would be meaningless if tied strictly to the occupancy of specific territories, and because the histories of occupancy are often contested and basically unrecoverable. Space, territory and history of occupation, is only one piece in the puzzle of indigeneity – but often an important one.

Theorists of space have distinguished between space, understood as empty homogeneous regions semiotically coded with different kinds of general meanings and characteristics, and place, understood as specific locations within a system of relations expressed through specific cultural ontologies (Tuan 1977). In this sense, a Region of Refuge is a space, but the Zongolica Highlands is a place, that can be understood as a manifestation of this particular spatial concept, but which is also a specific location that can be identified as characterized by specific events and relations. Just like the construction of a particular political space as either a private or a public sphere may be asymmetric and dependent on vantage point, so particular places may be seen as located in different kinds of spaces depending on the perspective of the viewer. When Aguirre Beltrán sees the Zongolica highlands as a Region of Refuge, he does so from the external perspective of the *longue durée* of indigenous history in Mesoamerica. Indeed, he takes history to be the source of the particular kind of spatiality that he predicates of the region. From the view of the Mexican state the Highlands are often coded as a region of underdevelopment and economic marginalization – one that consistently figures in the bottom tiers when INEGI, the Mexican Institute of Statistics and

Geography, published indices of social development. A similar, though less empirically based, view is often echoed in the news media of Orizaba, the major town located in the warm lowlands just north of the highlands. Here the Zongolica region is depicted as a primitive and uncivilized region where the colorful but poor and essentially primitive *indígenas* live. From the perspective of a sociologist, the highlands could be coded as a "push zone" or a "sending zone" from which migrants move into the rest of national space and across borders. In the perspective of the UVI, it is one of four "Intercultural Regions," which basically means that it is a zone of indigenous occupation with a resulting high degrees of cultural and linguistic diversity. All of these possible constructions of the Highlands as a space, are built on an objective birds-eye view of the region – the way it looks on a map, as a region shaded in according to some specific quality that we are illustrating. But as we know, the map is not the territory, and for the people who know the region not from maps, but from walking on its hills, tilling its lands, eating its fruits, and engaging with its inhabitants it looks different.

In the following, I will seek to understand the region not as "space" but as a "place" which is the home to a specific group of people who largely share a similar form of life, and who also share a set of similar ways of making meaning of that form of life – the Nahuatl language being one of them. My intention is that by adopting this perspective, we can come to see the region, not only as characterized by what it lacks in infrastructure, natural resources, work opportunities, or capital, but also as a lived space, i.e. a place, that imposes particular constraints and offers particular possibilities to its inhabitants.

In the Nahuatl language there is no traditional word that describes the highlands as a region. The town of Zongolica, is called *tzonkolihkan* "place of curly hair" in Nahuatl, but this label applies only to that specific community, not to the region. For the locals the region tends to be conceptualized as divided into three major zones, the cold, warm and the temperate zones, and into

specific town-centers, each with a network of communities around them. The towncenters are the main nuclei of local identity, and they tend to be the municipal seats (*cabeceras de municipio*), and the communities (*comunidades* or *congregaciones*) are considered its satellites. In Nahuatl each town center is referred to as *altepetl* (literally "water-mountain"), a word which was also used for the main political unit, the autonomous polity comprising a ceremonial center, its surrounding territory and its population, in precolonial times (Berdan 2008, 108). Even, today the *altepetl* constitutes the main political unit in Nahua society, and the words used to describe regions *weyi altepetl* "Great Altepetl" and for communities *altepemayotl* "altepetl arms/branches" are derived from that word.

The *altepeme* (plural of *altepetl*) of the cold zone are Atlahuilco, Tlaquilpa, Astacinga and Tehuipango, and those of the temperate zone are Reyes, Zongolica, Mixtla and Texhuacan. The *altepetl* of Tequila is the accesspoint to both zones as it lies where the road leading south from Orizaba forks, leading to the temperate zone to the north, and the cold zone to the south. In the warm zone west of Tequila, the communities of Tenejapa, Tlilapa, Tezonapa and Rafael Delgado are located. The three zones differ markedly in the richness of their soils and climates, and consequently in the type of agriculture they sustain, and. In the warm and temperate zones coffee grows well, and from the 19th century until the coffee market crashed in 1997 it was the main crop of the area (Folbre 1977), (Trujillo 2008). Today coffee is still grown, but it is not very lucrative, and many producers produce it on a small scale only for local consumption, and supplement with fruits such as bananas, citrus, avocado, and peaches. In the warm and temperate zone, corn agriculture is often good, for those who have relatively flat pieces of land to sow. In the cold zone, growing anything edible at all takes hard work, and the main natural resource is the cloud forest with its abundance of lumber, mushrooms and game. These ecological and economic conditions of

subsistence, sustain different ways of life – some slightly more profitable and comfortable than others, but none characterizable as abundant.

In the conception of space that exists within the oral tradition of the Nahuas, the source of abundance is located underground, inside the hills and mountains, out of sight, in the underground realm of *Tlalokan*. It tends to be considered accessible only in small portions, through diligent observance of ritual practice, and intensive labor. This is the life world that grounds Adán Sanchez' narrative of the "Man who visited Tlalokan" (as well as the Hueyapan narrative of the Yellowhaired Girl"), and which undergirds most of the ritual practice of the Zongolica region¹⁵⁰.

This view of space grounded in a Mesoamerican indigenous ontology, tends to be challenged by a newer conception, tied to the same modernist tropes that also ground Aguirre Beltrán's "regions of refuge". This modernist view locates all sources of abundance and possibility outside of the region altogether, within the mainstream economic system, accessible by leaving to work in the cities or crossing North into the United States. The Nahuatl phrase used to describe migrants, *tlen yawi ne wehka* [literally "those who go there, faraway"], locates the migrants simply in an unspecified space faraway almost outside of the established world system. Luis Alejandro Martínez Canales, a former faculty member at the UVI in Tequila who wrote his doctoral dissertation about the effects of labor migration on the community of Tehuipango, noted how the discourses of migration tended to code the region as being empty of possibilities, making leaving the only feasible choice for those who embrace this view (Martínez Canales 2010).

¹⁵⁰ Rituals such as the *xochitlalilistli* ritual, are aimed at asking permission, through sacrifice of something precious, to extract resources from the earth. Similar practices are described for many other Nahua regions, including the Huasteca highlands (Sandstrom 1991), Guerrero (Good Eshelman 2001). Analyses of pre-Columbian Nahua mythology and ritual suggest similar beliefs and practices, justifying the argument that this reflects elements of a pre-conquest religious tradition.

The tendency to see the highlands as completely devoid of possibilities, is common, both among its inhabitants and outsiders. Partly because in one sense it is true: there are very few of the type of features commonly understood as possibilities, few options for subsistence, few options for education and paid work, few options for engaging in different types of activities. I will argue that the important difference between the view grounded in the indigenous lifeworld and the modernist view is not just how it conceptualizes the highlands as different kinds of space, but also that it motivates two different subjective stances in relation to the region, its population and its future. I will propose that by discursively privileging the traditionalist view that they call “indigenous cosmovision,” the UVI does cultivate and support a subjective stance in its students that motivates them to engage in a different kind of relation with the territory and its communities. Finally, it is clear that one of the possibilities enabled by the UVI, is to play a role in the formation of a Nahua counter public as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 1990:67). This possibility is significant, because it suggests a possible new role for the Nahuatl language as the language tied to a public sphere that is wider than the individual Nahuatl speaking *altepetl* communities.

Of sowing and harvesting

Adán collected the same story, the one that tells of the deer hunter's trip to Tlalokan, twice, in two different versions which he fused into his own Spanish language narrative in his thesis. I was with him when he collected it the second time.

It was *Día de la Cruz*, Day of the Cross, which is celebrated on the third day of May, and the cold part of the Zongolica Highlands, was covered in a dense fog. From the slopes of Vista Hermosa, the community in the Municipality of Tlaquilpa where Adán and his family lives, it wasn't possible to see down to the municipal seat. Everything was gray and humid.

Over the winter, I had been staying with the family a week or two every month, going with Adán, his wife Ana and his brother Malaquias to the Intercultural University where Adán and Ana were in the last semester, and where his brother was now working as a faculty member. But now spring was on its way, and Adán and Malaquias had convinced their father Don Felix to sow corn. Don Felix had been reluctant, it was a lot of work, including a substantial investment in the help of a *yuntero*, a ploughman with an ox-plough, and the harvest is notoriously meager in the highlands. It might not be worth it, Don Felix had thought. But his boys had convinced him, and now he was fully determined. "It is always worth it to sow, even if the harvest is little, it means that whatever you can harvest of your own crop, you don't have to buy," he argued. I had asked if I could help sowing, and while they seemed a little amused at the thought of me in the field they were happy to have me come along. I borrowed Malaquias rubber boots and walked with them down the rocky slope to the slightly less rocky slope that would become the cornfield.

The Zongolica Highlands have been home to Nahua people for centuries, maybe even a thousand years. The town's church stands on the foundations of a stepped pyramid that is still clearly visible today, and locals say that before the Spanish invasion they were paying tribute to the Aztecs of Mexico who conquered the Cuauhtochco province in the 14th century. Tlaquilpa, in spite of its name with the probable meaning "place of fruits" in Nahuatl, is not a fertile place. It consists of pine-covered rocky hills, with arable land on the slopes and in the steep valleys. With cold temperatures and the year-round rain washing most nutrients out of the soil, growing corn requires much work, and gives little bounty. Corn is not a cash crop and those who sow it harvest it only for their own consumption. But as Don Felix says, at least that means that one does not have to buy it. The main exploitation of the mountains is silviculture for wood and lumber, but all the communal lands of Tlaquilpa have been depleted. Only those who have private lands and exploit them sustainably can maintain this business.

As we arrive in the bottom of the steep valley between the ridge where Don Felix's family lives, and the next ridge over where his neighbor lives, I see that the *yuntero* has already arrived. His oxen, not yet tied before the plow, are grazing on the unprepared land around a small hawthorn tree. We all greet him and while Don Felix stays to talk about how they will do the work, Malaquias, Adán and I walk around the other side to the small sheds where they used to live before they moved up on the ridge. Here a black tarp covers a small mound. Adán pulls off the tarp and tells me to look, "it's organic fertilizer" he says, "we learned how to make this at the UVI".

The mound beneath the tarp is gray and dry, and looks like ashes, but looking closer it also contains sheep manure, pine needles, compost and lime. I grab a handful and it is warm, heated by the chemical reactions of fermentation. "Up here you can't grow anything without fertilizer" Adán tells me, "but at the UVI we learned that chemical fertilizers deplete the earth quickly, and makes the dry corn less resistant to pests. Its also expensive." We fill the fertilizer into plastic sacks, and carry them down on the slope. This part of the slope, most of it actually, is much too steep for the oxen to plow. So instead of sowing into a furrow, Malaquias digs into the earth with his hands and drops four or five maize kernels, red, white, yellow and blue, and a couple of dried black beans, into the hole. I go behind him with a bucket full of fertilizer, trying to keep my balance on the steep slope, so as to not roll all the way downhill into the stream on the bottom, and I drop a handful of fertilizer directly on the seed and cover it with a couple of handfuls of earth. Hole by hole, and kernel by kernel, we work our way down the slope as the morning hours turn into midday. Meanwhile Don Felix and the *yuntero* sow the flat part of the slope, using the ox plow. Later in the afternoon Dona Cristina, Don Felix' wife, Felicitas, their youngest daughter, and Ana, Adán's wife, come down with food for us and we take a break to eat.

I sit next to the *yuntero*, Don Basilio, but am too tired and shy to make conversation. Don Basilio speaks Nahuatl rapidly, talking about the food, the field, the animals, and I gradually loose

my concentration. But Adán in turn takes the moment of rest as an opportunity to work on his own ethnography. Being in the final stages of his thesis writing, he is struggling to find his interpretation of the stories that he has heard of Tlalokan. Tlalokan is the underworld in Zongolica Nahua cosmology, but not an unpleasant, terrifying underworld of the dead as European tradition tends to depict it, but rather an underworld of fertility and abundance, with water and plants. It is home to all the wild animals, that reside there under the protection of Tlalokan Tata and Tlalokan Nana, the ruling couple. At the beginning of the agricultural cycle in April, the people of the Highlands used to perform the *xochitlalilistli* ritual in which an offering of flowers, corncobs and candles is placed in a hole in the ground accompanied by prayers to Tlalokan and its entities to provide water and to allow the corn to prosper. The ritual is expensive, because it is enjoyed among friends and neighbors with turkey and *mole*, a brown, spicy chilibased sauce, and *pulque*, the fermented juice of the maguey cactus, and because of its costliness many people in the highlands, including Don Felix, no longer practice it.

Adán had sensed that there was a relation between the taboo on deer hunting observed by many communities in the highlands, and the cosmological relation between humans and the earth implicit in the *xochitlalilistli* ritual, but he had not been able to ascertain the nature of this relation. Sitting there by the fire with the *yuntero*, Adán took the chance to ask him, an elder of the community, about the relation between the deer and Tlalokan. Don Basilio told Adán the story that began this chapter, one which Adán had already heard once from his wife's grandfather. But whereas the first version described the role of the deer simply as a ploy to lead the hunter into the cave to meet Tlalokan Tata, in Don Basilio's version the deer is really a guise of Tlalokan Tata himself. This spin on the tale gave Adán the ideas he needed to finish his analysis, linking native cosmology to agricultural and ritual practices. In his thesis defense, he argued that knowledge of the native oral tradition and the way that it represents indigenous cosmology is crucial in order to

be able to engender kinds of social and economic development that respect indigenous tradition, and practice. Through the study and analysis of Nahua oral tradition, he was able to formulate an account of the highlands and the relation between people and environment, that was different from the “regions of refuge” conceptualization – one that recognizes the highlands as a zone of abundance, when the correct method is followed.

Education between Cultures: Interculturality

Adán's ethnographic work among members of his own community, and the way that he tied it to themes of development, can be considered a typical example of what students do at the intercultural university of Veracruz. As such, it can be taken as a practical example of interculturality at work. But interculturality, besides being a practice, is also an influential set of metacultural discourses that provide an ideological framework for how state institutions can approach cultural diversity in a way that is considered more ethically correct, than previous approaches.

Interculturality is an educational paradigm that has been developed in Latin America starting in the 1990s and which has been allied with a social and political critique of mainstream neoliberal multiculturalism (Povinelli 2002), (2001); (Postero 2005), (2007), and to the defense of indigenous peoples rights and interests (Gustafson 2009), (Rappaport 2005), (Loncon Antileo and Hecht 2011)). In Mexico, interculturality has become increasingly institutionalized as the main paradigm of cultural politics through which the state engages with its minorities. The 1992 constitution defined Mexico as a multicultural nation, and was followed by the 1994 Zapatista uprisings which created an even greater sense of urgency for the state addressing questions of cultural diversity within the nation with a higher degree of sophistication than previous “indigenista” policies that had by that time become obsolete. In 1997 the branch of institution aimed at indigenous populations changed its name from “Bilingual Bicultural Education” to

"Bilingual Intercultural Education". In 2001 the General Direction of Intercultural Bilingual Education (CGEIB) was established and made it part of its mission to promote interculturality in the entire educational system. In 2003, The General law of Linguistic Rights, established the right of all indigenous peoples to receive public education at all levels in their native languages. And in 2003 as a result of a collaborative effort by the CGEIB and the CDI, the first of 8 Mexican Intercultural Universities opened, offering careers in "intercultural development" to students (Schmelkes 2009).

In 2014, with the Programa Especial de Educacion Intercultural 2014-18¹⁵¹, the Mexican ministry of Education (SEP) established interculturality as a paradigm "permeating all levels and modalities of education," emphasizing the need to use the pedagogical principles also in contexts that do not involve indigenous groups. As pointed out by several researchers, there is not a single dominant conceptualization of what interculturality is, or what educational principles it entails. Often actors within the intercultural system describe interculturality in opposition to multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is understood as the simple recognition of the existence of a plurality of cultures within the state. Interculturality on the other hand posits that this recognition must result in an intercultural dialogue in which members of the various cultures exchange views and positions, learning from and about each other, and negotiating a shared future on what is ideally supposed to be equal terms. The formulation of interculturality as a process in which cultures and their members interact on equal footing, lends itself easily to the critique of naiveté. Critics ask, how, even in theory, can it be possible to bridge a cultural difference, created and sustained largely by colonialism and oppression, through the fiction that intercultural interlocutors are on equal footing? Others have asked how discourses that posit cultures as stable entities, and encourage the use of forms of strategic essentialism, may pretend to be used to overcome an

¹⁵¹ The program can be accessed from the ministry of education webpage at http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5342484&fecha=28/04/2014

oppressive system that is exactly based on enforcing (and commercializing) exclusive and essentialist concepts of identity. Others again dismiss interculturality as a new guise of neo-liberal multiculturalism, or paternalist indigenism, or other oppressive systems used to capitalize on cultural difference or to make it otherwise compatible with whichever system of political domination is currently in place .

Interculturality and the intercultural universities have faced these critiques and many others from different actors in Mexican society since their foundation¹⁵². I am not however particularly interested in engaging these critiques at a discursive level to take a stance of either defending or critiquing "interculturality" as a set of ideologies or institutional practices assumed to have a particular ontology. Instead, I critically examine interculturality as heterogeneous network of interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous actors of different political persuasions, each with different goals and objectives, who operate with different instruments and under different constraints in their attempts to achieve them. Within this network, I will focus evaluating the potential of new spaces of possibility, spaces in which indigenous actors can work to realize and develop their life projects in ways and with degrees of agency that might not have been otherwise possible. The value of interculturality for indigenous people must lie, I think, not at the level of its abstract ideology or the discourses that reproduce it, but in the concrete and practical effects that it has on their lives and communities.¹⁵³ These effects emerge within a nexus of

¹⁵² ¹⁵² See e.g. (G. Dietz 2009), (Dietz and Mateos Cortés, *Multiculturalism and intercultural education facing the anthropology of education* 2011), (Sartorello 2009), (Arias Sandí and Hernández Reyna 2010), (Lehmann 2013).

¹⁵³ In this, it seems that the indigenous critics of interculturality and intercultural education agree. Purhepecha scholar Martha Dimas Huacuz, critiques the way the intercultural university of Michoacán was underfunded from the outset, and lacked the basic resources to be meaningfully called 'a university' (Dimas Huacuz 2006a) (Dimas Huacuz 2006b). And she points to the fact that the decolonizing ideology of the institution rings hollow when it remains tightly controlled by the state, without any practical autonomy for the indigenous groups it claims to serve. Yucatec Maya scholar, Genner Llanes Ortiz considers interculturality to be a priori impossible in contemporary Mexico because of the unequal ground of power on which the intercultural meeting would have to take place. For example he considers the close alliance between interculturality and modernist ideas of

institutional constraints and possibilities, and through the choices and practices of specific actors and collectives.

The Mexican intercultural universities were established during the presidency of Vicente Fox, and the movement towards creating the universities was spearheaded by sociologist Sylvia Schmelkes who was the head of the CGEIB and Xochitl Galvez, who was the director of the CDI. The universities were not founded by the federal government, but rather by the state governments, and the rectors in most cases were appointed directly by the state governors. The exception to this rule was the Intercultural University of Veracruz, which was founded in 2004 within the politically autonomous Universidad Veracruzana, as a semi-independent branch within the university structure. Apart from the campus in Tequila, where I did my fieldwork, the UVI has campuses in three other “intercultural zones” in the state of Veracruz, and its central head quarters in the state capital of Xalapa, location of its mother institution, the Universidad Veracruzana. The “intercultural zones” are basically the four main zones of indigenous presence in the state. Apart from the Zongolica highlands with its large concentration of Nahuatl people, there is the Huasteca region with presence of Nahuatl, Otomi, Totonac and Tepehua people, the Totonacapan region with a concentration of Totonac people, and the Selvas region in the southern part of the state with presence of Nahuatl, and speakers of different Mixe-Zoquean languages. Each campus is located in rural municipalities with high concentration of indigenous people, clearly in an effort to draw their students from among the indigenous groups, although being public institutions they cannot limit their admissions along ethnic lines.

‘development’ to be highly problematic. Nevertheless, he also notes the importance of looking at the negotiation of interculturality as it happens on the ground in the institutional setting, and he argues that such a perspective will show the necessity to broaden the way that ‘knowledge’ is conceptualized within the intercultural framework to include also lived and embodied forms of knowledge. (G. d. Llanes Ortiz 2008) (G. d. Llanes Ortiz 2010)

There is no single conceptualization of interculturality within the UVI, although some elements of interculturality are institutionalized into the curriculum. The curriculum for example institutionalizes the idea of intercultural dialogue as a dialogue of knowledges. This means that diversity of perspectives and practices is conceptualized as an asset that is multiplied through sharing. In this way, interculturality differs from previous approaches to indigenous education in acknowledging that indigenous groups have knowledge, and in recognizing indigenous knowledges as valuable and potentially equal to non-indigenous ways of knowing. Practically, this epistemological pluralism is embedded in the organizational structure of the UVI, in which the leadership of each local campus is supposed to work in collaboration with a committee of community members and cultural authorities from indigenous communities, to make sure that local knowledges are represented in the curriculum. Furthermore, among the core classes taught to all incoming students are topics such as “*cosmovisions*” (note the plural) and “local language” - meant to introduce the students specifically to epistemological, cosmological and linguistic pluralism, and to specific local knowledges. All core classes use anthropological theory and method to mediate between pluralities of perspectives and meanings. Gunther Dietz, the anthropologist-turned interim director of the UVI, builds on the theories of Nestor Garcia Canclini in his ethnographic work on the institution. He describes in ethnography how a possible achievement of UVI could be the creation of a new kind of “hybrid subjectivity,” able to move fluidly between modernist and traditionalist, indigenous and Western, conceptualizations of the world (Dietz and Mateos Cortés 2011a; G. Dietz 2012).

Nonetheless, while basic tenets of appreciation of diversity and cultural dialogue is respected by all within the intercultural system, among the faculty, different approaches to interculturality exists and are constantly debated. A main discussion among proponents of interculturality pits a model based on liberal democratic rational dialogue within a power free

public sphere against a more radical vision that sees interculturality as a way of empowering indigenous groups to form their own political community in opposition or defiance to the neo-liberal nation state and against other hegemonic groups. Part of this dialogue also turns around the concept of modernity, and the ways in which discourses and ideologies of modernity can or cannot be reconciled with indigenous perspectives on social change. It is not uncommon, to overhear faculty members in the hallways, where they discuss how best to understand the relations between interculturality and democracy, or how best to empower the communities. Some commentators, for example Sartorello (2009), see this sometimes conflictive plurality of views of interculturality, as a challenge to be overcome through consensus building. I would argue in turn, that this plurality is both natural and necessary for the ongoing reflexive development of the intercultural model of education.

A clear goal of intercultural education as practiced by the UVI is to provide an educational space in which indigenous values, perspectives and practices are both welcome and specifically accommodated. This is in itself a new thing in Mexican Indigenous education, which has traditionally been constructed as a space of acculturation, (or perhaps better put 'deculturation') where heterogeneity could be replaced (or perhaps only reframed within) a common national culture. Through their focus on participating in processes of development and organization of indigenous communities, the intercultural universities bring the intercultural ideology with its skepticism of universalizing narratives into the field of "development," which has traditionally been dominated by absolutist modernizing discourses. This means that the ambitions of the UVI is not only to create a new kind of subject within the institution, but also to be a catalyst of social change outside of it. This ambition of being a platform for social change, but without necessarily having a prepackaged idea of what kind of change this has to be, is what I think gives the UVI the potential for becoming a "space of possibilities".

Spaces of possibility: The UVI, development and education in the highlands

Mario Blaser, writing about the relation between modernizing development projects and indigenous peoples, describes the relationship as largely antagonistic. He uses the concept of the “life project” as the individual and subjective experience of a directedness towards an imagined future. In the case of indigenous peoples, he and the contributors to the volume “In the way of development” (Blaser 2004), seem to consider these imagined futures to be largely incompatible with those imagined by official strategies for “development”. Echoing classic anthropological critiques of development policy (e.g. Ferguson 1990, Escobar 1991), Blaser and the other contributors to the volume on Indigenous lifeprojects and development describe official development strategies as being based on types of logic that are mostly foreign to the communities that they pretend to 'develop'. Similar critiques have been forcefully leveled at the development strategies used by the Mexican state and the *indigenista* anthropologists (Warman, et al. 1970). Blaser's introduction of the idea of the life project as a way to examine indigenous peoples own imagined futures and ideas about how to reach them, has the distinct advantage of not seeing change itself as alien to indigenous peoples, and to focus on indigenous agency in producing the types of change that they themselves seek to engender. The life project, in this sense becomes a possibility looking for a space in which to manifest.

Education is generally an integrated piece in the type of development strategies that states use to “develop” their indigenous peoples. This has certainly been the case in Mexico where government agencies having to do with indigenous peoples such as the INI, have been deeply invested in developing education systems and institutions since the 1930s. When looking at education from the top-down perspective it is easily conceptualized as a process of “transforming subjects,” “creating citizens,” or “civilizing”. Very often such hierarchical conceptualizations of the relation between the educator and those to be educated have been explicitly made by the state.

Another way of conceptualizing education is as a “technology of self” in the terminology of Foucault, a process in which individuals may choose to engage in order to recreate themselves as a new kind of subject. In this conceptualization, education projects, rather than being simply a top down effort to change certain kinds of citizens into a different more desirable kind, can also be coöpted by citizens for the purpose of furthering their own life projects. I believe that in order to understand intercultural education in Mexico, and its possible contributions to improving the life conditions experienced by indigenous peoples, this dual perspective is required. This suggests that we need not focus as much on the motives behind the state’s education and development strategies, but instead more on how indigenous peoples use education to achieve their own goals and those of their communities.

The Zongolica highlands traditionally has had few educational options available, and those that it has had have been of low quality. Before 1966, all education in the Highlands was monolingual in Spanish. In 1966 a group of Nahuatl schoolteachers from the Huasteca region in the state of Hidalgo arrived, and founded the first 26 bilingual primary schools in the area, one in each municipality. By 1982 the number of bilingual schools in the Highlands had risen to 165 - 111 of them preschools and 75 elementary schools, as well as 18 school homes for children who lived too far from the schools. This was achieved largely by the support from the INI, the National Indigenist Institute and its local Centro Coordinador Indigenista (CCI). The surge in schooling, in turn led to a surge in bilingualism, and started a process very similar to that which has led to language shift in many other Nahuatl speaking areas. Through the CCI, the INI pursued the objective of increasing bilingualism, improving basic infrastructure (roads, schools, health clinics, public transportation) and generating better possibilities for the people of the highlands to produce and market their goods. This last task was sought achieved through easing local access to credit, by easing logistics through improving infrastructure and by promoting production through the teaching of skills, and

encouraging and supporting the establishment production cooperatives (Hernández Orellan 2011). This was a basic neo-liberal plan, based on the premise that by removing the obstacles limiting the free flow of goods and services, the locals would become able to pull themselves out of poverty by their own bootstraps. As in most such projects, development was framed in entirely materialist goals, as the simple increase of income and consumption levels. Education was conceptualized as a means to this end.

Severiano Hernández Orellan, whose 2011 Masters thesis in anthropology I cited above, wrote under the direction of one of the last of the major *indigenista* anthropologists Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán. Hernández Orellan himself worked at the CCI through the 1980s and '90s. In his thesis, he summarized the positive achievements of the INI in terms of engendering economic improvement, and also extended a severe critique of the heavy bureaucratic system of the INI which tended to crush local initiatives and favor the institutionalization of clientelism. He did not mention however, how the same period saw an increase in outwards migration from the highlands, towards Northern Mexico and the US, nor how local cultural practices and social networks of reciprocity were affected by increased focus on individual social mobility. Hernández Orellan's sense of the achievements and problems, I believe, provides a salient example of how the Indigenista perspective accepted a universalizing narrative of modernity as the only framework for development. It also provides an important contrast to the perspectives contained by the types of intercultural education and development typically envisioned at the UVI.

Compared to primary education, secondary and post-secondary education has been slower to make it to the highlands. When the UVI opened its campus in Tequila, in the temperate zone of the highlands in 2004, it was the first institution to offer a BA level career in the area. Previously, anyone who wanted to study further after having completed their *bachillerato* (equivalent to high school) had to travel out of the highlands, either to Orizaba or Córdoba where trade schools and

small universities are present, or even further away to study at one of the state universities. Today youths of the highlands can choose between two options for higher education in the region: the Intercultural University and the *Instituto Tecnológico Superior de la Sierra de Zongolica* (ITSZ). The ITSZ is a technical school offering careers in engineering, computing and social development, which opened its first campus in 2008 and has now opened 4 additional campuses in the sierra, and gone from an enrollment of 200 to one of 2000. In comparison, less than 150 students are currently enrolled at the UVI's Tequila campus.

The UVI offers a single *licenciatura* (a 4 year BA level degree) in Intercultural Management for Development (*Gestión intercultural para el desarrollo*), allowing students to choose between five different orientations – health, sustainability, law, communication and language. The curriculum has a number of core classes that are taken in the first two years of study, which it combines with fieldwork periods, where groups of students work in communities on specific projects of investigation or implementation. Each student ends their course of study by undertaking an investigation project either individually or in small groups which then forms the basis for a thesis. Very often projects contain both an investigative and an applied component, such as carrying out a diagnostic of a situation of concern, and then attempting to implement a solution and documenting how it works. UVI students may write their theses about topics such as the access of alphabetization of women in the San Antonio neighborhood of the town of Tequila (Hernandez San Pedro 2010); about the recollection, recreation and promotion of prehispanic music styles through the exchange of knowledges between organic intellectuals in the highlands (Xocua Zapactle and Montalvo Nolasco 2010); or about the importance of local botanical knowledge in sustainable highland forestry (Cuatra Reyes and Ramírez Xocua 2010).

