

**“For an Authentic Democracy, #IAm132”:
Contested Democratic Imaginaries in the
Mexican Student Movement, #YoSoy132**

Ella Dixon BA (Hons)

Thesis submitted to Macquarie University

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



Department of Sociology

April 2018

Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acronyms and abbreviations	iv
Statement of originality	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Overview of chapters	7
Chapter 1: (Re)conceptualising #YoSoy132.....	10
Reviewing the literature.....	12
Postmodern perils	21
The promises and problems of neoliberalism	25
Methodology	38
Chapter 2: Legacies of struggle	45
The post-revolutionary regime.....	46
National unity	51
Simulated democracy.....	54
Education and student movements	58
Resistance “from below”	66
Neoliberalism and democratisation	69
A failed transition	75
Concluding remarks	78
Chapter 3: The encounter	80
The significance of public and private.....	81
<i>Hartazgo</i>	94
Euphoria on the streets.....	101
Unification	105
Concluding remarks	110
Chapter 4: A new political style.....	112
The Mexican Spring.....	113

A new political style?	118
New subjectivities.....	125
Mediating factors	136
Concluding remarks	140
Chapter 5: Bifurcation	142
From I to Us	143
Principles	152
Organisational structure	162
Paradoxes and unresolved tensions.....	169
Concluding remarks	176
Chapter 6: An authentic democracy	178
Revitalising liberalism and resuscitating the sovereign people	180
Generational debate	187
Dialectic of authentic democracy.....	194
Internal hegemonic struggle.....	199
Concluding remarks	208
Chapter 7: Lasting significance	210
Personal transformation	211
Political lessons.....	215
Conscientisation.....	219
Sharing Democracy or Counter-Democracy?.....	223
Concluding remarks	234
Conclusion	236
References.....	246
Appendix 1: Ethics approval	275

Abstract

#YoSoy132 erupted unexpectedly during Mexico's 2012 presidential elections in the face of the imminent return of the ex-hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to power. Faced with this threat to Mexico's weakly consolidated democracy and with the candidate's neoliberal reforms package, this volatile student movement temporarily united sections of a deeply divided student body. Given the entrenched class antagonisms that divide public and private universities in Mexico, surprisingly little critical attention has been paid to the forging of these political solidarities. Instead the literature has emphasised the aesthetic self-consciousness and innovative use of new communication technologies as mechanisms for contesting power and alternatives for participation. Such accounts sideline socio-economic and historical factors in favour of cultural and communicative analyses of the movement's politics, overlooking factors that mediate access and influence. This thesis grounds the ongoing significance of #YoSoy132 within a history of democratising struggles in Mexico. Drawing on 21 semi-structured interviews, I explore participant reflections two years on, at the movement's epicentre: Mexico City. Investigating the play of competing democratic imaginaries within the movement, I argue that a new political style enabled #YoSoy132 to temporarily transcend class-based divisions and to generate an inclusive and voluntaristic association, which was both energising and self-limiting. In parallel, I analyse how politically-minded public university students revived historic aspirations for popular sovereignty, channelling the movement towards an antagonistic politics and testing the limits of student unity. Finally, tensions between electoral and anti-systemic politics underscored a vital and necessary confrontation between world views in a generational debate on Mexico's future. Rescuing these tensions, analysing their underlying assumptions and placing them into dialogue with one another revives the transversal spirit of the movement, reveals hitherto under-examined instances of power and privilege, and tempers premature celebrations of its rupturing status.

Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym	Spanish	English
1DMX	1 de diciembre de 2012	1 December 2012
AGI	<i>Asamblea General Interuniversitaria</i>	General Interuniversity Assembly
AMLO	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	
AN	<i>Asamblea Nacional</i>	National Assembly
CI	<i>Coordinadora Interuniversitaria</i>	Interuniversity Coordinator
CNH	<i>Consejo Nacional de Huelga</i>	National Strike Council
CNTE	<i>Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación</i>	National Coordinator for Education Workers
CU	<i>Ciudad Universitaria de la UNAM</i>	University City, UNAM
EN	<i>Encuentro Nacional</i>	National Encounters
EZLN	<i>Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional</i>	Zapatista Army for National Liberation
FAA	<i>Frente Autonomo Audiovisual</i>	Autonomous Audiovisual Front
FCPyS	<i>Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la UNAM</i>	Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, UNAM
FPDT	<i>Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra</i>	People's Front in Defence of the Land
Ibero	<i>Universidad Iberoamericana</i>	Iberoamerican University
IFE	<i>Instituto Federal Electoral</i>	Federal Electoral Institute
IPN/Poly	<i>Instituto Politécnico Nacional</i>	National Polytechnic Institute
ITAM	<i>Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México</i>	Autonomous Institute of Technology Mexico
ITESM/Tec	<i>Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores Monterrey</i>	Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education
ITESO	<i>Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Occidente</i>	Western Institute of Technology and Higher Education

Acronym	Spanish	English
PAN	<i>Partido Acción Nacional</i>	National Action Party
PNR	<i>Partido Revolucionario Nacional</i>	National Revolutionary Party
PRD	<i>Partido de la Revolución Democrática</i>	Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	<i>Partido Revolucionario Institucional</i>	Institutional Revolutionary Party
SME	<i>Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas</i>	Mexican Electricians Union
SNTE	<i>Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación</i>	National Union for Education Workers
TEPJF	<i>Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación</i>	Federal Electoral Tribunal of Judicial Authority
UACM	<i>Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México</i>	Autonomous University of Mexico City
UAM	<i>Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana</i>	Metropolitan Autonomous University
UNAM	<i>Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México</i>	National Autonomous University of Mexico

Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed:  Date: 31/05/2018.

Acknowledgements

For five years #YoSoy132 has been at the forefront of my mind as a puzzle that I have felt can teach us much about the current challenges and potential of grassroots Mexican democratic politics. It has been an intensely stimulating, yet at times deeply lonely, process. I could not have embarked on this journey without the financial and technical assistance of Macquarie University over the past 10 years, and the financial support afforded by the Australian government's Australian Postgraduate Award. I also could not have arrived at my destination without the aid and support of a number of significant persons.

Firstly, I must give a heartfelt thank you to Pauline Johnson, my supervisor. Thank you, Pauline, for your patience, persistence and faith in me as a supervisor, for taking me on and for sticking it out even when it seemed we might both be driven mad in the process. Your commitment to my completion and to ensuring the highest quality possible gave me the strength to continue when it seemed this road would never end. Thank you. A deep thank you also to my co-supervisor, Jane Hanley from the Department of International Studies, who has been an exceptional and unwavering source of ongoing support, gentle reassurance and kindness. Thank you, Jane, for reading drafts and funding applications, for your thoughtful and engaged commentary, and for looking out for me over all these years. I have the greatest respect for you as a person and a professional and am grateful for your quiet confidence and generosity of spirit that have also seen me through this arduous journey.

Acknowledgement and appreciation must go to the Department of International Studies for their generous funding over the years as both an undergraduate student and in the first half of my doctoral candidature. I owe so much to this department and to its staff who have supported me. Many thanks also go to the Department of Sociology for taking me under their wing in the latter half of the PhD. The Department of Sociology showed me what a strong culture of nourishing research communities looks like and I feel fortunate to have formed part of it. I would also like to acknowledge the department for funding the final proofreading of this thesis, which has also given me confidence in letting go. This thesis has benefitted from the expertise of a professional proofreader, Lilla Wendoloski. Thank you, Lilla, for your proofreading expertise and for your prompt and warm support.

If these people and institutions supported me in the successful completion of this project, then others have been integral to my arriving at the very possibility of initiating a PhD. I would like to thank Estela Valverde for seeing my potential and encouraging me to pursue postgraduate studies and for opening up the doors to me and supporting me in the initial stages of this project, including introducing me to Dr. Eugenia Correa Vazquez, UNAM, who was a key contact in helping me to find my feet at Latin America's biggest campus. Thank you also to Eugenia for kindly assisting me in my fieldwork.

Thanks enough could never be expressed to my mum and dad for a lifetime of unconditional love and support without which I might never have been where I am today. Thank you for your generosity, and for an enabling mix of sympathy and stoicism. My success is always and fundamentally yours. Thanks very much also to all my friends and extended family for your ongoing support and encouragement, especially when times got tough. Special thanks go to Louis Di Paolo, "the secretary of my mind", for your profound friendship and love over the years. You are an ongoing source of inspiration to me and a critical pillar in my student life and as a person.

This thesis is dedicated to the movement whose complexity has caused me great unrest, but whose beauty has also compelled me to try to understand it more fully. In particular, I wholeheartedly thank the participants in this study who gave their time willingly to a stranger and who entrusted me with their reflections. I hope you will find something of value in my re-telling of the story of the movement. Lastly, to all Mexicans who are fighting for justice and a better world, I hope that in some small way, this thesis might contribute something to your cause.

Introduction

What united us? A lot of it was hatred for the PRI...it represents everything; this frustration with poverty, inequality, corruption, with many things. So I think that a lot of people decided to get involved because they are fed up with what happens in the country. Because it is a country that on the outside wants to give an image of progress, of a strong economy, of respect for human rights, and those of us who are here know that it is not like that...and it was a generalised frustration, and that goes for all social classes and all ideologies.¹

— Elena (Ibero)

Because what united the students was frustration. It got to the point where it didn't matter if you were public or private, we have never seen the country in such a decadent situation. That was what made us unite and say, 'it doesn't matter anymore, man'. I mean, after that all of the class and ideological conflicts re-emerged, but in that moment it was like, 'if the country is submerged in decadence, we have to unite'. So it was very cool, very beautiful to see those juniors that we have always stereotyped as snobbish, well now they were worried a bit about their country, and they came out of their reality.²

— Marta (UNAM)

Perhaps it was the arrogance of his presumed untouchability that awoke the response, "Get out!" "Ibero doesn't want you!" "Murderer!" The façade had fallen and Enrique Peña Nieto was momentarily rendered helpless. Expecting to be safe amongst his own in an elite private Mexico City university thought to be apolitical, the protest against the leading presidential candidate shattered convention and expectation. Most

¹ *¿Qué nos unió? Pues mucho el odio al PRI...representa todo ¿no?; ese hartazgo de la pobreza, de la desigualdad, de la corrupción, de muchas cosas. Entonces yo creo que mucha gente decidió involucrarse en esto porque está "hasta la madre" de lo que pasa en el país ¿no?, porque es un país que hacia afuera quiere dar una visión de progreso, de economía fuerte, de respeto a los derechos humanos, y los que estamos aquí adentro sabemos que no es así ¿no?, sabemos que es muy evidente la desigualdad que hay, la corrupción, la violencia, las violaciones a los derechos humanos; y era algo ya...un hartazgo generalizado, y eso sí, en todas las clases sociales y en todas la ideologías.*

² *Porque lo que unió los estudiantes es el hartazgo. Llegó un momento en que ya no importabas si eras de la pública o la privada, ya el país, nunca lo hemos visto en una situación tan decadente, y yo creo que esa situación tan decadente, fue la que pudo hacernos unirnos y decir, "ya no importa güey", digo, ya después salieron a relucir esos conflictos de clase, ¿no? Ideológicos, pero ese momento era, si el país está sumergido en la decadencia, nos tenemos que unir, entonces para nosotros era muy padre, muy bonito ver que esos juniors, que siempre hemos catalogado de fresas, pues ya se preocuparon un poco por su país, y salieron de su realidad.*

would agree that the deliberate misrepresentation of the protesters as pseudo students by the mass media and high-level officials of the Institutional Revolutionary Party³ (PRI) was a fateful mistake (González Villarreal, 2013, p. 40; Meléndez Preciado, 2012, p. 12). Within three days the students responded unambiguously. In an 11-minute video montage uploaded on YouTube, 131 students testified that the protest was genuine and that they were not pseudo students: “We are students from Ibero, we are not *porros*,⁴ or *acarreados*,⁵ and nobody trained us for anything”⁶ (R3CR3O, 2012). Addressing the authorities in question and “the mass media of dubious neutrality”,⁷ the students’ response turned the tables on the situation, denouncing the farcical accusations of provocation and intolerance and reclaiming the authenticity of the protest.

What began as a personal grievance rapidly took on political dimensions. The monopolistic media conglomerate, Televisa—responsible for such historical crimes as covering up the student massacre of 1968—became the target of the students’ ire. Yet Televisa’s complicity in creating a fresh look for the ‘old dinosaur’, the PRI, spelled something far more sinister than political marketing: it signalled collusion in the imposition of a series of neoliberal structural reforms whose purpose was to finish undoing the social gains fought for in the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) and defended at a high cost by protestors and activists during the 20th century. The party that once claimed to incarnate the Mexican Revolution with its promises of land, liberty and effective suffrage, today promised progress in the form of a neoliberal structural reform package including energy, labour and education. In a country which had only recently celebrated the ‘democratic alternation’ that saw the ex-hegemonic party lose the presidency for the first time in over seven decades, the return of the PRI should have been unthinkable. The Ibero protests went to the heart of the matter; they warned of the consequences of the return of an authoritarian party to presidency. Nonetheless, few could have imagined the magnitude of the terror to come.

³ *Partido Revolucionario Institucional.*

⁴ Paid agitators and assailants; use of *porros* is a common tactic introduced by the PRI for disarticulating and repressing protests.

⁵ Individuals who receive some material benefit for publicly demonstrating political support for a particular party; use of *acarreados* is a common practice associated with clientelism.

⁶ *Somos estudiantes de la Ibero, no somos porros ni acarreados y nadie nos entrenó para nada.*

⁷ *Los medios de comunicación de dudosa neutralidad.*

Twelve years after Mexico's historic shift away from a one-party State, Mexican democracy was again under scrutiny. The National Action Party⁸ (PAN) (2000–2012) had failed to bring about democracy in Mexico (Meyer, 2013). Moreover, three decades of neoliberalism have concentrated the wealth of a few to the exclusion of the many: the economy remains stagnated, wages are falling and inequality is rising (Antonio Ramón, 2018). Since 2006 the so-called War on Drugs has been accompanied by waves of violence that show no sign of slowing. In the first six years of the war alone, 26,000 people were disappeared and 70,000 killed (Rovira Sancho, 2012, p. 423). Horrific human rights abuses, disproportionately affecting the poor, women, journalists and activists, have contributed to a situation in which thousands of Mexicans might be considered “activists in waiting”, held back by fear and an oppositional vacuum (Galindo-Cáceres & González-Acosta, 2013, p. 10). Youth in particular are facing rising levels of precariousness, including in the most educated sectors, contributing to anguish over the future (Fernández Poncela, 2013, p. 180). By 2012 the decomposition of Mexico's political and social life had begun to personally affect a segment of the population that had otherwise remained absent from social protest, and when these students voiced their discontent they unexpectedly catalysed a nation-wide movement that reopened the question of Mexico's unfinished democracy.

Where two six-year terms of the right-wing PAN had failed to achieve the economic promises of neoliberalism (Flores-Macías, 2012, p. 129), Enrique Peña Nieto's highly anticipated “Mexican Moment” was praised by the international business community as the passing of long awaited reforms that would open up Mexico's vast oil reserves to foreign investment and further suppress wages (Núñez de la Peña, 2013; Todo Marketing Político, 2012; van Tienhoven, 2013).⁹ Peña Nieto's presidential candidacy was supported by an internal oligarchy sharing his conservative values and economic interests and his image had been carefully crafted to the “‘tastes and approval’ of the average voter”¹⁰ by Televisa for six years prior (Figueiras Tapia, 2012,

⁸ *Partido Acción Nacional*.

⁹ In 2014 Reuters reported that “one in seven Mexicans earned the average minimum wage of 65.58 pesos ([US]\$5.10) a day or less” and that low manufacturing costs of US\$2.70 an hour—compared to the average hourly wage of US\$2.43—had out-competed China in the market, yet at the cost of “chronically low pay, weak public spending and poor productivity” (Murray, 2014).

¹⁰ “Gusto y aceptación” del votante medio.

p. 29). The unabashed promotion of Peña Nieto by Televisa reinforced the widespread perception of the imminent return of the PRI to the presidency.¹¹ For many of those viewing the impending tragedy incredulously, angrily and fearfully, it was the courage of the response and the clarity of the message of those 131 students that inspired hope. Employing social media to spread images of the actual events of the day and to express solidarity with the students, the hashtag #YoSoy132—#Iam132—went viral.

The political traction of #YoSoy132 was no doubt strengthened by the wave of protests that swept the globe from 2010 to 2016, a wave to which it contributed. Like many of its political contemporaries, #YoSoy132 was an unexpected uprising against abuses of power by unrepresentative politicians colluding with big business. Popularised slogans like “we are the 99%”, “we are not commodities in the hands of bankers and politicians”, “real democracy now” and “the people’s assembly” expressed a renewed interest in democracy as the rule of, by and for the people. Temporarily, at least, these movements changed the political climates of their countries, often dramatically. These movements appeared to be “leaderless and self-organized insurgencies of common citizens” whose characteristic effervescence initiated heated debates over their nature and effectiveness; accordingly, contemporary political thought “reflects (on)” the split between structure and free association (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis, 2014, pp. 2–3). Like many of its global contemporaries, #YoSoy132 generated much excitement only to eventually fade from public view, leaving open questions as to its meaning and significance for Mexican politics.