I arrived at the UVI during a precarious moment in the university's development. The leadership at the main UVI rectorate as well as in two of the campuses had recently changed in a

dramatic process that also led to the departure of several faculty members. Admissions were at an all-time low at all four campuses. The new leadership was headed by Gunther Dietz an anthropologist who had worked studying the process of interculturalization at the UVI, and he was facing several challenges in terms of budget and organization. First of all, the Universidad Veracruzana, the mother institution of the UVI, had not been receiving the majority of the funds officially allocated to the UVI from state and federal sources. This forced an austerity policy throughout the UVI where most local initiatives had to be funded by the faculty or by individual fund raising. Secondly, the low admissions meant that fewer faculty and larger flexibility was required. Dietz' ambition was to restructure the curriculum to become more flexible in order to become better able at handling fluctuations in admissions and to create room for local innovation at the campuses in response to local needs and conditions. But this was easier said than done given the bureaucratic structure of the UV. He had also begun a process of "*basificación*," meaning that faculty on temporary contracts would gradually be given tenure, job security and benefits. At the time of my arrival only one employee at the Tequila Campus had received tenure, the rest, including the coordinator of the campus and the direction, were on temporary contracts. Faculty on temporary contracts receive no benefits, or health insurance and some are only paid part-time. The challenge to getting tenure to faculty members was that the UV would decide tenure cases for UVI faculty on the same criteria that they would for faculty at the main UV in Xalapa – i.e. largely through publications in peer reviewed journals.

This puts the UVI faculty at a distinct disadvantage because many do not have time allocated for research, and because of the fact that the nature of the research they conduct is highly specific to the local context to the UVI and local campuses is not easy to publish in prominent journals. Dietz

described how he was actively working to get the university administration to lighten the requirements for tenure at the UVI.¹⁵⁴

Hybrid subjectivities: Being a student at the UVI

During my time as a visitor at the UVI, I had the chance to interact and collaborate with many students, and interview 10 of them formally. I was invited to teach several guest lectures, and I also collaborated with some students as research assistants – primarily transcribing interviews in Nahuatl. I also served as an external reader for Adán Sánchez' thesis which he defended in June 2014. During my brief visit to the UVI campus “Selvas” in May 2014, I also interviewed ten students and faculty members there, the visit meant to serve as a way to improve my understanding of the particularities of the campus in Tequila by also seeing how interculturality worked at other campuses. In my conversations and interviews with UVI students, I worked to achieve an understanding of the educational path that had brought them to this particular form of education, trying to find commonalities between their paths, life stances and experiences. In order to have a comparison, I also visited the campus of the ITSZ in Zongolica and interviewed a handful of Nahuatl speaking students from the university's *licenciatura* in “community development”. In the following, I synthesize what I learned about the student body, without going into detail about their individual trajectories. Later in the chapter I give a more detailed account of the educational experiences of individual students and their family, when I describe how the Sánchez family of Vista Hermosa, Tlaquilpa arrived at and experienced intercultural education.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Gunther Dietz, Xalapa 3.11.2014

The majority of the students at the UVI Campus "Grandes Montañas" in Tequila, come from Nahuatl speaking communities and grew up speaking the language.¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, more than a handful of students are Spanish monolinguals from larger towns in the area. Two non-Nahuatl speaking students are from as far away as the state of Oaxaca. No student I spoke to mentioned language as the primary reason for having chosen the UVI over other educational options. Several of the Nahua students were Nahuatl learners, whose parents spoke and understood the language but had not taught it to their children.

Among the main reasons students gave for having chosen the UVI, was its economic, academic and geographical accessibility: The UVI charges a smaller tuition compared to the ITSZ and other educational institutions in the area – although it is the same amount as charged by the rest of the Universidad Veracruzana for its BA programs (Dietz pers. comm). Located in Tequila, it was also the closest option to students from the cold zone of the Zongolica region, though this reason is probably less important for students choosing today as the ITSZ has now opened campuses in Tehuipango in the cold zone and in Tequila. Other students mentioned that they in fact wanted to study at one of the major national universities, but that they failed to pass the admissions exam. One student was going to reapply to law school in Mexico City, and leave the UVI in case he got in. Students also often mentioned the flexible curriculum and the community based approach to education as a reason for being at the UVI. Several students were particularly invested in "doing something for their community," and considered the practical approach of the UVI the most attractive aspect. Overall all students I talked to were excited by the community focus, and the prospect of contributing something of value to disadvantaged communities, whether they be

¹⁵⁵ At the UVI campus "Selvas" the linguistic situation was different, here three main languages coexisted with Spanish among the students: Nahuatl (three different varieties of Isthmus Nahuatl, with low degrees of mutual intelligibility), Sierra Popoluca (a Zoquean language spoken in the neighboring municipality of Soteapan), and Zoque (a Zoquean language spoken in Chiapas and the Valley of Uxpanapa in Southwestern Veracruz).

their own or others. One student considered that to be the main difference between the ITSZ and the UVI. At the ITSZ, she said, students were more focused on their own careers, becoming engineers, leaving the region and sending money back. Rather her choice to come to the UVI, even though she did not specifically know what "*interculturalidad*" was when she started, was the focus on collaborative community development and the practical research based approach. This made her feel as if she could already be doing good for others while studying. She and several other students had scholarships from CONAFE (*Centro Nacional de Fomento Educativo*/National Center of Promotion of Education). CONAFE is a Mexican education initiative established to provide education to underserved and marginalized populations, by sending volunteer instructors to provide primary education in rural, often indigenous communities. When students graduate from a *bachillerato* they can volunteer with CONAFE who provides them with basic training in teaching primary education. They are then allocated to communities where they will live and teach for a year at a time, receiving no direct salary, but all their basic living costs covered in the community. For each year of volunteering, CONAFE provides the volunteer with three years of stipend for college education. Some students at the UVI had volunteered two or three years, and were guaranteed a stipend for their entire *licenciatura* (B.A. level) studies. But while the CONAFE scholarship was clearly extremely important in allowing these youths to pursue college level studies, more importantly many students cited their experiences with CONAFE, as having provided their primary motivation to choose a career focused on working with indigenous communities.

Another shared experience for many students at the UVI is the experience of struggling to fit in, whether in terms of language or in terms of culture. Two students had the experience of entering elementary school as the only monolingual Spanish speakers, among classmates who spoke only Nahuatl as soon as the bell rang out to recess. In both cases their parents had decided not to teach their children Nahuatl hoping that as monolingual Spanish speakers they would do better in school,

but arriving in school where their inability to speak with their classmates isolated them this motivated both of them in very deliberate efforts to learn Nahuatl. One of them, worked so insistently that she eventually won a writing contest for essays in the language. Her classmates were annoyed, and said that she didn't really speak the language, but her teacher supported her, saying that knowing Nahuatl was not only about speaking the language but also about writing in it.¹⁵⁶

These experiences highlight a paradoxical fact about the UVI: The students who make it to college level studies where they can achieve education that takes into account their status as bilinguals are the ones that have already been able to succeed in a Spanish language educational environment. Being a Spanish monolingual, or at least fully bilingual is a requirement for passing through secondary school and the *bachillerato*, even for the youths who attended bilingual primary schools. There are no bilingual *secundarias* or *bachilleratos* in the region (and very few in Mexico). For some students, becoming bilinguals comes naturally, but for others it implies a struggle, and a constant sense of being on the outside and isolated. This difference depends both on language socialization in the home, but also on individual abilities and interests, and on experiences in the educational environment. As the example of the Sánchez family will show later in the chapter, even within a single family, the diversity of contexts and experiences of its members may lead to siblings achieving very different degrees of bilingualism, and education.

¹⁵⁶ In contrast, the Zoque speaking students at the UVI Campus "Selvas" all mentioned having struggled against discrimination and bullying throughout their schooling, and, except one, all of them had intentionally given up their Zoque language and identity in order to fit in, retaking it only as they arrived at the UVI. All of them arrived at the UVI through the help of a single school counselor in the Uxpanapa region who had been intent on finding a place for her Zoque students to continue studying, she referred them to the UVI and drove them there (a 12 hour trip) to visit before they applied. The conditions of Zoque students in the Uxpanapa valley are different from those in the Zongolica region, because they originated as a refugees from the state of Chiapas, and inhabit highly marginalized rural communities without basic infrastructure. Consequently they have to travel to Mestizo communities for their secondary and bachiller studies where they make up a small and visible minority. In contrast Nahua students in the Zongolica region are likely to make up the majority of students in secundarias and

A third set of significant experiences point to the immense importance of teacher's influence in encouraging or discouraging students from using the Nahuatl language in the educational sphere. Some students spoke fondly of individual teachers in their *secundarias* or *bachilleres* who showed interest in the Nahuatl language, and allowed or even encouraged its use in the classroom. One student at the ITSZ who came from a small community in the municipality of Tehuipango, lived at an *albergue* (student boarding home) while studying her *secundaria*, and when she arrived there she was a monolingual Nahuatl speaker. She spoke particularly fondly of one teacher whose patience and support allowed her to acquire the Spanish and continue on in her studies. Other teachers prohibited it entirely, even putting up written signs formalizing the prohibition, in spite of the fact that this violates the students' legal right to use their languages in all and any public environments. Some students who received their education after the passing of the Law of Linguistic rights, still told of corporal punishment for speaking their language in school. As such, the personalities and educational philosophies of individuals teachers' provide an influence on students' educational paths and language attitudes that is hard to overstate.

A further commonality of the students at the UVI, both indigenous and non-indigenous, is that frequently their interests and life-stances are "alternative," in the sense that they tend to see themselves to be outside of the unstated mainstream, that tends to see education as a means to an economic end. They frequently understand their participation in the UVI as a way to pursue a type of education that does not necessarily lead to a steady job and a good pay. Some students explicitly state that they are "not interested in money," but that what engages them and motivates them is their interested in social change and justice, in arts and crafts, in sustainable agriculture and the environment, in their communities, or in knowledge itself. In this way the profile of the UVI student could fit within the sphere of counter cultural or "progressive" values. Given the way that

interculturality itself emerges from this tradition of thinking, and that most faculty members and administrators also represent such a value system this is perhaps unsurprising.

Finally, a recurring aspect of student narratives concerns the effects of their education at the UVI on the way that they relate to and experience their communities of origin. Often the students comment explicitly on how the UVI has required them to look at their communities in a different light. One student commented that through the UVI he suddenly became aware of many social problems in his community that he had never noticed before but just taken for granted – problems such as the presence of gender-based violence, pollution and depletion of resources, or alcoholism. Others, mention that they had never thought of themselves as members of an ethnic group before, but that being at the UVI among Nahua people from other communities they developed a feeling of belonging to a larger community.¹⁵⁷

These findings echo those of Shantal Meseguer, the anthropologist who took over as director of the UVI after Gunther Dietz in 2014 and whose prize-winning dissertation was an analysis of the attitudes and experiences of youths at the Tequila campus of the UVI (Meseguer Galván 2012). Like Dietz and Mateos, she notes the transformative effect that the UVI experience has on student subjectivities, who during their studies become more aware of the positive aspects of their identity as members of a community with a distinct cultural tradition. It stands to reason, that many students arrive at the UVI with modernist ideas of education, development and progress, only to find this ideology challenged by the intercultural frameworks insistence that other views are possible and perhaps even preferable. Certainly, such an experience must be transformative.

¹⁵⁷ The Zoque students at UVI "Selvas," all mentioned that when they arrived at the UVI they lost their shame of being Zoques, taking this identity instead as a source of pride. This sentiment I never heard expressed by Nahua students, who also didnt report having been the victims of discrimination to the same degree as the Zoques of the Uxpanapa region.

But it is significant to note that it is impossible for Nahua youths of the Sierra to arrive at the UVI without first having assimilated the modernist ideology of education – since this is all that is offered within the first three stages of the educational system. The first stage of “hybridization” takes place as children enter the school system and begin a process that requires them to move ‘in and out of modernity’ (in Garcia Canclini’s (2005) terminology *The UVI and its intercultural education* provides a second stage to this process, in which the basic condition of hybridity is drawn into the students’ conscious awareness – which allows students’ to make informed, conscious decisions about the way they want to position themselves vis a vis education, mainstream society, the local community and their own futures. Meseguer’s work, and my own observations, provide hope that this process will empower youths to choose for themselves towards which public they will orient their attention.

A tiny Revolution: The use of Nahuatl at the UVI

The way in which the Nahuatl language was used at the UVI changed substantially over the course of the year I visited there. When I arrived at the UVI, and old people about my project, I explained it as being an investigation of how the Nahuatl language was used in the intercultural context of the UVI. When I asked about the language situation at the UVI, the first response I received from a faculty member was “The students speak Spanish here. It’s only really in the communities of Tehuipango and Mixtla that there is a lot of Nahuatl, in the other communities everyone is already bilingual so there is no language problem there”. This kind of discourse, framing the use of Nahuatl as a problem, and taking bilingualism and the consequent use of Spanish as the main language of communication as the solution, was not what I had expected to find at the UVI. It sounded very much like old *indigenista* discourse, framing indigeneity as the problem and adopting the majority norms as the solution. Luckily, I found that this perspective was not the most influential one on campus.

Among the most common responses to my queries about the relative absence of Nahuatl on campus were comments such as “most of the students speak the language, but not on campus,” “they’re embarrassed,” “we hardly ever hear Nahuatl here”. Mostly, the faculty members ascribed the student’s reluctance to speak Nahuatl to embarrassment over their indigenous roots. One faculty member, Malaquias, himself a native speaker and alumnus of the campus, noted that many students are here because they want to be *licenciados* (college graduates), and that they have the ideology that “*licenciados* don’t speak Nahuatl”. Malaquias, was clearly opposed to this way of thinking. He argued that the UVI was not a place to study if you want to be the kind of *licenciado* who wears a tie and sits behind a desk. At the UVI, he argued, the purpose is to be at work in the communities, and the communities speak Nahuatl. My own interviews with students pointed to another possible explanation for the Nahuatl speaking students’ reluctance to speak the language on campus: All of them were highly proficient Spanish speakers who had spoken Spanish since they were children, and who had succeeded in the educational system exactly because of their ability to speak Spanish well. Speaking Nahuatl in an educational context had simply not been part of their *habitus* since elementary school (for those who had attended bilingual elementary schools).

When I arrived at the UVI, there were three Nahuatl speaking faculty members: One of them was from the community of Atlahuilco and taught in the sustainability track, he was on a semester contract which was not renewed for the spring semester of 2014. Though a native speaker, he said he never used Nahuatl in his teaching, and agreed with what seemed to be the general consensus, that most students didn’t want to speak it on campus anyway. The other was Rafael Nava Vite, the newly appointed coordinator of the language track, who is a native speaker from the Huasteca area. Vite was the only one of the faculty members with a doctorate, he had studied ethnohistory at the National School of Anthropology and History, and he had also published a Nahuatl language book combining ethnography and political history (Nava Vite 1996). The third

faculty member who spoke Nahuatl was Malaquíás Sánchez, from the municipality of Tlaquilpa in *tierra fria* (the highland region with its cool climate), whose experiences we will hear more about in the second half of this chapter. Dr. Nava had been recently made coordinator of the language track, where previously all the language courses had been taught by another faculty member who did not speak Nahuatl. Among the nonacademic staff there were a few more speakers, the groundskeeper and the nightwatchman were both Tequila locals and native speakers, and so were the three women who ran the school cafeteria – a small stand selling *tacos*, *sopes* and *quesadillas*. Though Nahuatl is spoken natively by more than half the students, the nonacademic staff, were the only people I generally heard speak Nahuatl on campus.

In terms of what the curriculum says, Nahuatl is only taught for a single semester during the first year's "core classes" taken by all first year students under the title of "local language" (*lengua local*); Another semester is dedicated to "National languages" (*lenguas nacionales*) - a general introduction to the linguistic diversity of Mexico. In comparison two semesters are dedicated to learning English, which everyone I spoke to agreed is an important language to be able to use in a university setting. Apart from that language is used as an optional "node" (*nódulo*) in the curriculum, meant to allow students on the language track to specialize in language on their own or in small groups with the support of faculty. But because of the low enrollment at the UVI in 2012 and 2013, the "nodes" had been consolidated into a single track for all students, where language only took up the equivalent of one week during the school year. According to the curriculum, students choosing the language track as their main orientation should become able to function as translators and interpreters and to work professionally with the language. But under the given circumstances that would seem an unlikely outcome – and perhaps for the same reason there were no students majoring in the language track at the time.

In the spring semester of 2014 things changed. A new school counselor was hired Carlos Octavio Sandoval – who is a native speaker of Spanish, but fluent in English, Nahuatl and Portuguese – having lived and studied in Canada. He had acquired Nahuatl as a second language studying on his own, he speaks it fluently, and he insisted on speaking it in as many different contexts as possible. He brought a new way of thinking about language with him, as well as a new approach to interculturality. It seemed to me as if by their combined energies Rafael Nava and Carlos Sandoval infused a completely new approach to the role of language in interculturality. Both Carlos and Dr. Nava would converse with students in Nahuatl in the halls, occasionally use the language in the classroom as a medium of instruction, and also speak to each other in the language. Several times Carlos caught me off guard, addressing me in Nahuatl in front of students – forcing me to do my best to respond in the same way – but talking about topics that I had never spoken about in Nahuatl before such as making plans for class, talking about the theoretical points about Nahuatl or interculturality etc. In this semester I also started hearing students speaking Nahuatl in the classrooms and among themselves out of class.

Dr. Nava had participated in the development of the UVI from its early days, coming from a background as an Indigenous Education teacher he had taught at the campus in La Huasteca, his native region before coming to the Tequila campus. We talked about the way that Nahuatl was integrated into the curriculum. He told me that originally it had been the idea that the indigenous language should be implemented not as a single subject, but as a transversal axis, throughout the four years of study. For practical and bureaucratic reasons this was not the way it worked out. Indigenous language was confined to a single semester course of "*lengua local*". At the Tequila campus where the only local language was Nahuatl, this was less of a problem than at other campuses. The "La Huasteca" campus in Northern Veracruz or in the "Selvas" in the southern are both located in regions with significant linguistic diversity, and at any given time the campuses had

students speaking not only several varieties of Nahuatl, but also Totonac, Tepehua, Otomí, Popoluca and Zoque. At the other campuses a given cohort entering first year would only be exposed to one of the local languages, and the decision about which that would be was not based on composition of speakers of different languages among the students, but on practical criteria, such as availability of an instructor. At both campuses, and of course in Tequila, this generally meant that the language taught was most likely to be Nahuatl – for all students regardless of linguistic background. Both Dr. Nava and Carlos Sandoval, as well as the director of the UVI Gunther Dietz, found the way that indigenous languages was officially included in the curriculum to be unsatisfactory, and were actively working to find better solutions to the practical problems. According to Dr. Dietz, the obvious goal for the Tequila Campus was that Nahuatl should be the default language, which he considered a feasible plan given the relative linguistic homogeneity of the zone. Recognizing that the presence of Nahuatl in the system relied to a large extent on the presence of faculty members who would actively use it, Dietz had been instrumental in placing all of the Nahuatl speaking faculty members at the UVI as a strategy of linguistic normalization based on the language planning strategy used in Catalonia.¹⁵⁸

The culmination of the changes in the use of language at the Tequila campus occurred in the fall of 2014, when Dr. Nava and Carlos Sandoval organized for the research colloquium to be held entirely in Nahuatl. The colloquium is a forum in which first year students present the results of their field research projects for each other using PowerPoint presentations and other forms of audio-visual tools. Usually colloquia were held in Spanish, the language of the majority of the faculty members who supervised the field projects, but for this colloquium it was organized that all students would present their research in Nahuatl. The purpose was to demonstrate the equality of

¹⁵⁸ Aspects of this normalization strategy at the UVI are described by (Figuerola Saavedra, Bernal Lorenzo and Hernández 2013), (Figuerola Saavedra 2013), (Figuerola Saavedra and Hernández Martínez 2014) .

Nahuatl as a medium of academic dialogue, and to incite students to speak Nahuatl on campus. The controversial aspect of the decision was that even monolingual Spanish students, who made up about 10% of the cohort, would be required to present in Nahuatl, and that only the Nahuatl speaking faculty members, Carlos, Dr. Nava and Malaquias would be able to give feedback on the presentations.

In the colloquium about 10 four-person groups presented their research results with projects such as "promotion of domestic gardens as a way to food security," "violence and gender at the Indigenous school-home in Los Reyes," etc. The students presented their results with little difficulty, considering that they probably were neither used to using Nahuatl when speaking about such topics, nor when speaking in public. Remarkably, several of the non-native speaking students had managed to translate and memorize their parts of the presentation entirely in Nahuatl, some with considerable enthusiasm.

The presentations received constructive criticism from the three Nahuatl speaking faculty members, both regarding form and content. The inconsistency of Nahuatl orthography in the PowerPoint slides was a general critique. This critique reflected both the student's lack of experience in using Nahuatl as a medium of written communication, as well as the teacher's goal of holding Nahuatl to similar standards of rigor as Spanish would have been – thereby cementing its legitimacy as a language of academic communication. The Nahuatl monolingual colloquium was the first major initiative by the new language teachers, and the first time major step at the campus to actively promote the use of Nahuatl there. But it was not the only one: Dr. Nava and Carlos Sandoval also organized to begin the publications a bimonthly bilingual magazine "*Toyolkayak*" [The face of our hearts] with content written by the students. The same semester Carlos Octavio Sandoval and Malaquias Sanchez started offering a Nahuatl course for monolingual faculty members, which four of the Spanish speaking faculty started attending regularly. The semester after I left, Sandoval

organized a series of “poetic action” events, in which groups of UVI students painted Nahuatl language poetry on publicly visible walls in the city of Orizaba, in order to draw visibility to the presence of the language.

The novelty of the approach offered by Dr. Nava, Carlos Sandoval and Malaquias Sanchez was to change the perspective on the Nahuatl language from being something that was primarily the interest and concern of the students who spoke it, to being something that was of concern to the entire university – including monolingual Spanish speaking students and faculty members. In the period leading up to the colloquium student groups would be working on their presentations, discussing among themselves how best to express a specific concept in Nahuatl, or how best to spell it. The native speaking students would help the learners by translating for them and coaching them in pronunciation. In the language courses, Malaquias, himself recently graduated from the UVI was coaching other faculty members who were used to teaching communication or winning prizes for their mastery of the literary Spanish language. In a short semester, the linguistic order turned upside down, and Nahuatl became a valid form of linguistic currency at the campus in a way that it had not been before.

What I take to be the most significant element of this experience at the UVI, is how the cultural change in this institutional setting was dependent on a very small shift in the composition of the faculty. Only a couple of faculty members with new attitudes and the desire to change the status quo were able to do so, without experiencing significant opposition or nonconformity from their colleagues and students. I wonder if this had been possible if there had not already been a strong discourse of interculturality in place to support precisely this kind of initiative. The fact that the discourse of interculturality was universally adopted as the regulator of values and practices at the UVI, meant that Dr. Nava, Carlos Sandoval and Malaquias Sanchez were not working against the established cultural norms when they were trying to implement change. In fact, it would have been

difficult for anyone who had wished to challenge their projects to do so, because of the way they were solidly grounded in the shared discourse of interculturality. Similarly, because of the discourse of interculturality, when teachers were now offered the chance to study Nahuatl outside of class-time, the weight were on them to explain why they were not interested or able to participate. Inverting the question from “Why should I study Nahuatl?” to “why wouldn't I study Nahuatl”? In this way, the discourse of interculturality does not in itself create social change, nor does it force anyone to act differently from what they usually would, but it establishes a space of possibility where creating new approaches to teaching and learning, and to the relations and hierarchies of the everyday can be challenged and experimented with.

As can be seen from the testimonies of students and the way that language policy was changed at the UVI in the spring semester of 2014, the UVI can be considered an institutionalized “space of possibility”. A space designed through the discourse of interculturality and the political and organizational work of the educators who developed it to be allow students and teachers to work outside of narrow conceptions of the norm. It attracts students who already have an idea of being interested in “something else,” and who seek identity and community by placing themselves outside the dominant discourses that see education primarily as a tool for social mobility. But one thing is how the institution of the UVI provides small spaces of possibility, where options outside of the mainstream of neoliberal modernity can be explored, another is how the exploration of these options manifests itself in the communities served by the UVI. What spaces of possibility does intercultural education create in Nahuan families and communities, and how do they put these spaces to use?

Education and everyday life in the Sánchez family

The first day I arrived at the UVI at Tequila, the campus coordinator Mtro. Mata, introduced me to Malaquias who was one of the only faculty members at the University who was a native Nahuatl

speaker. I asked him if he could help me find a family where I could stay in his community, he said yes. Without my knowing what his idea was, he brought me to stay with his own family. I only realized this during the hour long bus ride from the University at Tequila up through the clouds and into the high Sierra.

The family lives in two large plank houses on the side of a ridge overlooking a large valley with the town center of Tlaquilpa in the middle. The family plot of land runs on a steep slope covered in *okotl* (pine) and *āvatl* (oak), and there is a narrow, flat strip at the foot of the ridge where Don Felix, Malaquias' father, has his cornfield. It does not produce enough to feed the family through the year, but provides a necessary addition to the household budget. Most of Don Felix's income comes from carpentry; he has a small wood shop where he makes planks from the trees he can cut down with his chainsaw. He doesn't make charcoal anymore, it is too much work, and the price of the coal is too low these days. Doña Cristina, Malaquias' mother, has a couple of sheep that keep her with wool which she spins and weaves into thick warm *pochimeh* (blankets) and *māngameh* (a short handwoven poncho) for her family. Tlaquilpa nights are cold in the wintertime and during the rainy season. The family is not rich, and, except for the plot of land where they live which was inherited from Don Felix's father, what they have comes from their own hard work. Neither Felix nor Cristina have any schooling, Cristina learned to read when she was fourteen, but she doesn't feel comfortable writing. She also doesn't feel comfortable speaking Spanish, and she says she doesn't understand it well enough. They married in the late 1980s when Mexico was going through a severe financial crisis, and their life was hard. There were few options for making money, and they struggled to make ends meet.

One night, Don Felix dreamt that a blond man dressed in red came to him and asked in a low friendly voice "*Teh tikneki tiyās Estados Unidos ahm' nelle?*" [You would like to go to the US isn't it true?]. Felix said yes, he would, but the trip was dangerous and expensive. The man replied that no,

it wasn't that hard, if he'd like they could go right now. Felix said yes, and within an instant they were standing in a gigantic fruit field in the US. The fruits were strange, unlike anything Felix had ever seen, and he told the man he didn't know how to do the work. The man told him not to worry, and showed him how each of the many fruits and vegetables were picked and packed, and told him how much they paid each jar of berries or bunch of leek. Felix set to work and the work was light. He could see that the money was quickly accumulating as he advanced across the field. He turned to ask the man a question, but he was gone, and the dream was over. Don Felix never did go to the U.S. though several of his cousins and brothers in law did.

Malaquias is the middle sibling of five, but his two older brothers no longer live at home. One, Pablo, a carpenter, lives in the center of Tlaquilpa with his common-law wife. And the other, Evaristo, is working as a bricklayer in Monterrey and comes home only a couple of times a year. So the Aguilar household is inhabited by Don Felix and Doña Cristina, Malaquias and his girlfriend Reina who is expecting their firstborn this spring, his younger brother Adán and his girlfriend Ana, and the youngest of the siblings, the little sister Felicitas. In the household all communication takes place in Nahuatl, even with me they only shift to Spanish briefly if they can see that there is something I really don't understand, or if I initiate a conversation in Spanish. Everyone in the household is a Nahuatl dominant bilingual. The Nahuatl spoken in the household is fast-paced, and playful: unstressed syllables are frequently weakened to the point of elision. When everyone is gathered in the kitchen building, jokes, comments and questions in Nahuatl fly across the table. The three family members who have the broadest dominion of Spanish speech styles are those who are attending the Intercultural University. Sometimes Adán will shift to Spanish to discuss politics with me. The only members of the household who are addressed mostly in Spanish are the two dogs named *Grande* and *Amarillo*.

When the two eldest brothers grew up there were few options for post-secondary education in the region, the nearest options being in Orizaba and Cordoba several hours away. After finishing primary school, the eldest brother Andres had to contribute to the family economy, helping his father in the field. Secondary school was not an option. Pablo, started secondary school but didn't finish. Malaquias, however, enjoyed primary school. The teachers were mostly locals who spoke Nahuatl and were able to use the language as a medium of instruction when required. Among the topics they were taught was Nahuatl, and he remembers fondly the texts from his textbook *Nauatlajtoli* (Nahuatl language). This two-volume primary school textbook published by the SEP (ministry of Education) was written by local teachers specifically for teaching the Zongolica variety of Nahuatl, the book was used to teach the students to read and write Nahuatl, the language most of the students spoke at home. Malaquias, one of the students for whom bilingualism came easily, was an excellent student, making first in his class several years in a row. In secondary school he quickly mastered Spanish, learning the formal register of the education system, instead of the Nahuatl-influenced vernacular Spanish (a register locally called *cuatrero* or *nawañol*) that he had learned from his friends. His secondary school teacher was also warmly disposed towards the Nahuatl language, even taking an hour every afternoon in which he required his students to practice their Nahuatl. This was in stark contrast to the secondary schooling experiences of Adán and Ana, both of whom were explicitly prohibited from speaking Nahuatl in their secondary school – in spite of it taking place several years after the passing of the Law of Linguistic Rights.