In a global atmosphere of disaffection with institutional politics and in an epoch marked by declining collective identities and rising individualism, #YoSoy132 introduced a novel kind of politics for a new generation of activists: an individualist politics based on broad notions of solidarity, affective ties over ideological bonds, and intensive use of digital communications technology for political purposes. Anyone could be #132, so long as they respected the movement’s principles, most importantly

¹¹ In “Peña Nieto: El Gran Montaje” (2012) political analyst, Jenaro Villamil, describes in rich detail Televisa’s strategy of “selling” news and negotiating with politician clients to promote their image through special coverage, infomercials and “spots” and to generate debts and favours with public figures immersed in scandals as a means of consolidating the consortium’s power. The promotion of Peña Nieto’s presidential candidacy is exemplary of this strategy. Between August and December, 2008, Peña Nieto enjoyed 23 hours and 21 seconds of infomercials and news coverage on Televisa’s main news channel, Canal 2 (Villamil, 2012, p. 37).

non-partisanship, non-violence and horizontality. Drawing heavily on the emotive power of art and aesthetics to mobilise and in a style characteristic of the times, #YoSoy132 is said to have substituted empathy and solidarity for ideological critique and militancy, making activism attractive to a politically inexperienced generation (Rovira Sancho, 2014, p. 47). #YoSoy132 resonated with a generation labelled apathetic and apolitical (Corduneanu, 2014, p. 1781). In a very brief period of time, #YoSoy132 transformed the electoral contest, breathing fresh air into an otherwise predictable and monotonous electoral campaign (Fernández Poncela, 2013, p. 206).

In addition to this looser, libertarian brand of politics, #YoSoy132 rapidly became a mass student movement that radiated outwards from Mexico City, the cultural, political, economic and educational centre of the country. Students from Mexico's major public and most prestigious private universities came together to try to prevent the election of Enrique Peña Nieto to Presidency. Early on #YoSoy132 proclaimed: "We have broken the artificial prejudices of the division in the identity of public and private school students. We are simply students, without distinction"¹² (Martínez, 2012, June 10). In a university system structured to reproduce social stratification (Sillas Casillas, 2005) and plagued by everyday class antagonisms, #YoSoy132 appeared as a remarkable transgression: a first encounter that opened the divided student body to dialogue on their collective future. This vexed dialogue was at once tied to the electoral conjunction and a commitment to political unity was linked to the short-term goal of preventing the imposition of Peña Nieto to power. However, the student encounter also represented a unique opportunity to build a cross-sectional political solidarity that would draw upon individual talents and interests to strengthen a sense of collective agency and political efficacy. This thesis investigates the construction of these novel solidarities across the educational divide as an integral aspect of the significance of the movement and its contribution to Mexican politics.

Within weeks of the protests at Iberoamerican University¹³ (Ibero), thousands of university students had self-organised through a system of local assemblies that

¹² *Hemos roto los prejuicios artificiales de la división de la identidad entre estudiantes de escuelas públicas y privadas. Simplemente somos estudiantes, sin distinción.*

¹³ *Universidad Iberoamericana.*

converged on the General Interuniversity Assembly¹⁴ (AGI). At its peak, #YoSoy132 convened 108 local assemblies nationwide (Alonso, 2013, p. 24) and rapidly expanded to include 52 international ‘cells’ (“Se globaliza #YoSoy132”, 2012). From its origins at Ibero to the formation of a mass student-led movement, #YoSoy132 passed through various stages (Alonso, 2013 p. 35; Fernández Poncela, 2013, p. 178; Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 146). The electoral stage, coinciding with the lead-up to the July election, differed vastly from the post-electoral stage until 1 December 2012 (1DMX), when Mexico City participants experienced direct-State repression for the first time. The repression of 1DMX marked the symbolic ending of the once friendly and festive movement, and its disappearance from the public eye, even if in practice collectives in regional Mexico continued to organise themselves under the banner of #YoSoy132. What became of the movement that within two months of erupting is said to have transformed an election, altering its results, putting the PRI into ‘checkmate’ and politicising a generation?

The aim of this research is to try to understand #YoSoy132 within a history of struggles for democracy and social justice in Mexico. The central research question guiding this thesis is: how can we understand the significance of #YoSoy132 for contemporary Mexican politics? In particular, I explore the movement from the point of view of higher education as a representative manifestation of the class divide in an era of neoliberal hegemony and hence as both a source of commonality and a division for the student movement. This notoriously divided educational terrain is the ground upon which political solidarities would have to be constructed in the process of movement formation. This research focuses on the experience of Mexico City students as the protagonists of the movement. Some relevant questions thus include: what features of #YoSoy132 provoked or enabled these unexpected solidarities? What are the foundations of the student unity and under what conditions could it endure? Furthermore, how did #YoSoy132 conceive of and enact democracy? What are the lessons that the movement leaves in its wake? And how can we interpret its lasting significance for Mexican democracy? In other words, what was the contribution of #YoSoy132 to democracy in Mexico?

¹⁴ *Asamblea General Interuniversitaria.*

This thesis will argue that #YoSoy132 revived struggles for the failed project of liberal democracy and recuperated historic demands for social justice, at the same time as it prefigured a political imaginary in which informed debate and imaginative contestation are foundational. Although the movement offered a glimpse of a democracy freed from unexamined notions of ‘who we are and what we want’, deep socio-political divides challenged the prospect of an ongoing egalitarian dialogue beyond the student community and the electoral conjuncture. The idea of a collective identity unburdened by structural hierarchies and class conflicts is analysed alongside the dire need to secure a vision of the material conditions for a new democratic imaginary to take root. In the process of reimagining democracy, the argument for a necessary rupture with the status quo of politics is analysed in light of its compatibility with, or challenge to, a neoliberal rhetoric of individual responsibility and a postmodern cultural politics devoid of material demands. In contrast to estimations of the potential of #YoSoy132 as a break with ‘politics as usual’, it is argued that the movement’s highly contested nature contains an undetected seed for a critical re-thinking of democracy in contemporary Mexico.

Overview of chapters

Chapter One provides an overview of the literature that conceptualises #YoSoy132 as a rupture with ‘politics as usual’. The chapter frames these conceptualisations within a discussion of the profound transformations brought about by the postmodern cultural turn and the rise of neoliberal economics over the past three decades. Employing some models for thinking through the effects of these processes on contemporary subjectivities and political thinking, this chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the potential and problems of the new postmodern political style adopted by #YoSoy132. The possibilities opened up by the apparent liberation of the individual from totalising collective identities are juxtaposed with the deeply polarising outcomes of neoliberalism. #YoSoy132 is thus shown to be a generation differentially embedded in neoliberalism. Following this discussion, I present my methodology as an exploration of the subjective dimensions of participant experiences and reflections that intersects with a critical analysis of the interpretative literature and a systems-oriented approach to social theory.

Chapter Two examines some of the key features of Mexico's political system against the backdrop of the shift from revolutionary cultural nationalism to neoliberalism. This chapter examines some of the principal resistances to the consolidation of an authoritarian political system since the Mexican Revolution. The aim of this chapter is to place #YoSoy132 within a larger historical framework that allows us to discover both its continuities and moments of rupture in order to try to grasp its contribution to the legacy of earlier resistance movements. It also provides the necessary background for understanding the contentions and claims that arise with respect to different democratic imaginaries within #YoSoy132.

Chapter Three analyses the significance of the public-private university divide for contemporary Mexico before examining how the Ibero protests opened up an unexpected political opportunity that brought the student body together for the first time since 1968. It is argued that the encounter of the students initiated an unprecedented dialogue across the educational divide that led to the temporary subsumption of entrenched political antagonisms and the discursive negation of class in favour of a strategic unity within a high-stakes electoral conjuncture. The finding of common ground based on generalised frustration and a shared sense of privilege and responsibility as tertiary students is framed as part and parcel of the construction of political solidarities across class divides.

Chapter Four deepens this enquiry into the forging of political solidarities to explore how #YoSoy132 sought to overcome barriers to collective organisation through the deployment of a new political style. This new postmodern political style emphasising individuality, inclusivity, moral responsibility and affective ties is framed as an expression of global self-consciousness in accordance with contemporary protest movements. It is argued that the new style pre-empted a plural imaginary that challenges hierarchical relations and homogenising collective identities and that it is particularly apt for confronting the media powers on the terrain of image production. However, while this unique political style liberated a critical political imaginary from unifying metanarratives and achieved broad public support in ways that would be unthinkable for sectarian struggles, this new style was ultimately inadequate as a critical engagement with the class divides that underpin and sustain politics in Mexico.

Chapter Five describes how the construction of a formal participatory structure that enabled debate and representation across the university system came into tension

with the open and inclusive political style described in Chapter Four. The massification of the movement with the arrival of public university students is described as generating a bifurcation in the collective identity of #YoSoy132. The formal adoption of a set of principles functioned as a social contract entailing an agreed set of rules more than an ethics to be prefigured. Chapter Five describes how the implementation of decision-making structures in the student tradition of assembly democracy were essential to the construction of a unified student movement but nonetheless ended up reproducing anti-democratic practices that the new political style had sought to transform.

In Chapter Six I argue that beneath the strategic unity of the students lay divergent needs and interests that allowed for a temporary and fraught solidarity, but one which also held underappreciated possibilities. Within a high-stakes electoral context, the unprecedented dialogue between public and private university students allowed for a generational debate involving the clash of electoral and anti-systemic perspectives whose failure to generate lasting organisational structures nonetheless offered rich experiences and political lessons for participants that are vital to the prospect of renewed dialogue in the future.

Chapter Seven reflects on the personal transformations, political lessons and broader socio-political ramifications of #YoSoy132 as part and parcel of an enduring struggle for a more just and democratic Mexico. This chapter concludes by considering two distinct potentialities for the contribution of #YoSoy132 to a democratic politics in Mexico, namely, Sharing Democracy (Ferguson, 2012) and Counter-Democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008).

Chapter 1: (Re)conceptualising #YoSoy132

More than the name of a movement, #YoSoy132 is a call for a dialogue about the democratisation of politics, aimed at the breaking down of hierarchical and centralized ways of power.

— Mariana Favela (2015b, p. 222)

The identity of 132 does not exist. In any case we can speak of identifications, processes, places to inhabit 132. Meaning, I believe, together with Mariana Favela...that 132 is, was, an open call.¹⁵

— Rossana Reguillo (2016, 32:00)

Faced with “a powerful configuration of new sentiments and thoughts” that were “determin[ing] the standards of debates, defin[ing] the manner of ‘discourse’ and set[ting] parameters on cultural, political and intellectual criticism”, David Harvey (1992, p. iii) wrote *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. In it he sought to grasp the historical conditions undergirding cultural change in the latter half of the 20th century. Having eschewed coherence and authority and embraced pragmatism, postmodernism produced ephemerality and a preference for “surface appearances” rather than “roots” (Harvey, 1992, p. 53). Harvey (1992) described how postmodernism’s rejection of truth and essential meaning had inaugurated a generalised state of fragmentation, chaos and uncertainty that obscured a clear view of the deep reformulation of the political economy along conservative and technocratic lines.

Grappling with the confounding state of affairs that postmodernism seemed to have induced, Harvey (1992) expressed concern that a depoliticised cultural critique had facilitated the unimpeded advance of the neo-conservative political and economic agendas globally. Despite clear changes in culture, politics and economics, by setting such changes against the backdrop of capitalist accumulation, Harvey (1992) suggests

¹⁵ *La identidad del 132 no existe. En todo caso podríamos hablar de identificaciones, procesos, lugares de habitar el 132. Es decir, yo creo, junto con Mariana Favela...que 132 es, fue, una convocatoria.*

that postmodernism in fact appeared to be more akin to a shift in surface appearances than a sign of the emergence of an entirely new society.

Harvey's (1992) exploration of postmodernity's intrinsic links to the global dissemination of neoliberal economic rationalities reveals a whole new set of problems for progressive politics that is highly relevant to the case of #YoSoy132. That is, the postmodern features of #YoSoy132—self-referentiality, ephemerality and an emphasis on aesthetics—coincide with more straightforward instances of 'politics as usual', albeit updated within a context of media centrality. For such reasons #YoSoy132 is characteristically difficult to categorise in any straightforward or non-controversial manner. The purpose of this chapter is to situate these qualities against the backdrop of broader global changes in the past three decades. I first review the interpretative literature that coalesces around the idea that #YoSoy132 was an instance of rupture with 'politics as usual' and, as such, that it cannot be understood through traditional conceptual lenses such as 'social movements', 'class' or 'ideology'. I then offer a comparative viewpoint via the assessments of militant participant-scholars in terms that stress the obstacles to radical political change faced by #YoSoy132 as a result of its more postmodern features. Following an overview of the literature on #YoSoy132, I explore the intersections between postmodern cultural changes and neoliberal economic rationalities and their effect on contemporary political subjectivities and socio-economic structures. Rather than take the argument for the transformative effects of its innovative qualities at face value, the aim is to re-frame the novel status of #YoSoy132 such that later chapters can critically assess its strengths and weaknesses within Mexico's contemporary political and social contexts.

Crucial to my thesis is the critical reframing of the movement that finds a middle ground between the more triumphant approaches to the movement and more polarising ideological ones. This chapter contributes to this aim by assessing the impact of the simultaneous onset of postmodern and neoliberal paradigms on contemporary subjectivities and politico-economic landscapes. In the final section of this chapter, I present my methodological approach which involves a combination of semi-structured interviews and broader structural and textual analyses that together provide an overall framework positioning #YoSoy132 within both the specific Mexican context and overarching trends of 21st century capitalism. Understanding the problems and potentialities of #YoSoy132 involves examining how postmodernism and neoliberalism

have combined to produce promises of authenticity and limited freedoms as well as deeply uneven geographies that frame the lifestyles and future options of the generation of #YoSoy132, and thus their very aspirations and critiques. The interviews therefore constitute an important methodological instrument that supports an overall critical engagement with the movement and its democratic potentialities allowing for a comparison of evaluative, subjective and reflective responses of participants in this study.

Reviewing the literature

#YoSoy132 proposed a distinct way of understanding politics. This is, that if for its part professional politics and normative thought reduce and restrict the channels of participation to the electoral path, partisan representation and the institutional option, #YoSoy132 generates alternatives to implicate citizens politically: activism online and in the streets, promotion of alternative media, the creation of working groups on distinct social problems, formal proposals for the modification of public policies, and cultural and artistic events for political conscientisation.¹⁶

— Raúl Diego Rivera Hernández (2016, p. 4)

Surprise, shock and spontaneity are strongly associated with the emergence of #YoSoy132 in an elite private university and the subsequent proliferation of activism under the banner of #YoSoy132. Given the rapid and seemingly uncontrollable expansion of protest activities during 2012, one stream of the literature has emphasised rupture and aesthetic innovations as stand-out characteristics of the movement (Arditi, 2015; Favela, 2015a, 2015b; Galindo-Cáceres & González-Acosta, 2013; González Villarreal, 2013; Reguillo, 2016; Rivera Hernández, 2016; Rovira Sancho, 2014). #YoSoy132 has been variously termed: an “event” (Arditi, 2015); an “overflowing insurgency”¹⁷ (Favela, 2015b); a “convocatoria” or convocation (Favela, 2015a); an

¹⁶ #YoSoy132 planteó una manera distinta de entender la política. Esto es, si por su parte la política profesional y el pensamiento normativo reducen y restringen los canales de participación democrática a la vía electoral, la representatividad partidista y la opción institucional, #YoSoy132 genera alternativas para implicar políticamente a la ciudadanía: activismo en línea y activismo en las calles, impulso de medios independientes de comunicación, creación de mesas de trabajo sobre distintas problemáticas sociales, propuestas formales para la modificación de políticas públicas, y eventos culturales y artísticos de concientización política.

¹⁷ Una insurgencia desbordada.

“aesthetic movement”¹⁸ (Galindo-Cáceres & González-Acosta, 2013); an alternative option for doing politics (Rivera Hernández, 2016); and an uncontrollable social eruption (Rovira Sancho, 2014, p. 47). These accounts juxtapose qualities such as spontaneity, individuality and decentralisation with programmatic action, collective identities and centralising structures. In general, the former are treated as genuinely democratic and authentic aspects of #YoSoy132 while the latter are considered to be outmoded and authoritarian remnants of an old political style that a new generation was rejecting.

The bulk of the interpretative literature presents persuasive rationales for viewing #YoSoy132 as a break with the status quo of Mexican politics. In general, they assert the potential of affective and imaginative repertoires to mobilise and politicise, and make a convincing case for seeing #YoSoy132 as an original, fresh and emotive expression of an emergent political subject. Affect is positively appraised for its potential role in reconstituting social relations in a more egalitarian manner conducive to mutual recognition and an interest in common concerns and public debates, particularly at a time of widespread disaffection with ‘politics as usual’. By shifting the political terrain from the ideological to the affective, #YoSoy132 is seen as offering a potential solution to Mexico’s deeply fragmented socio-political landscape that evades historical cycles of vulnerability to sectarianism, co-optation and repression. The promise is an anti-authoritarian political culture that closes the gap between rational and emotional, synthesising them into a new liberating combination that is not only politically potent, but fun and exciting. These qualities are also key to overcoming disaffection, disillusionment, cynicism and fatalism and to reasserting the collective power of free individuals coming together to do politics democratically, without ideologies or leaders. Read together this body of the literature offers a compelling set of ideas that has set the standard for how #YoSoy132 is conceived and strongly influence the terms of the debate.

As an “event” (Arditi, 2015), #YoSoy132 is understood as rupture based on a refusal that opens up political possibilities. Ardití (2015, pp. 100–101) argues that the spontaneous and effervescent character of unsolicited insurgencies is akin to

¹⁸ *Un movimiento estético.*

democracy—not as a political regime, but as a practice that “dissolves” or “undermines” “the markers of certainty”, opening up the “validity of standing norms” to debate. Strategically, these fleeting eruptions of discontent extend the question of democracy beyond institutional limits to reframe it, or rather re-member its constituent potentiality. From this perspective democracy appears as “a moment, rather than a form” (Wolin, 1994, p. 19). Closely tied to these claims is a positive appraisal of effervescence that insists upon the significance of overcoming inertia and reimagining politics, and dismisses suggestions of the failure of #YoSoy132 to achieve lasting, mass organisation as misguided or irrelevant. Latency (Favela, 2015a) and “the spectre of insurgencies” (Arditi, 2012) challenge the critique of the ephemeral character of these interventions portending that, beyond the ossified structures of formal politics, effervescent interventions have lasting effects on the legitimacy of hegemonic regimes and the supposed lack of alternatives.