After secondary school, Malaquias went to the college preparatory school, in a *tebachillerato* – a kind of rural high school where some of the classes are taught through educational videos, requiring fewer teachers to teach all the topics. In the *tebachillerato* in Tlaquilpa the television didn't work, so the two teachers taught all the subjects in person. When Malaquias finished, he knew he would like to keep studying. During the last semester his teachers

told him about the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural (UVI) in Tequila – the other option was the Instituto Tecnológico Superior de Zongolica. What drew him to choose the UVI was both the fact that he was attracted to the sustainability track, but also importantly tuition was much lower than the ITSZ. Also contributing to the decision was the fact that transportation between Tlaquilpa and Tequila where the UVI was located was just one hour, whereas transportation to Zongolica was two and a half, which would have required him to find a room there. For academic achievement, Malaquias had received a scholarship from PRONABES (the National Program of Educational Scholarships) which covered most of his transportation and tuition costs. The university did not disappoint him. He quickly grew to enjoy its ambiance, the way the teachers taught, and the focus on creating development in one's own community. Gradually he grew fond of the health track instead of the sustainability one, especially after he took a course on veterinary medicine. With the skills he learned in this course, he became able to diagnose and treat his family's sheep, chickens, turkeys, and dogs for their different ailments. Eventually he even started practicing veterinary medicine on the weekends' curing his neighbors' animals and making a bit of money for the family. He found that the fact that he spoke Nahuatl was an immense help, because the neighbors felt comfortable with him, as they could explain the symptoms and receive the explanations in their own language. After graduating, Malaquias found a job at a local development NGO working in the community of Soledad Atzompa. Also here, where he was the only one of the development workers who spoke Nahuatl, the language was useful, in creating trust, in maintaining the community's engagement and making sure they understood the way the projects worked. Sometimes he felt the fact that he was a *licenciado*, with a college degree, and yet spoke Nahuatl inspired the people he worked with to think differently of their own possibilities.

His younger brother Adán heard about the UVI from Malaquias, and decided to attend as well. Like Malaquias he was an excellent student, with a keen and critical mind. His thinking is more

political than Malaquias, and he does consider himself to be a part of a Nahua people. He tells me that the UVI awakened this ethnic and social consciousness. Like his brother on the weekends he dedicates himself to veterinary medicine in the weekends – and now even Don Felix has taken up the practice helped by his sons. Where Malaquias, took an interest in the health and sustainability track and wrote his BA thesis about the usage of terraces and organic fertilizer to make agriculture more sustainable in the highlands, Adán's interest was rather in the area of communication and culture. He was particular influenced by one of the faculty members, Luis Martinez Cañales who was doing ethnographic field work for his doctoral dissertation interviewing migrants and their families in the neighboring community of Tehuipango. He read cultural theory and decided to make his own thesis project an ethnography of his own community, focusing on understanding the meanings of the aricultural rituals that the people of Tlaquilpa had still used when he was a kid, but was now increasingly abandoning. This was the project that led him to interview community elders about the ways in which they understood the old rituals, and to his conversation with Don Basilio the *yuntero*, that produced the narrative with which I started this chapter.

The youngest sibling, and only girl, Felicitas, had a very different experience from her brothers. She entered primary school speaking only Nahuatl, having almost never heard Spanish at home. Her teachers were locals who spoke Nahuatl to the children, and had the time and patience to explain the exercises to the kids. She felt good and safe there. She gradually learned basic Spanish and was able to do the work, though she never felt good at it, and preferred to spend her time playing or helping her mother. Undertaking the task of becoming functionally bilingual was neither her interest nor her *forte*, and in her primary school it was also not a necessity. When she started secondary school all of this changed. Here everything was in Spanish, the teachers came from cities like Orizaba and Córdoba, and had a different idea of discipline, and educational achievement than her primary school teachers. In this environment Felicitas realized that she spoke a lot less Spanish

than her peers, and consequently had a harder time doing many of the basic tasks, or even understanding what her teachers were talking about. This of course led her to fall further behind her class mates, which they of course also noticed, making her the butt of cruel jokes and comments. Under these circumstances, it was perhaps unsurprising that one day she told her mom, that she was not going to continue studying next year. Her parents ascribed her choice to lack of responsibility and self discipline, but accepted it. Now she spends her days with her mom in the house, helping with chores – conforming in some ways (at least currently) to the Nahua kinship model of the *kalyollotl* “the heart of the house,” the girl of the family who never marries, but takes care of her aging parents.

In the Sánchez family, intercultural education has been a significant factor in providing the family with new opportunities. As Doña Cristina puts it when she explains the impact that her boy's education has had on the family, particularly emphasizing the skills in veterinary medicine that they have passed on to their parents - *“Yi nikīxmati tlan pahtle tlan tipo kokólistl para inon kiservirōs itlan in yolkameh. [...] Pos axān tēserviroa in tlēn yefan omomachtihkeh”* (Now I know which medicine works for which kind of illness with the animals. [...] So now what they learned is useful to people.)

The UVI: Public institution or local counter public?

In spite of the structural limitations under which it operates, the UVI provides students and families with spaces of possibility for developing approaches of development that fit their individual and communal necessities, and provides room for individual and collective agency. But it is not completely clear what impact if any, an intercultural institution such as the UVI, may have on the development of indigenous ethnic politics.

If we accept the argument that there is a relation between the long-term fate of an indigenous language and the degree to which it is embedded as a language of discursive action within a counter public sphere, then we are prompted to ask whether the UVI contains the possibility of fostering new Nahuatl counter publics or strengthening existing ones.

Given that the UVI is founded and funded by the Mexican state and that most of its faculty are urban non-indigenous intellectuals, the university may seem an unlikely place for any new developments in indigenous ethnic politics to emerge. But on the other hand, if we acknowledge that it is in some ways an institutional space that is not fully within the mainstream, and which leaves room for agency, and for shaping new practices, then perhaps it is not entirely unlikely. In his treatment of the gradual institutionalization of Intercultural Bilingual Education

(EIB) in Bolivia and its impact on the Guarani community, Bret Gustafson (2009) arrives at a similar position of tentative optimism, about the possibilities of EIB to foster political and social improvements for the Guaraní. I think that the case of the UVI offers some additional elements to Gustafson's equation.

Chapter 4 proposed that the possibility of creating a Nahuatl political community is tied to the degree to which that the Nahuatl language is used as the code of a counter public sphere, and used specifically to discuss issues of collective relevance to a community defined in opposition to the national mainstream. Here, it is suggested that the way that interculturality explicitly represents itself as an alternative to different mainstream ideologies from neoliberalism and capitalism to Mexican nationalism and even democracy, may have an important role in positioning the Intercultural Universities as possible spaces for the formation of subaltern counter publics.

The Nahuatl language research colloquium seems like a clear example of a microscale counter public sphere. Other examples of the role of the UVI in the fomentation of local publics, are

the research projects undertaken by students which show an engagement with indigenous communities and their internal affairs as distinct *rēs publicae*. Such projects may entail a dialogue between student and communities, with the students and faculty members as cultural critics of their own communities both supporting and fielding claims against local authorities. Third I consider the role of UVI students as metacultural agents and producers of knowledges aimed for circulation in and consumption by their local communities. These three examples of processes that take place within the UVI context suggests to me, that whether or not the official project for the UVI is one of forced assimilation of the indigenous public into the national one, the result is just as likely to be the opposite: the formation of local indigenous counter publics.

The Nahuatl language colloquium series, is significant for two reasons. First of all, it was a forum in which Nahua youths publicly discussed social and political issues that affect Nahua communities and did so in the Nahuatl language. Secondly, it was a forum that did not exclude non-Nahuas from the discussion, but which literally required them to engage on Nahua terms. In her work on Mazatec ethnic revival which takes place through the establishment of similar local fora of discussion of communal issues, Faudree (2013) points out the problem inherent in contemporary large scale democracies: Namely that expression may be free, and everyone is allowed to criticize or pose demands on authorities, but that there is no guarantee that anyone will listen. This problem of course applies equally to the UVI case. But perhaps this problem can be avoided, if we move beyond the conception of indigenous communities and their local matters as merely private spheres of local “special interest” located within the scope of the Mexican national public sphere such as the Mexican state has tended to do.

Michael Warner (2002) pointed out that the Achilles heel of the counter public is its tendency to take on the form of a social movement and enter into relations with the state as a movement within the mainstream public sphere. In doing so, it is forced to adapt to the discursive

regimes of that political scale, which jeopardizes its ability to remain a true counter public with its own distinct idiom. Under this lens, we may argue that the discussions in the research colloquia at the UVI are perhaps not able to field claims on authorities at the national level. But they are able to critique and challenge authorities within their own public with a real chance of being heard, and with a chance of being able to develop alternative perspectives on the public good. Nancy Fraser's (1990) rethinking of Habermas' public sphere concept, introduced the possibility of envisioning subaltern counter publics that operate at different political and semiotic scales from the national public sphere. The bourgeois public sphere emerged through collective discussions about the common good at the microscale of the city or town, before becoming the vehicle for the emergence of the national community. In the same way, we should not expect the members of an indigenous counter public to field claims or critiques against authorities at the national scale, but rather at the scale at which the counter public sphere operates. In the case of Zongolica this is the regional, municipal, and community levels.

The research projects of UVI students urge them to take their local communities to be the sphere of political action. This means that the local community is represented both as the sphere at which authority and authoritative discourse is produced, and also it is challenged. I offer two examples of how this is done in student projects.

The first example is Adán Sanchez' dissertation project, and particularly the example of how he sought out local elders as cultural specialists whose knowledge he could synthesize into a single authoritative account of a collective perspective on agricultural rituals and their meaning. Furthermore in his case, the narrative that he collected and with which I began this chapter, exactly had as its main theme the negotiation of cultural authority between an indigenous ontology and an outside, national one. Don Basilio's narrative of the hunter's meeting with *Tlalokan Tata*, explicitly reproduces a vision of indigenous reality as ontologically and politically distinct from and superior

to the outside ontology represented by the greedy and lascivious wife and her saintly lover, and it explains a series of cultural practices as a form of obeisance to this reality. In this way in recollecting the story, Adán was in fact also recollecting a local perspective on intercultural relations between Nahuas and outsiders. The perspective he found was one that clearly posits the existence of a separate Nahua political sphere, in opposition and contrast to the mainstream one. By being able to recirculate it with the stamp of authority from the two local narrators who recounted it, he legitimized this view as an authentic "Nahua" way of understanding Nahua political existence.

Another example, is the project of another student at the UVI also from the community of Tlaquilpa. She had taken as her project the solution to the tragedy of the commons as it had manifested itself in her community. As mentioned earlier, the communal forest (*monte comunal*) of the community of Tlaquilpa has been depleted through over-exploitation several decades ago. This happened in the early eighties when the municipality abandoned the previous policy of requiring any community member to apply for a permit to cut down any tree in the communal forest. This happened under circumstances in which community members suspected the municipal president of being about to sell the communal lands to outsiders (perhaps a well-founded suspicion, since this kind of occurrence is commonplace and privatization of communal lands has been a long-term strategy of the Mexican state). The people decided to expel the potential buyer, and take over the management of the woods under an every man for himself principle. This led to the rapid depletion of the forest, and presently only some privately owned terrains in Tlaquilpa are being sustainable managed. The continued depletion of the large communal forest means that young trees are cut down before reaching its maximally profitable stage as soon as they can be exploited, and the lack of old trees leads to erosion of the soil, and to a general decrease in biodiversity in the area, threatening for example the many local species of orchids. As her thesis project the UVI student decided to work to reverse this development, by dialoguing with local authorities and the many

stakeholders who exploit the communal forest, in an attempt to convince them to go back to earlier ways of managing the forest sustainably by enforcing quotas, and by participating in a reforestation project. In this part of the project she came up with more resistance than she had imagined, no one in her community were willing to commit to a moratorium on exploitation, or to support the introduction of a new set of regulations. And what surprised and aggravated her more, was that many cited as the reason for their unwillingness the fact that she was "just a young girl" - assuming that if the project had a woman as its primus motor, it would not have sufficient clout to enforce any regulations. This made her decide to defy what seemed to be the public opinion and instead collaborate directly with several local elders, whom she convinced to participate in establishing a reforestation plan. The plan involved creating a tree nursery in the middle of the communal forest, six miles off the main road and only accessible by walking. From this nursery trees areas of the communal forest would be slowly reforested while she worked to gain confidence and respect of the locals and formed alliances with more local authorities. Again, in this project, the sphere of action is the local community, not the national one, and instead of simply producing and representing authority and community, her project challenges established authorities and the communal status quo. In this way the type of research projects that UVI students undertake are actively participating in dialogues about how to move their local communities forward, and both discovering local ways of understanding development, and proposing new ideas about which direction "forward" is. I do not claim that such individual projects in themselves can create counter publics where none existed before, but if projects such as these find a way to gain critical mass in their communities, they do seem to have such potential.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ One project of the UVI has shown to be able to generate this critical mass and produce effects even at the national level. At the UVI in Totonacapan, the Totonac-speaking region of Veracruz where the UVI has a campus in Espinal, a joint research project by faculty and students performed a diagnostic of the local economic situation, and found that the town of Espinal, in the throes of global economic crisis, suffered from an acute lack of liquidity. As the town was populated largely by smallscale farmers there was simply not enough cash

Finally, UVI students also take on the roles as cultural producers, constituting as they do so their local public spheres as independent fields for the production of knowledge and culture. Again, the thesis of Adán Sánchez provides an example of how this is done: Given that the focus of the investigation was the ritual cycle of the community of Tlaquilpa, Adán needed a theoretical framework within which he could approach the issue of cultural difference, and he dedicates a section to this question. He starts out by criticizing the folkloric concept of culture that is often used in Mexican discourses of "culture" to describe what makes indigenous groups "different" and "unique" - the production of certain crafts, the indigenous language, the use of *traje típico* (folk dress) etc. He argues that there is a need of a broader concept of culture that encompasses everyday life, forms of experience, work and social relations. This critique of simplistic and essentialist concepts of culture is a staple theoretical point at the UVI. Rather than stopping at the critique, Adán makes a different turn, arguing that the problem is best avoided by using a native concept. He posits two Nahuatl terms that he proposes as native conceptualizations of "culture":

currency present in town for the economy to flow and grow. The participants proposed an innovative solution – they created an auxiliary currency which they named *tumin*, the Totonac word for "money," and formed a cooperative of local producers who committed to both using and accepting *Tumin* in their transactions with each other. Since the members of the cooperative received an initial number of *tumin* for free, and since they were guaranteed to be able to use the currency in their every day economic transactions with other community members, the auxiliary currency created an instant influx of liquidity into the town, which the UVI research team predicted would increase the general level of prosperity. Whether the *tumin* had the desired result or not is a matter of some dispute, but it did have two clear results: Firstly it changed the economic profile of the community of Espinal, where many businesses continue to use and accept *tumin*, promoting local community solidarity. Other neighboring municipalities have even requested to introduce the currency as well. And secondly, it was perceived by the Mexican state as a threat to its monopoly on the production of currency, and they took legal action against the faculty members who had promoted the project. The lawsuit by the Mexican National Bank against the creators of the *tumin* is still ongoing. The creators defend themselves by arguing that the *tumin* was never intended to compete with or replace the national currency, but that it should be considered rather to be an instrument of barter (Oracca & Oracca 2013). The *tumin* project in particular demonstrates how interculturality may promote forms of political action that constitute indigenous communities as their own public spheres, in both cultural and politico-economic terms, in open opposition and defiance to the national public sphere. In the *tumin* project, the welfare of the local community was prioritized as being a higher common good, or rather a common good of a different community, than the good that is the monetary sovereignty of the Mexican nation.

masēwalixtlamachīlistli and *masēwaltlatekpankāyōtl* (Sánchez Rosales 2014, 28)¹⁶⁰. The first concept is based on the verb root *mati* "to know," from which the concept *tlamachīlistli* "knowledge" is formed, to this word is then aggregated the prefix *ix-* which is a bodypart prefix referring to the eyes and face, it creates the word *ixtlamachīlistli*, which refers more specifically to knowledge derived through experience or study. By prefixing noun stem *masēwal-* "indigenous" the word is restricted to mean a knowledge type which is derived from the type of experience shared by indigenous Nahua people. The root *masēwal-* which is the base of the word *masēwalli* which originally referred to the commoner class in pre-conquest Nahua feudal society, but which in today's usage commonly refers to all indigenous people, proto-typically nahuas; the Nahuatl language is often referred to as *masēwaltlahtōl* "the language of the masewales".

Masewalixtlamachīlistli in Adán's usage then refers specifically to what anthropologists would call "indigenous knowledge" of the Nahua of Zongolica. The other concept, *masēwaltlatekpankāyōtl*, is based on the verb *tlatekpana* which means "to put things on top of each other," "to put things in a row," or "to put things in order". The abstract noun derived from this verb *tlatekpankayotl*, then has a meaning of "orderedness," "layered structure," or "sequence". Adán explains that by this concept he means to refer to the layered nature of practices shaped over time by repetition, and to the social order that emerges organically from this process. Again, by prefixing *masēwal-* he restricts the concept to the orderedness produced by or characteristic of indigenous forms of life. The concept strikes me as particularly potent because it encapsulates both the historical-genealogical aspect of culture, which is necessary to be able to talk about cultures as distinct units, and the structuredness, characteristic of the synchronic holistic culture concept. With this word, Adán

¹⁶⁰ Adán writes the concepts as two words, *masewal ixtlamachīlistli* and *masewal tlatekpankayotl*, probably because he sees the prefix *masewal* "indigenous/Nahua" as similar to a Spanish adjective, but here I write them as single words analyzing it as a composite noun where *masēwal* modifies the following head noun root. I also add macrons to show the long vowels, because they are a prominent feature both in the pronunciation and awareness of speakers in the Zongolica area. This is one of the only regions where speakers have corrected me when I have pronounced a vowel short when it was supposed to be long.

becomes able to write about the culture of his community with a high degree of theoretical sophistication, yet in a way that is immediately intelligible to other community members.¹⁶¹

Gibson-Graham's politics of possibility have as its central element the quest to find ways of arriving at new perspectives on old spaces. With such new perspectives they argue, it becomes possible to form true community politics, and find ways for subaltern communities to exercise power even within the strictures and constraints of the capitalist world system. Their concept of community politics, I would argue, corresponds almost directly to Fraser's (1990) concept of the counter public, except that Gibson-Graham takes the existence of the community's public sphere for granted. It would not be possible to embark directly on community politics in the Zongolica Highlands, because there is not currently a consensus about what is the common good, or if there is such a thing. As a case study of a community politics Gibson-Graham points to a project of reforestation of the commons in coastal Oaxaca (described by (Barkin 2001)) and its success in generating new economic possibilities for marginalized communities. Maribel's experience of trying to reforest the Tlaquilpa commons, seems to show that Tlaquilpa is not ready for this kind of project yet – she will have to break the ground on that. It seems that in this way, the intercultural university may have an important role to play in producing and circulating new ideas of the common good, through the work of its students.

¹⁶¹ Another example is provided by the thesis of a student at the Selvas campus who wrote on the topic of language endangerment and revitalization in relation to her native variety of Nahuatl, that of Mecayapan. She wrote the thesis in Nahuatl, specifically *mela'tajtol* as the divergent Isthmus variety is called locally, simultaneously producing what I believe is the first full length academic work written in Nahuatl at a Mexican institution since the colonial period, and the first such work ever written in a peripheral variety of Nahuatl. By writing about language endangerment in the endangered language, she simultaneously performed the proposed solution to the problem, and she defined it as an issue to be treated first and foremost by the members of the speech community themselves – indeed she circumscribes her potential public to consists only of the speakers. Her thesis was read and assessed by her faculty advisers who are also speakers of the same variety, which shows how the UVI, when the conditions are right, can become the locus of discussions about the social problems of indigenous communities, carried out by the community's members, in the local language. This is an important first step in any process of formation of local indigenous counter publics, and the public use of the language is crucial in making this first step possible.

Beyond hybridity: Subjectivity politics

In my treatment of the UVI I have focused on exploring the potential of intercultural education as a catalyst for social and political change for indigenous individuals and communities. Recent studies of intercultural education have tended to take different approaches, focusing more on interculturality as a theoretical construction. If we study interculturality primarily as an ideology and a conceptual system it is impossible to avoid thorny discussions about the boundedness of culture. One would have to ask questions such as how it can even be possible to distinguish between cultures that can then be put into dialogue, how to avoid the trap of essentialism, how or whether to focus on accentuating differences instead of bridging them, how to avoid confusing history with future, etc. These paradoxes do seem to be inherent in interculturality when viewed primarily as an ideology. In Mexico, philosopher Miriam Hernández Reyna has been a vocal critic of the concept of interculturality from this angle, critiquing her version the ideology and the problematic traps of privileging identity and history as sources of politics (Hernández Reyna 2013). In many ways Hernández Reyna's critique is a critique of the concepts of cultural differences, and of indigeneity and indigenous rights itself – more than it is a critique of the actually existing intercultural practices, practices with which she does not seem very familiar and to which she rarely makes reference. In fact, her main points of critique, the trap of essentialism, the risk of perpetuating colonial history by privileging a simplistic historiography of colonial relations, and the problematic use of the “debt of conquest” as the motivation for engaging in interculturality, are simply not relevant in the context of the intercultural education that takes place at the UVI. Students and teachers explicitly discuss these risks and work reflexively to avoid them, engaging with culture, politics and history at a theoretically sophisticated level that cannot be reduced to the slogans that Hernández Reyna critiques. Similarly, Lehmann (2013) warns the interculturalists of the risks of essentialism and fetichizing difference. Lehmann visited all intercultural universities in Mexico as part of his engagement with intercultural education, but nonetheless also carries out his

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critique mostly as a conceptual question. In practical reality, it does not seem to me that UVI students fall in either of these traps, and their faculty members work hard to avoid them. Much more relevant are the critiques of Dimas Huacuz (2006b) (2006a) and Llanes Ortiz (2008) who warn of the risk of interculturality failing, as long as the support for its objectives remain on paper and at the ideological level, while inertia and lack of resources pushes towards a practice that is not clearly distinguishable from that of classical *indigenismo*.

The ethnographic approach of Gunther Dietz and Laura Mateos Cortes (2011a, 2011b), is one of the few that take a more practical approach, focusing on the practical effects of the UVI on the youths studying there. They argue that it produces students that have closer ties to their communities of origin, but who are nonetheless capable of moving between the conceptual and epistemological logics of their communities of origin, and the national mainstream. Dietz and Mateos Cortes' work builds on Nestor Garcia Canclini's influential formulations about the hybridity of contemporary Mexican, and global, modernity (García Canclini 1995). Like Friedlander's demonstration that the elements considered central to the culture of Hueyapan are mostly not primordially indigenous, or Bonfil Batalla's demonstrations of the mixed nature of Mexican National culture with its undertow of "deep" indigeneity, or Hill and Hill's demonstrations of the syncretic language practices of Mexicano people in Tlaxcala, Garcia Canclini's conclusions are probably readily acceptable. The world really is inescapably "hybrid," "syncretic" and "mestizo," and all cultural boundaries are porous, permitting movement across and between. Nevertheless, this firm conclusion about the permeability of cultural borders may itself need to be tempered by reality, for example in situation where a subaltern subject has to work hard to cross them.

The experiences of students who become "bilingual and bicultural," "hybrid subjectivities" through processes of socialization that require veritable exertions of strength, show that in practice the permeability of semiotic boundaries may be less accommodating of hybridity than cultural

theory suggests. Hybridity, understood as a kind of subjectivity as opposed to the simple fact that subaltern subjects cannot escape a degree of participation in the hegemonic semiotic systems, is often achieved in spite, as youths struggle to become able to belong in more places than one.

This, I believe, is what makes intercultural education potentially significant: It provides a space where cultural boundaries can be negotiated, rather than simply enforced. And this leads to a very different kind of hybridity because it is one that allows subaltern subjects to choose the configuration of elements from the two cultural spheres that they want to combine. Instead of presenting neoliberal modernity as a package deal, the intercultural ideology presents it as a take-your-pick negotiation, and it provides a discursive and political environment that does not code all elements of the mainstream as inherently superior to their indigenous alternatives. This is also what makes its ideology of “development” different from that which was espoused by the indigenistas, and which is still practiced at institutions such as the Instituto Tecnológico de la Sierra de Zongolica. “Development,” as Blaser (2004) points out may look very different when seen within the context of an indigenous life project. Gibson-Graham's work (2000) point out the importance of having new perspectives in order to practice the politics of possibility, and a large part of their work lies in providing techniques for how to arrive at new perspectives on the possible by rereading texts from odd angles, adopting new subjective stances, creating new languages in which to discuss the political economy etc. By actively seeking out indigenous conceptualizations of the world and integrating them into the project of education and development, the intercultural project has a constant source of new perspectives to use when approaching questions of development. In this sense one could argue that the intercultural university should not be understood as a project with the purpose of bringing new forms of knowledge, and new possibilities into the desolate Highlands (even though probably many do see it this way). Rather, the reason intercultural

universities need to be located in zones with cultural diversity, is because that is where the new perspectives are.

Scholars have also pointed out the irony the fact that education projects aimed at producing indigenous intellectuals, often entail a process of deterritorialization, that ultimately dislodge the intellectual from the community they represent. Faudree (2013) for example notes how Mazatec intellectuals, are often based far from the Sierra Mazateca – writing back to the territory they've left. Indigenous intellectuals, such as Natalio Hernández, the Nahuatl poet who was given the task of translating the Mexican constitution, often write about indigenous politics from Mexico City, and often their writings never make it back to their communities. The IDIEZ project, with its focus on teaching Nahuas to study Nahuatl history through the historical sources is based in Zacatecas, far away from the Huastecan communities where most of the Nahuatl intellectuals involved in the project are from. The Aztecs had a policy of bringing the princes of conquered peoples to the capital to live as honored guests, and hostages, of the Imperial Court – assuring compliance from the communities that their parents rule. The same effect can be ascribed to the way that the centralized nature of Mexican intellectual life draws indigenous intellectuals out of their local communities and into the National public sphere. By being located in the indigenous regions, the intercultural universities in Mexico have the potential to create intellectuals that stay, and to maintain debates about the development of indigenous communities within the communities, close to the forms of experience that the local environment produces, and as parts of the local dialogue about the common good.

Anthropologists commonly agree that the weakness of identity politics is that it reproduces and requires a rigid political ontology. In turn a politics based on discursive action and the formation of counter publics, has the potential of becoming what we might call a “subjectivity politics” – a politics based not on ontology but epistemology. In this regard, the significance of the

Nahuatl language and its use in education is that by using the indigenous language, discourse is produced in a form that delimits the scope of dialogue to a group of people who share a similar set of life experiences. And it produces a dialogue that takes place in the terms that this group of people share and use to put the experiences of their everyday lives into words. Perhaps by shifting the focus away from statements of identity and cultural differences to shared experience and lived lives, we as scholars can move past the conceptual critiques of interculturality, and on to more productive tasks. Such as seeing how we can play a role in supporting indigenous communities in constructing new spaces of possibility in the territories they occupy and the institutions that service them. As Don Felix points out, even sowing a few seeds may well be worth a bit of hard work.

7. CONCLUSION: LANGUAGES, STATES AND ETHNO-UTOPIAS

Languages and Families: The Espinozas and the Sanchezes

Chapters five and six described two families in two different communities: The Espinozas of Hueyapan, Morelos and the Sánchezes of Tlaquilpa, Veracruz. My description of both families indicated how patterns of language use, abandoning or embracing Nahuatl, were affected by the individual life experiences of parents and siblings, motivating seemingly unconscious attitudes as well as conscious choices. They portrayed how the tense and conflictive political and economic relations between the counter public of Hueyapan and the outside national public affected the family life of the Espinozas, causing a differentiated process of language socialization among the siblings. For the siblings who lived with their grandmother the process of language socialization and tying early childhood experiences to the Nahuatl language, and consequently the language resonated through their later lives in various ways – motivating them to engage with it in their religious lives. For the other siblings, the Nahuatl language remained an arm’s length away, as a symbol of belonging more than as a lived memory.