Galindo-Cáceres and González-Acosta (2013, p. 9) deem #YoSoy132 Mexico’s first aesthetic social movement, the relevance of which lies in breaking through barriers of fear and disaffection to inculcate society with democratic values and to introduce new agendas into public debates. Aesthetic movements, the authors explain, trade rational and ideological appeals for a moral choice between the vulgar and the sublime and are defined by three key characteristics: an appeal to new identities, clever use of social media, and authenticity (Galindo-Cáceres & González-Acosta, 2013, pp. 47–50). This purportedly aesthetic quality with its affective and moral counterparts is seen as key to diffusing protest through the media of art and digital communication technology, generating ‘contagion’ (Fernández Poncela, 2013, p. 200). Such accounts take stock of the democratising potential of the appropriation of information communication technology, affective language and aesthetic interventions to create a political culture that breaks with the hierarchies, impositions and homogeneity of traditional social movements and institutional politics. Strategically they function to avoid the familiar outcomes of hegemonisation and co-optation and, thus, the containment of its creative energies.

#YoSoy132 is therefore taken to be primarily a novel phenomenon that explicitly rejects old ways of doing politics, whether institutional or revolutionary. Part of the defence of new forms of doing politics is the problematisation of 20th century social movement theory (Rivera Hernández, 2016, p. 6), and of pre-existing categories

more generally (Favela, 2015a, p. 164). These narratives reinforce the anti-authoritarian and pro-diversity sentiments of this postmodern critique, both externally and internally to the movement. Favela (2015a, p. 166), for instance, challenges the reproduction of hierarchical and exclusionary relations within struggles, arguing for the strategic importance of both refusal to be classified and an imaginative rethinking of politics and power (Favela, 2015a, p. 167). This challenge is seen most clearly in the juxtaposition of normative tendencies, political programs or counter-hegemonic strategies, and spontaneity around specific conjunctures that catalyse creativity, innovation and a reconceptualisation of power and politics that is not based on domination. Similarly, as a “multitude” (González Villarreal, 2013) #YoSoy132 is characterised by autonomous, horizontal and decentralised direct action in opposition to the vertical and centralist representations associated with ‘the people’.

In contrast to politics as usual, whether as electoral democracy or socialist strategising, the effervescent, spontaneous and dispersed quality of #YoSoy132 as an event or insurgency and its organic networked character captured by the qualifier, “multitude”, all signal a shift not only in organisational form and political logic, but in political subjectivity. In her research on European autonomous social movements, Flesher Fominaya (2015) discovers a paradoxically “anti-identitarian collective identity” that escapes classifications and avoids labels. Through a series of negations and refusals, explains Flesher Fominaya (2015, p. 66), autonomous social movements assert an anti-identitarian collective identity in which labels are thrown off, questioned or merely absent. For Favela (2015a, p. 166) and other anti-identitarian, autonomous and anti-hegemonic actors, the championing of diversity is a necessary defence against the reproduction of systemic impositions, of “the rhetoric of power that is announced in masculine and singular”.¹⁹ Favela (2015a, p. 167) insists on strategic non-identity: “#YoSoy132 is not those of us who met in the assemblies. We are not a label. 132 is the possibility of recovering laughter in the country of money and blood. They are art and happiness yelling rebellion in the streets”.²⁰ The negation of class, ideology and other traditional political categories goes hand in hand with a critique of hierarchy and

¹⁹ *La retórica de un poder que se enuncia en masculino y singular.*

²⁰ *#YoSoy132 no somos quienes nos conocimos en las asambleas. No somos una etiqueta. El 132 es la posibilidad de recuperar la risa en el país del dinero y de la sangre. Son el arte y la alegría gritando rebeldía en las calles.*

homogeneity, moving away from structural and systemic analyses towards the cultural plane of politics.

Rupturing imaginaries announce a new political subject—diverse, polyfocal, connected—problematizing and resisting the use of traditional sociological categories and theories for their apparently outmoded character and their overall inability to comprehend movements like #YoSoy132 (Favela, 2015a, p. 155; Rivera Hernández, 2016, p. 7). The refusal of classifications and labels that order hierarchies and reproduce the status quo is effectively part of a struggle to democratise Mexico's political culture, to encourage free-thinking and autonomous subjects unburdened by external categories or essentialising collective identifiers. This refusal occurs at the level of the movement and also informs theoretical arguments. It is claimed that #YoSoy132 was not a social movement (Favela, 2014, 2015a, 2015b), and neither can it be understood through the application of existing concepts or traditional sociological categories (Rivera Hernández, 2016). These arguments present both rhetorical and intellectual challenges to 'academia as usual' that seem fitting of a phenomenon that claims to challenge 'politics as usual'—implicating existing theories with conservative tendencies and proclaiming a brave new world that is unintelligible to those who cannot adapt to the times.

In general, these qualities express a generational conflict between: hegemonic political cultures associated with an authoritarian, imposed version of democracy in collusion with a hierarchical and monopolising media; and the proposition of an open, horizontal and participatory culture combined with demands for the democratisation of the media (Candón Mena, 2013). *Convocatoria*, or convocation functions as a recipe for dissent that prefigures another political culture, resisting and avoiding anti-democratic politics—a mobilising tool based on universal human emotions, empathy, solidarity and love (Favela, 2015a, 2015b). Imagination, and not ideology, is at the heart of the insurgency (Favela, 2015a). Overcoming the totalising tendencies of teleological ambitions, imaginative processes of unlearning are viewed as necessary in order to construct another subjectivity (Reguillo, 2013). Aesthetic and communicative innovations are thus presented as the principal means for breaking with the stigmatised and outmoded political language of 20th century emancipatory narratives and their authoritarian seed (Favela, 2015a; Reguillo, 2013). In many ways the novelty of #YoSoy132 is an echo of the postmodern sensibility in which individualised, affective

and communicative politics rejects economic determinism, totalising analyses, hegemonic strategies and teleological politics.

The above accounts depict unexpected and uncontrollable forces of rebellion unleashed in rupturing moments. The emancipatory potential of these insurgencies is defended against an instrumental analysis that evaluates their effervescent character as a double possibility: institutionalisation or failure. I agree that the objective and potential of these moments is not necessarily captured in the institutionalisation of its agendas. Indeed, for many participants, this is precisely what ought to be resisted. However, it is also clear that certain sectors of the movement intended to make #YoSoy132 a lasting organisation, as will become clearer in the coming chapters. González Villarreal (2013, p. 302) recognises the double character of #YoSoy132: differentiation and dispersion on the one hand, and institutionalisation on the other. This double dimension takes account of the passage from event to movement (González Villarreal, 2013, p. 303). González Villarreal (2013, p. 306) therefore correctly locates #YoSoy132 in the spaces between denunciation and refusal, between innovating possibilities and effectuating them. In contrast to Ardití (2012) does not charge ‘events’ or ‘insurgencies’ with the construction of alternatives, but merely with the task of disruption. For Ardití (2015, p. 101) this is sufficient because events generate contestation and debate over ‘the given’, thus recalling “the contingency of all foundations” and “the constituent capacity of people to reconfigure the world”.

It is true that the very conceptualisation of #YoSoy132 as “event”, “insurgency” or “network” presupposes a rejection of old ways of doing politics that resonated with a new generation rejecting democratic centralism and largely unenthused by a struggle program. Yet a problematic tendency exists to take the unequivocal nature of these innovations at face value in ways that obscure an understanding of the contestation that occurred within and over the movement. Contestations that can tell us much of the current state of affairs for democratic politics in Mexico. The problem is that a particular image of #YoSoy132, with its connotations for the kinds of politics at stake—non-normative, spontaneous, plural and dispersed—directly ties the perceived authenticity of the movement to its rupturing status. As a corollary, these standpoints implicitly frame instances of ‘politics as usual’ as dubious aberrations and minority—read militant—impositions. The effect is to engender an undue binary of authenticity—inauthenticity, mirroring the old–new dichotomy that effectively shuts down debate.

This binary appears to be replicated in the very fabric of the shift towards an aesthetic politics in ways that have thus-far eluded critical attention.

Indeed, according to Galindo-Cáceres and González-Acosta (2013, p. 106), a polarising effect is characteristic of aesthetic movements whereby politics defined as ‘for’ or ‘against’ is displaced onto aesthetic oppositions between: sublime and vulgar; legitimate and illegitimate; modern and unfashionable. The issue becomes whether or not an aesthetic politics is in fact a democratising tool per se, and whether or not it effectively ruptures with the status quo of politics in an era of media and image-saturation. Moreover, if aesthetic movements are simultaneously open and inclusive whilst generating a strong sense of belonging (Galindo-Cáceres & González-Acosta, 2013), then it is not clear that a shift to aesthetics eludes the possibility of manipulation or hegemonisation. In fact, such a shift seems to suggest new terrains for those most adept in the deployment of imagery in a society dominated by spectacles. These questions are absent in the literature. Instead an emancipatory, counter-cultural quality is assumed.

There are other reasons, too, for critical reflection on the primacy of rupture. The effects of both postmodern culture and neoliberal politics on the construction of these novel subjectivities are absent from the above accounts. Likewise, an exclusive focus on culture and communication risks engendering a dislocation from structural analyses of the very conditions that underpin and enable an aesthetic protest scene, and who might be empowered by such a shift. Compounding this, an overemphasis on rupture obscures the interplay between continuity and change and the multiple lines of tension that arise as a result of the encounter of public and private university students and the negotiation of political styles and competing interests that occurred within the movement. In short, the literature presents a partial and political vision of the democratising potential of #YoSoy13 that is highly rhetorical, even if it offers an important critique that deserves to be taken seriously in an attempt to understand the movement.

In contrast to the insistence on new analytical lenses and conceptual tools, a much smaller body of literature assesses the movement from critical, socialist and militant perspectives. This overtly political style of evaluating #YoSoy132 is paralleled in the debate that arose out of similar tensions and the ambiguous status of the contemporary protest wave of which #YoSoy132 formed a part. In the case of #YoSoy132, analyses by participant-scholars from public universities have tended to

focus on internal political currents and strategic and political capacities, such as the articulation of demands, political conjunctural analyses, alliance building, and evaluations based on the failure to generate lasting organisational and tangible outcomes more generally. Along these lines Solís (2015a, p. 136) asserts that:

There was a moment in which the inertia, the impetus of the youth mobilisations made it seem as though a social force could be achieved that would act, in the first instance, like a counterweight, to later become a real political alternative from a New Left. The outcomes of the mobilisations, the absence of a far reaching political program, the fateful response to the electoral results, and the natural fatigue and the internal divisions, messed up that possibility.²¹

As discussed, such normatively driven evaluations are questioned by accounts emphasising innovative protest forms and emergent subjectivities. However, they also address important lacunas left by the literature that pre-emptively discredits programmatic political alternatives as alien and intrusive. These theoretical insights help fill the vacuum left by the abandonment of structural critiques that ought to be considered as the underside of such innovations.

Others have acknowledged the double logic of #YoSoy132 in combining novel, global and transversal elements within the localised, national space of the elections (Martí i Puig, 2015, p. 188). Similarly, Pérez Monroy (2015) affirms that the movement's collective identity was constituted by tensions between this global character and public university traditions of student protest. At the level of organisation, Ortega Erreguerena (2017) analyses the complex interactions between an open and dispersed networked form and the centralising impulses of the AGI model. What is more, this friction between militant perspectives and broader sentiments is highly suggestive of the lines of contestation that traversed #YoSoy132. Yet with few exceptions (Ortega Erreguerena, 2017; Pineda, 2012), such thinking falls short of a sustained and reflective dialogue with the movement's constituent tensions and a

²¹ *Hubo un momento en que la inercia, el ímpetu de las movilizaciones juveniles, hicieron parecer que se podía conformar una fuerza social que figurara, en primera instancia, como un contrapeso, para después convertirse en una alternativa política real desde una nueva izquierda. El desenlace de las movilizaciones, la ausencia de un programa político de gran envergadura, la fatídica respuesta al resultado electoral, y el desgaste natural y las divisiones internas, dieron al traste con esa posibilidad.*

nuanced view of the significance of #YoSoy132 for Mexican democracy. Rather it tends to harden into seemingly irreconcilable political forms that make it difficult to give a balanced assessment of the nature of the movement and its democratic promise.

My approach, however, is dialogical. Specifically, I focus on the tensions and contradictions as well as the negotiations and new understandings that emerge as a result of ongoing efforts to form a student movement and to act together to create change. In locating #YoSoy132 within a history of Mexican politics, I intend to draw out the significance of the intersections between old and new, national and global, not only on how #YoSoy132 is understood, but also remembered. My own position is that #YoSoy132 cannot be fully understood outside of the tensions between these competing accounts and that such contestations must also be located within a longer history of protest movements as well as the specific characteristics of the educational divide in Mexico. From this perspective, rupturing narratives that fall short of critical self-reflection on the limitations of this new style of politics are equally as partial as militant assessments that avoid deeper reflections on problematic aspects of their own ideals and practices. Taken together, however, we can appreciate the dialectical nature of these positions and the real prospects and problems created in the process of forming a student movement to take with us lessons for the future.

In sum, bringing discussions on #YoSoy132 as an affective, open, inclusive, aesthetic and non-ideological phenomenon into dialogue with assessments of its organisational capacity and political efficacy is key to avoiding the reification of the movement and the excessive enthusiasm it has received. My study is motivated by the desire to bridge the gap between rival representations as part of my own account of the sociological significance of #YoSoy132 within the history of democratising struggles in Mexico. The challenge is to analyse these tensions within a differentiated terrain of aspirations for justice and democracy in accordance with the experience of a generation raised under both the promise and problems of neoliberalism and in an era deeply shaped by the effects of postmodernism. In this spirit, I will now offer an analysis of the intersections of postmodernity and neoliberalism to suggest ways for reflecting on the possibilities and challenges opened up by #YoSoy132 as an attempt to rupture established modes of politics. This task involves examining how postmodernism and neoliberalism have combined to produce promises of authenticity and limited freedoms as well as deeply uneven and polarising geographies. In the next section of this chapter,

I will attempt to reframe the appeal, potential and challenges of the novelty of #YoSoy132 through the lens of highly-effective processes of global integration that have vastly impacted upon contemporary political subjectivities, State-society relations and the perceived function of the contemporary neoliberal State.

Postmodern perils

This economy has transformed the world, but it has merely transformed it into a world
dominated by the economy.

Guy Debord (1994, Thesis 40)

In a country with high incidences of protest, #YoSoy132 stood out as “fashionable” (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 7). “Everyone wanted to be an activist”,²² exclaimed veteran activist, Francisco (FAA). Being fresh and original was part of what made #YoSoy132 so attractive. Rovira Sancho (2014, p. 47) describes #YoSoy132 as “a self-generated call to action”, whilst Favela (2014, p. 244) considers that #YoSoy132 gave individuals the opportunity to be “one more”, to overcome isolation, “[and] to allow ourselves the freedom to be authentic”.²³ Along these lines, Galindo-Cáceres and González-Acosta (2013) claim that “leaders” of aesthetic movements understand the value of authenticity for promoting action and shaping the identity of those being called to action. In certain respects, the appeal of #YoSoy132 lay in the promise of political participation that does not require one to forgo his or her individuality. This particular aesthetic quality seems to affirm Galindo-Cáceres and González-Acosta’s (2013, p. 56) view, that the cosmopolitan-minded middle and upper middle class private university students who initiated #YoSoy132 see creativity and flexibility as opportunities to be exploited and as manifestations of freedom in the here and now. According to these authors these qualities, which are not necessarily distinct from marketing logics and cultural industries, were the real power behind the movement and the source of its mobilising capacity. To shed light on this appeal I suggest we look to the ways in which

²² [*#YoSoy132*] se puso de moda, todo el mundo quería ser activista.

²³ El 132 es una convocatoria en la que nos llamamos los distintos a no estar solos, a permitirnos la libertad de ser auténticos.

postmodernism's promises align with the new managerialism of the late 20th century and the marketisation of that which was previously public and political.

In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) describe the ability of capitalism to continuously respond to critique in order to bolster itself. The appropriation of the language of dissent therefore helps to explain the continuity of capitalism over time as well as the current predominance of networked, horizontal and entrepreneurial terminology in the seemingly opposed forces of anti-neoliberal protests and global markets. The current state of affairs emerged over time as a response to critique of the bureaucratic hierarchies of modernity by counter-cultural movements in the 1960s. Boltanski and Chiapello describe how changes in global production processes geared towards flexible accumulation were accompanied by a managerial rejection of hierarchies and planning as dominating and rigid. Purged of its anarchistic tendencies and dissociated from critiques of alienation and oppression, desires for authenticity and freedom were assimilated into the lexicon of the market in an atomised fashion and presented as ends and values in and of themselves (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 97). Their seminal research on new management literature reveals how talk of “formal equality” and “respect for individual liberties” rose in incidence alongside the “unprecedented salience” of competition and rapid technological change (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p. 71). In a period of rapid developments in information communication technologies and expanding markets, capitalism was updated, as was its reach into the cultural and subjective corners of everyday life.