In the quote that began the introduction, Don Isabel Lavana phrases his experience of community with the other people of Hueyapan as a kinship relation, weaving together shared language, shared experience and a shared sense of place as a single “substance” that constitutes the ties of kinship. The localocentric purism of Hueyapan’s Nahuatl project builds on the same sense of kinship through shared experiential: the true language is the one that our own parents and grandparents spoke, in which they lived and formed their social relations. It is hardly coincidental that the context for language learning chosen by the teachers was a re-enactment of a wedding ceremony, including rehearsing most of the templates for kinship behavior, for parents, and in-laws and youths of both genders. Through this kind of reenactment, a kinship bond is formed across the

participating generations, using the language, in its most local form, as the medium of cohesion. To me it appears that this ritual was not primarily intended to represent Hueyapan as an indigenous community to outsiders, although it did also fulfill that function. It was also intended to perform a healing function for the community, revitalizing not just the language, but recreating also the sense of kinship mentioned by Don Isabel. I take this to mean that for the teachers in the project, the reaffirmation of Hueyapan as a community of experience was necessary for the subsequent reconstitution of Hueyapan as a political community. This would not have been possible without focusing the revitalization effort specifically on the local variety of Nahuatl – no other Nahuatl variety would have been able to represent those ties. The referential content of another Nahuatl variety might be the same (though it is not), but it is the specificity of local pronunciation variants that indexes experiences shared by the people of the face-to-face community of Hueyapan. The reason this pronunciation indexes those experiences is because it iconically represents what is stored in the memory of those who grew up listening to the language, making it elicit an affective response that would be missing from other pronunciations.¹⁶² The point here is that language revitalization, in order to be a meaningful endeavor, must take as its starting point that which makes the language meaningful as the shared property of a community. In a town like Hueyapan, where the language is still alive and spoken by a significant portion of the inhabitants and resonates in the lived memory of the majority, the language is meaningful to the locals because of the way that it indexes a local form of life. I would argue that the kind “sociolinguistic nostalgia” that Mary Bucholtz (2003) describes as an ideology held by sociolinguists who use it to authenticate some varieties and disauthenticate others, can also be harnessed by communities in the form of “localist

¹⁶² Edward Sapir (1924), writing about “The grammarian and his language” used a concept that he called “form-feeling” to describe how it is that while different formal languages can point out the same objective points within a system of coordinates (or understood as the same physical objects in the real world), using one formal language to do so imparts a different *kind* of attention to that point than if using another language to point to it. It is this intentional difference produced by the way that specific signs index unique bodies of memory that contributes to the specificity of subjective experience tied to different linguistic forms.

purism” in the service of community building. Therefore, the “intimate grammar” of a close-knit community, is not just a nostalgic and affective relation romanticizing the local vernacular, but also a political relation. It is the use sociolinguistic nostalgia to authenticate a local variety as ‘our language’, that keeps the language revitalization project of Hueyapan from become an empty exercise in performing indigeneity for the state.

In Zongolica, the Sánchez family were working to find a way to exist in a context of precarity and material scarcity. Here, not only does the language live in the community, but also more accurately perhaps it would be to say that the community lives in the language. The fact that in Zongolica the form of life is a life in Nahuatl, has meant that for the Sánchezes a major obstacle was the lack of access to the acquisition of Spanish. Having acquired enough Spanish to succeed in the education system, the opening of the UVI meant that for Adán and Malaquias it became a possibility to retaining their first language as part of their professional lives. For their youngest sister who did not have this ease, the absence of indigenous language education higher than the elementary school level meant that she had to stop her studies. For the entire family, the UVI meant an improvement in their family life, allowing them to achieve something akin to a middle class life. Importantly, this improvement did not require them to leave the region or their community, or to abandon the practices that give meaning to their languages and lives. This demonstrates an important way that the UVI has had beneficial effects for people in the Sierra. Additionally, the argument that I have made is that the UVI providing a space where new collectivities can be imagined into existence, and where such imaginaries can be phrased in and explored from the perspective of a Nahua lifeworld and the Nahuatl language. My representation of the narrative of the man who traveled to Tlalokan, points to the role of language and narrative in conceptualizing space, and the relation between humans and landscape. In doing so, I wish to draw attention to the fact that our perception of a space as fertile or barren, as an intellectual center or a peripheral wasteland depends upon the

perspective adopted. In spite of dreaming of the riches of the US, Don Felix decided that pursuing a relation to the landscape, community and family was more important than pursuing a more modernist life project as a migrant. He could do this because he was able to see the landscape as something other than barren, rocky hillsides as I did. Malaquías and Adán had the same ability, and in spite of having achieved an educational level that could be used in pursuit of life projects in the national sphere they have not done that so far. In this way the UVI, seems to have the potential to empower Nahua people to choose: to choose their relations connected to their community, culture and language if they so desire. In doing so, they may even be sowing the seed of a regional Nahua public in the Sierra.

Nevertheless, as I noted, it is not the case that the government that founded and funds the universities can take the credit for this development. Rather, these spaces of possibilities are being opened by activist teachers and students who work from their own passion, and who do so in spite of the strictures of the resource-deprived organizational structure they are part of. When I was in the field, it was a public secret that the Universidad Veracruzana of which the UVI is a branch, had not received any of the funds that had been allocated to it from the federal budget and which was supposed to be channeled through the state. Instead, PRI governor Javier Duarte of Veracruz, had simply kept the money destined for the university and spent it on other expenses within the state budget. In October 2015, the public secret stopped being a secret when the journal *La Jornada* published the accounts showing that between 2013 to 2015 the governor had appropriated more than 2 billion pesos of the federal funds for the UV.¹⁶³¹⁶⁴ Commenting on the situation Duarte rejected that there was any debt

¹⁶³ <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2015/09/30/estados/029n1est>

¹⁶⁴ A month before this, the media reported that Veracruz photo journalist Rubén Espinosa was found tortured and executed in Mexico city, along with the UV-educated activist and anthropologist Nadia Vera Pérez, as well as three other women. They had both left Veracruz after receiving death threats related to their publication of accusations against Duarte. Months earlier Duarte had publicly commented that he considered “certain journalists” to be associated with organized crime and warned them to “behave” or face the

between the state and the university, noting that the financial situation of the state simply did not permit disbursing the funds.¹⁶⁵ The UVI being the least prestigious of the branches of the UV, of course has been severely affected by the governmental stranglehold on its mother institution which has caused the university to halt hiring and keep faculty on temporal contracts without health insurance and benefits, to freeze pensions and cut expenses for teaching materials. In spite of working in such precarious conditions, teachers and students continue pursuing their goals, slowly opening new cracks in the institutional structure through which light can enter from a world outside. Just as when Don Felix sowed his corn on the rocky and seemingly barren hillside, such an effort requires a good deal of optimism, which can only come from the conviction that one is doing the right thing and is working towards something better. If anything, the open hostility from the governor has steeled the students into a position of defiance. In addition to the protests,, the UVI has intensified its efforts to claim a space for the indigenous language, and a voice with which to express their demands. They have opened a Nahua Cultural Center in Orizaba, to maintain a presence of the UVI and in order to show case what they want the city dwellers to learn about the indigenous people whose territory surrounds their town. This was partly a result of increasing hostility by Orizaba officials against the indigenous vendors from Ixhuatlancillo, who market their goods in the streets of Orizaba, and who are frequently harassed and humiliated by city police. By opening up an indigenous space within the city, the UVI was showing that Orizaba also belongs to indigenous people. Carlos Octavio Sandoval also continued his “Poetic Action” in Orizaba, painting Nahuatl poems and political slogans on city walls, opening up further spaces of possibility.

consequences. This series of events underscore the precarious situation of those whose work directly challenges the established power structures.

- <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=409301>
- http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/08/150803_mexico_asesinato_espinosa_mujeres_am

¹⁶⁵ <http://elclarin.com.mx/no-le-debemos-nada-a-la-uv-dice-javier-duarte-senala-rectora-que-adeudo-es-de-casi-5-mil-mdp/>

This is where I believe that the cases of Hueyapan and Zongolica compare best. In both cases the certainty that the project embodies something worth working towards, springs from a utopian imaginary of a future of relations articulated in Nahuatl terms - the relations between humans and landscape, the relations between neighbors, and across generations. This imaginary Nahua ethno-utopia drives the will to be otherwise.

Communities and language: Theorizing the dynamics of revitalization

The theoretical argument of this dissertation poses the existence of a significant relation between language maintenance and the strength of the political identity of the community of speakers. This relation stems from the recognition that language serves several functions within a community. One such function is as a semiotic vehicle through which the qualia of everyday life, the sensible world, is turned into meaningful experience that is intersubjectively communicable. Another function is as a shared but exclusive semiotic code that enables the production of a dialogue that both produces and implies a sense of we-ness that includes those who speak the language and excludes those who do not. These two functions integrate to produce a community of experience, where the exclusive code indexes a shared intersubjective lifeworld. This argument is supported by existence of localocentric linguistic purism, which takes the specificity of the local ways of speaking, and way it indexes the local landscape of geographical, spatial, social and moral relations as the backdrop when defining what is pure and authentic. From the community of experience, a political community, a public, may emerge, when the dialogue takes on the character of communicative action, through which the community seeks to define a collective path forward. This can be seen for example when communities decide to reclaim their language and the lifeworld it indexes through overt activism, or when it decides to use the same language revitalization activism to pursue political interests by emphasizing its indigeneity in the national public.

From this theoretical position, emerges a phronetic argument that can be applied to critique and analyze social phenomena located at the intersection of language and community politics. This argument is supported by the ethnographic data, which elucidates the complex articulations between the language policy of the Mexican nation, the localocentric language revitalization projects of indigenous communities, and the ongoing negotiations of sovereignty and domination between them. Because of the close relation between linguistic and political vitality, projects of linguistic revitalization may be conducive to strengthening local political identity. Conversely, the argument implies that unless revitalization projects integrate a political component, and carry out some political function for the would-be speech community, they are unlikely to succeed. When I apply these arguments to the state sponsored language revitalization projects currently carried out by INALI across Mexico, it motivates a significant skepticism. In fact, I am forced to conclude that state sponsored language revitalization is likely to undermine the vitality of indigenous languages for three distinct reasons.

1. Based on my analysis of the historical effects of state patronage of indigenous communities as laid out in chapter 4, state patronage is likely to induce indigenous communities to increasingly orient away from the localocentric public and take on a nation-centric stance. This reorientation contributes to making the language obsolete.

2. Secondly, because the Mexican state-driven revitalization efforts are highly centralized, with linguistic authority being constituted outside of the communities themselves, it amounts to an expropriation of the indigenous resources by the state, removing ownership of the languages from the local political community.

3. Because state-driven revitalization efforts seems to be primarily used by the state to divert attention from urgent political problems, it is never adequately supported by the institutional infrastructure, and does not receive sufficient economic resources to be able to

handle the tasks that could potentially improve linguistic vitality. In this way, I show that the critical arguments by scholars who have interrogated the consequences of multiculturalist policies implemented within the frameworks of neoliberal policy (e.g. Hale, Povinelli, Murray Li), also hold for the field of government sponsored language revitalization.

However, a second argument, tempers the skeptical conclusion of the first: When the discourse of national public sphere assigns a positive value to indigenous languages, this provides the indigenous communities with a new currency that can be used in its negotiations with the state, and which may serve to advance localocentric agendas, and to bolster local public spheres. Additionally, by constructing new infrastructure for the production and circulation of local knowledge such as local community driven revitalization projects or intercultural educational institutions, it also creates fissures within its own totalizing infrastructure of knowledge and discourse, which can be used by indigenous communities in the pursuit of their own purposes. Here, I find myself in agreement with what I consider to be the emergent consensus regarding indigenous politics, namely that indigenous identity politics can potentially contribute to empowering and liberating indigenous peoples, just as it can also contribute to their continued oppression and marginalization (Povinelli, Postero, Warren, Faudree, Gustafson). As in other fields of cultural and identity politics, also within the field of language politics and language revitalization, the outcome is determined in the political field where concrete practices are negotiated through the application of government strategies of domination and community tactics of resistance and . I contradict the view that language politics, including language revitalization, is somehow a field with a shallower political potential than other more concrete fields of politics such as the politics of land, water or political organization. I hope to have shown that language is also a potentially significant resource for the political infrastructure of indigenous communities, and that as such they should be wary of allowing it to be appropriated by the state. The risk of such appropriation can perhaps be

mitigated by maintaining political control of the revitalization project within the community, by basing it on an ideology of localocentric purism rather than on nationalist or historically purist ideologies, and by maintaining its exclusivity for members of the political community.

The preceding chapters have presented evidence showing that the process of contraction of Nahuatl through the *longue durée* of Mexican history bears out the conclusion that maintenance of a separate political identity supports the maintenance of a separate language. Just as the maintenance of a separate language increases the ability for a community to maintain a sense of political separateness from the nation state. Throughout Mexican history it has been the case that face-to-face communities that were linguistically distinct from the imagined community of the nation, have been more likely also to resist political domination, either through open rebellion or through silent defection. It has also been the case that the more resistant a community has proven to outside attempts at domination, the more likely they have been to maintain their indigenous languages. Chapter 4 demonstrated this with a general correlation of the regions where indigenous languages have held out the longest, and the regions that have been most resistant to the advances of the nation state's hegemony. Chapters 5 and 6 showed that the correlation also holds in specific cases: Ixhuatlancillo and Hueyapan are examples of individual communities that can be argued to have maintained their language exactly as a result of having constituted themselves politically as counter publics. In Ixhuatlancillo, where local identity is predicated strongly on the resistance to domination and victimization by the neighboring city of Orizaba, the language continues to thrive. In Hueyapan, transmission of the language broke exactly in the period where the increasing integration into the national networks of circulation of goods, services and discourses made the maintenance of a separate political identity less desirable for many community members. Similarly, in the Zongolica region, where the Nahuatl language has remained vital much longer than in Hueyapan, the incipient decline of the language likewise is occurring exactly during the period

when the population for the first time is experiencing a increased access to the options afforded by the national public such as commerce, development funds, educational and employment options and social mobility. Language shift in these cases is not caused by marginalization or stigmatization, but by integration and social mobility.

This poses a paradox for the standard sociolinguistic explanation of language endangerment: The more benevolent the nation state is and the more rewards it offers to speakers of minority languages who reorient their attention away from their local communities and towards the national community, the more likely they are to abandon their indigenous language. In contrast, when the state is at its most oppressive, marginalizing indigenous people and depriving them of access to resources outside of the community, the more vital will be their languages. Standard sociolinguistic models such as Terborg's ecology of pressures, poses that systematic socioeconomic marginalization of speakers of minority languages creates a negative incentive to language shift, in effect pushing speakers of indigenous people away from their language. In contrast, one may consider that the major threat to indigenous languages is the benefactor state, which lures people away from their languages with offers of a better life within the mainstream public. Speakers do not choose to abandon their languages, but simply choose to pursue better lives outside of the sphere of existence where the language is meaningful. This argument is borne out by the ethnographic data that shows how in Hueyapan and in Zongolica, individual choices of maintaining or abandoning the language are directly motivated by the access it provides to desirable life projects.

The main argument here however, is that language maintenance is not simply the sum of individual language choices. Within a framework where a subaltern language exists within the sphere of dominance of a hegemonic one, individual life choices do add up to language endangerment. But the reverse is not the case: languages do not sustain themselves through the accumulation of conscious choices of their individual speakers. Long-term language vitality

requires support of a public, which in turn imprints its life world, and language, into the existence of those who interpret their lives in relation to the forms of life it offers.

Here we may return to the concept of “function” and the claim that “language survival requires the language to have a function”, attributed to León-Portilla. If we understand the function of a language to be purely communicative, as the denotational ideology of language would have it, then small languages would *prima facie* be less “functional” than larger ones, since they allow for more generalized communication. Linguistic anthropology has done much to expose the denotational ideology as ideology, and to demonstrate that the potential functions of language are both much more complex and much more variable than this ideology suggests. No linguistic anthropologist would be surprised at this dissertation’s claim that among the functions of language is that of exercising power, and of producing politics. But the claim here goes a little further than that, suggesting that the political function of language, as providing the semiotic infrastructure for a circumscribed sense of “we-ness”, is fundamental for language vitality.

In the end, this is an empirical claim, which can be tested and falsified. Future research might for example consist in visiting a range of local indigenous speech communities in Mexico, in which the language is in different stages of vitality. Here one could use some type instrument to assess the vitality or strength of the local political community (for example, the relative absence or presence of national political parties, of local news media, of local forms of governance, of localocentric linguistic purism, of monolingual or bilingual ideologies (Sicoli 2011), of intense rivalries with neighboring mestizo communities, of a vital cargo system, relative strength of internal political factionalism, etc.). It would then be possible to correlate the degree of “political vitality” with the vitality of the local language. We would not necessarily expect that all politically vital communities would have also a vital language (since non-indigenous communities can also be strong counter publics), but we would predict that the language would be more vital in communities with strong local publics, than in those

that are more integrated into the national mainstream. One way of approaching this task would be to focus on a single language group, for example comparing 100 Nahuatl speaking towns across Mexico. Another could be areally based, transcending language groups, comparing for example all of the municipalities in the state of Oaxaca (which due to its extreme diversity would be an interesting place to start). Undertaking such a research project would enable us to determine whether the hypothesis advanced here is sound, and if the political function of language indeed supports language vitality more than other functions.

Scales and Publics: Experienced and Imagined Communities

Beyond the question of language vitality, this study contributes to the literature examining the political relations between indigenous communities and the nation state (Reviewed in Urban & Sherzer 1991; Stavenhagen 2002), and in doing so, it relies on the concept of the “public sphere”. The conceptualization of the public developed here, and the uses to which it has been put, differs from the way it has been used by others. Typically, as described by Cody (2011) the concept of political publics has been reserved for mass-mediated forms of “stranger-sociality”, in which technology supports the creation of “imagined communities” of unprecedented scopes. The primary way in which this study adds to previous approaches been is by attending to the phenomenological foundations of the public as well as its tangible semiotic infrastructure. No community, imagined or otherwise, can form without somehow making its way into the conceptual systems of its “members” through experience. In the case of “stranger sociality”, this means that the sensible signs that are to be interpreted as indicating the existence of a metaphysical community must be present within the field of experience of individual lives (Urban 1996). The community’s indexes must insert themselves into experience in order for the imagined community to integrate itself into the subjective and intersubjective lifeworlds of a group of human beings. In this way, even the most

abstract national community is also only viable in so far as it is also an “experiential community” of some sort. The mass-mediated public works in this way, by saturating subjective lifeworlds with its own signs: flags, National institutions, public officials, national celebrations, the salute to the flag every Monday morning, parades, tricolors, elections, television shows, and words such as “*mexicano*”, “*méxico*”, “*el país*” [the country], “*pátria*” [the fatherland], “*nosotros los Mexicanos*” [we Mexicans], “*la bandera*” [the flag] etc. But in spite of the seeming all-pervasiveness of these signs of the nation, they matter little if a group of people are not paying attention to them. Or if they live in a lifeworld where signs of another public are even more pervasive, than the signs of the nation. Or if they consistently interpret the signs of the nation as representing an oppositional force to the public they identify as members of (as in the case of a counter public). This is the strength of the local face-to-face public and the counter public, what allows them to live in spite of being embedded within the scope of a national community.

Publics are not impenetrable billiard-ball bubbles; they intersect and subsume each other at recursive scales. Blommaert’s concept of “sociolinguistic scales” (Blommaert 2007b), allows us to understand how it is that publics can exist within publics. For Blommaert, scales are a hierarchical or vertical order of semiotic contexts, that serve as indexical grounds for the interpretation of signs (Blommaert, Westinen og Leppänen 2014). Using Silverstein’s concept of indexical orders, Blommaert proposes a scalar embeddedness of semiotic communities, so that at the highest level only the most essential or denotational indexes contribute to meaning, whereas semiotic communities at lower scales each add specific local indexes. An example could be the Mexican flag, recognized universally across the globe as a symbol of the Mexican nation. At a global scale, this relation between the country and the flag is its only index. Outside of Mexico, members of the global community add to this relation only the indexical signs that they are part of their local experiential world: Indexes such as “Tequila”, “Cancun,” “Lazy moustache wearing men with sombreros,” and

“illegals,” would be the most important secondary indexes of the sign “Mexico” for some Americans¹⁶⁶. A much richer and more nuanced set of indexes are available to people who have more extensive experiential relations to the country, not to mention people who are born and raised there. Blommaert, describes the asymmetry in indexical associations in terms of intertextuality, a difference in the number of co-texts associated with a given sign. Another way to think of it, would be as an experiential asymmetry. Under this view, experiential communities can be said to exist at different scales, but the non-Mexican associates fewer indexes with the symbols of the Mexican nation, and consequentially the interpretation becomes “thinner” (in the sense of Geertz (1973)). At the higher semiotic scales, indexical networks are thin, but at the lowest scales, they are thickly saturated by the minutiae of everyday experiences, shared between the members of the local place-based community who see and interact with each other directly. There is a continuum of different degrees of “indexical thickness” from the local experiential community to the national imagined community.

Blommaert, however, does not consider the role of locality in producing thicker webs of indexicality, or how these scalar differences may impinge on the formation of communities and identities. This question however has been central to the present endeavor, and that is why a phenomenological approach has been necessary. We may understand the relation between a National public and its embedded publics, as a constant struggle for attention between publics at different scales, at different levels of abstractness, and at different degrees of distance from the everyday lives of people. The mass-mediated public has the advantage when it comes to commanding the attention of large numbers of strangers in wide swathes of space. But everyday interaction between people who know each other in a local public sphere has the advantage in

¹⁶⁶ This selection of course betrays my own stereotypical indices regarding “some Americans” with whom I am not sufficiently acquainted to have developed a more nuanced repertoire of indices.

terms of frequency of exposure (especially if the location is relatively isolated from the macro-public by a semiotic membrane provided by a separate denotational language indexing a distinct local lifeworld, or by sheer physical distance).

Within the context of Superdiversity, Blommaert posits the existence of “light communities” (Blommaert and Varis 2015) united for example only by the identifying as the same kind of consumer (for example the identity of being a “BMW-owner” or a “Mac-guy”). The type of consumer who buys the work of indigenous artists (or at least sufficiently indigenous) (only original and non-pirated) to support “national artists”, would be this type of consumer, and in such a context the “imagined nation” would be a light community in Blommaert’s sense. The Mexican nation’s efforts at branding itself, reproduces the type of light identities found in consumer-culture, and consequently its engagements with indigenous symbols is necessarily shallow. Probably a “national community” and other forms of “stranger sociality” will by necessity be “lighter” than communities based on continuous everyday interactions.

In relation to the process of national expropriation of indigenous signs posited in chapter 2, one might say that the expropriated signs are never “lost” to the community. This expropriation then would be a victimless crime. But the critique advanced here proceeds from the premise that nationalizing signs, strips them of their local indices, making them semiotically shallow. They also risk becoming one more index of the nation, contributing to the saturation of indigenous life worlds with national signs. Therefore, the ability of



FIGURE 12. Facebook meme (March 2016), showing the Mixe-language meanings of the embroidered designs of the Tlahuitoltepec Huipil plagiarized by Marant.

indigenous peoples to maintain the value of their semiotic resources, depends again on their ability to maintain their meaningfulness within the local lifeworld, without shifting the interpretational context to the scale of the nation. At a fashion show, the Tlahuitoltepec blouse plagiarized by Isabel Marant would simply signify “Indigenous Mexico”. But, in Tlahuitoltepec, each of the embroidered designs hold a specific meaning – encoded in the local communalect of the Mixe language (See Figure 12.). This demonstrates how the richness of indexical meaning vanes as the signs travel further away from the local context and up through the semiotic scales. This is one of the ways that “imagined communities” are fundamentally different from “experiential communities”: They represent different experiential textures.

Consequently, the dissertation can be read also as a call for anthropologists to attend to the different phenomenological qualities of publics, qualities that depend among other factors upon their semiotic infrastructure, and their scale. One may guess that different types of public, with different phenomenological qualities, and different semiotic structures may significantly correlate with the affective and emotional aspects of publicness. This is a venue for future research. Moreover, by pointing to the existence of oral publics, it becomes possible to attend to the ways that publics at different scales compete for the attention of individuals, each public seeking to saturate local and individual lifeworlds with their indexes. I believe such a perspective can contribute significantly to the concept of “superdiversity”, by acknowledging not only the shallowness, superficiality and delocalized nature of identity processes in superdiverse environments, but also attending to the existential and experiential worlds in which superdiverse publics coexist and coarticulate. If the observable superdiversity of signs is understood as competing publics, and as ways for people to navigate between publics, then we may arrive at new ways of interpreting the superdiverse environment of a global world.

Additionally, the scalar aspect of the relation between national and indigenous publics also results in the conspicuous silence of the “deep Mexico” that Lomnitz (2001) notes. The indigenous publics, that are the most vigorous, are not likely to be those that are heard in the national public sphere, and if they are heard, the denizens of the national public are likely to misrecognize them as a “private sphere” or a “subcommunity”. As I suggested in the introduction, publics may also be considered semiospheres – especially when they are isomorphic with the scope of a distinct denotational language and a distinct cultural lifeworld. The most important contribution of ethnography and thick description to the study of minority politics lies in the ability of the ethnographer to position herself within the semiosphere that is under study – to hear the voices within it. It is possible to do this without speaking the language of the local public, but as with other aspects of researcher positionality, it has distinct consequences for the type of observations that we can hope to make, and the interpretations that we can give to them.¹⁶⁷ This realization should situate linguistic anthropology centrally within the discipline of anthropology, and we might consider the question of social positionality as an aspect of a more general semiotic positionality – and be reflexive about both. In this dissertation, I have deliberately tried to position myself within a Nahuatl semiosphere, to look at the kind of politics that might be taking place there. Had I taken a different semiotic position, surely my observations would have been different, and perhaps the politics of revitalization in Hueyapan and Zongolica could have been understood quite differently. In the next section, I reflect on my own political positionality in relation to the activist projects that I have studied.

On the politics of representation and the representation of politics

¹⁶⁷ (Tanu and Dales 2015) makes a similar argument for considering language use as part of the researchers positionality within a community.

As a linguistic anthropologist writing about politics, I cannot help but being aware that my writing is also political. I do not speak about language revitalization from a void, but from a vantage point that is necessarily politically situated. The representation of politics therefore cannot be entirely severed from the politics of representation.

In writing about the ethnographic contexts that I am studying, which are also political contexts, I have to situate myself in relation to the political actors who work in that field. Sometimes an anthropologist may choose to attempt to write with an “objective voice,” even about issues that they feel deeply invested in. This is not a strategy, I have tried to use. I think that representing a political struggle ethnographically requires me to adopt in my writing, a certain sympathy towards that cause and those who struggle for it. Writing about language revitalization as a political endeavor, I think implies not rejecting the cause out of hand as futile or counterproductive, but instead to entertain earnestly the possibility that the goal may be both attainable and desirable - doing this of course, without being blind to the many risks, pitfalls and contrary perspectives.

Readers may argue that in evaluating the education efforts that take place in Hueyapan and Zongolica, I could have taken a more critical view. I could have done more to emphasize the small numbers of students who participate in the projects and the crippling lack of resources and political support the projects receive from government. I could have spent more efforts criticizing how participants sometimes rely on problematic forms of cultural essentialism to construct their separate identities, and how this essentialism may support different kinds of racism and stereotyping of indigenous peoples. But in the end, I could not make this perspective the dominant one in this work – to do so would amount to an insulting negation of the work of the language revitalization activists who spend their efforts in an attempt to use language practices to engender a positive change for their communities. They all realize that it is a struggle against the odds, but like Don Félix in the small vignette that began this chapter, they believe that small seeds hold the

promise of something growing, even when the ground is hard and cold. What they need to succeed is their efforts, their knowledge and a little space of possibility where something can grow.

I take it as my responsibility to acknowledge and describe the potential existence of such spaces, even when the wilderness around might be what characterizes the surrounding landscape. It would simply not be fair of me to portray the efforts of the activists as inherently doomed. And doing so could have the consequence of deterring future projects, that might have better chances of succeeding. It would also ignore other potential benefits stemming from the project, such as those focommunity building – Nancy Dorian notes this in her article on “the value of language maintenance efforts which are unlikely to succeed” (Dorian 1987). For this reason, I chose to adopt a sympathetic perspective in writing about these political projects, even though at times my pessimistic inner voice of academic critique disagreed. This choice of perspective is itself a political choice, which may have the positive consequences of opening up new spaces of possibility for future political projects. Though granted, it could also have the negative consequence of rendering vulnerable those indigenous communities that might be inspired to try to open up spaces of possibility within the government infrastructure, but who result unable to do so.

The larger point however, is not affected by my choice to use my writing to emphasize the spaces of possibility that emerge in the infrastructure of state sponsored revitalization. While these forms of activism in my view holds a promise of re-invigorating not just the language, but also local political communities, the larger argument holds even if we consider this to be merely a naïve hope. Whether it is such a naïve hope, is an empirical question to which the future will inevitably provide the answer, but whether or not these projects succeed, my proposed relation between the vitality of the political community and the vitality of the language, is likely to hold.

The State of the Nation: Politics beyond language rights

I maintain that in terms of long term political survival, language politics and the maintenance of a community's semiotic resources, is as significant for political empowerment as the politics that involve the community's tangible resources. Nonetheless, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the fact that in many indigenous communities the struggle for their short-term physical survival holds the priority. Here, I will take a moment to warn scholars and communities against allowing the state to use its support of cultural rights to divert attention from the more problematic aspects of its politics against indigenous communities. It is clear that while the Mexican state enjoys emphasizing its liberal record on cultural rights as a major achievement, it is simultaneously pursuing an authoritarian policy in other aspects of its engagement with indigenous communities, and in doing so routinely violating fundamental human rights.

When I was in the field in 2013-14, the issue of indigenous language revitalization was not what dominated the media landscape. The war on drugs took on a new phase in the first months of the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto's presidency as the media reported that across the state of Michoacán local militias, so-called *autodefensas* were taking up arms against the cartels. In indigenous communities in the state of Guerrero, many of them Nahuatl-speaking, *policías comunitarias*, armed community police forces working within the *usos y costumbres* legislation, patrolled their communities to keep out strangers, and curb the extortion and kidnappings that organized criminal organizations inflicted on communities. These issues that directly impacted the national security situation and which made the state look increasingly incompetent and incapable of providing the most basic security for its citizens were what dominated discussions in the national public sphere. When Peña Nieto finally acted, it was the *autodefensas* that he cracked down on, exactly as it seemed that they would be able to push back the cartels.