This entrepreneurial turn rested upon the realignment of the critical desires for authenticity and creativity that had been denied by cold, rational bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of the 1960s. #YoSoy132 too, drew strength from its aesthetic appeals that seemed to be remaking the image of protest by explicitly rejecting leadership, ideology and partisanship in favour of diversity, spontaneity and creativity. Yet far from simply freeing individual creativity from the bonds of rigidity, broader economic shifts in the past three decades have rested on the flexibilisation of labour that is replacing the modernist imaginary of permanent employment with precarious short-term contracts and projects. This drive for flexibility, permanent innovation, knowledge consumption and decentralised production not only transformed the economy, but work and self alike, promoting a self-fashioning entrepreneurialism (Hearn, 2012, pp. 25–26). Despite espousing values of freedom and creativity, in reality corporate governance is

attained through the displacement of external controls onto self-regulating and self-disciplining individuals whose creativity is subordinated to the project leader's vision and the firm's culture and stated values (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, pp. 80–81). The cultural resonance achieved by this strategy can hardly be overstated.

If postmodernism holds the allure of authenticity and flexibility, neoliberalism promotes competitive individualism. Yet rather than offer untrammelled liberties, this combination proves a double burden. Firstly, the individual is personally charged with overcoming structural adversities in the face of retreating public social services. Secondly, as States devolve social responsibility, individuals have been left to feel personally responsible for solving collective problems through the privatisation of solidarity, most clearly manifested in the plethora of non-government organisations (NGOs) soliciting monthly donations. Hirsch (2003) describes the reconfiguration of the State by neoliberal globalisation as driving the rise of professionalised and permanent NGOs whereby previously private actors are increasingly engaged in public issues. The outcome of which is to contribute to a political field dominated by “the privatization of political processes of decision-making and implementation” (Hirsch, 2003, p. 252). In the process, neoliberalism undermines public solutions to collective problems.

Whilst the public is increasingly marginalised in political processes, the market has responded with proliferating commodifiable solutions to growing ethical and environmental concerns. Branding strategies operate in a political landscape marked by the shift from public to private solutions, distracting from the public and political nature of such concerns. Mukherjee and Banet-Weiser (2012, p. 19) describe how through affect, emotion and social responsibility corporate branding strategies are shaping contemporary subjectivities and creating identities, including political ones like the “consumer activist”. These solutions are particularly lucrative in a contemporary landscape that compels individuals to find “a ‘biographic solution’ to systemic contradictions” (Beck, 2002, p. xxii, in Brodie, 2007, p. 103). The “self-brand” can thus be considered the ultimate expression of an entrepreneurial reconfiguration of selfhood that preys upon the cynicism, opportunism and disenchantment of the “flexible personality” divorced from collective identities (Hearn, 2012, pp. 26–27).

In parallel to the discursive disappearance of ‘society’ and the marketised reconfiguration of the self, the welfare State has been increasingly dismantled. Neoliberal advocates promoting leanness and an end to so-called bloated bureaucracies

have been reneging on the social responsibilities of the State for decades. As neoliberal governments from Thatcher in England, Reagan in the United States and Salinas in Mexico moved to absolve the State of social responsibilities, private persons and private organisations came to occupy the abandoned terrain of the welfare State. In the midst of this changing scenario, Hirsch (2003) considers the complex networks of NGOs and international agencies to be part of a global managerial class that expresses the changed condition of the State in an international order. For Hirsch (2003, p. 254) this new order is founded on “welfare chauvinism, racism and the supposed superiority of Western civilization” that legitimates itself through doctrines of “‘humanitarian’ militarism” and human rights. As postmodernism withdrew faith in alternative utopias, opportunistic actors everywhere embraced—and many more were compelled to accept—the triumphant arrival of a market-based democratic system that would spread across diverse planes in myriad ways. The death of ideology and utopia announced by postmodernism in reality marked the consolidation of a neoliberal world order.

The privatisation of the commons and the individualisation of the social are core components of neoliberal ideology, which in practice translate into anti-unionism and a punitive State reconfigured to protect the interests of those who control the markets. The neoliberal State is hostile to any form of social solidarity that restricts capital accumulation, such as independent trade unions and social movements (Harvey, 2005, p. 75). Privatisation opens up the Global South to the ravages of unregulated exploitation. At the same time, the rhetoric of human capital dissolves the tensions between labour and capital by reformulating labour as the activity, and capital as the outcome (Read, 2009, p. 31). The result is the apparent disappearance of class conflict precisely at an historical moment marked by exponential inequality, generalised precariousness and brutal exploitation. The dissolving of labour into capital not only erases the collective category of class but rids politics of the conceptual tools for analysing exploitation and workers’ relations, and as such the rationale for unions (Brown, 2015, p. 38). In this context, neoliberalism can be fruitfully understood as a project for the restoration of class power involving the radical reconfiguration of State institutions and practices with respect to the balance between capital and of popular movements (Harvey, 2005, p. 78).

Like postmodernism, neoliberalism does not denote a coherent theory, but reflects “a broad historical shift in ideology and practice” (Connell & Dados, 2014,

p. 118). Neoliberal doctrine “holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market”; as such, it charges institutions with facilitating such freedom through strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). Brown (2015, pp. 22, 20) describes neoliberal modes of governance as producing and disseminating a neoliberal rationality in which persons and States are conceptualised in the image of the contemporary firm as entrepreneurs seeking to maximise their present and future value; nonetheless, neoliberalism is also context dependent and, like democracy, “is a loose and shifting signifier”. Indeed, neoliberalism is notoriously a characteristically discontinuous and uneven concept, which in practice functions to reconfigure State, society, economics, nationalism and State–society relations. Let us now see how these transformations have been effected in Mexico and the broader Latin American region, and with what consequences.

The promises and problems of neoliberalism

We are a generation with precarious employment, we are really fucked, and apart from that they criminalise us and throw us in jail when we go out onto the streets, so that was part of a generation.²⁴

— Juana (UNAM)

As a historical phenomenon, neoliberalism did not originate as a complete ideological and economic program to be transplanted onto the world, but was developed over time in response to local conditions. Connell and Dados (2014, p. 122) describe Chile’s oft-cited earliest experimentation with neoliberal economics as General Pinochet’s strategy for achieving political legitimacy through economic means. The objective was to weaken organised labour through the abandonment of industrialisation and to transform the economy into an export-oriented market based on extractivism (Connell & Dados, 2014, p. 122). However, experiments in neoliberal economics go back further than that. As far back as 1965, the seeds were planted for experiments that could rework public policy along neoliberal lines by establishing free trade zones for

²⁴ *Somos una generación con empleos precario, estamos muy jodidos ¿no?, y que aparte nos criminalizan y nos meten a la cárcel ahora que salimos a las calles, entonces eso era parte de una generación.*

installing *maquiladoras* along Mexico's border with the United States. The success of this experiment, from the point of view of the transnational business classes, paved the way for the reorientation of Mexico's manufacturing industries towards almost exclusive export-based production (Mexico Solidarity Network, n.d.).

Mexico has also proven a successful experiment in the expansion and deepening of neoliberal economics and their enshrinement in law through free trade agreements. These highly unequal agreements increase foreign dependency whilst drastically limiting national sovereignty. Following the entry into force of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the United States flooded Mexico's markets with subsidised agricultural products, undercutting Mexican peasants' capacity to compete and not only locking peasants and small-scale farmers out of the market but effectively overturning Mexico's food sovereignty and producing dependence on external markets for food and fertilisers (Rubio, 2009). Speculation on food prices in the United States subjects internal consumption to market fluctuations in ways that are devastating to ordinary Mexicans.²⁵ Similarly, "the corporatization and privatization of hitherto public assets...privatization of water and other public utilities" have become the chief instruments through which the United States attains the strategic natural resources that are crucial to the maintenance of its global power and to satisfy internal consumption (Harvey, 2004, p. 74). Harvey (2004, p. 74) describes the United States government's strategy for ensuring access to strategic resources as "New Imperialism", which in effect constitutes "a new wave of enclosing the commons". Neoliberalism brought new modes of imperial domination that bypass and override public and national interests by enshrining the rights of corporations in free trade agreements.

In a globalised economic order, the competitive advantages of the Global South rest on the extreme exploitation of natural resources including human labour, making peripheral countries like Mexico dependent on resource extraction. Exploiting these human and natural resources is the engine driving the neoliberal project in the region, as elsewhere. In general, Latin America derives its importance to the global market from extractivism (Sader, 2008, p. 28). Today Mexico receives the most direct foreign

²⁵ During the 2008 global financial crisis set off by the bursting of the US housing bubble, speculation on food prices produced an unprecedented price rise for grains, provoking a food crisis that has since seen price hikes of up to 70% on basic food sources (Rubio, 2009, p. 6).

investment in extractive industries in the whole of Latin America, with over 80 federal mining concessions issued to multinational corporations covering 1.5 million acres of land in the state of Oaxaca alone—a state with a high percentage of indigenous population living in extremely vulnerable conditions (Miller, 2009). Free trade agreements not only spell the enclosure of the commons, but the destruction of deeply rooted indigenous traditions that protect and conserve the environment as public patrimony; thus, they are also provoking a cycle of violence and mass forced migration as well as renewed resistance (Roux, 2012).

The cumulative effects of neoliberal economics contribute to the overall state of insecurity in the country and are driving organised, albeit largely localised, resistance throughout the territory. Under neoliberal governance, the State provides surveillance and coercion to repress free market opposition (Harvey, 2005, p. 77). In Mexico, megaprojects ranging from highways to airports, dams and wind power farms have been fiercely resisted by peasant and indigenous communities organising in defence of land and life across the national territory. In 2006 the People's Front in Defence of the Land (FPDT) in Atenco²⁶ resisted the unlawful appropriation of their communal lands in San Salvador de Atenco for the construction of an international airport. The State responded by brutally repressing protestors, leaving two dead, multiple wounded and 200 tortured detainees, including 47 women who subsequently denounced the military's use of sexual torture (Rovira Sancho, 2014, p. 51). Atenco illustrates the State's readiness to use government force for the imposition of private projects. Although some populations are more vulnerable than others to the effects of these policies, in general the combination of elite governance excluding popular participation and violently suppressing dissent has directly contributed to the accumulation of specific instances of injustice as well as the overall erosion of rights that is creating cross-sectional disenfranchisement and generalised frustration.

The impact of neoliberal economics on land, agriculture and rural societies has been particularly damaging in the Global South and is linked to the rise of informal economies and organised crime (Connell & Dados, 2014, p. 132). César, a student at the National Autonomous University of Mexico²⁷ (UNAM), described his motivation for

²⁶ *Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra de Atenco.*

²⁷ *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.*

joining #YoSoy132 in terms of the opportunity it gave to organise to try to prevent Peña Nieto's reforms from being implemented, illustrating the links between neoliberal reforms and the crisis state of contemporary Mexico:

In Mexico we have a deterioration of community and social concord that is reaching alarming levels...there are ample regions in the country in which the State does not have control over public life, where there are criminal groups that are better armed than the military...there are regions where every week they are finding clandestine graves of 80–100, 200 bodies, there are mass kidnappings of the middle class...the dead women of Juárez, is a phenomenon that has risen a lot and that persists...But all of this is part of the same cycle because the violence has grown with the abandonment of the Mexican countryside, which is the larger problematic.²⁸

César (UNAM) directly relates these problems to the social costs of neoliberalism, the privatisation of State-owned industries, the disappearance of social services, health care and quality education and the loss of employment, as well as the structural function of Mexico as cheap labour for global capital and the obligatory migration of youth to the United States in search of employment—all the direct effects of neoliberalism. Permanent military occupations contribute to a broader strategy of social control involving radical forms of repression of opponents to megaprojects, dispossession and mass displacement, all of which are becoming normalised in the course of ensuring the unobstructed flow of goods—legal and illegal—within Mexico and across its borders (Emmelhainz, 2016, pp. 29–31).

The privatisation of public assets and natural resources combined with monopolistic industrial concessions have also resulted in the concentration of wealth at the top. In 1994, the year that NAFTA came into effect, wealth concentration in Mexico rose to the highest levels on World Bank record: the highest 20% of the population concentrated 55.8% of the income (World Bank, 2018a). This compared to 8% of

²⁸ *En México tenemos un deterioro de la comunidad y la convivencia social, que está llegando a niveles alarmantes...hay amplias regiones del país en donde ya el Estado no tiene control de la vida pública, donde hay grupos de criminales que están mejor armados que el ejército...hay regiones del país donde cada semana se están encontrando fosas clandestinas, en donde se encuentran 80–100 cadáveres, 200 cadáveres, hay secuestros masivos de personas de la clase media...las muertas de Juárez, es un fenómeno que ha incrementado mucho y que persiste...Pero todo este fenómeno es parte de un mismo ciclo porque la violencia ha incrementado desde que existe un abandono del campo en México, que es una problemática más grande.*

income held by the second 20% of the population in the same year (World Bank, 2018c); and to 1.6% of income held by the lowest 10% of the population (World Bank, 2018b). Between 2002 and 2014, the combined wealth of four multimillionaires increased from the equivalent of 2% of the country's GDP to 9% (Esquivel Hernández, pp. 17–18). Most of the Mexicans featured in *Forbes* wealthiest list were enriched by Salinas's massive privatisation schemes; they include Ricardo Salinas Pliego who in 1993 acquired the State broadcasting service, Imevisión (González Amador, 2011), which is today TV Azteca, constituting, with Televisa, the media duopoly that #YoSoy132 opposed. Billionaire Carlos Slim is Mexico's richest man and was the world's richest man between 2010 and 2013, according to *Forbes Magazine*. Slim made his fortune by buying a controlling share of Telemex, Mexico's national telephone company that was privatised by Salinas in 1990 (de Palma, 1993).²⁹

The vast sums of wealth accumulated by a select few Mexicans lie in stark contrast to the devastating effects of neoliberalism on the life possibilities of the vast majority of Mexicans. As a result of three decades of neoliberal economics, the stagnation of the minimum wage and rising costs of living, the purchasing power of Mexicans fell 80.8% between 1987 and 2017 (Antonio Ramón, 2018). In 2018, Mexicans living on the minimum wage of Mex\$80.04 a day have to work 24.5 hours to buy the basic recommended food basket (CAR), compared to 21.2 hours at the beginning of 2012; this means that an additional 3.25 hours of work is required to afford the CAR, which has risen by Mex\$44.33 under Peña Nieto's administration to Mex\$245.34, while the minimum wage has risen by less than Mex\$10 during the same period (Antonio Ramón, 2018). These effects have been deeply felt by vast sectors of the population whose everyday realities are directly impacted by macro-economic structures, particularly as the already deficient social services that once offered a degree of protection to workers and the poor are being increasingly eroded in the name of neoliberalism.

For many countries in the industrialised West, neoliberalism has signified the end of the social contract of modernity (de Sousa Santos, 2004, p. 6; Monedero, 2012,

²⁹ The estimated net worth of Slim dropped from US\$51.7 billion to US\$45.2 billion following Donald Trump's 2016 election, which caused the Mexican peso to be depreciated by 13% against the US dollar (Estevez, 2016). As of February 2018, Slim's fortune stands at US\$70.6 billion (Forbes, 2018).

p. 86). Yet for peripheral countries like Mexico, the social contract was never fully extended to the vast majority who instead waited in the wings in a pre-contract state, devoid of rights (de Sousa Santos, 2004, p. 9). Across Latin America, neoliberal policies drive the transition from a pre-contract state in which the promises of modernity had yet to be delivered, to a post-contract state in which the State reduces its obligations, leaving the majority extremely vulnerable to predation (de Sousa Santos, 2004), even as it updates traditional populist strategies of clientelism and corporatism (Morton, 2003, p. 644). This state of affairs reflects the subordination of the State to right-wing *de facto* actors that challenge the State's monopoly on violence and the rule of law (de Sousa Santos, 2004, p. 10). Today the post-contractual stage of neoliberalism is overseen by a duplicitous State that serves and protects the interests of a minority, whilst dispossessing the vast majority of their collective, social and political rights and privatising public goods. These polarising tendencies are aptly described by de Sousa Santos (2004) as "Civilized zones" and "savage zones", the former experiences the protective State and the in the latter the State is either absent or predatory. Santa Fe in Mexico City, like numerous other gated communities and self-sufficient apartment condominiums, was designed to insulate the rich from the growing precarity and insecurity of the city (Emmelhainz, 2016; Walker, 2013).

Emmelhainz (2016) analyses instances of selective State protection in Mexico. Ciudad Juárez on Mexico's northern border with the United States exemplifies this trend in which islands of security exist amongst vast swathes of insecurity and dysfunction. Drawing on Ong's concept of "graduated sovereignty", Emmelhainz (2016) describes the double-face of the neoliberal State in Mexico towards its population with respect to global markets. The strategic, economic importance of northern Mexico's *maquilas* lies in the production of exportable goods in a neoliberal economy oriented towards competitive advantage based on cheap labour (Connell & Dados, 2014, p. 124). Since around the time of NAFTA's signing in 1994, Ciudad Juárez has become emblematic of the phenomenon of femicide, as vulnerable young migrant women workers become targets of extreme gendered violence. However, whilst homicidal violence rages in the border zone, processing plants are shielded from femicide and cartel violence, and new *maquilas* are continuously being constructed (Emmelhainz, 2016, p. 81). Through this and other examples, Emmelhainz (2016) describes how the duplicitous Mexican State selectively demonstrates its capacity to

maintain order to the extent that it is in the economic interests of the de facto powers, political elites and international actors to do so.

As we already seen regarding food prices, the greater speculative investment and external dependency brought by the new economic model have left ordinary Mexicans vulnerable to the flux of international markets (Revueltas, 1993, p. 224). As a direct effect of neoliberal economics or “the financialisation of everything”, rent-seeking capitalists armed with a plethora of new debt measurements triggered the spectacular rise of the “new rich” (Harvey, 1992). In the United States and Mexico, respectively, Harvey (1992) and Walker (2013) describe the new financial and professional classes resulting from neoliberal economics and an emergent “yuppie” culture of young, rich and privileged individuals. In both Mexico and the United States, as elsewhere in the world, gentrification symbolising class power and personal aggrandisement stands in stark contrast to the social costs of neoliberalism—falling wages, increasing living costs and rising personal indebtedness.