Simultaneously with this development, across the country indigenous communities were protesting against the state. Yaquis in the state of Sonora closed a major highway in an attempt to get the government to respect their right to water from the Yaqui River. In San Luis Potosí, Huichol communities were protesting the granting of mining contracts to Canadian mining companies on areas of previously protected wilderness that were traditionally sacred to them. In southern Veracruz, Marines invaded the Nahua community of Tatahuicapan when they shut off the water supply to the city of Coatzacoalcos, as the city refused to pay for the water that was being supplied to them from the community's springs.¹⁶⁸ In Oaxaca, Huave people protested the planned construction of a mega wind park on the stretch of coastline where they have made their livelihood as fishermen for centuries (Howe 2014). And in Morelos, Puebla and Tlaxcala, dozens of communities, many of them Nahua, protested against the construction of large pipes of natural gas through community land, that had been expropriated for tiny reimbursements.¹⁶⁹

National media were silent about all of this, except in some cases when the sudden disappearance or imprisonment of a local leader of the protesters caused brief outrage. Moreover, in all of these cases the government strategy was the same: no negotiations, no concessions, instead crushing the protests by brute force. The widespread fear of organized crime was mostly ignored by the government; except when officials at press conferences announced that now the violence had abated. One time the secretary of state Miguel Angel Osorio Chong even gave such a conference in the capital of Tamaulipas, while a shoot-out between federal police and heavily armed cartel members resulted in four dead.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Information from interviews with people of Tatahuicapan in March 2013. See also this article: http://www.milenio.com/estados/Maestros-dejan-Coatzacoalcos-Cosoleacaque-Minatitlan_0_172782921.html

¹⁶⁹ Field notes from interviews with activists in Amilcingo, March 2013
<http://www.proceso.com.mx/374048/anuncian-caravana-de-pueblos-contra-el-gasoducto-morelos>

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2015/02/enfrentamiento-deja-cuatro-muertos-en-reynosa/>
<http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=395709>

On television, government ads with the slogan “*Moviendo a Mexico*” announced Peña Nieto’s neoliberal reforms – the electoral reform, the telecommunications reform, the energy reform and the education reform. A beautiful ad for the education reform showed an indigenous girl studying in a beautifully lit rural classroom, smiling and writing words in Otomi on the blackboard. Clearly, the Mexican Nation was intent on informing its indigenous citizens about their linguistic rights.



FIGURE 13. “MOVIENDO A MEXICO” SLOGAN IN THE MAZAHUA LANGUAGE, FROM A CAMPAIGN BY INALI IN THE MEXICO CITY METRO.

The dismaying situation of rampant violence and insecurity also characterizes Mexican education politics. Two weeks after I left the field for San Diego in September 2014, news reported that 43 students of the Raul Isidro Burgos rural teachers’ college in the town of Ayotzinapa, had disappeared after being attacked by police on a way to a protest. All of these students were training to become teachers, and the teachers’ college had a reputation for encouraging its students’ radical politics. Many of the students came from Nahuatl speaking communities in central Guerrero. It soon became clear that police, acting under direct orders of the Mayor of the City of Iguala, had attacked the students, killing three of them, and kidnapped 43 who didn’t manage to escape - probably taking them somewhere to be tortured and executed and their bodies incinerated. The event of course sparked national as well as international outrage and protests. Moreover, it completely falsified to the public both the government’s claims to have curbed the drug related violence (the mayor of Iguala turned out to be part of a cartel) and its denial of police and military involvement in organized crime.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Navarro, L. H. (2015). Ayotzinapa: el dolor y la esperanza. *El Cotidiano*, 189, 7. See also a detailed description of the events at: <http://www.proceso.com.mx/415839/iguala-la-noche-del-horror-minuto-a-minuto>

And if it needed further demonstration, the events at Ayotzinapa also demonstrated with all possible clarity that in Mexico of today, it is an extremely dangerous business to engage in radical politics. In Hueyapan and at the UVI, I had witnessed that individual teachers driven by passion for their work and for social change, were the ones opening and exploiting spaces of possibility within the institutional and political structure. After Ayotzinapa, Mexico had 43 fewer such teachers, and probably countless others who were deterred from trying to become one.

Peña Nieto's education reform contains no provisions directly aimed at indigenous education, but it is bound to have a significant impact nonetheless. Its main aim seems to have been to curb the power of the teacher's union, which has been among Mexico's strongest and most independent and troublesome for the state, and bring it under a much higher degree of government control. Historically the power of the teacher's union has been a problem for indigenous education, primarily because the union has had the right to allocate teachers to specific schools and has done so with little interest in sending competent teachers to indigenous schools. Indeed, indigenous education, often being located far from the amenities of cities and suffering from much more difficult teaching conditions, has been considered the worst place to be allocated and teachers have generally sought to leave. With the reform this could change, since it aims to make it possible for schools to hire teachers based on qualifications, and to reward the best performing teachers. For the assessment of teachers' performance, the reform established the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (INEE), to develop an national strategy of evaluation. With the weakening of the union and the institution of an evaluation regime, the solution to the education problem presented by the reform is taken straight out of the big book of neoliberal governance. Teachers are dismayed, and have protested intensely against the reform - to no avail.

The effect that the reform will have on indigenous education is entirely dependent on the criteria of evaluation adopted by the INEE. For example, if the meting out of rewards and

punishment to teachers is to be based on the performance of their students in standardized tests, and if the measurement of performance is not adequately corrected for the socio-economic circumstances, then indigenous education, and rural education in general, is likely to be systematically disadvantaged. For the effect of the evaluation regime to be beneficial to indigenous education, it would have to take the specific challenges faced by indigenous education teachers into account, among them language. If the evaluation criteria include an evaluation of the teachers' language abilities, and their integration of the indigenous languages in their classroom practices, then it would be possible to begin to remove those teachers who are unable or unwilling to use indigenous languages from indigenous education, and replace them with others who can. Given the historical failure adequately to consider the challenges of indigenous education and to value the work of indigenous teachers, it may seem unlikely that such a strategy will be chosen by the INEE. But there are also two reasons to be optimistic. First, the president of the INEE who is in charge of the development of the evaluation process is the sociologist Sylvia Schmelkes. Schmelkes has been among the biggest critics of educational inequality in Mexico, particularly decrying the inadequacy of indigenous education. She has also been the leading voice in introducing interculturality as the main educational paradigm, and she was instrumental in the process that led to the creation of the intercultural universities. If anyone could be expected to work to steer INEE towards an evaluation process that can benefit indigenous education, it would be Schmelkes. Although as pointed out by Lomnitz (2001) the Mexican state does have a history of absorbing its main critics into its own institutional apparatus, silencing their critiques. Secondly, in 2014, SEP introduced its four-year plan titled the *Plan Especial de Educación Intercultural 2014-18*, which adopted the principles of interculturality as basic for all of the Mexican education system, not just the indigenous education

system¹⁷². In spite of the generally disheartening situation for Mexico's indigenous education, perhaps these two developments portend the possibility of more spaces of possibility opening up in the system.

Post Scriptum: Young Voices

I returned to Hueyapan in late December 2015. A new municipal president was going to be sworn in on January first. The election had been hotly contested, and after a recount the Hueyapan candidate had been declared the winner. Ana Bertha Haro Sánchez, wife of Hueyapan's first municipal president Mario Soberanes, was not originally from Hueyapan, but a large portion of the townspeople had backed her and voted her into office. The town was split though. Montes, the outgoing President also from Hueyapan, had come to be strongly disliked by a large portion of the townspeople, because of his failure to deliver on many of his promises, and because of the perception that he was corrupt. In part, Haro, was elected on the wave of anti-Montes sentiment in Hueyapan. Montes had however, managed to be elected to the state congress in the same election, which meant that he was still a force to be reckoned with in Hueyapan politics. Montes had posited himself as the first Indigenous congress member in Morelos, and blonde and blue-eyed Haro from Mexico City was clearly anything but Indigenous. Sure enough, the new municipal lemma chosen by Haro was only in Spanish. One might have expected the town's interest in indigenous identity to refract along the same lines, segregating into pro-indigenist and pro-nation groups. Not having been back the last year, I was halfway expecting the local Nahuatl course to have been dissolved as the political alliance between the organizers and the municipal government did. But it turned out that it was anything but dissolved. When I met with Doña Erminia and Alex they couldn't wait to tell

¹⁷²

me what they had been doing. The youths themselves had organized into an *Asociación Civil* (a non-profit organization): they had called the organization *Chimalnahuatlahotlle* “Shield of the Nahuatl Language” and one of them had created its logo in the style of an Aztec glyph – a shield with a speech scroll. Now the youth organization was in charge of the classes, independently from the state or municipal authority (although the new cohort of students still received the state stipend for their participation). With his good connections to the CDI, which he had formed over the course of his municipal employment as representative of indigenous issues, Alex had managed to get two sizeable grants from CDI. One of the grants had been spent on publishing a book of recipes in Hueyapan Nahuatl. Each recipe was written by a student, who had gone home and asked their parents or grandparents to teach them how to cook a local dish, and to explain the ingredients and procedures in Nahuatl. The CDI had provided a photographer who took professional and delicious looking photos of each dish, and a graphic designer who produced the booklet in a smooth and modern design and printed it on thick glossy paper. The second grant was going to be spent on teaching supplies and materials – which had been completely lacking until that point. The students had traveled on several occasions to other towns in the area to perform the wedding dance-drama at local patron saint-festivals. Even though many of the youths had gone on to study outside of the town, some of them still came back and participated in the course on the weekends. But a cohort of new students, doing their year of “community service” in order to receive their stipend, had joined. Of course, not all of the students had developed more than basic knowledge of the Nahuatl language, but those who had (usually because it was spoken at home) now had a forum where they could use the language among a group of friends. In this group of friends the use of Nahuatl was about strengthening ties of language, community, and kinship, not to the Mexican Nation, but to the town in which they were born and raised.

On February 27th, 2016, the students of the UVI organized a protest in the center of Orizaba, against the state Governor's open hostility to the University of Veracruz, which he now openly stated would not be receiving any of the federal funds that he had frozen. For the past two years, the students and faculty had suffered under an extreme lack of resources, and the contempt with which the governor now stated plainly that the university was among his lowest political priorities, brought the students' anger to a boiling point. After a march through the streets with signs and posters, they congregated on the main plaza of Orizaba. Gabriela Citlahua, one of the second year students, took the microphone, speaking in a powerful voice:

*Kwaltis titlapowaskeh ika tlahtol tlen tehwan tiknekiskeh, ihkon yitos nawatl ihkon yitos español!*¹⁷³ [Deep breath]. Todos podemos hablar el idioma que querramos, y todos nos podemos entender... la lengua no puede ser una frontera ...¡*Axkan xikakikan!* [Interruption by applause and cheers from the crowd]. ¡*Axkan xikakikan!* ... *Nikan tikateh tefan, ya miyak otechkixtilihkeh ik ich toaltepewan. ¡Tomin! ¡Tlalli! ¡Atl! Miyak otechkixtilihkeh. ¿Axkan tlen oksiki tehckixtiliskeh? ¿tokaltlamachtilyahwan? ¿timokahkawaskeh? ¡Ahmo! ¡Ahmo timokahkawaskeh! ahmo!* [interruption by cheers from the crowd] A los pueblos indígenas nos han quitado tierra, agua, territorio. Ahora nos quieren quitar también la educación, ¡no lo vamos a permitir! ¡La educación pública es para todos! [The crowd begins to chant]: UV, SOMOS UV! UV, SOMOS UV! UV, SOMOS UV!¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Transcription conventions used here: Italics=*Nahuatl*, plain=Spanish, ¡exclamation!, ¡YELLING!, ¿question intonation?

¹⁷⁴ *We can speak whichever language we want, whether it is Nahuatl or whether it is Spanish!* [Deep breath]. We can all speak the language we want to, and we can all understand, the language cannot be a barrier. ¡now listen! [Interruption by applause and cheers]. ¡*Now listen!* ... *Here we are, they have already taken much away from our communities. ¡Money! ¡Land! ¡Water! Much they have taken away from us. ¿Now what else are they going to take away from us? ¿Our schools? ¿We allow that? ¡No! ¡Will we allow that! No!* [interruption by cheers from the crowd] They have taken land, water and territory away from us, the indigenous communities, Now they want to take away our education, ¡We will not allow that! ¡Public education is for everyone! [Crowd begins to chant]: ¡UV, WE ARE UV! ¡UV, WE ARE UV! ¡UV, WE ARE UV!

Gabriela's speech was videorecorded by the local newspaper El Mundo de Orizaba, and they posted it to their Facebook page.¹⁷⁵ The next day it went viral, as more than 250 people shared it, and thousands "liked" it. A Nahua counter public had formed at the UVI, and had struck back at the mainstream public, now claiming a space in the heart of the conservative city of Orizaba – and online. In response to the attention, Gabriela posted from her facebook profile: "*Onechpakti tlen otikchihkeh yalla pampa omokak totlahtoltzin iwan axan kimatteh Ke masewalmeh noihkeh timomachtiah iwan amo san timomasewaltlakentiah ihkuak tikxochikoskatischeh se tekiwah. ¡Ma titlayikanpankisakah!*" [It made me happy what we did yesterday because our language (honorific) was heard, and now they know that we *masewales* (Indians) also study, and that we do not just dress up in our traditional clothes to adorn some politician with flowers. ¡Let's come out ahead!]

¹⁷⁵ The video can be watched at: <https://www.facebook.com/ElMundodeOrizaba/videos/1272917156068560/>

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9. CORPUS INSCRIPTIONEM

APPENDIX I. INTERVIEW WITH ANGELA MENCÍAS ROSALES, JULY 2014 (TRANSCRIBED BY ESTEBAN DE LA CRUZ FLORES (UNEDITED TRANSCRIPTION))

Mitzmotlapoilis mexicano... este en náhuatl este... pus ne nuwalla nika ichini pueblo, ne amohehnika newa ne onimotlakatili itzintla volka "Pico de Orizaba" ompa onmotlakatili ya después onwalmartok no... no jefecita enpas descanse omokokhtzino wan okualmalikilihke Mariano, Mariano ompa mm... amo okmaxili remedio omestikaktaya omestikatkaya wa entoces ompa pus neka otmokahke ommikili, ommikili iwa tos inoinoras ya yonmoka ni werfanita ompane nihnnotzintle ompa nika Mariano de ocho años entos a los ocho años ompa onmokaya, nikatkaya, nikatkaya inak noyawitzi xan despues, antes toh okintemoaya trabajadoras neka ichi kasas particulares Xolalpa, tonsisi ino ompa Xolalpa kin pa... kin tlaxtlawiaya pus toh barato no axa cincuenta centavos ino tonale cincuenta pesos, ino nech tlaxtlawiaya opehke nethctaxtlawia cincuenta pesos metztle, iwa tonces ompa no ya neka nikahki onikatkaya onikatkaya onte... onipatlak kanah nawi trabajo onikitipanok ompa wa onitlplancharoaya, ontlapahpakayah, onchiwaya desayuno, tlatrapirowaya, nochi cosas de... de domesticas tonces ompa no neka ya onikatkaya iwa noyawitzi noonechtemakak ompa manikitipanoti pus neka ompa neka la verdad ya oya nechkahkayawato ke ya manikisa porke nech wikas nimotetlahpalwiliti setzi totahtzi nika mestika tlakotepe tos ompa nechmoikilis noyawitzi mantetlahpaloti ke nech tlakoiske ke tzozomahtle, ke matleno tanto ne cualtzia nias nomotetlahpalwiliti tos oniki... onechkuito noyawitzi ya noyawitzi nechkuito ka ya yompa no neka pus onechwi ya nechwalik yeh tlaka yonechtemamakak ika nika se axa noseñor omochihtzino, nechtemamakak ya nekahki pus por kahkayawilistle nechwalmachtihke dotrina, nechmachtihke lotrina, xa neonkualihto tleka nechmatia ne pus amo ne yonincho no primera comunión, yonmokonfirmaro ne nipipichintzi de siete años nimokonfirmaro, iwa comunión pero pus ompa amonimati ne onechwikake "La Concordia" nechwikake ya ompa pus onechilihke ke manichiwa juramento inantzinco padre pero pus amo ni mati de tlino, ya ino nechilwihke manchiwa juramento pus ayimo nommakaya cuenta pus nipia catorce años ya neka onech ompa onechiwalthike ya neka o... okualihtohke ino kuapresentasion tos ya cunado neka ki kualihtokte tlanankilis kuaktikrakis inin señor neka kitlahtoltiske dotrina te xtlaxnankilih iwa ne noonkihto ntlankilis pus ontlankili ya pus ne nechilia pus tos tlino ini pus okualihtoke ino nmokasaros iwa neka nmonamintis iwa ino axa no señor xe ne onikualto pus ne nicholos ne mejor amo pero nechwalmolwili noyawitzi tlake neka ki ora sí ni cholos nechkawatiwe nechtetlokliwiwe cárcel iwa ompa nechkuatske perros, tzikuinti ya tos ompa yinmaka nechkixtiti pus ya milahka pus yimok onia pus nikimakasi entonces inonoras pus ya ono... oahsik tonale ke... yitos kasamiento pus amo owilit porke noseñor noigualn k... okmotlahtoltilihke litrina iwa okmoentregarwili pus amo onmonaminti san ihko pus ya yimo oniwalaskia pero ompa no axa omoikake ifamilias kualmihtoltilihke ya nika tleno fiesta kimpialia man... mawualmikaka mamotlakualtiki iwa tos neka nias ya onwala nika ya ayinmo onechmotekawili no suedro no setzi itlatzi noso noseñor pz ya yinmk o... onechtekawilihke manio nika onmokahte mas onmoyolkokoaya pz nika onmokahtepus nika onwala onmahxili nosuedro viudito, makuille nocuñados no... iminsel onkimahsik nika pus ne onkintixiliaya, onkintlapakiaya, nochionchiwayah tikil ichkalihetik, ya pus nika onimoka, nika onimoka ya pus ihko oniweka pus depues mas onechmaya noseñor, mas keni pus ya yinmok onia, keh onkualihto yonimpihpinahti xan kani nias pus ya yekmati nika manmokahtewah wa pus nika onmokante, ya ihko nika, nika, nika, pus ihko kan koale kani amo kuale ihko otivivirohke iwa noseñor takampa yommikiliko.

Pero ya kano a los cuarenta, los si... a los cuarenta, cuarenta y cinco, ya ne mas antes como de...? Treinta años, treinta y cinco años, onechtemohke ich clínica pus manitoh, manchiwa servicio soh...

servicio social, noneka clínica, promotora voluntaria ompa onikatkaya komo trece años, a los trece años ya pz ne nseguirowa, xa se tiempo de la politika owallahke nika nechtemoa, nechtemoa nnawi viaje onechtemoko amo onechahsike, ya después neka onsipa owalahke, ya ino okualihto no siwamo tlakahnile mitzmotemolia nech... yowalahke koyomeh nekah tehwatzi nmatlino por ika la politika, ya nechwaln si... nonuera kihtoa pus amo pus amo nosuedra amokmonikiltiah xmotlankili porke nonsan ohtle tikualmtokilis, san ohtle tmonimiltis yehwatzi anokmopantilia, iwa milawak nenonikaprichuda onkualihto pus axa ihki ammilawak, todavía ayimo ni mati tline yeh nika nechmalwihtoke pus tos axa nkisas tleno, ntlanankiliti pus inikis iwa yihko nipia amistades inwa inohke kohkoyotzitzi entons wa nika paisanos, entonsis iwa owalmikakw inon koyomeh tehwa mitzmonombrarwilia mitzmotemolia ich partido, partido cardenista, mitzmotemlia como... candidato para presidente, pero mas antes ya yonpa... yihko yonkatkaya ich partido cardenista, dos...neka oppa viaji onipanok como ni... ni soplente, soplente presidenta entonces ino ompa yonmoka entonces neka ii... amo otlanke neka presidencia pero ne onmoka como suplente entonces pus ihko yonpanok pero pus nika amoke itla... valor kipia ino sinoke pus ya nimatok nisoplente ino ompanikani como ni presidenta, tos xan después yowalahke como candidato pus ya yo nechtlalihke iwa ye ne amo onnikiahporke pus bucha letras ne amonikixmati miak estudio pus ami nikpia ne ni poko onimachti, entonces neka inechwalilwia pus non timitztlaliliske se secretaria para mitzi ayudaros del partido iwa pus inonoras ya yonmitlanankili, ontlanankili iwa pus ora si ke en el nombre sea de Dios onwalpe nikisa ichneka politika campañas electorales, nimi, nimi, nimi, ya pus onnini pus onintla las elecciones nochi gente o... ora si ke o el pueblo nochi ovotarohke nechmakake noso noso ino invoto okitomarohke la decisión ke se siwatzintle kachi mas mejor kitipanos ke todo tlakatzizi siempre kitipanohtiwitze iw nika amokemma itla okitaya, amokemma itla apoyo okimmakaya amokeh itla kintlokoliah siempre san presidentes kmokowia tlalti mochantia iwa pus ora si yeh motah in beneficios yehwa otlawanayah anteriormente presidentes pero milahka otlawanaya sakeh tline paraeste ne onkimitak ome presidentes ke asta ichkantina okochtinimiah wallanesi asta sin warches presidentes entonces neka... Ome presidentes nkimatok kaakinohke pero nomas amo nwiliti nikintowa akinohke entonces ino... Inon Joaquín de la llave iwa in se tetahtzi itoka Encarnación inohke asta sin waraches tlanexilia ichkantina ne como nio ntemoti kowil para ntisi nion tem... nio molino nkimita ichkantina coxtoke terowiyokatohke yeh ino presidentes coxtoke... tos onkualihto noch presidentes ihko kichiwa nichu, nika ichini pueblo amo kemma onka se neka... ni kaye pavimentado amo kemma tikita escuelas milahka nika siki maestros nika los kapulines kasa por kasa oyahtinimiah ktahtlantinimi permiso para ino kin makaske clase kokone iwa tos la verda nika okchiwaya falta mucho pus kampo, kampo para ino kokoneme modivertiroske donde kiera awik yowe kinhowa kinwalewiltia kokoneme iwa ich campaña onechpedirwilihke ino pus gracias a Dios onkinkumplirweli, nikinkumplirwili jóvenes neh kse kampo oniprepararo ke okatoya nomas san al olvido ino área del municipio pero si oniprepararo onchiwili i...? este...? Ikancha kuantzi iwa ipo... puerterias onikintlali iwa pus ok... okiprepararohke un poko para ino kampo, okse kampo hasta neyik kinh Rancho de Pala noontlali aya kahki Telebachillerato para inohke jóvenes y pus gacias a Dios yehwa tlennet...nechtlantlanilihke, nononechtlantlanilihke jardin de niños, onkintlali nechtlantlanilihke aulas onikintlali pus onechpanti porke onintla elecciones yehwa kdepositarohke invoto por ne, iwa pus ino ne la vedad ke notambién onechpanti pus onitlaxtla, onikin... o ora sí nkinndevolwili ika obras amitla ika onkendevolwili maski ika obras ichini pueblo ika invoto iwa la verdad pus limites no tabien ono... onikinpatlak, onikintotokak, onikintotokak porke tiempos ke amo kemma, siempre Xolalpa nochi kuilihtiwitze i... ilimites Ixhualtancillo wenyi yokuili ilimites iwa tovía, kseguirwaya kseguirwaya pus okseguir, porke ne o... de tres años pus la verda nixoochi para ino oni presidencia wa pus gracias a Dios ontokaka a pesar de ono ntotokak pero ihko onechtlalihkiwalahkah, ora si keh kihtowa “pez grande kikua non kachi pipichintzi” porke pus ini pueblo kachi indígenas amo amo kmati tlapoaske, axa orita ya sikitzi, ya la niñespus ya imapa tapoas español pero antelio...anteriormente nada i... ora si amo os... i... imatia, amo okmatia ino español, entos orita pus inon kichiwiliaya yo kreo falta iwa por eso ikino to

omotekawilihke para Xolalpa ma, ma... makin pisiota... pisotiaroh entos por eso ikiho pus siempre okinkuilihtiwallahke iwa axa lultimo iwa parti presidentes no a la ambicion del dinero porke okinanamaka kihto pero okinmamakake tomi ne ino onikansik noticias axa orita ultimadamente non ne ondefenderoayah ino territorios se pedaso todavía pus ne amo ontekawili ne oninchi plantones, ne oninchi marchas, oninchi nocho Xolalpa pus gracias a Dios nochi onkitzalti ono abusos de nika para pueblo de Ixhuatlancillo, non Xolalpa okichiwaya abusos, pero ahora okarak okse itoka Lionardo inon tan fácil okidoblaro imah... imawa wa entonces pus siki este... okitekawili in iwa pus okimakakeh ino tomi, tehwa timattoke okimakeh tomi, matkeski millon okmakakeh ya pus tleno kihtowa pero pus nika tohnitzitzi pus yihmo kipia fuersas para kipelarioske para tleno kayiltiske porke ne kuando anteriormente kuako ne onikarak ni presidenta okualihtohke ne yonnamakak limites ne ya por eso ikini amo nnawati por eso ikino yonikis iwa amitla oninchi, ne ontokakak sata el ultimo mes de m... de mi salida onin... onitotokak pero pus nechtlalitiwitze ke no, ke ino ya yinmo ke ya nikisati pan diciembre ke ino yihmo nech korresponderoa porke ne ya nio de salida, axa correspnderoa no akino karakis ino korresponderowa, iwa ye despues okualihtonke, ne uta tlen amo nechiliayah, ya nechtomarwilia palacio, ya matleno tobia kuan yanikisati, koonikis todavía miak gente miak cosas onechili ke nsinberguensa, ke ni cochina, ke tleka onnamakak limites ke poreso yimmok onnawat cuando ne nimatok ammilawak, onech secuestrarohke, nochi, tlen amo onechayilti ino Leonardo kuado ne nicatkaya ni presidenta pero ahora ye yimmak itla okayilti mas okmatke okinamaka ino territorio amitla okayilti, amaka gente, amaka omokitz ipa, yihko okkawilikhw porke kmattoke toh kuehsihkih inon ika pero si yehwa yiske moprepararoske tonitzitzi pus ora si ke si.. si wilitiske nochi moliniskan nochi mahkokuiske yaske ipa si kitotokaske iwa kitzakuaske porke amo kipia permiso dekinamakas se pedazo de territorio del municipio, pero gente amo nawati pus ne siempre no nechkokowa porke ne siempre onipeliaro hasta el ultimo onikahsik mojoneras, onikahsik limites lo ke es para todabia ixhuatlancillo pero pus hasta orita amo okichi... amo okmake valor si no ke Xolalpa wilika okkuili Orizaba se buen tanto, entonse por eso de ke ino pz orita la verdad si nesesarowa se presidente ma karaki, ken non como keh ne onikitipano, como keh ne ondemostrarwili pueblo, como keh ne oninchi aulas, oninchi dissiete aulas, oninchi nekahki... carrete... caminos, caminos rurales pero mayito la comunicación ichi las congregaciones como Rancho de Pala, Rancho de Pala onbeneficiario yeyi kamino, en Rancho del Cristo se camino, en San Isidro se camino, a rural pero on... ontlapo lectrificaciones, Chicola 2, Los Alamos, neka... puerta chica, este... Nika... Los Arenales noh se electrificacion, entoces nochi ino orasi neka pus lectrificaciones nicho ocarake para ino gente no nechtlatlanili ichi campaña nochi onikumplirwili, jardín de niño onechtlatlanilihke oninchi es... es... escuelas tamien pus onkinch escuelas lo keonechtlatlanilihke nicho nikin... onkintlalili non tlen ne no tzontiko no también ke inihke kalles, lo principal kalles inima... ma moyentlalika porke tenwa otviviroaya, ichi se ataskadero, ichi puro lodo, puro hierbero, pus gracias a Dios si kahki hierbero orita pero am hasta ihko, ya kahki se banketa ya kahki se... se nekah... pavimento ichi kalle mas, orasi como este keh kilia nekah... inon... nnekah... asfalto pero pz ino omochi kera yimmo itik sokitl tlahtlasatinimi tohnitzitzi sa kampa paisanitas, axa ya miak tonnitzitzi ya ki pia warachitos anteriormente puro... inxipa amitla nion warachitos pus ne ino nkualihtowa tero itik zikitl sampoohtinimi amo mas wara... amitla warachitos pero makipiaka se bankketa para itik mprotegeroske kokone iwan tenantzitzi iwa ini no gusto ininchi sa ini no... no kalle amo onyentkali ontlali kalsada porke onikita niprotejeros no familia porke panoa kochihti miake walpanoske iwa kin atropoyaroske pus xa como de bajada noch okihtlako semnto neka... atzihtle xa yo chihchito titl pero amo ki respetaroa gente maski ihko amo ki respetaroa yihko kalle, entons orita pz la verdad sa ino nika no media molesta porke hasta mismo ne no onitlali pero ya yoihtlaka axa orita ke bueno karakiskia kokse presidente pus no ma tlanimli pero amo non tlini oninchi tlen ti motilia nicho tlen kahki ini pavimento de la iglesia para nika, inon tiopantzi para nika pz ino nekah yihko ne ontlayentlali ya para nepik ino pus oksiki... ne no si... oksiki nepa no onyentlali é ikotlapa tiopantzi nochi ne ontlali banketas ne ontlali, nekah... non kalle noasta santokampo ne ontlali ino