Neoliberalism promised, as modernity had, that Mexico could become part of the First World, a promise apparently incarnated in the middle classes (Emmelhainz, 2016, p. 68). The modern, high-rise zone, Santa Fe, is the location of the Iberoamerican University campus and the epitome of the image and lure of neoliberalism’s new wealth described by Walker (2013). While a new rich and a new middle class, decoupled from the bureaucratic apparatus of the PRI (Walker, 2013) have emerged from these processes, for the vast majority of Mexicans, neoliberalism has meant a decline in living standards compared with the high point of state-centred development prior to neoliberalism. In Mexico, these polarising tendencies are registered through processes of urban planning with an intended social stratifying function, including social cleansing that reclaims areas of the inner city from the poor.

The global spread of neoliberalism has been assured by a combination of factors including the reformation of higher education, the predominance of a technocratic elite and the spread of a particular variant of democracy throughout the Global South. Education reforms are central to the reproduction of neoliberal rationalities on a global scale. For Motta and Cole (2014, pp. 2–3) the neoliberal project represents a continuation of capitalist coloniality whereby Latin America is acted upon by international agencies and foreign powers from the Global North imposing externally developed systems of evaluation that devalue local knowledges and narrowly redefine

education as an instrumental good required to partake in the globalised workforce and thus consumption. The reformulation of education along the lines of consumers and technocrats also directly negates the notion of education as a public good and as a key factor in social mobility, and thus the very promise of progress and inclusion. Similarly, de Sousa Santos (2003) describes the hegemonic production of neoliberalism as a “monocultural” rationality that maintains the cultural dominance of Western colonial and imperial projects.

In her book, *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism*, Sarah Babb (2002) notes the profound changes three presidential administrations had on Mexican economics. Since the 1980s, neoliberal reforms in Mexico have been overseen by a large cohort of US-trained economists and an elite group of internationally renowned undergraduate economics programs have been training their students in US-style, neoclassical economics (Babb, 2002, p. 2). The combination of US-trained experts educated in neoclassical economics and the coercive power of the International Monetary Foundation (IMF) and World Bank drove neoliberal policies in Mexico and profoundly reconfigured Mexican economics from the inside out (Babb, 2002, p. 1). Babb (2002) denominates the neoliberalisation of Mexico as “expert isomorphism”, whereby internal pressure is mounted by a group of professionals with common ideology and links to powerful networks, backed by a resource-bearing constituency and the trust of international gatekeepers controlling access to vital resources. The reduction of political elites to a narrow vision of the world dominated by neoliberal ideology and a technocratic approach to politics have reinforced the conservative swing in Mexican politics (Meyer, 2013, p. 151).

Elite representative democracy is a striking example of ideological and cultural imposition by the West that is tied to the global spread of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism in Mexico is strongly associated with the ‘third wave’ of democratisation (Tamayo, 2016, p. 86). By making access to international financial resources conditional upon a stated commitment to electoral democracy, a procedural methodology for transferring power to ‘democratise’ authoritarian regimes was imposed as a democratic model upon indebted nations (de Sousa Santos, 2004, p. 17). In peripheral countries, these formally democratic structures are largely ineffectual in any meaningful sense of the word because governments are “in practice authoritarian and are dependent on international capital, international organizations, and powerful states” (Hirsch, 2003, p. 253).

Moreover, the emphasis on procedure in these models justifies the substitution of legitimacy for legality and produces low-intensity democracies (de Sousa Santos & Avritzer, 2002). Democracy reduced to proceduralism excludes popular participation (Vázquez-Arroyo, 2008, p. 132). This effective marginalisation of ordinary voices from meaningful participation, beyond periodic voting, was a significant driver for the youth of #YoSoy132 who, feeling excluded from any real means for effecting political change in a formally democratic system, felt compelled to take to the streets in protest.

Neoliberalism has also achieved hegemonic status by supplanting the language of government—associated with power, sovereignty and conflicting versions of the common—with that of governance. Brown (2015, p. 32) describes governance as “reconceiv[ing] the political as a field of management or administration and reconceiv[ing] the public realm as ‘a domain of strategies, techniques and procedures through which different forces and groups attempt to render their programs operable’”. In all of these cases, governmental rationalities signified by terms like “inclusion, participation, partnership, and teamwork in problem solving” are employed to reinforce predetermined ends that foreclose debate and dissipate questions of power (Brown, 2015, pp. 127–129). The effect is to erase “deliberation about justice and other common goods, contestation over values and purposes, struggles over power, pursuit of visions for the good for the whole” and thereby, essentially, eliminate the very core of politics: “robust expressions of different political positions and desires” (Brown, 2015, p. 127). At the same time, governance signals a broader shift towards obscure public–private decision-making that effectively enables private actors to write their interests into law, and public–private joint ventures. Under these conditions “the State assumes risk, private companies make the profit” and the State becomes the repressive, coercive and surveillance vehicle for the protection of corporate interests against opposition from the public (Harvey, 2005, pp. 76–77).

The language and practices associated with governance have taken firm root in Mexico’s elitist democratic model. Today, Mexican electoral politics is dominated by three major parties which have recently converged in the so-called Pact for Mexico in order to ensure the implementation of Peña Nieto’s neoliberal reforms. The Pact exemplifies the paradigm of governance which is driven by norms of efficiency in pursuing economic imperatives. Under the presidency of Peña Nieto, the PRI, PAN and

Party of the Democratic Revolution³⁰ (PRD)—representing the centre-right, right and centre-left, respectively—signed the *Pacto por México* as a commitment to tri-partisan cooperation. The Pact for Mexico, writes PAN Senator and former Governor of the state of Morelos, Marco Antonio Adame:

Represents a vehicle for political and social cooperation in achieving agreements and the great reforms that, with a sense of urgency, should be established in the national agenda. The pact is a mechanism for sustaining the political will of the parts, for achieving, with the greatest efficacy, the validity of a new paradigm for Mexico, the paradigm of the yes. It is a space for generosity and the political responsibility of all, in the search for coincidences and public goods that permit, at the end of the day, the possibility of making concordance the basis of national development.³¹ (Adame, 2013)

The “yes paradigm” connotes the efficiency of governance and the disappearance of normative conflicts—most glaringly, popular opposition to the reforms—and encourages a view of politics based on consensus that is entirely discordant with the polarised national reality.

The rise of technocratic experts replacing statesmen and of secretive economic accords, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and NAFTA, designed to insulate economic imperatives from popular will and to undermine the very basis of politics, of the class struggle and, ultimately, of democracy have been some of the most significant characteristics of a globalised neoliberal order. The dissemination of discourses of human capital and competitive entrepreneurialism have also served to negate a critique of exploitation and foment competition, polarising societies, depoliticising public life and undermining democracy. In this scenario, the mass media plays a key ideological role in the new world order. Summing up the confluence of de facto powers like the mass media and the ideological project of neoliberalism, Harvey (2005, p. 38) affirms that:

³⁰ *Partido de la Revolución Democrática.*

³¹ *...representa una vía de concertación política y social para lograr los acuerdos y las grandes reformas que, con sentido de urgencia, deben instalarse en la agenda nacional. El pacto es un mecanismo, sostenido por la voluntad política de las partes, para alcanzar, con el mayor acompañamiento y eficacia, la vigencia de un nuevo paradigma para México, el paradigma del sí. Es un espacio para la generosidad y la responsabilidad política de todos, en la búsqueda de coincidencias y bienes públicos que permitan, al final de la jornada, que sea posible la concordia como base del desarrollo nacional.*

The freedom of the market that Bush proclaims as the high point in human aspiration turns out to be nothing more than the convenient means to spread corporate monopoly power and Coca Cola everywhere without constraint. With disproportionate influence over the media and the political process this class...has both the incentive and the power to persuade us that we are all better off under a neoliberal regime of freedoms.

The combined effect has been the reduction of democracy to electoralism dominated by charismatic figures and media spectacles, the very situation that would become the focus of the movement in its demand for the democratisation of the media.

Harvey (1992) describes how postmodernism was accompanied by a stylised politics that served as a distractor and a façade to the otherwise deeply anti-popular projects of the Reagan administration. This worldwide drive toward the media spectacle is reproduced in Mexico, illustrated not only by the rise in scandalous topics, but by an excessive dependence on opinion in the absence of information—a trend that is underpinned by the role of a select range of media intellectuals acting as the moral compass in the representation of the civil society and the transformation of non-intellectual celebrities into political commentators (Escalante Gonzalbo, 2010). Moreover, the Mexican mass media not only reinforces a homegrown variant of neoliberal democracy but takes an active role in the criminalisation of protest. In this climate #YoSoy132 denounced the de facto power of the media monopoly on Mexico's weak democracy, offering a vital critique that would be deepened and extended to shed light on the way in which this unholy alliance, aimed at the full neoliberalisation of Mexican public life, actively prevents the realisation of an authentic democracy, blocking the possibility for popular sovereignty and social justice.

Today the overall picture is one of a thoroughly minimal version of electoral democracy that continues to exclude popular participation whilst winding back the hard-won rights of the 20th century, with dire consequences. Nonetheless, support for neoliberalism in Mexico had come from an emergent middle class whose newfound status appeared to embody the longstanding promise that, through modernisation, Mexico too could belong to the First World. Yet the updating of longstanding promises of progress and freedom have in reality been extremely limited and deeply polarising. Moreover, the high social costs of neoliberalism directly undercut the limited freedoms enjoyed by its beneficiaries. Rising precariousness and the dispossession of rural communities from their land is unleashing a wave of violence and insecurity that

directly contributed to the frustration that caused the outbreak of #YoSoy132 among upper middle class elite private university students. The complexity of the situation cannot be grasped through any framework that disregards the role of economics in the absence of authentic democracy. Even as #YoSoy132 critiqued the vast disparities in wealth and power that have accrued under neoliberalism and have directly facilitated the emergence of an oligarchical State subordinated to de facto powers and foreign interests, on the whole a critique of political culture sits in tension with the notion of popular sovereignty as a common will of ‘the people’ that might allow for the articulation of an alternative to neoliberalism.

As far back as 1992, Harvey warned that in exchanging the perspective of economic determinism for the standpoint of cultural critique, the New Left of the post 1960s had dispossessed itself of a critical vocabulary with which to oppose the renewed strength of capital (1992, p. 354). The very absence of a critical perspective on social transformation was what forced the New Left “to compete on the same terrain of image production, aesthetics, and ideological power”, weakening it drastically “when the means of communication lay in the opponents’ hands” (Harvey, 1992, p. 354). It might seem that a generation embedded in the promises and problems of neoliberalism would be strongly positioned to criticise the barren terrain of broken promises for the vast majority of the population. Yet despite the technological optimism regarding #YoSoy132’s novelty, insistence on technology’s importance in offering new means for contestation and empowerment is beset by the glaring reality that the movement opposed the largest media conglomeration in the Spanish-speaking world. It would seem that while a cultural critique of the spectacle of contemporary politics is imperative, the strength of such a critique is undercut when it involves the abandonment of demands for a democratised economic order. Much as a purely economic perspective is too reductive to respond to the complex needs and problems at hand, a cultural politics dissociated from a clear structural critique is also clearly insufficient for addressing the basis of the failure of democracy in Mexico.

What we seem to be looking at in terms of the novelty of #YoSoy132 is a postmodern self-referentiality expressed in a kind of first-person self-branding communicative strategy for affecting change. This approach, tied to claims that it is not possible to understand or to speak of #YoSoy132 outside of each and every person’s own representation, is nonetheless problematic as the basis for a democratic culture that

can effectively promote and defend common and public concerns. At its extreme, this results in cacophony and confusion in ways that undermine collective power and bolster rampant individualism. In his reflections on the state of the movement in October 2012, Pineda (2012, p. 15) stressed the grave problem of a lack of organisation based on a synthesis of deliberation and action, insisting that autonomy could not be allowed to be reduced to atomised disorganisation or the primacy of individual impulses. Pineda's concern resonates with Mark Bray's (2013, p. 94) critique of 'liberal libertarianism' in the Occupy movement, whereby a purportedly distorted understanding of counter-cultural and anti-authoritarian politics places individual whims above collective democratic practices. It seems necessary at this point to ask whether the convergence of postmodernism and neo-conservative politics has given rise to a cultural criticism that re-emerges in #YoSoy132 and that does not actually endanger, but in some ways reinforces, the global hegemony of neoliberalism.

An exploration of epochal promises of authenticity, creativity and individual autonomy points to the appeal of #YoSoy132 as fertile ideological ground for a new generation embedded in postmodern sensibilities and entrepreneurial rationalities. Yet while the tendency in the literature has been to favour rupture and negation as means for opening up the possible, it is unclear that what follows is necessarily critical or progressive. Certainly for Read (2009, p. 36) "A political response to neoliberalism must meet it on its terrain, that of the production of subjectivity, freedom and possibility". Yet it would seem that the challenge for a movement like #YoSoy132 is to overcome 'liberal libertarian' attitudes that reinforce fragmentation and find accommodation with self-limiting political forms and reactionary expressions of public opinion, something I will further explore in Chapter Four. Whatever the outcome, #YoSoy132 highlights the urgent need to rethink politics, and the equal importance of ensuring that any reconsideration does not reinforce the position of a circumscribed neoliberalism or a depoliticised postmodernism. In Mexico, any effort to rethink politics must encompass questions of diversity and issues of equality, questions that have already been raised by previous movements, most clearly Zapatismo, but which take on whole new meanings in #YoSoy132, as we shall see.

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to try to understand #YoSoy132 within a history of democratising struggles in Mexico. Part of the puzzle lies in grasping the apparent novelty of the movement as well as grappling with its continuities as reflections of the ideals, interests and identities expressed by participants and constructed in the formation of the movement. I attend to these tensions by contextualising them within longer national–historical trajectories and through an analysis of the broader global, social and political processes that contribute to the movement’s meaning and complexity. This involves a critical analysis of the literature in continual dialogue with the personal interviews I conducted in order to develop my own analysis of the movement’s character and its contribution to Mexican politics. The overarching analysis is also nourished by first-hand observations of the dynamics of everyday life in Mexico City, including university life and street protests. These direct observations, which I will discuss further below, contributed to an overall sense of the vast disparities and deep political tensions that underpin public life in Mexico and to a critical analysis of the movement’s own rhetoric of unity and inclusivity. Strategic discursive and performative aspects are unpacked with the help of comparative interview questions that specifically enquired after participants’ subjective understandings and experiences vis-à-vis the movement’s public rhetoric. The results revealed deep ambiguity and contestation over key concepts and practices that enabled a further exploration of the stakes and tensions within the movement and the socio-political significance of framing the movement for how it is understood and remembered.

This thesis draws upon a qualitative analysis involving three months of field research in Mexico City from August to October, 2014. During this time, I conducted 21 semi-structured interviews of approximately 1 to 1.5 hours with movement participants. As an outsider with few pre-existing links to the movement, I utilised the snowball sampling method (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Futing Liao, 2004) in order to gain access to willing participants. Since the snowball method relies on existing networks, it gives some insight into connections between participants that is both useful and interesting in its own right. However, this reliance can encourage unintended bias as participants might only recommend persons with whom they share common views. As such I specially asked participants for assistance in achieving a balance between public and private university students and gender. The interviews were voice recorded and then

transcribed and analysed. Participants have been de-identified and are referred to by pseudonyms, although their educational institution and discipline are offered as contextualising factors.

In total I interviewed eight students (three male and five female) from private universities;³² nine students (four male and five female) from public universities;³³ and two students (one male and one female) from the artist collective, Autonomous Audiovisual Front³⁴ (FAA). I also conducted three interviews with participants from outside of Mexico City: one male student from Western Institute of Technology and Higher Education³⁵ (ITESO) Guadalajara, one female alumnus from Cozumel and one aspiring tertiary education student (male) from San Luis Potosí. These three interviewees provided an important point of comparison to their Mexico City counterparts given that #YoSoy132 became a national phenomenon in spite of historically significant geographical differences between the capital and the states. However, for reasons of access and emphasis, the focus of this thesis is on the student movement in Mexico City.

The purpose of the semi-structured interview format was to gain comparative insight into the subjective standpoints of participants. Part of my rationale for choosing semi-structured interviews was to grasp the sociological factors that shape participant perceptions and experiences and how they relate to political postures and evaluations of #YoSoy132. I was interested in getting some understanding of how participants understood their experience and evaluated the movement according to their own interpretations of the ideals and practices of the movement. This approach is sympathetic to individual experience whilst remaining attuned to the political dimensions of different interpretations (McIntosh & Morse, 2015, p. 1). The interview questions elicited responses based on personal experience that underpinned the comparative–evaluative nature of the data. This approach revealed ambivalence regarding key concepts and brought to the fore many of the more contested areas of the

³² ITESM; ITAM; Iberoamerican University; El Claustro de Sor Juana; and ITESO.

³³ All public university students were from UNAM.

³⁴ *Frente Autonomo Audiovisual*.

³⁵ *Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Occidente*.

movement. The interviews provide points of contrast between differently engaged individuals.

To an outsider, participants often spoke candidly of their differences of opinion and conflicting views and took the time to explain the “taken-for-granted assumptions of participants” (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 97). Asking participants to reflect on their experience of core values such as democracy and inclusivity provoked varying interpretations, revealing many of the lines of tension and underlying disputes. The interviews also provided a glimpse of “the individual and collective visions, imaginings, hopes, expectations, critiques of the present, and projections of the future” that enable collective action and shape social movement histories (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 95). This approach thus does not discredit the possibility of achieving a broad, albeit nuanced, understanding of #YoSoy132 based on an exploration of intersecting social, cultural and political influences on the subjective understandings and experiences described. This comparative subjective approach enables a perspective on the tensions between individual subjectivities and the processes of collective identity formation that helps to avoid reifying or idealising the active political subjects that together forged #YoSoy132.