banketas, neka kalle non Benito Juarez tompa ne ya de tiopantzi, nepik okse nombre kipa pero ino nochi ne ontlali nono porke po a verdad kchiwa falta y pus oyi okse presidente kitipanos pus ke bonito pero amo ihko xa ike orita desde ke oniks amaka ki chiwa se guarnición amitla kipatla se kalle ke xa ini ya kitztoke keh kahki amo kihtoske ki yentlaliske, yihko kanki hasta axa orita ya yotichihke cuenta diecinueve años ke.. keski ya yonikis iwa hasta orita, ihko kahki ini pavimento toncis pus la verdad nochi presidentes karaki nichí pero pus para yehwa inveneficio de yehwa para ye moyentlaliske para yehwa kmokoiske intlalwa, para mokoiske kolalti, para mokoiske nekah... orasi y parselas, ejidos nochi motlakoiya iwa pueblo amo kita, yehye tomi para inon kuika, entons pus ne ami ino nonintencion, ne amo ino notraba... amo ino, por ikino onkarak ne onkarak porke oniki... oninnik niktas pueblo, nimakas pueblo por ejemplo el día de la mamá ne onkintlokoliaya niaya nitlakoati ino tonale tresmil pesos sam puro kositas nio ntlakoati aunque sea de plastiquito pero onkinmakaya inregalito, kokoneme el día 6 de enero también nkintlokoliaya jugetes nio ntlakuati cuatromil, cuatromil, sincomil puro ino nio ntlakuati para ino kokoneme nkintlokilis se kokochesito, se karrito, se jugete, mamodivertiro kunel porke siki nika kate muy pobres ke, pus nika amoexistiroa mia ika para de Los Reyes kintlokoliske kokoneme, amaka okintlokoliayah, orita algunos sehsi si kin tlokolia pero la mayoría amo kin tlokolia akchiwa falta ihko kintlokoliske kokoneme porke si yehwa si con un juguete chikitito pus yehwa kate conformes iwa ne ino nalegría ino ike kuado onikatmaya onkintlokoli, el día del niño, día este... treinta de abril no tambien ihko onkintlokoliayah, onkinsolitaro cemento, onslitaro cemento para letrinas lamina, ikeh nika okatkaya letrinas pero rurales y gracias a Dios pus donde kiera Rancho de Pala nekah kih San Isidro okchihke letrinas porke anteriormente tehwa otinchihke letrinas komo promotoras no otinchihke ino letrinas pero... ora si... ino no amo nkilnamiki ken kiliah porke non sektlalia titl iwa después carbón sektlaliliah iwa ya ino sekireyenaruwa ya sektlalia r... sekrellenarowa neka ika... ika grava, iwa tonsis pa ya nekah... ki... ino sekchivas se nekah tabl... entablado iwa itik sektlalia se tasa, pero ne kmochichintok neka eskremento nekah tlalle, entos kua tlake san como kiera toh wal itlakawi inin, wal la ihyaya ichini pueblo pus nochi ino ne nikitak, iwa ino onikita la salud, gente onipalewi para ke... Algunos okinikia pz amo yomikili amitla y apoyo amitla kipia y centavito para motokaske ne nintlokoliaya inkajitas, onkintlokoliaya para velorio, xottzintle o limosnahtzi niktintlokolia o kana hospital nio nkixtiti, he maski como de presidenta pero pus ne onchpanti el... la colaboración de ayudar a nuestros hermanos y pus ino lunikamente mas n... ichin administración nion se cristiano amo onikuili se multa, nion se cristian amo onikuili, ke por se akta xicobraroka tanto, actas de nacimiento, tres años, tres años onkintetlokoli actas de nacimiento el día del niño, kasamientos gratis onkinmakayah porke onechpanti nikapoyaros pueblo, kualkiera itla amatzintle yuwe pues presidente yuwe kitatiwe masnikhtowa pus ino amonechtokarowa ini kitokarowa regidor o sindico no, no kihtowa tehwa tinniki te, poerke tehwa omintzmakake voto te omitz apaya... apoyarohke te, tehwa otihnike te xitonika, xa hasta axa ihko pus kihtowa tehwatzi toh kualtzi tehwatzi toh otmokitipanowili tehwatzi ti yakema yakinye setzi señora owalmuikya tehwatzi otmiresivirwili municipio con... con amor, con cariño otmoresibirwili otmonawahtikili pro axa presidentes karaki yihmok iwal, pero pus nimodos yehwa ihko kiniki yino PRI, yino PRI kivotaroske, yino PRI kinpantiah, porke yino yehwa in familia, yino yok pia tiempo, en akeyos tiempos yehwa amo kokse partido kitake yehwa PRI yehwa ino kadorarowa, puz la verdad nika orita isistirowa miak partidos pero orita inon tonale ne onipe ni tlani primero por eso toh onechkokoliaya no okarake nowa axa Ernesto Garcia, okihtowaya axa yimo ichi municipio yimo gobernarowa los pantalones axa gobernarowa las faldas ich municipio pero pus nichí ino nechtitlaniliaya razones ihko iwa akinohke yowa tlanihtiotiwe itla kosas kihtowa nika yimo tlanawatia non pantalonwa nika tlanawatia non faldas axa orita pus ino nochi, nochi tan nech amenasasowaya tlen amo nechiliaya mismo no ompa okatkaya noediles puz ne nochi onsoportaro tlennechayiltiaya ma kihtika tlen kihtoske pero ne nika kan nikihtos tleno ni chiwas kan ne nikihtos nchiwas cambio, cambio. Yanekah tonalle nika nion se patrulla okatoya ne nechmakake se patrulla se karkachita pero bien feo, ke nika ne motarowa yomokitz, nekah... neyik wika yomokitz, nchi

yoihtlaka, se volteo tero kohkototzi onechmakake, ni para basura ni para nada nekah... ino... ichi palacio nochi nekah ichi noacelda pero se atascadero, se apestilencia, bueno ke amo katkay cristianos ompa si no keh katkaya ikeh chikero de marranos pero ino nochi onchipa nochi ontlali nekah okatoya nion... mas ke se komandante, nika o existiroaya se persona para nochi pueblo katenderos oisistiroaya miak rrobos niaka, ke ganados nika como ganados toh gente tlakua ika ino ganaditos manteneroaya lechi, ganados kema yo kuikake vakas, kema yokuikato toritos, kema ya yokin... kii kahtehke ihkih, samochokilia to paisanohtzitz, pus ne ino tonale onkinwallali, oninchi kambio doce, dice policías en la... el día, al día, ne el día seis, en... la noche seis al medio día se kambiaban, ya pus ino... ino inoras ya yoninchi uniformados nochi, onwiya ichi nekah... inon nekah ken kilia... non... non seguridad publika okinsolicitaro armas, onkinsolicitaro, inuniforme, nochi okinmakake, okinwaltetlanili gobierno, omuniformarohke nekah policías, armas para ya, tos, yah chikoase tlahka iwa chikoase tiotlak tos ya kitipanowa onka vela... onka veladores ya... iwa ne onkinrecomendaroaya patrullas nikahki se patrullita onechmakak este ino neh... kah seguridad publika viejito de segunda mano kilikah inin patrulla nakachimo... nan kecharwiliske ganas por recorrido, hasta Pala, San Isidro nochi, iwa xikimitaka miranka akinohke tlachtiki, pus yehga pobresitos iko iwa ne ni ora si keh nkimiliah si nan kipia mirahka fe ichi trabajo nan kniki nan kitipanoske ne amo niki xtlawanaka onan otwalahke para kitipanoske, otwallahke para nikahki tiktaske puelo, amo otwalahke para neka... san tikuikiwe tomin iwa ya ti chiwaske tlen tehwa ti nikiske, nikahki tleno moniki inon tinchiwaske iwa sime onikitak se amo... katenderowa pueblo si seme onikitak kosipa amo nimi kani onkabsito kuchtok ne nwalmeawas yuwak iwa nechwikaske nimiti haber kani namechahsis nan cuchtoske ihtik patrulla, no gracias a Dios pus ini tonale omikitz ino nika tlachtiki, porke ye si owalpehke tlachtikia donde kiera torohti entonces hasta mas nika to kalkotlapa ya kate torohti tkualmatische yokinwikake, entonces pus yamilahka ino tonale mokitzke iwa ontlal ino ley ke inon piaske vigilancia iwa onka horden ichi policía comandancia, yotlalihke se bandera como milahka... orasí... tlagu... gobernantes kate ompa, ya selda pus chipawak kah celda ya muy aparte kipahpaka nochi hé, non borrachitos witze pus kin karakia pus ya, inohne ne okintzakuaya ne amo kema onikinkobraro se multa, nunca mas toh faltistas, pero aber xkinkixtiti ya yokah... yoktlami, makchiwati y faina, makchiwati ifaina iwa ya ma kisah pork ne amo onechpanti nikincobraros nion se peso, axa miaketohnitzitzi kihtowa ne niichtikih, ne nipresidenta yontlakua ichi... diablo yon... non... kuan nimikis necwikas diablo keh satanas nechmokawanyohtihtas, poro pus ne nmatok ammilak ma kihtika tlen kihtoke ne no corazón kahki limpio porke nion se multa amo kema onikuili se no cristianoihni amo onkinkamakopi ipipilwantzitzii iikomida in yalimento non ne nkuilis ichi bokado de la boka, ich iminte kokone yehwa matlacuka porke siki tohnitzitzi nika amo kipia trabajo nika pus orasi kate muy este... débiles de trabajo porke antes omatenerowaya pus tlayoltzintle tlameway, tlatoka, yitzintle, ino lunika mente, axa amo xa ya kisa topaisanitos xa kisa pus ora si en otros... en otras ciudades kisa, ke lo mismo mexikano pero pus lejos yuwe ta kah, Monterey, Tijuana, Guadalajara, este... nochi non neyik tlampak wehka wehwehkah nimi, miake tonnitzitzi mig... migrarowa porke amotla in trabajo pero anteriormente amakana kisaya pus si ne nechilwi iaunque yaske neyik pus ne witze no paisanos pus ora sí ne amo nechpantiah nikinkuilis mas tikimita nimi amo no milawak toh kualika tomi propio siki motlanewia para yowi tlanamakati witz pues kopas ika réditos entonces pus non kin Dios kinmotlokoliah toh kitetlanehtia centavito pus ika redito tonsis ini ne ino la verda amokemma onihniknikoas se tohni porke iseñora ne mayantika iseñora ne i... inamik toh borrachito yeh ne amitla kualikilia i... icentabito ye ne yo nin tzakuato yeh pa ne tlini yokichi pani mankobraro amo, ora si ke nechpante deberas nikayударos pueblo onechpanti nikitipanos ika pus orasi ne amo oguaran ...gran importancia sueldo ne tresmil pesitos ino tonalle onechmakaya, tres mil pesitos porke ino la decisión yuwe, kuando se karakis se presidente ya kchiwa tlanesi nima sekchiwas se... junta de kaildo ya se moreuniros iwa tonsis ompa ya nekaki, ne ndesidiros kekech nikintlalilis insueldo entre de ne, Sindiko y Regidor, tesorero amo desidiros inohke tres inohke tres ediles lunikamente onks ich ini municipio tehwa tidesidiroske keni, pero yehwa axa sindiko iwa regidor yehwa okinikia mirahka kin ximaske pueblo pero nkilia ne amo

ne amo nuwala ika ino ne nowala para nyentlalis, si ne okihto tomi techwatitlanilia gobierno iwa nika mani... manikui nochi no, tos kema nichiwias itla ichi pueblo tos iwal ikeh non sikihke karaki nochikuika, nichu kuika iwa pueblo amitla, amitla kchiwiliske, no señor, nikahki til, tikpanoske para pueblo nika lo pokito ke titlaniske tehwa pos axa orita kani ki tlani ihko, pos ne ino onmodedikaro pero poz miake owalaya tehwa... tei... teihnitzitzi neyik kin Mariano, Perla, Xolalpa te xkobraro tanto, te xikui tomi, te amo xchiwa cuenta porke tikisas kualihtoske siempre ottlachtik, otikuikuik amo otikualihtoske ottlachtik e iwa si otikuik dionaves makihtoka pero otikuik ina ne kilia, ma kihtoka tlen kihtoske, ne amaka nipias conforme mas ke nodios nodiosito nimpialis koto... kontento iwa nodiosito mestitos konforme de ke ne amo ontlachtik, ikuando ni mikis yenwatzi ompa nechmolwilis ee, porke ino si ya tkichtikilia ne tero tmatoke kualtitlani para neka obra, para neka okse obra ye ne te tikuis te amitla tchiwas pos ye beneficio del pueblo poreso ikino ne amo kema onihnik nikuis tomin, lunikamente no sueldo, lunikamente nosueldo, Dios nechmotilihtok nosueldo, pero yo creo nmeseroh... mmereserowaya porke ne de las tres de la... las nueve da la mañana para ni servicios pueblo, a las tres de la tarde no salida, nin chiwati juntas, otlakeh amo nsolistaroti non yonkaraki para obras nopakete nio nitati amo kchiwa cuenta kualtitlanis gobierno entonces, ya no nreclamaroti, nio chiwati keni movimiento papeles tlake amo ika ini limites ya nio hasta cerro de borrego nio ntlachiati aver keni para hasta tikahsiske kani limites, onkahsik gracias a Dios onkahsik mojoneras, amo poliwis setzi Dios ikonetzi tech nextili kani tontoke mojoneras, otkimahsike nika kolinia de "tlalchichilko" nochi hasta la poniente kuarenta deltra, teintaiuno hasta la kuarenta otkansike nochi limites takani pero pus de todas maneras otechkuilihke porke okse okarak tan fácilmente okualpacho imawa iwa okpanolti para Xolalpa, pero amo san ihko ika tomi, iwan despues ihko onechiwihke onechkonoserowaya licenciados kihtowa, kihtowa nexkita, te señora, e presidenta te amo omitz antojaro tomi, te amo omitzpanti tomi xa xkitah Liona kita ken tokpantia tomi, xkita ye okrecibiro millones de pesos para inon limites pues nimodos ye idecisión ye ihko kichiwa pero pus ino tomi amo kirendiros porke ini del pueblo, puz ihko ino ne hasta axa orita pus toh gentes nn... tehwatzi ximolejirohtzinoh tehwatzi yihmo niki komo ihki nnimi amo ne... kimihtoltia ntlachiah pero ye amo ntlachia ipus yihmo nwiliti ika no vista tla oyini novista kuale tleka amoh ne asta yonyehyoko orasi nocristiano ihni pero amo onakmonikiltihke xa axa orita aver ihki tero amitla kichiwa kihtowa amo pus tehwatzi sí otmokitipanowili tehwatzi sí la verdad tkrerowa tleno iwa axa tla oksipa timonekiltis tmokarakis mitzmakiliske voto porke tehwatzi si tmotikipanowilia iwa si tikita tleno techmopakiliah xa orita parna... parnan... pasarowa inihke presidentes nada, nada amitla techtlokoliah nochi yehwa, nochi yehwa morrikohtia, pero pus nimodos ya ne nonoh ya yonmikoko nonohtambien nose Diosito imando ya yonmokoko ya nechkokowa novista ya yihmo niwiliti pus ne nadamas ino mitzmolwiliah.

¿Ti... tim... timonigiltia este texch tlapowi kuak kuak otmochiwili marcha o an yahke ompa Orizaba?

A si pus ino noomitmolwilito ino oninchi marcha para Xolalpa notambien ino sobre de inon limites porke pus amo otechatenderowaya ye presidentes ontlatitlanili matkeskibiaje mawallo timotlapioske tidilogaroske porke ne amo nimoomiyaros ne amo nima nimoomiyaros por eso, kahki hasta se kansión de Vicente Fernández algo ihko, ne amo nimoomiyarowa ni el mas rriko sinoke ne onmoka para nkapoyaros el mas pobre, no por rrikos nimoomiyaros iwa por demas ke el pueblo nikahki amo kimihtlanilia itla Xolalpa amo kichtikili itla Xolalpa sino keh kichtikilihtoke nochi yokpisotiarohke nochi nekah yokuilihke wenyi territorio iwa axa kok segirowa kilia, segirowa kuilia, nkualihto para ne nmoomiyaros ompa iwa ntlehkos nunca oninchi marcha, oninchi marcha iwa, nochi pueblo cerca nochi omak miak, miak sapano, desde nika o... otimoke tnehninke hasta palacio de Orizaba,otnehninke hata ompa, hasta axa kani orita kahki municipio ompa otiahke otimarcharonke ideaompa otkiske, owehka otihkatoya ompa amo oki... amo okinikia waltimos presidente okitoaya mantlehko pos no señor ne amo ntlehkos porke ne amitla nikuilia ne neka Xolalpa nekah kuilihtok

Ixhuatlancillo nueve posos okiulihtoya de agua, de agua potable pz atzintle nochi kuika, iwa aparte rio palas kuika... kuikatoya inon rio anteriormenete kuikaya para Montesuama pero axa parece ke yihmo kikui Montesuma axa inon ye Xolalpa o... okuikak okidesbiaro pero ikichi se agua potabilizadora pero okatkaya yamati okikui para tlapakaske para tleno, pero despues ono ya nekah... kua onia onchiwato planton iwa tohnitzitzi wa onkili si amo waltimos presidente iwa si amo walas ich municipio a las setentaidos horas tikotonilske atl nochi posos tikintzacuaske porke nada motla kibeneficiarowa Ixhuatlancillo para ino nochi nekah... atzintle kuikatok, kuilihtok nion se peso amo kimaka Ixhuatlancillo, nochi ye yon ye knamak atzintle ye kin kobrarowa por, por el año, por mes no se ke tanto kikobrarowa pero kobrarowa entonces mientras ke Ixhuatlancillo pus amotla kiresibirowa iwa ne ino onikilwi pos amo nikilia para ntlehkos amo, entos okihtowaya matlehko se komitiva, no, no señor, nikhki amo tehwa tsegirowa tokamino pus owaltimos presidente tos owala kihtowa wallas tlanesis wallas pus ot... otichxke, otchixke pus si owalla las nueve de la mañana ya nika kahki omahkok se akta kan ya yihmok kchiwas abusos para Ixhuatlancillo ipatruyas nion ye ni nekah kikawilia atzintle porke a pesar de kahki colonia, alomejor yotmotili potabilizadora Citlalli ¿yotimotitili? E ino potabilizadora, ino nekahki... o, otkilwihke pus tehwa tkotonaske ino iwa ye la verdad ino nos... sa a pesar de ke ino colonias ihko kahkih nekah ompa kahki potabilizadora los alamos amokimakaya atzinte yehwa pobres okonia, kmomuia igarrafón iwa nekahki... ino para nekahki... chiwaske in limpieza no nekahki... okuaya nekah por, por pipas pero ich Orizaba kuando yehwa ompa panotok ino atzontle iwa iwa yehwa ompa otlaxtlahtoya ich impuestos nika lo ke es, San Juan Bautista, Los Alamos, Puerta chika, nich iwa tlahtlaxtlahtoke impuestos, iwa ahora nion atzintle amo kimaka iwa ye nika ewa atzintle pus onkualihto amo, ino ika ne toh ontlawelmil iwa ino ika ne no oninchi plantón, entonces después pus ino nekah oninchi plantón iwa ya de ompa otkiske palacio kintoke presidente si walas techatendero otiahke otichihke se marcha hasta Coordinación de Gobierno ompa tchihke se plantón iwa ompa otlapohke iwa codi... coordinador de gobierno iwa ino ompa y yonikili keni, kualihto amo ximpreokuparoh señora Alcaldesa ini orita mitz ayudaros, neka ichi la legislatura para ino mota ini man... namrreglaroske iwa tonses pus ikichi gobernador, notambién no... también noonechapoyaro iwa tambien ora si nekah non presidente owalla omahkok akta pus ya yihmo okichiwaya abusos non pedasitos yohmo okinwikaya no otlawanaya Puerta Chika non neyik Los Álamos non colonia San Juan Bautista yihmo kinwika nochi para nikak kinwalika pero xmotili onikara onikis okarak inon Florencio padenuevamante como yehwa tero sa inwa okatkaya, sa inwa okatkaya, claro ke ne no pus omprobecharohke para nika osegirohke xa hasta kampa Leonardo okarak lo mismo iwa axa se tiro oknamakake limites se tiro oahsike hasta Puerta Chica, ipus inon marcha si onechrespetaronke inon tonalle iwa no bandera ne amo, toaber tlimanech ayiltika iwa no bandera, okualihtoke tlinonechayiltiske nechmintiske ichohtleh, tleno, tleka nich iwa inon marcha tleka nikipinahtiti, pero nikilia amo wilito aber manechmintika iwa no bandera si nimikis iwa nobandera manechmintika nikiskihtas nobandera iwa iwan nias sata Xolalpa onnehni iwa pus tohnitzitzi no onechmotokilihke, no nika bien agradesida inwntznko porke, ya yehwantzi kuando onechsekestrarohke nekah ichi nekah... escuela notambien, primer año nima onechsekestrarohke ye Leonardo iwa Gaudencio Martínez Nicolás iwa nekah... nin Gar... Ernesto García iwa ino Liona nochi onechsekestrarohke, okololohke gente iwa inon tonale desde las tres de la tarde nechkarakihke ichidirección de la escuela, iwa hasta las tres de la mañana onechwalikake hasta nika ne kua horas owalah nekah komitiba de palacio de gobierno de la legislatura onechkixtihko iwa onechkawako hasta nika pero tohnitzitzi sakeh tleno ayihmok akiya kachi, neyik ihtik no kolal miak gentetzi, kayes nochi otrinke porke miantzitzitzi onechmokawiliko, pus milahka onechmapoyarwilihke nkinmakilia gracias iwa ne milahka pus nikinmotlasohtilia tohnitzitzi, respeto para no tohnitzitzi nika ichini pueblo porke onecha... mapoyarwilihke gracias a yehwantzitzitzi onikaraka nipresidenta onigobernaro ini municipio iwa tambien necmoapoyarwilihke igh ino ikuak onechsekestrarohke onechmokawiliko hasta nika porke ne onipiaya miedo nikisas iwa nechmolwilia ya xmokixti ya nika kate gente de gobierno mitzmokawilitiwe mochantzi, nechmokawiliko nika gracias a Dios, iwa

marcha ino pero gentehtzitz mirahka miantzitz sapano miatzi kana unos tres mil personas omuikake nechmuapoyarwilihke ichino marcha por lo limites, pero pus keh yamitzmolwilihtok la pez grande kachi mas kikua non pez pichintzi, entons yehwa kipia tomi yehwa komo toh recursos miak tlakobrarowa nochi pus seguro okawato tomi iwa ino ika amokema okinike necatendorohke hasta ika onikis, iwa ya inihke presidentes ya yokarake ya kuilpachohke inmawa pus ya yihmitla onka pero si ne si onlucharo onechpanti nikitipanos iwa oni... onechpanti nidemostrarwilis pueblo ke gobierno si techmaka tomi, porke anteriormente okihtoaya san dos años kin maka tomi se año ya yihmo kuan ya yowe salieda... ya... de salida ya yihmo kimaka ino, si, hasta el último año kinmaka tomi lo ke pasa yehwa nich i chinbolsillo, ichinbolsillo nochi, nochi ktalia tomi para yehwa iwa gente nika pus muy kreida amo kchiwa obras ini presidente orita dos años ya ini año ya yihmitla kichiwas porke tleka ya yihmitla kmakas gobierno no, sikimaka gobierno igobierno si kamatenderowa non tlen tehwatzi tmihtlanilitzinos ino nochi tla atl lo principalmente m... cua ompa se karakis ya sekmatís se presidente n... techsnotza techmaka capacitación lo mas impo... indispensable agua potable, drenaje, luz, ino lo mas indispensable para, para el pueblo y gracias a Dios ne onkintlapo drenajes kani amo okatkaya, luz onikaraki, atzintle onikinkarakili, lo ke mas oknesesaroya el pueblo pus ne ihko onikitipano hasta orita nika sastisfecha iwa nechilwia nopipilwantzitz, te xkita tero tipobre tero amitla motomi te otikis xkita amitla tinpiah mocha yino tipiah chiwani se tipantle wenyih kualtzi xmo areglaroanish tpanok tpresidenta, axkita siki presidentes mirahka moyehyehtlali ika inchahchanwa tipanme inchahchanwa keni, xkawaka yekmatih ne amo yihmo techilika e kuemach sasi inon kankihtohtoke ya kuale pus tla yehwa ihko nek ki okuike tomi pus yehwa okichtike pueblo pero ne amo onechpanti ne nika sastisfecha de ke ne nio kan nio tlatlansa no trabajo, nosudor, nodesbelos, kani ontlakua, kani amo ontlakua, ne onmotarohtoa Xalapa, las dos de la mañana yakinye niwitz nahsiki ompa nika, twalkias ompa ne, las doce yakinye nikisa ichi oficinas nechatinderowa e iwa ye ne nika pus ne nkita no obras kan tleno onisolisitaro onechmakake tos amo nin pia orasi keh nimoyolkokotos ken nikihtos tleka amo nechilia nocha pus yakuale amoheknikis, amoheknikuikas nocha ne nimikiti nimokawati Santokampo akinohke sikhike omotlayentalihke akinohke toh millonarios wilika yaske kani non pobre, ompa ichi la misma tierra techkuas tehwa, amo ne amo nmoyolkokowa pus yehwa nechwalahwa kihtowa porke siki kihtowa yehwa milahka inchahchanwa kuahkualeh milahka kuale kipia terrenos ora te amitla pus te axa xkita yotmokoko kentimpahtis gente tkapoyaro gente amomitzi, puz non amo pero ne lunikamente no Dios necmuapoyarwilia lunikamente yehwatzi nechmomakilia salud y vida y alimentos para nika nvivirohtok y pus ihko hasta orita nika amo nmoyolkokowa ika amo onmochanti ika amo ontlali tipamme, amo ontlali tlalti ne amo nmoyolkokowa nika muy contento lo ke Dios kimihtoltis, ihko inon kosas.

Kualika Tlazohkamati miak

Tlenye, tlenye.

APPENDIX III. NAHUATL VERSION OF THE NARRATIVE OF THE MAN WHO WENT TO TLALOCAN,

COLLECTED AND TRANSCRIBED BY ADÁN SANCHEZ, W. TRANSLATION BY MAGNUS PHARAO HANSEN

The Man Who Visited Tlalokan: a story in Nahuatl of Tlaquilpa, Veracruz

This story was told to Adán Sánchez Rosales by Luis Juárez Colohua of Zacamilola, Veracruz, on April 5th, 2014. Here Adán Sánchez re-narrates it from memory, in the variety of Nahuatl spoken in Tlaquilpa, Veracruz. The story tells of a man who visits the underworld kingdom of *Tlalokan* where all the wild animals

live and from where the life force of the earth emanates up to the surface where we live and give us our sustenance in the form of plentiful game and a bountiful harvest. It exhorts us not to vainly abuse the gifts that we receive from the ruling couple of Tlalokan or they will pay dearly. This story explains why the Nahuas of the Zongolica region have a taboo on hunting deer, and why they perform the ritual of *Xochitlalilistle* to ask permission before sowing.

Se Tlakatl Okalakki Tlalokan¹⁷⁶

Tlapowah kohkolmeh tlen powih itech altepetl Atlahuilco, Veracruz. Kihtowah yowehka okatka se siwatl tlen oawilnemiya, noso okikayawaya itlakaf. Siwatl okihtowaya kipiaya se Totahtzin tlen okineskayotiaya San Antonio. Nochipa okitlamakaya, inon Teotl otlakuaya, nochipa okititlaniaya itlakaf itech tepetl ma kitemotih masanakatl, pampa Teotl sanye inon tlakualli nakatl okipaktiaya. Tlakatl noso okitemotowaya masameh ika se kuaftlamintli iwan ika se itzkuintle omopalewiaya pampa kinkitzkes, iwan amo omokuapaya tla amo okiwalikaya masanakatl.

Se tonalli okahsik se masatl iwan ikikitzkiaya, inon masatl amo okimotekawilih ma kitzki iwan omotleloh iihitek se ostotl, iwan ye ikuitlapan omokahka. Kampa okitokaya oasik “Tlalokan”: se teotlalko kanin chantih nochtin yolkameh tlen powih “Tlaltikpak”. Ompa omoasik iwan Tlalokan Tata iwan Tlalokan Nana, tlen kitlanowatiah nochi yolilistli tlen powi Tlaltikpak. Nimantzin Tlalokan Tata okahwak, iwan okilih ma kinpahti ikan xiwitl tlen ika okiahwiliaya tepenakatl, nochtin yolkameh tlen okinkohkokoh iwan tlen okinixpoloh kampa okinkitzkiaya. Iwan ik nepa itzkuintle tlen okipalewiaya ochokaya pampa okipachiliayah. Satapan inon tlakatl okittak tlen inon yolkameh ayikmo yolkameh okatka, omokuapkeh tlaltikpaktlakameh iwan nochtli okokoxkatzahtziyah. Nimantzin se kalatl okinehmachih ma kitemo ewakaxiwitl iwan seki siwameh okimakaskiya tlikonextli iwan kampa okinxawiliskiya opahtiskiyah noso oyoliskiyah.

Satapan kampa yayi okimpahti, ompa Tlalokan okilihkeh ma kitikipano tlalli, ma kitoka milli. Non tlakatl otlaxafki, otokki iwan otlamih, iwan oasik se tonalli kampa chikawak okiafki iwan satekitl oehekak iwan ochapanki milli. Tlalokan Tata okinowati ma kiahkoki nochi tlen ochapankeh iwan tlakatl omomaftih. Okilih, “neh amo keman nitlamis kiahkokis kampa satekitl miak tekittl!” Ikuakihkon Tlalokan Tata okinowati ma kiahkoki ika seki tlaketzaltih. Iwan tlakatl oksemi okihtoh ye amo kualtis kampa ye okiyehyekoh kox ahmo ika kuaftlaketzalti. Satapan Tlalokan Tata okinowati ma kinololotih ome poxahtl yolkameh tlen nemi itech tlalli tlen kineskayotia tzintijeras. Iwan se poxahtli ma kikawatih kanin pewa tlatokalli iwan okse poxahtli ma kikawatih tlatlahko tlatoktli iwan ompa ma kinkahkawa. Ikuaihkon milli opehki moahkoki. Ikinon kihtowah tzintijeras nemi iihitik milli iwan moneki se kimalwis.