These interviews and my fieldwork observations were complemented by an exhaustive review of the literature, focusing on key interpretative representations. In many ways the interviews and the interpretative literature were intertwined and intersected at key points. Indeed, my theoretical understanding is informed by debates in the literature as I have already explained, even if these debates are not always explicit. While the predominant tendency is towards a cultural, communicative and aesthetic focus, there have also been important contributions regarding the movement’s socio-political character (Alonso, 2013; Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015; Pineda, 2012). Gun Cuninghame (2016, p. 3) takes this latter approach to #YoSoy132, focusing on social composition and ideological impulses. My method is similar insofar as its focus is primarily socio-political, however I consider cultural and communicative interests to be inseparable from political subjectivities. Data gleaned from the interviews and analysed in relation to interpretative literature on the nature and outcomes of the movement brought divisive issues into focus and, with them, the suspicion that divergent representations expressed distinct visions of the kinds of politics considered desirable and appropriate for democratising Mexico.

Semi-structured interviews can also act as correctives to dominant discourses (McIntosh & Morse, 2015, p. 3). They also help to identify processes in the construction of movement identities, privileging participant agency in the generation of representations (Blee & Taylor, 2002, pp. 95–69). Comparative questions were especially significant in this sense given that wealthy, influential voices are predominant and more likely to shape lasting narratives, and for this reason men, participants from higher classes, and spokespeople tend to have an unequal influence on the documentation of movements (Blee & Taylor, 2002, pp. 93–94). Many of the participants in this study were highly engaged, articulate and educated actors. Some were highly visible in the public sphere and exercised greater influence over the movement's external representations through their personal testimonies (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 92). In this way, subjective interpretations become important counter-sources of knowledge that reveal unequal agency within the movement, for instance by identifying key individual reference points or opinion leaders. Mariana Favela, a participant and emerging scholar, is a good illustration of this point. Favela's interpretations of the movement have been embraced by different scholars and have also heavily influenced my own approach to analysing the movement.

Favela clearly operates on the terrain of “convocation”, a methodological commitment to prefiguring the radical social imagination—as opposed to “invocation” or “avocation” (Khasnabish & Haiven, 2012). Her potent and persistent critique of hierarchical, rigid and totalising theories and practices is admirable. Instead of “participating in the collective process of *calling something that is not yet fully present into being*” (Khasnabish & Haiven, 2012, p. 412), my research seeks to place such critiques into dialogue with their political and cultural ‘others’ within the movement—in this case liberal and Marxist inclined perspectives—in an effort to re-imagine #YoSoy132 as inseparable from a series of constituent tensions arising from the encounter of the students with one another. This understanding is the product of analysing the situated and subjective nature of participant perspectives that unavoidably brings to the fore the rich contestations occurring as a result of movement formation processes. Perhaps an account of these tensions risks perpetuating an overdetermined view of politics, part of what is being avoided in convoking methodologies (Khasnabish & Haiven, 2012). However, I endeavour to demonstrate that these political imaginaries retain their currency, even if unfashionably, through a deep contextualisation of these tendencies. The limitations of this approach are countered by the benefits of a more

explicit dialogical approach that does not privilege any particular representation of #YoSoy132 as more 'authentic', but sees the predominant political imaginaries as mutually constitutive and existing in a productive tension.

This field research took place a little less than two years after the movement disappeared from public view and the mass media. This timing gave participants critical distance for reflection, which likely impacted on their understanding of the phenomenon. The interviews provided participants an opportunity, for which many expressed gratitude, to continue reflecting on the experience and meaning of the movement. The timing of my field research also allowed me to observe the after-effects of #YoSoy132 and to ponder its lasting significance. Indications of ongoing interest in the movement within universities included a book presentation and an oral defence of a thesis, both of which I attended. The book launched was *#JóvenesEnLasCalles 69, 99, YoSoy132*, a compilation of essays that viewed #YoSoy132 within a history of public university activism through a Trotskyist lens. The launch took place in a large lecture room at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences³⁶ (FCPyS), UNAM. The oral defence took place in a smaller, more modern room in the Anthropology Department of the Iberoamerican University. These events not only allowed me to observe the kinds of audiences and the reception of the ideas, but crucially, to compare interpretations of #YoSoy132.³⁷

During my three-month stay I attended a number of events, colloquia, forums, discussions, assemblies and book launches on a range of topics of significance to the region including the social, geo-political, economic and ecological impact of neoliberalism in Mexico and Latin America. Many of these took place on the UNAM campus in Ciudad Universitaria³⁸ (CU). The key concerns underpinning these diverse events helped me to grasp the persistence of Marxist and anti-imperialist tendencies across a number of faculties at UNAM. I also attended weekly seminars on the Ethics of

³⁶ *Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales.*

³⁷ For instance, #YouthInTheStreets (Méndez Moissen, 2014b) presented an explicitly Marxist interpretation of the movement compiled by socialist militants. In comparison, the oral defence of the master's thesis on communication in #Másde131, the Ibero cell of #YoSoy132, emphasised global connectivity and technology. Tellingly, one of the examiners present questioned the presenter on the lack of engagement with ideology in her thesis, to which the researcher responded that ideology was absent from #Másde131.

³⁸ University City, located in the south of Mexico City.

Liberation by the distinguished philosopher, Enrique Dussel, at the Autonomous University of Mexico City³⁹ (UACM) from August 27 until my departure in late October. During my stay I visited distinct parts of the city and the country and was able to appreciate the enormous social and economic disparities between regional areas and the metropolises and between public universities such as UNAM and UACM, in comparison with Ibero, for instance. Additionally, I engaged in numerous conversations and informal interviews with participants and scholars from Mexico City and Guadalajara, Jalisco on matters of historical, political and sociological interest to better contextualise the movement.

Prior to my research journey and to the eruption of the movement, I had spent two months in Mexico, over 2011–2012, visiting different areas of Mexico City and the country, which had given me some idea of the vastness and internal heterogeneity of Mexican society and culture. Travel during my fieldwork further revealed the different cultural and social realities within and between Mexico City and regional Mexico and the contradictions, tensions and vast material inequalities of everyday life. From the marble bathrooms, campus security and luxury cars awaiting students at Ibero to the overcrowded and tense metro in the direction of CU, where overwhelmingly *mestizo* students boarded crowded buses to move about the largest campus in Latin America, everyday inequalities were ubiquitous. Within UNAM these disparities ranged from informal vendors, cheap coffee and second-hand book sellers in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters and FCPyS, to the modern, empty spaces of the postgraduate Economics building in which prices of food and drink were higher and bathrooms contained toilet paper and soap, a rarity in other parts of the campus. During my multiple visits to CU I observed the bustling student community, various occupied classrooms run by distinct leftist collectives, and a number of impromptu assemblies, marches and meetings, including the massive contingent on the annual commemoration of the 2 October massacre.

During this time, I resided in the historic centre of Mexico City, within walking distance of the city's most symbolic protest spaces: *Avenida Reforma*, *Zócalo*, *Palacio de Bellas Artes* and the *Secretaría de Gobernación* in Bucareli, where multiple protests

³⁹ *Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México.*

occurred. I was present during the spontaneous mass student mobilisations in support of the student struggle for the democratisation of the National Polytechnic Institute⁴⁰ (IPN or Poly) (Todos somos IPN, 2014) and, simultaneously, in the immediate aftermath of the forced disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero on 26 September (Amnistía Internacional, 2015). I witnessed the rapid response of the student community in organising assemblies, marches and strikes, watching the streets fill with graffiti demanding the resignation of Peña Nieto and demanding the students be returned alive. During this time, I was invited to attend a meeting of a collective of ex-132s in which I could observe first-hand the overlap of friendship and horizontal organisation in a discussion over how the collective could support the search for the missing students. At this meeting the issue of violence was raised over the burning down of the Municipal Palace of Iguala, Guerrero by protestors (Alín, 2014). The distance between the ‘radical’ responses in Guerrero, captured in images of burning buildings and featuring predominantly young, *mestizo* men covering their faces to avoid identification, contrasted strongly with the comparatively orderly and heterogeneous marches in Mexico City. These observations further impressed upon me the diverse faces of Mexican protest and seemed to reveal a gulf between moral outrage at emblematic instances of injustice and a systematic political critique of the structural violence and inequalities of everyday life that underpin them.

⁴⁰ *Instituto Politécnico Nacional.*

Chapter 2: Legacies of struggle

In Mexico great fortunes have been amassed at the cost of the exploitation and dispossession of millions of people...and as a result of that there is a very important tradition of resistance, in many areas...We had a very authoritarian regime for many years, as the PRI was, whose particularity is that it apparently raised the flag of the Mexican Revolution, while it maintained strict control over the unions, a corporate and clientelistic control...so that very authoritarian regime also developed struggles for civil and democratic rights.⁴¹

— César (UNAM)

This chapter examines some of the key features of Mexico's particular political system as it evolved from revolutionary cultural nationalism to neoliberalism, bearing witness to the extraordinary flexibility of the PRI to "update" the authoritarian tendencies that it "carries in its flesh" (Favela, 2015b, p. 223). Against this backdrop, #YoSoy132 urged the rethinking of politics, declaring itself to be non-partisan with respect to established political parties, autonomous and leaderless. The chapter also explores some of the key struggles for a democratic political ideal and institutional culture capable of bringing about social justice and respect for individual and collective rights that #YoSoy132 identified as part of its own inheritance. These discussions ground #YoSoy132 across key battle lines, namely, to democratise Mexico's authoritarian political culture, to resist neoliberal reforms, and to appeal to the liberal ideal of a dynamic public sphere for free and informed elections. The aim is to place these distinct issues within a history of democratising struggles from the Revolution to today so as to grasp the status of #YoSoy132 at the intersections of continuity and rupture.

⁴¹ *En México se han amasado grandes fortunas a costa de la explotación y el despojo de millones de personas...y producto de eso hay una tradición importante de resistencia ¿no?, en muchos ámbitos: en el ámbito de los derechos... Tuvimos durante muchos años un régimen muy autoritario, como fue el PRI, cuya particularidad es que aparentemente enarbolaba las banderas de la revolución mexicana, mientras mantenía un control férreo sobre los sindicatos, un control corporativo y clientelar... entonces ese régimen tan autoritario también desarrolló una vertiente de lucha por los derechos civiles y democráticos.*

The post-revolutionary regime

The PRI...betrayed the ideals and core demands of the Mexican Revolutions [*sic*] that took place around 1910. The creation of the PRI in the 1920s coincided with the quelling of popular effervescence that, 10 years later, still fought for the distribution of land, the democratization of the country, and the creation of the basic conditions for social equality. The suppression of the social conflict involved three interconnected strategies: to organize the popular classes into corporatist institutions, to institutionalize the design of a simulated democracy, and to impose a nationalistic-patriarchal narrative that legitimizes the concentration of power. This last strategy seeks to proscribe or discredit all expressions of dissent while it appropriates and repurposes their critical imaginaries after having emptied them of their subversive potential.

— Mariana Favela (2015b, p. 223)

The legacy of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) has been profound and lasting. The revolutionary calls by the Flores Magón brothers, Francisco Villa and Emiliano Zapata, for “land and liberty” genuinely mobilised the over-exploited and excluded popular bases of Mexico’s countryside (Knight, 1985, p. 7). By contrast, the wealthy northerner, Francisco Madero, campaigned against the 32-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, calling for effective suffrage and no re-election, demands which resonated with an urban middle class society frustrated by the lack of access to political power (Selee, 2011, p. 34). The post-revolutionary social contract in the form of the progressive 1917 constitution quelled dissent amongst the masses. However, it did not bring about the liberal democracy that Madero had hoped for: “the [R]evolution established the importance of constitutionalism, even if many of the constitution’s liberal provisions were never enforced” (Camp, 2013, p. 53). Today, the defence of the social gains enshrined in the 1917 constitution continue to animate leftist struggles, whilst the constitution’s liberal precepts, so poorly adhered to by the post-revolutionary regime, retain their currency for liberals and reformists. More than a century on, the peculiarities of Mexico’s political culture remain entrenched in the collective imaginary as a significant obstacle to democratic change and a legacy that has tainted the ideals of the Revolution.

Political violence and the appropriation of popular ideals became the means by which the emerging bourgeoisie and military victors established order and laid the foundations for the post-revolutionary State. In a climate of anarchy, amid a weakened State, economic ruins and fragmented political power (Selee, 2011, p. 34), political

stability was the first task of the revolutionary victors (Knight, 1994, p. 393). Centralised power to ensure law and order and regional integration to promote national progress legitimated the ascendancy of *caudillo* rulers and revived the dictatorial tradition of personalised rule over the dictates of the constitution (Córdova, 2012, p. 53; Williamson, 2009, p. 378). This tradition was written into the meta-constitutional powers of presidentialism (Solís, 2015a, p. 125). In 1929 President Elías Calles created the National Revolutionary Party⁴² (PNR) in response to the ongoing threat of subversion and infighting amongst elites (Selee, 2011, p. 36). The PNR was the first iteration of the PRI: a one-party, authoritarian, bureaucratic, quasi-democratic regime that would rule for 71 years. Calles personally controlled the PNR (Córdova, 2012, p. 98). The aim was to agglutinate powerful factions, bureaucrats and labour leaders within the party structure (Hodges & Gandy, 1983, p. 55). The PNR confined competition for power to internal party struggles, limiting conflict and centralising authority (Selee, 2011, p. 36). This enabled the implementation of the revolutionary program aimed at resolving the great ongoing problems of the nation by decree (Cosío Villegas, 1972, pp. 50–51). The anti-democratic political culture consolidated by the post-revolutionary regime would give way to an enduring one-party State in which neither institutionalised democracy nor full social justice would be achieved.

The Revolution became the ultimate source of authority for the regime and an enduring symbol around which the State could claim to embody the people and perpetuate its power (Williamson, 2009, p. 390). President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940) introduced a populist, revolutionary nationalist regime that has had lasting effects on the identity of the nation and its political and economic development. During this period the chief process for achieving State-led development was “Mexicanization”:

an outgrowth largely of Mexico’s exploitation by foreigners and especially its proximity to the United States...[that] strengthened Mexican values and culture as well as political nationalism. The [R]evolution altered Mexicans’ political rhetoric and social goals of legitimizing the needs and interests of lower-income groups and Indians... [and] it made the state into an even more comprehensive institution. (Camp, 2013, p. 52)

⁴² *Partido Revolucionario Nacional.*

In a transcendental act, Cárdenas nationalised the country's petroleum industry, paying indemnity to foreign owners with donations from the Mexican people (Barajas Durán, 2013, p. 47). He nationalised railway companies, redistributed land, created the workers' movement and fomented a burgeoning socialist education system (Gilly, 1981, p. 355). Cárdenas urged peasants and workers to organise themselves into unions to defend their interests, exchanging services for obedience in order to defuse the still-explosive popular masses (Hodges & Gandy, 1982, p. 57). Through these processes, the post-revolutionary regime came to embody the aspirations and frustrations of a complex and conflicted population, perpetuating the ideals—and contradictions—of the Revolution as a class struggle (Cockcroft, 2010).

The success of the post-revolutionary regime was based on the pragmatic conciliation of class interests through enforced collaboration with the State, incorporating organised groups in a subordinated manner. *Cardenismo* marked the beginning of a true mass party that could mediate between citizens and the State through the creation of genuine labour and peasant organisations, which were vertically integrated into the presidential system (Selee, 2011, p. 38). The institutionalisation of this two-way relationship became a fundamental pillar of the post-revolutionary regime in which labour rights and political representation were traded for the control of dissenting members by the leaders of official unions (Zapata, 2010, p. 65). The corporatist–populist model legitimated the interests of different social classes and professional groups, fusing society to the party as the singular vehicle for political representation in the public sphere (Olvera, 2003, p. 43). However, corporatism was limited to the most strategic sectors, leaving the remainder of the working class without representation or protection. The hegemony of the party, although never complete, was significantly shored up by this symbiotic relationship between corrupt union leaders and the regime.

Corporatism became one of the key mechanisms for controlling labour power. *Charro*⁴³ unions created powerful union leaders who wielded direct control over workers and mobilised them in support of the party in exchange for personal political clout. Today the leaders of *charro* unions represent the continuity, albeit weakened, of

43 “Institutionalized union cronyism” (Pensado, 2013, p. 15).

the corporate State and continue to exercise political power for personal gain and to undermine democratic processes. Carlos Romero Deschamps, the leader of the Mexican Union for Petrol Workers,⁴⁴ and Elba Esther Gordillo, the leader of the National Teacher's Union⁴⁵ (SNTE), personify the legacy of corporatism in their longstanding roles as union leaders. In 2000 Romero Deschamps was involved in the Pemexgate scandal, which saw approximately US\$40 million siphoned from the Pemex treasury to the presidential candidacy of Francisco Labastida for the PRI; even as Labastida was defeated by Vicente Fox, as PRI Senator and leader of Mexico's largest State-owned company, Deschamps evaded justice (BBC, 2013). For her part, Gordillo mobilised half a million votes by the SNTE during the 2006 elections to ensure the victory of the *panista* candidate, Felipe Calderón, who won by a mere 0.56% over the leftist candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Meyer, 2013, p. 98). This marginal victory for the conservative PAN, thanks to Gordillo, was a powerful demonstration of ongoing recourse to corporatism now entirely emptied of any revolutionary or nationalist connotations. The outcome of such fraudulent and opaque practices has been the stigmatisation of unions, reducing public support for the legitimate demands of rank-and-file union members.

Repudiation of this legacy was part and parcel of the search for a fresh protest image by #YoSoy132 in rejecting leadership, partisanship and sectarianism. Historically, public university student movements have aligned themselves with the union bases, for instance the recently-dismantled Mexican Electricians Union⁴⁶ (SME). In stark contrast to this tradition, Alejandra, a journalist student from the private university, El Claustro de Sor Juana, recalled how the movement's growing closeness to the unions following the elections "began to confuse the people a bit, how it was understood in the collective imaginary of these people was like 'oh, no! These guys have aligned themselves with the SME, how gross!'"⁴⁷ César, a militant socialist from UNAM, expounded upon the historical, ideological and class reasons behind these different perceptions:

⁴⁴ *Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de la República Mexicana.*

⁴⁵ *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación.*

⁴⁶ *Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas.*

⁴⁷ ...eso empezó a confundir un poco a la gente, cómo se entendía en el imaginario colectivo de las personas era como "¡ay no!, es que estos ya se aliaron con el SME, ¡qué asco!"

when we decided to align ourselves with the unions, with the CNTE...with the electrician's syndicate, the first ones to have prejudices are [the private university students] because they reproduce all that their neoliberal professors have said, that "the troublemakers"...and we said "no!", in '99 when they wanted to privatise the university, [the unions] were the ones who supported us, and in general there is a historic list.⁴⁸

The political views of militant students, such as César (UNAM), are evidently quite distinct from those of private university students, like Julia (Ibero). Dissociating the universal assumptions of #YoSoy132 from the apparent sectarianism and self-serving interests of the working class, Julia (Ibero) explained: "If the Federal District has anything it is marches...And all the marches look out for their own interests. The teachers, for themselves, the SME for itself".⁴⁹

The public perception of protestors is deeply influenced by mass media framing. Emmelhainz (2016) describes the role of the mass media in systematically demonising specific demands and certain forms of protest. For instance, conservative public intellectual, Enrique Krauze, recently targeted the National Coordinator for Education Workers⁵⁰ (CNTE), a dissident union resisting Peña Nieto's education reforms. These reforms would, among other things, threaten the pensions of teachers and impose standardised measures across a deeply diverse and unequal geographic territory. Krauze labelled the CNTE as self-interested and stigmatised the teachers for protesting in ways that affect third parties, by blocking traffic (Emmelhainz, 2016, p. 29). In the view of Emmelhainz (2016), such examples illustrate a clear division between so-called "good" and "bad" publics, which infers a distinction between valid and invalid political struggles, the former being for abstract rights and the latter for material redistribution. As a movement for 'democracy' #YoSoy132 was originally be considered a legitimate expression of citizen discontent. From this perspective, as Julia (Ibero) confirms:

⁴⁸ *...cuando decidimos aliarnos con los sindicatos, con la CNTE...con el sindicato de los electricistas, los primeros que tienen prejuicios son ellos, porque reproducen todo lo que sus profesores neoliberales han dicho, que "los revoltoso" ¿no?...y nosotros decimos "¡no!", pues si cuando en el 99, cuando querían privatizar la universidad, quienes apoyaron fueron ellos, y en general hay una lista histórica.*

⁴⁹ *Si algo tiene en el Distrito Federal son marchas...Y todas las marchas velan por sus propios intereses. Lo maestros, por ellos mismos, el SME por sí mismo.*

⁵⁰ *Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación.*

132 did not march for 132. 132 marched for the democratisation of the media, for democracy in the country...132 did not march for money for 132, for scholarships for 132, for a better education for 132. 132 marched for everybody except themselves. And that is what does not exist in Mexico. And that is because wages are so low that it obliges them to look out for themselves, it is an instinct.⁵¹

In this view, #YoSoy132 enjoys a kind of moral superiority based on its universal presumptions vis-à-vis the self-interested workers struggling for sectional interests. Julia (Ibero) did concede, however, that unlike the precarious working classes #YoSoy132 had nothing to resist: “‘There are no cigarettes or beers! Too bad!’ The conditions did not exist to keep resisting, or you suffer a lot, or you cede”.⁵²

National unity

In Mexico, differently than in other countries in Latin America, class conflict was covered up by national sentiment.⁵³

— Ilán Bizberg and Francisco Zapata (2010, p. 12)

The post-revolutionary regime’s project of revolutionary cultural nationalism fashioned an emergent national identity that sought to unite the disparate peoples of Mexico and to prepare the country for the future in a deeply nationalistic project of modernisation (Saldívar, 2014). The concept of *lo mexicano*⁵⁴ was impregnated in, and disseminated through, the arts, culture, technology, international diplomacy and, above all, education (Jackson Albarrán, 2014). As Rector of the National University of Mexico and Secretary of Political Education from 1920-1924, José Vasconcelos promoted his

⁵¹ *Y el 132 no marchaba por el 132. El 132 marchaba por democratización de los medios, por democracia en el país...el 132 no marchaba por dinero para 132, para becas para 132, para una educación mejor para 132. El 132 marchaba por los demás menos por sí mismo. Y eso es lo que en México no hay. Y eso es porque los pocos sueldos que obliga a velar por sí mismo, es un instinto.*

⁵² *Creo que el 132 duraba lo que duraba porque éramos estudiantes, de vacaciones, y porque no teníamos qué resistir, no teníamos que resistir. No hay cigarros o caguamas, qué mal! Las condiciones no te dan para seguir resistiendo, o sufres mucho, o cedas.*

⁵³ *...en México, a diferencia de otros países de América Latina, el conflicto de clases fue encubierto por el sentimiento nacional.*

⁵⁴ Mexicanness.

vision of *la Raza Cósmica*⁵⁵ based on the concept of *mestizaje*⁵⁶ and the glorification of an indigenous past, mobilising the generation of Mexican muralists whose works imprinted the idealised image of the *mestizo* in the collective imaginary (Ocampo López, 2005, p. 142). The State self-identified as the incarnation of the revolutionary ideals and as *mestizo*, cultivating an image of representation built on lofty ideals usurped from the popular bases.

This emergent nationalism gave new visibility and symbolic weight to the country's indigenous heritage and to the working classes, giving the popular bases of the Revolution a place in modern Mexico for the first time. Yet the idealisation of working class subjects and of an indigenous heritage masked dangerous tendencies which would ultimately reinforce the colonial structures of race and power in a new national context in which the post-revolutionary regime was bent on retaining social control and legitimising the State structure. *Mestizaje* facilitated continued exploitation: “politically, the constant dismissal of racism has been central to the naturalization of the systematic mistreatment, assimilation, incorporation, and displacement of indigenous people” (Saldívar, 2014, p. 92). The unifying myth of *mestizaje* supplanted the centrality of class conflict even as inequality was reproduced in the new national landscape (Bizberg & Zapata, 2010, pp. 11–12). *Mestizaje* and *indigenismo* exalted an indigenous past whilst demanding incorporation into the new nation by means of assimilation. *Mestizos* became the race of national unity and homogeneity par excellence and those who refused to participate in the *mestizajización* of the nation became ‘others’—enemies to be marginalized and eradicated (Gall, 2013; Saldívar, 2014; Smeke de Zonana, 2000). The contradictions of the post-revolutionary regime that claimed to embody the will of the people whilst suppressing difference and dissent have had a lasting impact on the collective imaginary.

The authoritarian tendencies of post-revolutionary Mexico endured in the form of a simulated democracy and a national identity rooted in clear social stratification beneath a project of differentiated cultural homogenisation. Diego, a political science student from UNAM and a defender of the Mexican Revolution, signalled how the

⁵⁵ The Cosmic Race, in which the mixture of Spanish and Indigenous blood would be the great race of the future.

⁵⁶ Miscegenation. Note, this term does not have the same negative social valence as the English word.

‘othering’ of difference—most emblematic in the case of the country’s diverse indigenous peoples—is today being reconfigured by a neoliberal framework dictating new evaluative measures in education. Nationalism once subsumed class-based differences in pursuit of class-conciliation and political stability (Bizberg & Zapata, 2010, p. 12). Today the imposition of a foreign standard refuses to recognise and respect the right to be different:

We are a country that has an institutionally negated diversity...the Mexican State says we have to defend the indigenous people and they exalt them, but only insofar as they are merchandise with a use value and exchange that can be sold to tourists...the education reform wants them to speak Spanish and English and not to speak their own languages.⁵⁷ (Diego, UNAM)

The language of inclusion and unity of revolutionary nationalism, like the façade of democracy in the form of controlled periodic elections, has nonetheless been leveraged to mobilise to resist neoliberalism. Most clearly, the gap opened up by the promise of inclusion and the reality of violent exclusion provoked the 1994 uprising by the Zapatista Army for National Liberation⁵⁸ (EZLN). The Zapatista uprising exposed the ongoing misery and marginalisation of the indigenous people, nearly a century after Emiliano Zapata cried out for “land and liberty”.

The Zapatista insurgency revealed the failure of the revolutionary project to create a just and democratic Mexico, shattering the image of a unified nation. Nonetheless, during seven decades of rule the PRI managed to create a compelling hegemonic nationalist narrative whose effects are still present today. Such nationalistic narratives were effective in generating cohesion and maintaining stability during times of crisis. They were also useful as a strategy to “implement otherwise unpalatable reform agendas in the name of modernisation”, as during the 1982 debt crisis as the PRI was moving towards neoliberalism (Sheppard, 2011, p. 506). The lack of a captivating and popularly approved alternative meant that revolutionary nationalism maintained popular support and remains ingrained in the collective imaginary through everyday

⁵⁷ *Somos un país que tiene una diversidad negada e institucionalmente negada...el estado mexicano dice que hay que defender los pueblos indígenas y los exalta, pero solamente en cuanto a que son una mercancía de una valor de uso y de cambio en que se les puede vender a los turistas...la reforma educativa quiere que hablen español e inglés y pues que sus lenguas que no las hablen.*

⁵⁸ *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional.*

frames of reference (Sheppard, 2011, p. 513). The ongoing status of Emiliano Zapata as a national icon for popular and peasant struggles is palpable in present day Mexico, no doubt reinforced by the EZLN's uprising and consolidation as a force of resistance, affirming indigenous dignity and ways of life. The slogan, "*Zapata Vive, la lucha sigue*",⁵⁹ is frequently chanted at popular marches and assemblies, and even #YoSoy132 celebrated the 133rd anniversary of the birthday of the beloved revolutionary figure with festivals, photographic expositions, concerts and conferences ("*#YoSoy132 festeja 133 aniversario*", 2012).

Simulated democracy

In 1946 the Party of the Mexican Revolution,⁶⁰ the second iteration of the revolutionary party created by Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938, was re-structured and re-named the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The hegemony of the PRI was consolidated through corporatism, a single-party system and control of the media (Olvera, 2010a, p. 186). The PRI administered all political participation, entrenching presidentialism by strengthening the executive over judicial and legislative powers (Loeza, 2014, pp. 655–666). It used *charro* unions to control organised labour and peasant confederations, and those who refused to comply with these increasingly corrupt unions were marginalised and repressed (Preston Dillon, 2004, pp. 53–55). Political persecution was facilitated by the emergence of *porrismo* as the State incorporated young, unemployed men into the repressive apparatus as paid agitators and assailants⁶¹ to discredit and harass dissidents and movements (Ibarra Chávez, 2012, p. 27). Pensado (2013, pp. 15–16) argues that "projects dedicated to national unity, centralization, revolutionary progress, and bureaucratization...not only failed to eliminate *caciquismo*⁶² but rather nationalized it in the forms of *porrismo* and *charrismo estudiantil*". Corruption and the utilisation of economically marginalised young men would play an important role in strengthening an anti-democratic system and suppressing dissent. It is little wonder that students from the elite Iberoamerican

⁵⁹ "Zapata lives, the fight goes on".

⁶⁰ *Partido Revolucionario Mexicano* (PMR).

⁶¹ *Porros*.

⁶² *Bossism*.

University were aggrieved by accusations that they were *porros* following their repudiation of Enrique Peña Nieto.

Political clientelism and the co-optation of popular leaders were essential means for achieving a façade of democracy in the absence of meaningful elections and in the face of a paternalistic presidential system (Brachet-Márquez, 1992, p. 98).⁶³ The clientelistic distribution of resources channelled through hierarchical networks linking society to the State has a long tradition in Mexican politics (Brachet-Márquez, 1992, pp. 93–94). Historically, political brokers acted as intermediaries within clientelistic networks maintaining a symbiotic relationship between formal and informal realms of politics, both targeting and delivering programs and services and manipulating and coercing local populations (Selee, 2011, p. 11). Clientelistic networks also linked citizens to particular organisations, which were vertically integrated into the political hierarchy through corporate relations (Selee, 2011, p. 42). Since clientelism negates universal rights and unaffiliated access to power (González Casanova, 1975), it strengthens an informal, hierarchical political culture that is not conducive to exercising universal political rights. As an informal mechanism for petitioning the State, clientelism reinforces corruption, dependency, informal power, the simulation of democracy, and the absence of citizenship as a set of guaranteed universal rights.

At the formal level, democracy was a limited good to be leveraged by the PRI for its own ends. The PRI tightly controlled elections, but tolerated opposition parties because they provided an air of democratic competition and an “escape valve for social conflict” (Selee, 2011, p. 44). As Favela (2010) has demonstrated, the more closed the regime was politically, the more radical demands became; hence, by providing some limited channels for negotiation and participation, the PRI could contain discontent and prevent radicalisation. However, “although all citizens could participate in elections, they had little ability to decide who was elected” because PRI candidates were preselected and guaranteed to win (Selee, 2011, p. 42). Similarly, the PRI tolerated

⁶³ For her monograph on children in revolutionary cultural nationalism, Jackson Albarrán (2014) unearthed archival records showing that children had been taught to write to the president, a paternal figure—especially Calles—to petition him for all kinds of favours. Those children educated to respect the president later taught their children—the generation of 1968—to do likewise. Raúl Álvarez Garín, a member of the CNH during the 1968 student mobilisations, recalled that his parents warned him not to get involved in the movement and that he had to respect the president (Múnoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 249).

contestations related to material distribution, but not systemic critiques, and in an era of rapid economic growth the PRI shared the benefits, albeit unequally and anti-democratically (Selee, 2011, p. 45).

Through these institutionalised political practices, social justice was instrumentalised. Demands were only partially fulfilled in return for political loyalty, but at the cost of contaminating the ideals of the Revolution in the public eye. These informal and institutionalised practices shed light on the extremely limited notion of democracy in modern Mexican politics, and as a corollary, help to explain the high degree of mistrust in institutional politics expressed by participants of #YoSoy132. Authoritarian political practices obliged dissenters to continuously seek political autonomy to defend the collective gains of the Revolution against the State, which was by now engaged in an intense process of State-centred economic development through the model of import substitution industrialisation (ISI). The ISI developmental strategy, common to Latin America at the time, generated rapid urbanisation and the so-called “Mexican Miracle”.

The “Mexican Miracle”, a period of relative stability and prosperity from the 1940s to the 1970s, altered the physiognomy of Mexico and brought on a period of urban migration with a series of megaprojects and highways (Loaeza, 2014, p. 675). Urbanisation changed social values and attitudes and social mobility expanded and strengthened the middle classes. A growing economy, rising per-capita income and expansion of employment and production, particularly manufacturing, were accompanied by increasing population growth (from an increase of 26 million in 1950 to an increase of 49 million in 1970) (Loaeza, 2014, pp. 665, 669). An expanding bureaucratic apparatus and the economic learning curve of ISI would pave the way for a series of economic reforms that would transform the political economy of Mexico. As we have already seen, by the 1970s the flaws of ISI were becoming dramatically clear across the Latin American region, and Mexico was not an exception. Moreover, the effects of rapid growth and deepening inequality, exclusion and discrimination were becoming evident; misery in the cities, inequality and poverty in the countryside and government corruption generated discontent (Loaeza, 2014, p. 678).

The consolidation of PRI hegemony during the 1950s would lay the groundwork for growing demands for democracy as a set of civic and political rights independent of material demands. Loaeza (2014) describes the diversity of discontent that spread across

the width of the country, including Catholics, supporters of the Cuban Revolution and adversaries, all exploding in 1968. Among the discontented were: striking workers demanding union autonomy; peasants and farmers invading territory or government buildings demanding credit and guaranteed higher prices; students hijacking buses and organising to oppose university reforms; business people refusing to pay taxes; company owners, fearful of the advance of communism, taking their money out of the country; railroad workers and doctors striking; and guerrilla groups (Loaeza, 2014, pp. 679–680). Combined with an expanding public education system concentrated in Mexico City and the growing politicisation of the university sector—which had mobilised in solidarity with the railway workers and doctors’ strikes of the late 1950s—these factors led to “profound questioning of the order that had been generated from ‘above’ to ‘below’ and that was incarnated in the organisation of the corporatist pact”⁶⁴ (Bizberg & Zapata, 2010, p. 14).

Even for those who had benefited from the economic development of the Mexican State, such as public university students, the increasingly authoritarian responses of the regime to discontent would become the platform from which critiques could be launched against the continuing absence of democratic rights and freedoms. In the process, the legacies of revolutionary nationalism and Mexico’s socialist education were taken up as tools with which to fight authoritarianism and protect the authentic legacy of the Revolution from below: the experience of mass popular mobilisation and organisation in throwing off the shackles of serfdom and demanding collective rights for the oppressed and dispossessed majorities.