¹⁷⁶ The Nahuatl of Zongolica has a number of phonological peculiarities that are reflected in the orthography here and some that aren't. The letter <f> represents the sound [f] which is the devoiced allophone of the phoneme /w/ (which in Tlaquilpa is generally pronounced [v] word initially and between vowels). Another peculiarity is that in nouns of more than two syllables the stress is on the antepenult, and not on the penult as it generally is in Nahuatl. At the same time sometimes the final absolute suffix -tle is weakened to simply -tl. This sometimes causes final clusters of two vowels, something that also doesn't occur in most nahuatl varieties. Finally the sequence -ia which ends many verbs in the present tense is pronounced as simply as [-i] with stress, meaning that verbs in -ia phonetically have stress on the last syllable, but phonemically on the penult.

Kampa otlanki okichi nochi tekitl okikawilihkeh ma mokuapa ichan, Tlaltikpak, kampa owalewak. Ompa Tlalokan okiwalmakakkeh seki chikolatl, noso oyetoski kemin tomin kampa ika ahsik in Tlaltikpak. Okuaihkon ompa Tlaltikpak yayi opanoka chikome xiwitl kampa opolika. Iwan ikuaihkon isiwatzin yayi omonamiktiskiya iwan teixpatlak. Ihkon okiliaya ompa Tlalokan, ye amo okineltokaya. Ompa okinowatihkeh ma kichiwa se ixkopinaliskayotlachiwalis ma ixnesto kemin se masatl, iwan ye ik amo okineltokaya. Pampa kineltokas tlen okiliayah yolcameh, okititlankeh tosan ma kikuiti seki xokotamalli iwan seki nakatl inon seki tlakualti tlen mochiwa pampa ika monamiktia. Iwan ihkon ika okineltokak.

Kampa okiski ompa Tlalokan oasis Tlaltikpak iwan oyahki kanin tlailwitilia. Ompa seki masewaltih okitlahtlaniliaya ixkopintlachiwalistli pampa ika mihtotiskeh, iwan ye amo okinek. Okitlahtlanilih ma kiwalikilikan tlakatl tlen omonamiktih iwan okimaktilih ixkopinkayotl tlachiwalistli, ye okinowati ma kiwalikili siwatl. Kampa oahsikoh okintlatzinilih ika se tlakohtli, yehwan omokuapke masameh iwan ocholohkeh itech tepeyo, pampa ahsitiweh ompa Tlalokan kitlaxtlawatiweh in tlahtlakolli. Noso tla yehwan amo oawilnemiskiyah, inon tlakatl amo okinmiktiskiya masameh iwan ika okitlamakaskia teixpatlak. Okinon kihtowa tokohkoltzitzinwan: moneki se kintlahtlatilis iwan innawak se motlapohpolwis Tlalokan Tata iwan Nana, kampa se tokas, noso kampa yehwan kitlanowatia yolcameh tlen powi tlaltikpak iwan patiyoh tlaxtlawaskeh masewaltih tlen kintlahyowiltiskeh yolcameh.

The Man Who Visited Tlalokan

The old people who live in the town of Atlahuilco, Veracruz tell this story. They say that long ago there was a woman who lived for pleasure, or in fact she cheated her husband. The woman, said she had a God, an image of San Antonio. She always fed it - that God ate - and she sent her husband to the mountains to fetch deer meat, because that meat was the only food that pleased the God. So the man went in search of deer with his bow, and with a dog that helped him catch them, and he did not turn back unless he brought deer meat.

One day he found a deer and wanted to grab it, but the deer didn't let him grab it, and it ran into a cave, and he was left behind it. Where he followed it, he reached Tlalokan: A magic place where all the animals in the world have their home. There he found Tlalokan Tata and Tlalokan Nana, who rule over all living things on the face of earth. Right away Tlalokan Tata scolded him, and told him that using the same herb that he used to season his game meat, he had to cure all the animals he had hurt, but which had escaped before he could trap them. And over there, the dog that had helped him was howling, because they were beating it. Then the man saw that those animals were no longer animals, they had turned into humans, like the ones on the earth surface, and they were all crying with pain. Then right away a frog advised him to go find avocado leaves, and some women would give him ashes, and when he washed them with it, they would heal or come back to life.

Then when he had finished healing them there in Tlalokan, they told him to go work the land, to plant corn. The man worked the earth, he planted, and he finished, and a day came when it

rained hard and the wind blew, and the corn plants fell over. Tlalokan Tata ordered him to raise up all that had fallen, and the man was scared. He said "I will never finish raising it all up, that is a lot of work, too much work!" then Tlalokan Tata ordered him to raise it up with some wooden sticks. And once again the man said that it was impossible, unless it was with sticks made of entire trees. Then Tlalokan Tata ordered him to go gather two bags of those little animals that go around on the ground and which they call "scissortails," the earwig. And one bag he would go and leave where the rows of corn begin, and the other bag he would go and leave in the middle of the rows, and there he would leave them. And that way the corn plants began to stand upright. That is why they say that one must take good care of the earwigs that live inside the cornfield.

There he finished doing all the work, they let him return home to the surface of the earth where he had come from. There in Tlalokan, they gave him some chocolate that would be like money with which he could return to the surface of the earth. But there back on the surface of the earth, five years had already passed while he was lost. And with that his wife now wanted to marry her lover the God. That is what they told him there in Tlalokan, but he didn't believe it. There they advised him to make a fashioned image that should look like a deer, but he still didn't believe it. In order that he might believe what the animals were telling him they sent the gopher to bring some sour tamales, some meat and some of the food that is made when someone gets married. And with that he believed it.

When he came out of Tlalokan he arrived on the earth's surface, and he went to where the feast was. There, some *masewales*¹⁷⁷ asked him for the fashioned image because they would dance with it, but he didn't want to. He asked them instead to bring the groom and he would give him the image, and he asked for them to bring out the bride. When they arrived he struck them with a stick, and they both turned into deer and fled into the mountains. They would go to arrive in Tlalokan where they would have to pay for their misdeeds. Because if they did not live for pleasure, that man would not have killed deer, with which she fed her lover. This is what our grandparents say: One must ask them for permission, and one must apologize to them, to Tlalokan Tata and Tlalokan Nana, when one sows, for they rule over all the animals that live on the surface of the earth, and they will pay dearly those *masewales* who hurt the animals.

*APPENDIX IV. NAHUATL AND ENGLISH VERSION OF THE NARRATIVE OF THE CREATION OF THE
SUN, COLLECTED AND TRANSCRIBED BY ADÁN SANCHEZ W. TRANSLATION BY MAGNUS PHARAO HANSEN*

¹⁷⁷ The word *masewal* refers to people who are indigenous, and who typically live in the countryside. It carries the connotations of being "Indian," being "a peasant," being "poor" and of being an "ordinary person" from the point of view of Nahua people in the region. People who are light skinned or who comes from a city and dress and act like cityfolks are not *masewales* but *pinomeh*. Here the word might simply be translated as "people".

How the Sun and Moon Were Made: A story in Nahuatl of Tlaquilpa, Veracruz

This story was told to Adán Sánchez Rosales by Luis Juárez Colohua of Zacamilola, Veracruz, on April 5th, 2014. Adán Sánchez Rosales recorded and transcribed it, making some minor edits consisting particularly in the replacement with some Spanish loan words with their Nahuatl equivalents. The story is a cosmogonic myth, telling about the mythical origins of the the present sun and moon. It is a version of the well-known Mesoamerican creation myth that is found in the Popol Wuj and the Leyenda de los Soles, but it is remarkable in that this version clearly is as an independent oral tradition among the Nahuas of the Zongolica region of Veracruz. It has several similarities with both the K'iche' maya Popol Wuj: in both stories the protagonists are magical twin hunters, who slay a monstrous animal (here a snake with glowing eyes, in the Popol Wuj a parrot with a golden beak) who was the first sun before becoming celestial bodies themselves. But it also resembles the narrative of the 16th century "Leyenda de los Soles," which is also found among the Cora, in which the sun and moon have their origin as children who sacrifice themselves by jumping into fire in order to become the Sun and Moon. Two other elements found in other Uto-Aztecán traditions is the prominent role of the deer and the dog. Here the dog is described as the herald of the sun, likening it in this way to the morning star.

Ken omochih Tonalli Iwan Metztzin

Yowehka kihtowah okatka se mamantzin tlen otlahpiatowaya itech tepoyo. Se tonalli ompa okasik ome totoltemeh iwan okinwalikak ichan. Iwan kihtowah okinpachowaya ken se totoltenan. Kampa otlahpiatowaya okinwikaya itech ichikiwef. Nochipa okinwikatenemi. Kampa oasik tonalli kanin otlapankeh, iwan ompa okiskeh ome chokomeh.

Inon chokomeh kampa omoskaltihkeh sawil omawiltiyah, iwan amo tlawelkakkeh. Okatka inon mamantzin yeh nochipa okiposoniaya tomakilitl. Iwan okinkatewaya chokomeh. Kinnowatiaya amo kitokaskeh kampa ye kitlamakaten in kohkolli, tlen omoestoka ipan chikomeh tepetl. Kampa ahsitowaya okitlakuikiliaya:

Masatl! Masatl!

kampa tinehnemi?

Mopampa, mopampa,

nichokatenemi...

Kampa mamantzin omokopatowaya, oahsikowaya chokomeh atlanki otlaxixitetzaya. Okimafaya, kampa okinekki kimpachilis omotlelowayah tlehkotiwe itech awayo. Kampa kintemowis mamantzin okiliaya "xipitlawi awatzintle!" iwan chokomeh okiliaya "xitomawi awatzintle!" Iwan amokeman okualti kimpachilis.

Se tonalli chokomeh okualankeh tleka amo okinkawiliaya ma kitokakan kanin kitlamakatin intahtzin. Iwan amo okitlawelkakkeh innantzin. Okitlahmachpixtiyahkeh, iwan oahsitoh ipan chikome tepetl ompa okittakkeh inantizn tlakuikatif:

Masatl, masatl

kampa tinehnemi

mopampa mopampa

nichokatenemi...

Kampa okittakkeh itempan se ostotl okisako se mazatl omoketzako ipan se tetl. Iwan kampa kikuas tlakualli achto okitlehkowaya mamantzin iwan satepan otlakuaya. Kampa ihkon okittakkeh chokomeh okualankeh. Se tonalli okitlahtlanelihkeh ma kinkowili se sakatlamintli, ye noso okinkowilih. Yehwan satepan okimopialtihkeh masatl, iwan okimiktihkeh, okinakayokixtihkeh, iwan ewatl okihtzonkeh iwan okitemohkeh kuawetzontih, ihtik ewatl okitilinihkeh iwan okiketzahtewakeh ken oyetozki yoltok.

Moztlapan kampa nantzin oyahki otlahpiato, chokomeh okitliwatzkeh masanakatl. Kampa omokuap tiosiwitwitz, iwan yehwan okimakakkeh masachil ma kikua. Ye okintlahtlani kani okuito tochi, yehwan amo okilihkeh. Iwan omoyehyekotewa omotleloh ipan chikome tepetl okiwikilih itomakiltzin, kitlamakaten. Kampa oahsik opehki kitlakuikili:

Masatl, masatl

kampa tinehnemi

mopampa mopampa

nichokatenemi...

Yeh omoketztoke ipan tetl iwan amo omoliniaya. Nantzin okualankeh iwan okinakastlamawito. Owetzito masatl iwan ipan okiskeh kuawetzomeh okitzohtzopitihkeh.

Kampa omokahkeh chokomeh. Ihkuakinon altepetlakameh omolochowaya kampa ayimo okinekiyah kowatl, tlen ika ixtololowan otlawihtoka, ma kinkualia okachi inkonewan. Yehwan okinehnekia ome tlakameh tlen yolchikawakkeh kampa ma yakan ma kimiktiti inon kowatl. Kih towah kampa okochiya omochiwaya yowak iwan kampa otlachiaya okatka tlanexotl. Iwan kampa oihsaya, okilewaya se konetl, kampa mewas iwan tlakuas. Ihkuaikon tlawihtos iwan amo okinmahmawtiski tlaltikpak tlakameh.

Inon ome chokomeh, yehwan okihtohkeh yaskeh. Inon kowatl kih towah opowiaya ipan se tepetl. Kampa yehwan oyahkeh, okinwikakkeh se weyi tetolontli. Iwan kampa okahsito, okixotlaltihkeh tlitl iwan okixotlaltihkeh tetl. Kampa otlachixkeh iwan okamachalo kampa konetl okimakaskiya, yehwan okikahkawilihkeh tetl xotlatok ikamak. Iwan omikki ihkon kamachalohtok. Kih towah chokomeh kampa omikki kowatl, omokuapke ke seki Teomeh. Iwan se chohko, tlen satepan omokuapaski Teotahtzin, okilih iiknen ma motlelohtikisa iwan ma kikopinilli se iixtotololo. Iwan yeh amo okinek. Ihkuak ihkon owala se xikohtl, tlen kipakti tlapalanalistle itech yoltos, iwan okilih "xikalaki, amo ximawili, ne yononkalaka itenko iwan itzintlan ononkisato iwan oksemi itzintlan ononkalak iwan itenko ononkisako!" Kampa inon okikakkeh tlen satepan oyetoski Tonaltzin omotlelohtikiski okonkuilito se ixtololo, iwan itech oahsik se weyi tlanexotl. Ihkuak ihkon omotlelohtikiskeh, okse chohko iwan okopinili okse ixtololo inon ayikmo kualli oxotlatiwaya kampa xikohtl chakalimeh yayi okiwalikaya. Iwan inin chohko omokuapki Metzin, ikinon axan chakalchapani Metzin,

Satepan owalahkeh inchan, ihkuak ihkon in nantzin oasiko inchan chokatiwitz. Iwan kinmilih tleka okimiktihkeh masatl, kampa inon intahtzin okatka. Inon chokomeh yayi Teomeh okatka kampa okitzintoroketzewakkeh iwan omokuapke Temaskalli. Iwan okilitewake "axan

nonkan timokawas tikinpahtis mopilwan ompa motlalexpan.” Iwan inon chokomeh kihtowah oyahkeh ompa chikometepetl kanin ochantiaya intahtzin, iwan okixotlaltihke kuafyoh. Kampa omimilikatiaya tlen Tonaltzin okilih Meztin ma motlelo ihtik tlitl kampa kittaskeh akin okachi chikawak. Iwan Metzin amo okinek, ihkuak ihkon oksemi omotlelohtikiski Tonaltzin iwan okiewaltihtia nochin tlitl. Iwan ikotlapan omokahka Metzin. Iwan okololohtia sayen tlixochtli. Ikinon kihtowah axan Tonaltzin sawil tetlati iwan Metzin motta tzikonextik.

Kampa ayikmo okatka kowatl pampa tlawis, tlaltikpak tlakameh iwan yolkameh nochtin okichiyaya kampa kanin ik kisakkeh Tonaltzin. Ihkuak inon kihtowah yolkameh iwan tlakameh otlapowaya. Kampa omonextikoski kihtowah xoloitzkuintli okimilih kisas ik ne tlane iwan motlatis ik totzompan. Iwan tlaltikpak tlakameh okualankeh kampa okihtowaya yehwan okachi kimatih iwan okilihkeh xoloitzkuintle “Teh tlan tikmatis? Teh titzkuintli!” iwan okikamawitekkeh. Ikinon kihtowah itzkuintle ayikmo tlapowa.

Ik nepa kawayoh noihki okichiaya Tonaltzin iwan yeh iwan omokualanihtoka pitzotl. Okiliaya “Teh tisokiyoh! Amo kualli nikan xieto! Xif tiktemaka tepinawilistli. Neh kema kwaltis nikittas Tonaltzin kampa neh nichipawak!” Iwan tlaltikpak tlakameh nechaltintoke iwan notech paxialowah. Teh amo tikualtzin” Iwan pitzotl okilih “Neh kema nisokiyoh, amo nichipawak ken teh. Iwan neh kampa tlaltikpaktlakameh nechkuaskeh, achto in nechaltiskeh, nechtekaskeh ipan in tlapochtlakoaloni iwan nechtlapohpolwiskeh, kampa nechkuaskeh. Iwan teh maski tichipawak amo keman in kalihtik mitzkalakiskeh, kampa timikes ompa moixtlawak tiwetzto, tipalanis iwan mitzkuaskeh tzohpilomeh amo ken neh” Iwan pitzotzintle ayikmo itla okachi okihtoh (iwan nelli ihkon axan mostla mochiwa).

Kampa ihkon nochtin motlapowiya. Xoloitzkuintle omotlelohtikiski ipan se tepetzintle kampa okisakoski Tonaltzin. Ikinok kihtowah itzkuintli mokuapke itopileh Tonaltzin, kampa ye nochipa kichixtos Tonalli kampa mototonis. Iwan tlaltikpak tlakameh ik nowian okihtowaya kisaki in Tonalli. Kampa okisako itzkuintle achton okahsik iwan kampa tlakameh okimahsik Tonalli omokuapkeh nohpaltih, ikinon axan ik nowian kekepanitoke, kampa kinehneki Tonaltlawilli.

How the Sun and Moon was made

Long ago they say there was an old woman who herded her sheep in the mountains. One day she came upon two eggs and brought them home with her. And they say she would sit on them like a hen. When she went to herd her sheep she carried them with her in a basket. She always goes around carrying them. Then came the day that they hatched, and there two boys came out.

When those two boys came to life they played all the time, and they not well behaved. So it was the old woman, she always boiled nightshade leaf. And she left the boys. She told them not to follow where her she would go leave food her husband who was waiting at Seven Mountain. When she came arriving there she went singing for him:

Deer! Little deer!

Where are you hiding?

For you, just for you,

I go around crying...

When the old woman returned, she would find that they had finished making a mess of things. She scolded them and when she wanted to beat them, they ran away to climb up an oak. In order to get them down, the old woman told the tree "please become slender little oak," and the boys told it "please become thick little oak!" And she could never beat them.

One day the boys got angry because she didn't let them follow her to where she would give their father his meal. So they didn't obey their mother. They just went about guarding secrets for her, and when they arrived at Seven Mountain, there they saw their mother go singing:

Deer! Little deer!

Where are you hiding?

For you, just for you,

I go around crying...

Then they saw a deer coming out from the mouth of a cave, and it came to stand on a rock. And when it was going to eat the food, first it mounted the woman, and then it ate. When the boys saw that, they were furious. One day they asked her to buy them a bow, and she bought it for them. Then they stalked the deer, and they killed it, they flayed its body, and they sowed the skin together, and they found wasps, and they filled them tightly packed inside the skin, and they left it standing upright as if it were alive.

The next day, when the mother went to herd, the boys dried deer meat by the fire. When she returned, she came with hunger, and they gave her deer the deer's penis to eat. She asked where they had gone to find meat, and they didn't tell her. And she thought she would run up to Seven Mountain. She brought him his nightshade leaf, she went to give it to him. When she arrived she began to sing for him.

Deer! Little deer!

Where are you hiding?

For you, just for you,

I go around crying...

But he, he just stood on the rock, and didn't move. The mother got angry and pulled his ear. The deer fell down, and the wasps came out all over her, and they stung her over and over.

Then they boys were left. And at that time the people of the town had gathered because they no longer wanted that the snake, who was lighting up the world with its eyes, should continue to eat more of their children. They wanted two men who were strong of heart to go and kill that snake. They say that when it slept, it became night, and when it was awake it was daylight. And when it awoke in the morning, it wanted a child, in order to get up and eat. Then it would light up the world and not scare the people on the surface of the earth.

Those two boys, they said they would go. That snake they say, came from a mountain. When they went, they brought a big round rock. And when they reached it, they lit a fire and heated up the rock. Then they waited, and when it opened its mouth when they were supposed to give it the child, they dropped the burning rock into its mouth. And it died, with its mouth open like this. They say that the boys, when the snake was dead, turned into Gods. And one boy, who would later become a God, told his brother to run in and out and grab one of its eyeballs. But he didn't want to. And then came a fly, that likes to live near rotten things, and it said "Just go inside, don't be afraid of it. I already went in its mouth once and came out its butt. And then I went in its butt and came out of its mouth!" Then they listened to it, and the one who would become the sun ran in quickly and grabbed one of its eyeballs, and with it he achieved a great light. And when the other boy quickly ran in the same way, he grabbed the other eyeball, but that one no longer lit up well, because it was now infected with the larvae of the fly. And that boy became the moon, and today the moon spits larvae.¹⁷⁸

Then they came home, and then their mother came home crying. She asked them why they had killed the deer, because that one had been their father. And those boys, who were now Gods, took her and stood her on all four with her butt up in the air and they turn her into a Steam bath tent. And they left her saying "Now you will stay here, you will cure your children there on the ground." And the two boys they say, went to Seven Mountain where their father lived and they lit the forest on fire. When it burst into flame, the one who was the Sun, told the Moon to run through the fire, in order to see who was the strongest of them. And the Moon didn't want to, so the Sun ran through it and went raising up all the fire. But the Moon was left behind. And he could only gather a few embers. That is why today they say that the Sun burns hot, and the moon just looks ashen gray.

Because there was no longer a snake to light the day, the people on the surface of the earth and all the animals were all waiting for where the sun would come out. So they say that back then the humans and the animals could talk. When it was just about to come out dawning, they say that the hairless dog told them that it was going to dawn down over there and it would go down behind us. And the people of the earth got angry because they thought they know more and they told the dog "You, what do you know? You're just a dog," and they hit it on the mouth. They say that is the reason that the dog no longer speaks. Over there the horse was also waiting for the sun, and it was angry with the pig. It told it: "You are dirty! You can't be here, go somewhere else to make an embarrassment of yourself! I, on the other hand, can be here to see the sun because I am clean! And the people of earth will bathe me and go places with me. But you are not pretty!" And the pig said "Yes, I am dirty, I am not clean like you. But the people of earth will eat me, and when they do, they will bathe me and lay me down on a nice bed and they will forgive me because they will eat me. You on the other hand, though you clean you may be, they will never take you inside, and when you die you will just lie in the field and rot and the vultures will eat you. Not like me." And the little pig never spoke more (but it was true that that is what happens today).

And that is how everyone spoke. The dog ran out on a mountain when the sun was about to come out, and they say the dog became the *topileh*, the staffbearer, of the sun, because he is always there waiting for the sun in order to warm itself. And the people of the earth went about saying that the sun would come out all over the place. But when it did come out it was the dog that it touched

¹⁷⁸ There is a certain kind of luminescent larva that sometimes seems to fall from the sky when there is a full moon, it is called *metzokwilih* "moon worms" and it is thought that they are the worms of the fly that falls from the moon.

first, and when it touched the people they turned into *nopal* cactuses, which are now everywhere growing up on top of each other because they want the sunlight.

APPENDIX V. THE YELLOWHAired GIRL - A STORY IN NAHUATL OF HUEYAPAN, MORELOS

This story was told by Trinidad Espinosa Barrera of Hueyapan, Morelos, to her granddaughter when she was a child, and who wrote it down in Nahuatl from memory when she was older. It is a moral tale, exhorting us to treat with respect the corn that gives us our sustenance. There is a long tradition in Mesoamerica of personalizing corn in the form of a young maiden with yellow hair representing the tassels of the flowering cornstalk. The narrator consistently uses honorific forms to describe the protagonist Don Agustín. Hueyapan Nahuatl has one of the most complex systems of honorific expression with three levels of reverentiality.¹⁷⁹

In Ichpokatzonkostik¹⁸⁰

Okatkayāya seppa se tlākatl tominpixki. An okipixkāya miak sentle. An pan se xiwitl in tlaōlālle okitlahkaltēn ītlālpan. Inon tlākatl ammo okitlahsotlāya in tlātlaōltzin. Peroh nemaktle inon. An nochipa tikpehpenāskeh. Aik tiktlahkalikān. An axān tikmatīs tlēka.

Sē tlākatzintle kwahkwihki ītōka Agustintzin okwahkwitiwaloāya kwohtlan. Kwak otlehkotiwayā īpan Xonakayoh okikak sē ichpokatōn ochōkatāya. Peroh Agustintzin ammo omoketzalok, san okipanok an otlehkotiwayak. Ammo tominpixki yehwatzin, sān tēsoātzin okipiāya an nāwi tēkōkonentzitzinwān, ān sē teaxhnotzin. An de kwalle mawesohtik yeh. Por inon kwak otemolok de īikpak in tepētl ān okseppa okikak in ichpokatōn ochōkatāya, axān kēma okilpih in tēaxnohtzin, an okitehtemolok de kānin owāllāya inin chōkilistle. Omokalaktilih īpan ītlāl sē tominpixki an okittak sē ichpokatōn kwaltōntzin, okipiyāya kostik ītzon, kostik, kēmen tōnaltzintle, an īka wēyak, okipanowiāya ītlānkwaterwān.

- "Tlēka tichōka?" okitlahtlanih in Agustintzin. An ichpokatōn otēnānkilitzinoh.

- "Ammo nēchtlasohtla in noteko. Onēchtlahkaltēn. Ipeh melāwak sān nitlaōlālle peroh kwalle sē nēchkwās, noihki nitlakwalle."

In Agustintzin ammo okahsikamatilok. Yehwatzin okilwīlok:

- "Ye kalakīs in tōnaltzintle titlayōwakilīskeh tiyakān tochān. Tlā ammo tikpiya kānin timokāwās, tehwān ammo tikpiyah miyak tlātlaōltzin peroh kwalle titlakwāskeh tonochtīn. Kipiya kwalle iyolloh nosoātzin. Ompa timokallotzinōs, totlān. Tikneki?"

¹⁷⁹ See also Johansson, Patrick, Johansson, Patrick. 1989. El sistema de expresion reverencial en Hueyapan, Morelos. *Tlalocan* XI. 149-162

¹⁸⁰ Though vowel length is contrastive in both of the varieties of Nahuatl represented here, this is the only one of the stories where it is marked orthographically with a macron above the vowel. The orthography does not represent the most salient phonological feature of hueyapan Nahuatl, namely that between vowels /k/ is voiced to [g], and /w/ is lenited to [β], and /kw/ is voiced to either [gw] or simply [w].

- "kēma, kwalle tlākatzintle," okihtoh in ichpokātōn. "Nikneki niyās amotlāntzitzinwān. Peroh achto nimitz molwilitzīnōs: Pan nīn xiwitl ximotlaōltōkatzīno, ankikwāskeh miak yēlotl. Timopixkilis miak sentle, pampa tehwatzin nochipa tinēchmalwitzīnōs"

Agustintzin axān kēma okinemiliāya: "Inin soātl mati ammo kawal" Peroh amitla okinānkilih sān okikaktaya. In ichpokātōn omotlapachtlalitāya. Kwak otēmakak Agustitzin imātzin para momākitzkis, axān onēsiya in itzon kēmen xilomotzontle. Okinek kimatelānas, ān sān okahsitāya sē tlaōllālmalkochtle. Ihkon omokwop.

Achto omomohtitzinoh, peroh satepan okahsikamatīwak tlonon okinekiya tēilwīs: Inin ichpokātōn ipēh melāwak in tlātlaōltzin oyīya. Okipehpenalok nochi in tlaōllālle, an okimemeltih in tēaxnohtzin. An opanok kēnin otēilwitzīnōh in ichpokatzonkostik: Okikwahkeh miyak yēlotl an okipixkeh miyak sentle, yehwatzin an tēchānehkāwān.

Por inon ammo xiktlahkali in tlātlaōltzin. Kwak tikittās tlapān tlamantok, xikahkoki, xikilnāmiki, xikmālwi. Yehwa nōihki kimachilia kwak tiktehtepitza, an chōka in ichpokatzonkostik.

APPENDIX VII "WHEN I THRESHED CORN," MEMORY OF FARMWORK IN THE 1950S, HILARIN MONTIEL

BENITEZ, HUEYAPAN

In nehwa niLarín Montiel Benitez.

Se vez oniyah San Juan Ahuehuevo. An se tlakatizintle itoka Don Elfego, pero san telwia Don Fego, An nechilia:

- "Mire usted Don Hilario."

Inon ye Español.

An kan nechilia:

- "Mire usted don Hilario. Usted, usted de tierra fria."

Nikilia: "kema".

Kihta:

- "kemman tiyas ipan morumbohtzin?"

Nikilia:

- "Pos neh ammo nikmati hombre. Amati kemman niyas porkeh nan nikpiya tekittl. an nikpiya onextokkeh in nopatron siete maquilas de nosiesiempra an nikkixtis in sasakah an nikpixkas in nosesen."

Entonces, in Don Fego okinekiyah siki pioneros, okinekiya masan diecisiete veinte pioneros.

An kan nitelia:

- "Para tlon timonekiltis inon in pioneros miyakkeh."

Kihta:

- "Ay, Don Hilario. Yo en este año me fue muy bien la cosecha. Recogí como cientocuarenta cargas de mazorca. Entonces yo quiero unos desgranadores, y por eso le estoy diciendo cuando va usted por su rumbo."

An kan nikilia nehwa:

ammo nimati kemman niyas, pero de todos modos, an tla man tikittatih ompa mochantzin in mocosechahtzin, que tanto. timittalias cientocinquenta cargas de mazorca xa man tikittatih entonces otiyahkkeh an nikittatoh and ave maria purisima se corredor tentok de sentle.

Nitelia inon:

- "pos nehwa nocompremeteroa nikoas in mosentzin."

An kan omoketzalo an keh kin kihta:

-“Pero no Don Hilario, a poco yo creo que nada más lo va a desgranar usted solito? no, yo no creo.”

Entonces in nehwa onocompremeteroh

An nitelia

-“nehwa nikoas.”

An yehwatzin nechilia kihta:

-“ay aquí va a estar usted un año solito.”

Nikilia:

-“ahi veremos.”

Pero nehwa como nikmati se truco ken nitlaoas, pero inon sentle de inon San Juan Ahuehueyo se Rancheria. Entonces onechittititoh in tesen. An yikah.

Entonces nitelwia:

-“Komo nikittah in ompa techan nochi tlalle ammo keh kipiya cementado para nehwa oyeskia keh bien se cementado porkeh non cementado nechayudaroa mucho. San niksowa in sentle ma san treinta cargas an kan kemah ipan nitlatehtepitzas. xtilitzinoh compadre! Peroh tla nitohtia. Nikmaka in cumbia! Pero cumbia ipan sentle, ihkin pan sentle. Nitlatehtepitza, nitlatehtepitza. Pero ximottillih.”

Entonces yehwatzin ammo kineltokakkeh

Tonces nitelia:

-“Don Fego, tiene usted una petatera?”

Kihta:

- “No Don Hilario, tengo hasta dos petateras, yo siempre siembro frijoles y azoto frijol. Tengo dos petaterotas. Pero usted para que quiere la petatera? Que va usted a dormir?”

Nitelia:

- “Ayammo, ayammo timottilia tlonon, san nehwa timopilia in petatera. orale.”

- “Y usted cuando le va usted a entrar Don Hilario?”

Nitelia, lunes, primeramente la voluntad de arriba, nopersinaros, la voluntad de dios. Lunes Ave Maria Purisima.

Inon Lunes onen an komo non ompik tierra caliente tlatotonia, entonces onen a las cuatro de la mañana. an niksowa in petatera an nikkixtia keh treinta cargas. Entonces sobre de treinta cargas open nihtotia an nitlatehtepitza ipan. Nitlaoxtika, nitlaoxtika inon truco pero xilitzinoh compadre. Nitlaoa, nitlaoa, nihtotia ipan sentle, sesentzin.

Entonces yehwatzin como cebollero okis oyah ikwawistlan anenecuilco okittatoh in cebolla.

Comerciante de cebolla.

Entonces nehwa a las cuatro de la mañana nitlaoxtika para a las diez de la mañana yi nikpiyah diecisiete cargas de maíz pero amontonados ihkin. Después yehwatzin oyah Kwawistlan Anenecuilco de retache owalwilak ompik San Juan Ahuehueyo pan se puente kilnamiki.

bueno in nehwa ompa kwak nitlaoxtika ompa oyakhe in molino in señoras an soameh hasta kitlalihkeh in inkokobeta ompa okimankeh nechitztikateh kenin nihtotia pan sentle.

In nehwa nikis se lado den petatera an yi nikmakatika in cumbia, nihtotia an nikimixnotza man nechayudarotih se de non soameh pero konahsikkeh ye yiweh pinahkeh opinahkeh entonces yoyahkeh.

Entonces nepik den puente tenamik in Don Fego. Entonces kihtah:

-“Que pasó Don Fego, allá pasamos en su casa, allá tiene usted un bailarín.”

An kan nehwa komo nehwa nonombre nilarín pos nihtotia ompa pero ipan sentle.

Walwilak ammo ketzalo nechitta kihta:

”No, pero este ya sabía usted que iba a hacer. Pensaba yo que no.

Nitelia pos ximottili a ver tla keh inon timottilih nikochis pero ammo keh nikochi.

APPENDIX VI. SAYINGS, RIDDLES, JOKES AND TONGUETWISTERS FROM HUEYAPAN

All of these are from Hueyapan, Morelos, told by Hilarin Montiel Benítez, Petra Ariza Jimenez and Modesta Lavana Pérez. These texts mark vowel length with a macron above long vowels, this makes it easier to get a feel of meter and rhythm.

Three Riddles

- *Tlāllān kākahontzin. Tlonon? Tlālkakāwatl*
A little box under the ground. What is it? A peanut.
- *Tlāllan tlāntepostle. Tlonon? Xikamatl.*
An iron for the tooth under the ground. What is it? A jicama.
- *Kwohtikpak līlistōntzin. Tlonon? Huaxih.*
A little ribbon up in a tree. What is it? The seedpod of the huaje tree.

A tongue twister:

amekakapolkopalkwowitl xikwālilakatzo kwēlpachkwoptiwitzez

There is no meaningful translation of the phrase, the words have been collocated primarily for their sound. The individual words mean:

- *Amekakapolle* - "wild berry-vine"
- *kopalkwowitl* - "copal tree"
- *xikwālilakatzo* - "twist it towards here",
- *kwēlpachkwoptiwitzez* - "they come folding, turning over"

Sayings:

A challenge to a fight:

¿De katle tikkwāni: Pāpatlachtik kox tlahtlaoyoh?

Which are you accustomed to eating: the broad flat tamal or the bulky one filled with beans?

(The broad flat tamal is the open handed slap, and the bulky bean-filled one is the closed fist.)

The answer to the challenge is:

nikkwāni in nowān! '

I am accustomed to eating both!'

Sān se īnakas

“(s)he has only one ear”

This saying means that a person only hears that which is convenient to them, and ignores that which isn't.

Tlachiyah kēmen ostōtl ika ikonēn

“they look like the cacomizcle and its baby”

This saying is said about those who are always seen together and never apart.

Yēyemānki in ītlahtol

“his words are soft”

This is said of someone who speaks gently and in the high pitched voice that demonstrates respect and friendliness.

Sōātēmpotz, okichtlānkwich

“She is a woman-pout and man-smile”

Said about a woman who is serious and stern with other women, but smiling and outgoing with men.

Tōnakayotzin, Tōnakayotzin mān wēyiya in piltzintle kēmen yēyēlotzin

'Tonakayotzin, Tōnakayotzin may the child grow like a small corn cob.

This is said by an adult such a grandmother while she swings a fresh corn cob over the head of a toddler letting its hair touch the child's hair. The word Tonakayotzin is not used in any other context in Hueyapan, but is related to the concept of tonakayotl “sustenance” known from colonial Nahuatl. The following is a playful parody of the same saying. Notice the playful use of reduplication and sound similarity in juxtaposing kwihkwi “grab repeatedly” with kwīkwītl “little turd” and kwōkwoh- “little tree”

Tōnakayotzin, Tōnakayotzin xikwihkwi mokwīkwītl ika se kwōkwohtzin

'Tōnakayotzin, Tōnakayotzin, keep grabbing your little turd with a Little stick.

Xochipitzawak - A wedding Song

This song is sung in many Nahuatl communities across Mexico. Friedlander (1976) argued that it had been introduced by the “cultural missions” of the Mexican state in the early 20th century, she gives a version from Hueyapan, Morelos. Another view is that it is a traditional Nahuatl wedding song. The poet and singer from Hueyapan Lino Balderas Pedraza performed and recorded a romantic version of the song in 1963, in a purist register of Nahuatl. These verses of the song which are less romantic and a bit more naughty still circulate among the older generations. They demonstrate a creative integration of Spanish and Nahuatl words, even rhyming between the languages – this register is typical of everyday spoken Nahuatl in Hueyapan, though some speakers consider it improper.

*Xōchipitsāwak del alma mia
kwalāni in monāna porke akmo niya
kwākwaltetzin moxayaktzin
ixtēxwakki motlaxkaltzin*

Slender flower of my soul
Your mothers angry because I know longer go
Your face is a pretty little thing
your tortillas of dried up dough

*kwak oniya nipiltontia
tlēn xompeleloh tlēn toquilla
axān yi niwēwetzin
sān xompeleloh de a cuartilla
when I was still a young man
Oh what a sombrero with its ribbon
Now I am already an old man
Just a sombrero worth a quarter*

*kwak ōniya nipiltōntle
nipetlāni kēn tēwilōtl
axān yi niwēwetzin
nitlahkaloa kēn tzompilōtl
When I was still a Young man
I shone like glass
Now I am already an old man
I stumble around like a vulture*

*kwak ōniwiya Pueblantzinko
ōnonamakato nopetlatera
ōnikonāmik se tlātlakwatzin
ōnēchonkixtili notontera
When I went to Pueblantzincó
I went to sell my woven mats*

I met myself a little possum
And he took a way my lack of wits¹⁸¹

*Niktlahkalli in nodespedida
tēch in ilpikachichille
mān Diotzin kimonekiltih
niktzotzomas inon wilchile*

I throw my farewell
Close to the red waistband [of a woman]
May God want it so,
That I get to slap that buttock

In Koyotl iwān in Tapachichi

Se koyotl onemīya wān okitzitzkih, okahsik, okitlānkwah, sē tapachichi.

Wān tapachichi momohtia kitlāntesīs, kitolōs, ān kilia:

'Īka kwākwaltzin in motlānkochwān īkanon tinēchtlāntesīs?'

An in koyotl ammo okinawatih san kihtoa: 'mmmm..'

An kilwia: 'īka kwākwaltzin monehnepil īkanon tinēchtolōs?'

Kihtoa in koyotl: 'mmmmmm...'

*Kihtoa: 'Nochi kwākwaltzin tikpiya. Nochi kwākwaltzin tikpiya
wān tinēchtolōs wān nipanōs mohtek.*

An nikīsatīn.

An nikīsatīn īpan motzitzīnko?'

An koyotl owetzkak: 'jajaja!'

okikahkān ān tapachichi opatlān.

Akmo omik. Akmo okikwah.

The Coyote and the Cricket (told by Modesta Lavana Pérez in 2004)

A coyote was out walking and he caught, he grabbed, he tooth-bit, a cricket.

¹⁸¹ (the Spanish word *tontera* “stupidity” here can also be understood as slovenliness, stupidity, innocence, or naivete, and the possum *tlatlakwatzin* is a near homonym of *tlatlakatzin* “a little man” giving a suggestive pun effect)

And the cricket is afraid that he will tooth-grind it, that he will swallow it, and it tells him:

With those beautiful teeth of yours, you will tooth-grind me?

The coyote didn't answer, he just says "mmmmmm" [still biting his teeth together around the cricket]

And it tells him: That beautiful tongue of yours, with that you will swallow me?

The coyote says: "mmmmmmmm"

And it says: Everything about you is beautiful. You're beautiful all over.

And when you swallow me and I pass inside your stomach.

And I will go to come out.

And I will go to come out through your beautiful little asshole.

And the coyote laughed: Ha ha ha!

And he let go, and the cricket flew away.

It didn't die. He didn't eat it.

10. ARCHIVAL SOURCES:

A. LETTER FROM INÉS TAPIA DE PÉREZ, HUEYAPAN. REQUESTING LEGAL HELP AGAINST

ACCUSATIONS OF BEING A WITCH, 1937

Al C. Juez Menor
Presente.

Inés Tapia de Pérez oriunda de Hueyapan, Mor. y vecina de este propio pueblo, a Usted respetuosamente comparezco a manifestar lo siguiente:

El día doce del presente mes, estubo en mi casa a decirme el señor Zeferino Carrillo vecino del pueblo de Xochicalco de esta jurisdicción, de que por boca de su hijo político el individuo Manuel González vecino de esta localidad, sabe que éste mismo ha dicho de que yo la comparente, estoy hechisando a su pequeña niña que tiene enferma y que además a él Manuel González era quien debía sufrir el embrujamiento, pero que al no poderse, me he desquitado de la niña. Como este asunto para mí es delicado, en vista de lo que pasa como aconteció el año próximo pasado en la señora de Wenceslao González quien fué villanamente asesinada por estos mismos achaques, por lo que me dirijo a Usted en demanda de justicia, suplicandole con encarecimiento que despues de haber declarado el señor Zeferino Carrillo ante Usted sobre la información que él me proporcionó, se sirva requerir a Manuel González, que afirme su dicho y pruebe del como sabe que estoy embrujando a su niña.

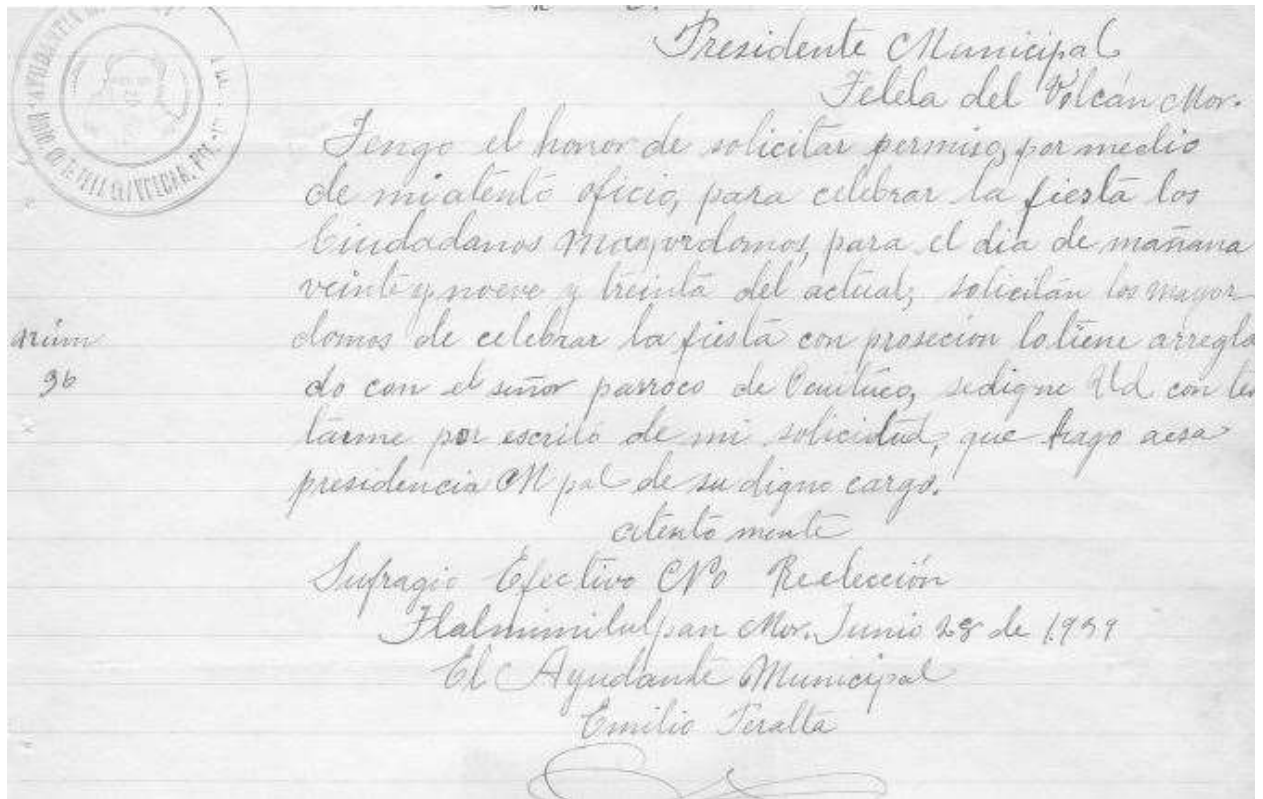
Como Usted comprenderá Ciudadano Juez, que soy inocente en la causa que se me imputa, así como tambien comparto con la gente culta en no dar crédito en semejantes hechisos, pero por los peligros que corren con esta gente inculta, me veo presisada a distraer la digna atención de Usted para que se me imparta la justicia a que tengo derecho, pues en el presente caso necesitaré se me dé fiadores que garanticen mi vida por parte de mi calumniador.

Es justicia que impetro con las protestas legales.
Tetela del Volcán, Mor. Abril 19 de 1937.

Inés Tapia de Pérez
Zeferino Carrillo

B. LETTER FROM AYUDANTE OF TLALMIMILULPAN, PETITIONING THE RIGHT TO CELEBRATE

RELIGIOUS FEAST, 1938



C. LETTER FROM MUNICIPAL PRESIDENT DENYING REQUEST TO CELEBRATE RELIGIOUS

FEAST, 1938.

Oficio No. 131.

C. Ayudante Municipal
Hueyapan.

En contestacion a su atento Oficio numero 30. de fecha 21. del actual, le manifiesto, con toda pena, que esta Presidencia, Hueyapan, a mi cargo, no puede sustentar, a que haga su fiesta religiosa, por que escasa que esta y bibico, estrictamente y penado por la ley, asi es que lo unico que pueda decir es la Presidencia, es que celebren, su fiesta como lo establece, la ley constitucional en el interior, del templo y nada en el exterior, atentamente,

Sufraga Efectivo No. 131,
Hueyapan, a 20 de Junio de 1939.

El Secretario
Francisco Garcia.

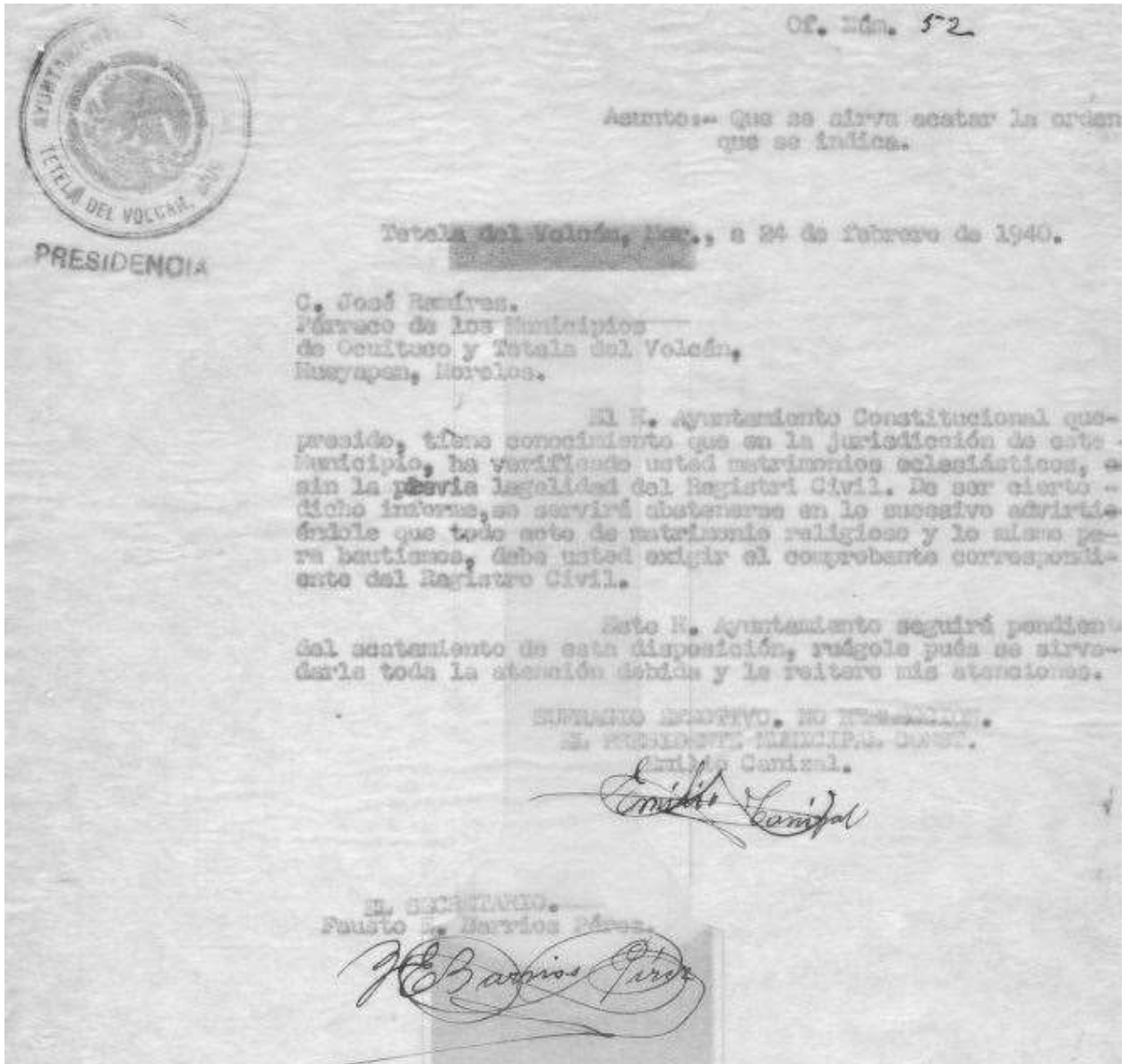
Francisco Garcia

Emilio Canibal.

Emilio Canibal

PRESIDENCIA

D. LETTER FROM SÍNDICOS OF HUEYAPAN RENOUNCING THEIR POSITION DUE TO WORKLOAD.



F. EXCERPT OF MINUTES OF 1940 AZTEC CONGRESS IN MILPA ALTA.

PHOTOS:

Hueyapan:



FIGURE 14. Location of Hueyapan (circled) on a 3D satellite image from Google maps. Looking north east, with the volcano Iztacihuatl on the far left and Popocatepetl in the middle ground. The volcano Malinche in the state of Tlaxcala is in the far right background.



Figure 15. A local public sphere at the "Indigenous Language Day" celebration in Hueyapan. Six community elders discuss local language and tradition on stage.



Figure 16. Front stage. The youths of the Hueyapan Nahuatl project perform the wedding ceremony in Nahuatl at the clausura in Cuernavaca.



Figure 17. Backstage. After their performance the Hueyapan youths enjoy the *mole* their parents brought from home, and pose for photos.

INALI



FIGURE 18. The sign at the entrance of INALI's Mexico City headquarters, stating in Nahuatl and Spanish that INALI is a multilingual space, and that translation is made in accordance with the Law of Indigenous Language Rights.

UVI - Tlaquilpa

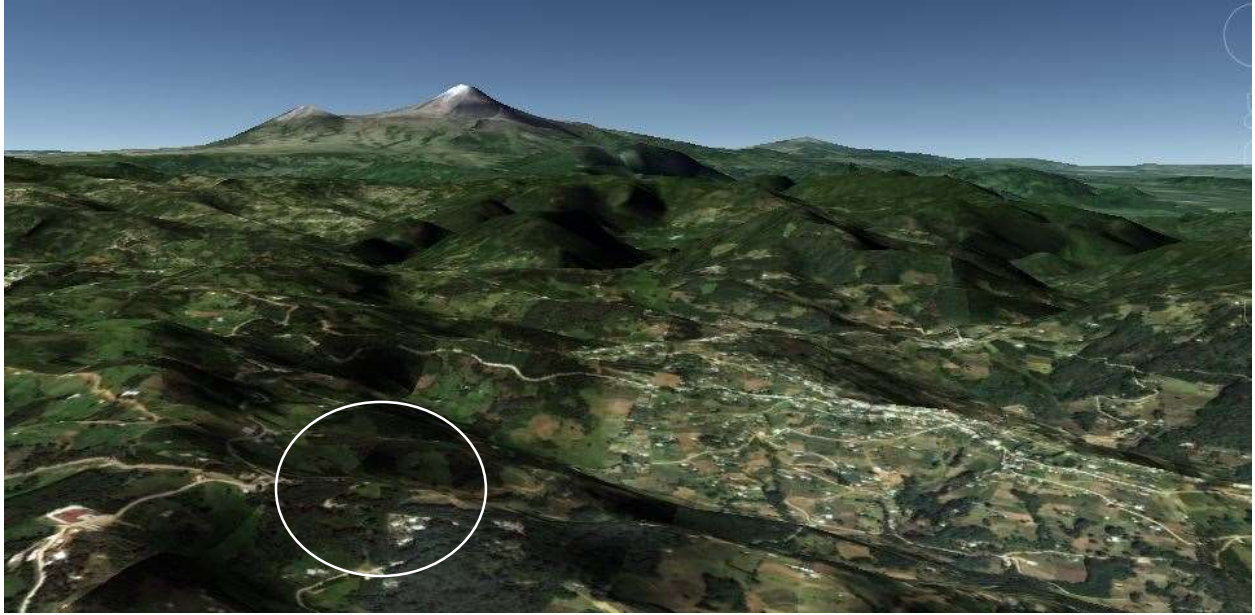


FIGURE 19. 3D Google map showing the location of Tlaquilpa (foreground to the right), in the Sierra Zongolica looking South West. The volcano in the background is the Pico de Orizaba, locally known a Istaktepetl. The area where the Sánchez Rosales family lives is circled.

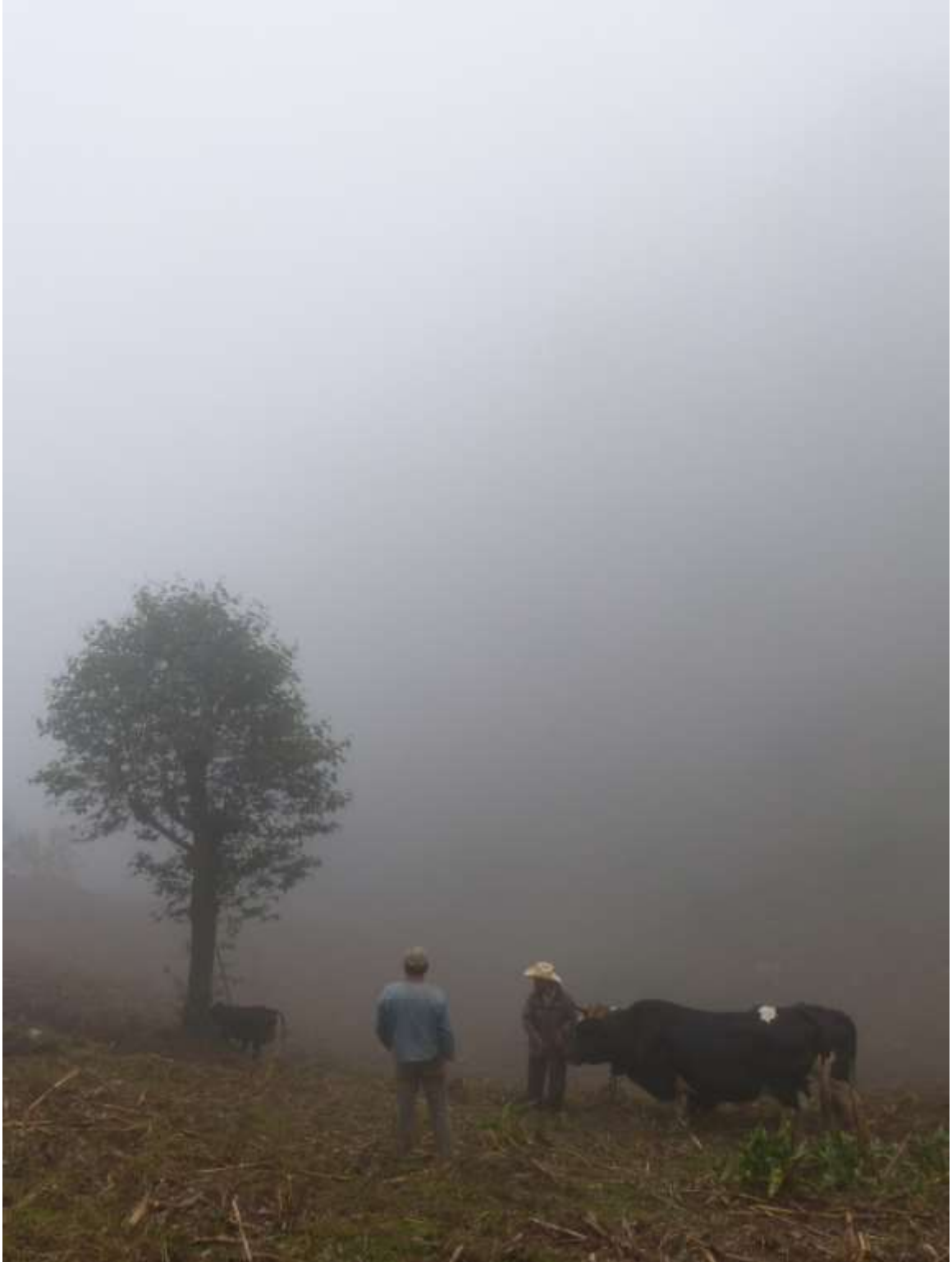


FIGURE 20. Tlaquilpa. Don Felix and the *yuntero* before plowing the flat part of the cornfield.



FIGURE 21. The Nahuatl colloquium. A group presents their work on “*Tleixmachilistli tlen totahwan okichihke ihkuak okitekipanowaya in tliolli*” [the knowledge that our ancestors made when they were working maize].



FIGURE 22. The UVI campus at Tequila.



FIGURE 23. Classroom during class at the UVI.



FIGURE 24. Adan Sánchez planting corn on the slope. The sack and bucket is full of organic fertilizer.



FIGURE 25. Adán Sánchez at his thesis defense.



FIGURE 26. The house of the Sánchez Rosales family, overlooking the valley of Tlaquilpa.



Figure 27. 'Don Félix takes a handful of maize kernels, yellow, white, red, and black from his seed bag. He carefully places them into the hole he has dug with his hand, between stones and lumps of hard-packed clay, covering it with a couple of handfuls of loose earth and a handful of ash-grey fertilizer. '*Sah Ihkon, ahm' vehkatlan,*' 'Like this, not too deep,' he says, showing me the correct way to sow. "*Tla vehkatlan tiktokas mach tlakis,*' 'If you sow it too deep it won't grow'."