⁶⁴ *...profundos cuestionamientos al orden que se había generado de “arriba” hacia “abajo” y que se encarnó en la organización del pacto corporativo.*

Education and student movements

For me the examples of resistance...are like, in spite of 100 years, maybe because of the education that I received in primary, or secondary or preparatory, was always the inheritance of the first Zapatismo, of the Zapata that fought for the peasants, of the people that fought back, that rebelled against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. From then on there is a whole generation of resistance, of the communist parties, the socialists, our painters, I mean, to see the mural in public spaces, universities, well it is to coexist all the time with resistance, because you know that a good deal of them were communists, militants, that had a political commitment.⁶⁵

— Marta (UNAM)

Cárdenas's socialist education permeated collective identities and political consciousness, standing as one of the most significant and lasting legacies of revolutionary cultural nationalism. During the 1930s education became a vehicle for mobilising the masses around the purported ideals of the post-revolutionary regime (Raby & Donís, 1989, p. 308). In 1936 Cárdenas established the IPN (National Polytechnic Institute) (also known as 'Poly') for the children of workers. The IPN promoted access to education for the subordinated classes (Ordorika & Kempner, 2003, p. 17). Javier, a sociology student from UNAM, expounds upon the relevance of this socialist education in Mexico:

The National Polytechnic Institute came from the government of Lázaro Cárdenas, which is considered a very progressive government in Mexico...so for an educational institution to come out of that government, it also gives a strong sense of identity, because the National Polytechnic Institute was planned for the children of workers...the majority of its degrees are focused on engineering, in issues of technological development and its use for changing raw materials, so that Mexico could advance as a country.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Pues para mí los ejemplos de resistencia...es como, a pesar de que ya son 100 años, siempre quizá por la educación que recibí en la primaria, en la secundaria, en la prepa, siempre fue el herencia del primer Zapatismo, del Zapata que luchó por los campesinos, de ese pueblo que no se dejó, que se rebeló contra la dictadura de Porfirio Díaz. Desde ahí hay toda una generación de resistencia, de los partidos comunista, los socialistas, de nuestros pintores, o sea, el ver los murales en los edificios públicos, universitarios, pues es convivir todo el tiempo con la resistencia, porque sabes que muy buena parte de ellos eran comunistas, militaban, tenían un compromiso político.*

⁶⁶ *El Instituto Politécnico Nacional surge a partir del Gobierno de Lázaro Cárdenas que es considerado en México como un gobierno muy progresista... entonces que un instituto universitario salga de ese gobierno, también le da mucho sentido de identidad, porque el Instituto Politécnico Nacional estaba*

If the roots of working class pride lie in Cárdenas's national popular education, so too does the bureaucratisation of participation that once again interweaves material benefits with the political consolidation of authoritarian bureaucracy.

Cardenismo left a lasting impact through the establishment of a culture of populism and formal, structured participation which “mirrored the bureaucratization of the revolutionary government”, sanctioning certain behaviours and attitudes and disciplining non-conformity (Jackson Albarrán, 2014, p. 265). Under Lázaro Cárdenas, proletarian children were taught political skills and class-consciousness through diverse media including puppet shows and speaking contests that glorified the proletariat and portrayed bosses as evil (Jackson Albarrán, 2014). While the proletariat became a unifying identity pervading organisational and popular culture, fair skinned, middle class urban children engaged in “civilizing missions” aimed at their poor compatriots (Jackson Albarrán, 2014). These learned attitudes and behaviours encouraged the solidification and strengthening of informal hierarchies that would find expression in the social positions of future bureaucrats, clients and marginals within the hegemonic party apparatus (Jackson Albarrán, 2014, p. 265). The post-revolutionary period produced a contradictory set of expectations and experiences of nationalism that systematically reintroduced existing hierarchies, even as it continuously reiterated the centrality of the working classes and indigenous peoples to the national project.

Tertiary education was also key to the consolidation of modernity in Mexico. Tertiary education both fashioned the professionals of the post-revolutionary regime and set the scene for an eventual questioning of the regime (Acosta Silva, 2012, pp. 7–8). In 1948, students from UNAM initiated the first strike against an increase in enrolment fees, revealing the growing strength of the middle classes and the incipient inclusion of popular sectors in what had been a university of elites (Pérez Monroy, 2012, p. 43). From 1950 to 1960 UNAM underwent a massive transformation as enrolment number skyrocketed from 24,054 to 58,519 students (Pérez Monroy, 2012, p. 45). Historically, the massification of Mexico's tertiary public education granted equality and access to middle and lower class sectors, making tertiary education the middle class aspiration par

pensado para los hijos de los obreros, por eso es Politécnico y la mayoría de sus carreras están enfocadas en ingeniería, en cuestiones del desarrollo tecnológico y su utilización para cambiar la materia prima, para que México avanzara como país.

excellence and the main means for social mobility (Acosta Silva, 2012, pp. 7–8). The change was not only in quantity but quality: UNAM now represented a much greater diversity of students and this heightened diversity would eventually trigger class-based ideological conflict within the university body, which had previously been a bastion of bourgeois conservatism (Pérez Monroy, 2012, p. 45). The very success of higher education would generate the conditions for the questioning of the PRI hegemony and demands for democracy as well as renewed commitment to the revolutionary ideals from within UNAM.

During the period from 1958 to the early 1970s, students were the vanguard of the whole of the Mexican Left (Rivas Ontiveros, 2004, p. 28), defending the gains of the Revolution in the face of a reorientation of national development towards capital accumulation and away from revolutionary nationalism. Internationally, this period corresponded with the Cuban Revolution and the proliferation of national liberation struggles in Latin America and the Global South as well as an emerging cultural expression, which would leave a lasting impact on the political consciousness of Mexico's largest tertiary institution, UNAM (León Rosabal, 2015, p. 231; Rivas Ontiveros, 2004, pp. 26–27). UNAM became a politicising school for a new radical leftist politics including Maoism and Marxist-Leninism and encompassing an autonomous cultural New Left (Rivas Ontiveros, 2004, p. 27). Organising internally in a democratic manner through student assemblies and radiating out across the country, the student Left profoundly impacted the “political physiognomy of Mexico” (León Rosabal, 2015, p. 231).

From the 1950s onwards, student activism has played a key role in leftist struggles and the struggle for a democratic political culture based on self-organisation for achieving popular sovereignty and social justice. Within this history, 1968 stands out as a turning point. Pérez Monroy (2012) describes how the demand for education driven by an aspiration for social mobility grew incrementally during the 1950s, causing concern for university authorities about the loss of quality education. Within the Cold War context, tensions arose between the authorities and the students that would eventually explode in the movement of 1968 (Pérez Monroy, 2012, p. 45). The National

Strike Council⁶⁷ (CNH) made six specific demands including the release of political prisoners and activists detained for protesting, and the repeal of Article 145 of the Federal Penal Code criminalising political agitation, including the crime of social dissolution that made protest marches illegal (Guillén, 2016, p. 154). The mass student movement is remembered for its novel demands for civil liberties and respect for the rule of law (Allier Montaño, 2009, p. 289). As César (UNAM) explained, the right to march on the streets was won by the students in 1968.

The events of 1968 would come to have profound and lasting effects on society, politics, family and media communications (Hernández Navarro, 2012, p. 9). Tamayo (2016) notes that there were two sides to the student movement: a euphoric and spontaneous rebellion and long, slow, conflictive processes of internal organisation and negotiation. Whatever the internal history of the movement, what remains in memory is the brutal and unanticipated manner in which the State responded and the centrality of the student movement in democratising struggles.

On 2 October 1968, just days before the commencement of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, students under the direction of the CNH staged a mass rally at Tlatelolco in which an ambush led to the military opening fire indiscriminately on the masses gathered at the plaza. Astonishingly, the massacre was followed by total silence and impunity. The morning following the massacre, Televisa's Jacobo Zabludovsky famously began the news with the observation: "today is a sunny day".⁶⁸ Televisa's complicity in covering up the massacre helps to explain this silence. For 50 years (1955–2000) Televisa had a "tacit alliance" with the PRI (Sosa Plata & Gómez García, 2013, p. 85). Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, the father of the current president of Grupo Televisa, once called himself a "soldier of the PRI" (Candón Mena, 2013, p. 6; Meyer, 2013, p. 90), declaring that Televisa made "television for the damned and not for intellectuals"⁶⁹ (Figuieras, 2012, p. 55). The official death toll was just 30, yet other estimates have since suggested anywhere from 150 to 350 (Allier Montaño, 2009, p. 293). The spontaneous and effervescent student movement of 1968 that ended in the repression, assassination and arbitrary detention of hundreds of students and protestors

⁶⁷ *Consejo Nacional de Huelga.*

⁶⁸ *...hoy es un día soleado.*

⁶⁹ *...televisión para los jodidos y no para intelectuales.*

resounded in the minds of the students of #YoSoy132: “68 is always our reference, always”,⁷⁰ exclaimed Marta (UNAM). Juana (UNAM) agreed that 1968 had an important place in the memory and identity of #YoSoy132. 1968 represented a crisis of legitimacy for the post-revolutionary regime that expressed the limits of development without democracy.

Taking a different tactic from his predecessor, President Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970–1976) sought to reconcile with the student community by ordering a presidential pardon of the imprisoned 1968 student leaders and announcing a ‘Democratic Opening’. Carr (1992, p. 258) affirms that the 1977 electoral reform was Echeverría’s strategy to co-opt the student leaders by redirecting their passions towards electoral ends. In this atmosphere, on 10 June 1971, students organised the first march since 1968, which was again unexpectedly and brutally repressed. So-called *halcones*⁷¹ or paramilitary *porros* killed approximately 140 people in what is remembered as the *Matanza del Jueves de Corpus*.⁷² The massacre radicalised the struggle for freedom and equality. The student massacres of 1968 and 1971 divided politics between institutional struggles and a resurgent revolutionary warfare in the form of student- and teacher-led urban and rural guerrillas (Ibarra Chávez, 2012, p. 107). After 1971 guerrilla warfare became the only option for those unconvinced by electoralism (Carr, 1992, p. 258). At the height of the Cold War the State intensified and modernised intelligence, it militarised the country, extending extrajudicial killings, forced kidnappings, illegal incarceration, torture and exile (Ibarra Chávez, 2012, p. 41). The ensuing radicalisation of conflict between guerrillas and the State is remembered as the ‘Dirty War’. The long-term, cumulative effect of these struggles would be the forced liberalisation of Mexican politics aimed at channelling discontent electorally (Bizberg, 2010, p. 30) to prevent the high costs to legitimacy incurred by armed insurgencies.

As a result of the strict conditions of debt restructuring from the 1980s onwards, Mexico has seen real spending per capita on education fall significantly, affecting both the quality and scope of education through falling wages of teachers and overflowing classrooms (Bonal, 2002, pp. 12–13). In this context, the State severely reduced public

⁷⁰ *El 68 siempre es nuestra referencia, siempre.*

⁷¹ Falcons.

⁷² Corpus Christi massacre.

funding for the burgeoning public education system at the same time as it took up an active part in managing higher education by linking finance to new evaluative criteria (Tuirán & Muñoz, 2010). Under Miguel de la Madrid's administration (1982–1988), the debt crisis facilitated the incorporation of market mechanisms into administrative and financial decision-making processes and strengthened State–market relations, opening up the scope for private investment in public higher education (Olivier Téllez, 2007, p. 104). Soon after, Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) inaugurated an education revolution appealing to 'efficiency' to justify reduced State intervention in public education, favouring private initiatives even at the expense of reduced opportunities (Ordorika & Kempner, 2003, p. 20). In response to this call, a bureaucratic and academic elite devised new policies that would see higher enrolment costs for students, reduced intake, the imposition of standardised testing and new measures of evaluation (Ordorika & Kempner, 2003, p. 21).

The conversion of education from a public to a private good, achieved through a discursive shift from State responsibility to private consumption, further undermines the role of public education in Mexican tertiary education as technocratic elites negate and dismantle the welfare State (Acosta Silva, 2012, p. 7). This shift in hegemonic ideology brought with it a reconceptualisation of knowledge, social relations and their relationship to community as well as a critique of public education (de la Torre Gamboa, 2004, pp. 16–17). In Mexico, neoliberal elites have attempted to supplant the humanist tradition of Mexican universities—based on values of freedom and equality and rooted in ideals of nationhood and community achieved through the welfare State—with a market rationality of competitiveness based on radically autonomous individuals and a minimal State (de la Torre Gamboa, 2004). While elite private education offers prestige-enhancing human capital through privileged access to social networks as part of the broad neoliberal framework, quality, accessible public education is being increasingly dismantled and redirected towards market imperatives and practical pursuits (Brown, 2015, p. 192). As the market supplants the State as educational provider, new evaluative methods and demands for quality and accreditations reframe academic expectations of students encompassing pragmatic, utilitarian and normative rationalities even as the future holds no promises (Acosta Silva, 2012, p. 7).

An increasingly mercantile rationality has transformed education into a matter of production and consumption that undermines students' ability to pursue an education

that might be unprofitable in terms of the investment made. In a globally competitive international market where technology is often concentrated in the developed countries, the low cost of labour is a key resource (Ordorika & Kempner, 2003, p. 6). Today less than 0.5% of Mexico's GDP is invested in science and technological development, contributing to reduced impact in research and innovation; comparatively low levels of postgraduate researchers in an already small research community prevent Mexico from competing internationally in these markets (Alcántara Santuario & Jiménez Nájera, 2013, pp. 364–365). These changes have stagnated social mobility and deepened social inequality. In the midst of these shifting terrains, Latin America student movements and teacher mobilisations are at the forefront of resistance to the “new common sense” of decentralisation, evaluation, accountability and privatisation of education (Alcántara, Llomovatte & Romão, 2013, p. 128).

If neoliberal educational policies that diminish public spending and instrumentalise education are at the forefront of privatisation, then public university students position themselves as the guardians of a free, quality public education. For students who struggle to defend accessible quality public education, historical memory and strong institutional identities are central. The historical significance of the IPN founded by Lázaro Cárdenas is leveraged against the neoliberal policies that seek to downgrade qualifications from engineers to technicians, a policy that would effectively lower wages and, therefore, labour costs. Efforts to implement these reforms were met with mass protests by the IPN student body, with solidarity from other student communities like UNAM, in September 2014. Polytechnic (IPN) students organised themselves through assemblies, striking on 30 campuses and leading mass marches in defence of public education, calling for unity and solidarity from the student community and the Mexican people (Todos somos IPN, 2014).

As the movement occurred during my field research and in close proximity to my Mexico City residence, I was able to personally witness the rapid and determined response by the students to protect the quality and status of their education. From my observations, the mobilisations expressed a strong sense of political community clearly rooted in the institutional identity of the Polytechnic. For instance, in gathering outside the *Secretaría de Gobernación* in Bucareli demanding an audience with Education Minister, Osorio Chong, the students frequently broke out in the official university chant. Moreover, sharing a certain class identity as public university students with a

left-leaning political outlook, students from other public institutions such as UNAM were also present, holding signs in support of the movement and the UNAM chant of ‘Goya’ was also periodically added to the chorus.

Despite the creeping dissemination of neoliberal rationalities, UNAM remains permeated by a sense of camaraderie and commitment to social justice that has been manifest in a number of significant events. In 1999, students called a strike in response to the threat of deregulation, the introduction of a quota to limit numbers and attempts to introduce obligatory fees. Strikers demanded the repeal of a series of technocratic reforms aimed at dismembering the revolutionary gains, which developed into a generational revolt of enormous significance (Pérez Monroy, 2012, p. 1). Students occupied the Mexico City campus for nine months, paralysing the university until their demands were met. During the strike internal splits between ‘moderates’ and ‘ultras’ hardened into two poles of a heterogeneous movement. As conflicting factions fought for control of the movement, the silent majority abandoned the strike (Tamayo, 2016, p. 105).

In the course of events, the mass media’s portrayal of the students as rigid and radical displaced attention from the political nature of the strike and its larger implications. The strike ended in February 2000, when the students were violently dislodged from the campus by police in violation of the principle of institutional autonomy. Although the strike was successful in the defence of free education, in the long run the cost to the legitimacy of student movements has been high. Until #YoSoy132 in 2012, student activism at UNAM was in a lull. Looking back, Solís (2015b, p. 15) affirms:

Those who promoted that elitist model assumed that student resistance that stopped the fee rise in 1986 represented the last generation of politicised youth. They were wrong. On the contrary, in 1999 a rupturing generation emerged that was very influenced by the discourse of neoZapatism...It was not until the emergence of #YoSoy132 that the thread of university activism began to be collectively re-sown.⁷³

⁷³ *Quienes promovieron ese modelo elitista, asumieron que la resistencia estudiantil que detuvo el incremento de cuotas en 1986, representaba la última generación de jóvenes politizados. Se equivocaron. Por lo contrario, en 1999 emergió una generación de ruptura muy influenciada por el discurso neo*

Resistance “from below”

Above all we should accept the challenge of assuming the inheritance of the great social conflicts, such as the railway workers, the students and the armed movements in the conformation of Mexico today. Those conflicts and that collective action contributed decisively to generate the conditions of a culture of resistance that...seems to be expressing itself in a clear manner throughout the length and width of the country.⁷⁴

— Ilán Bizberg and Francisco Zapata (2010, p. 19)

As we have seen, institutionalised practices for the subordination, co-optation and elimination of dissent were crucial to the consolidation of the post-revolutionary regime’s political hegemony. Nonetheless, Knight (1990) and Rubin (1990) contend that this domination was never total, and nor was change ever so sudden or transformative as is usually claimed. The authors thus challenge the predominant understanding that the PRI was ever an all-encompassing hegemonic force. On the contrary, the partial nature of hegemony and the continuity of social struggles were central to 20th century Mexican politics. Rubin (1990) criticises the corporatist model for its over-determining and excessive views of State power, and both Knight (1990) and Rubin (1990) assert the dialectical nature of the State and opposition, including the ongoing power of regional elites. Similarly, Jackson Albarrán (2014) concludes in her archival study on children’s citizenship in post-revolutionary Mexico that centralised dictates for proper comportment were met with varying degrees of adaptation and flagrant disregard, particularly in poor, rural areas. These conflicting and contingent dynamics undermine the myth of a monolithic State and reveal complex interactions that have led both the PRI and its opponents to update their strategies as they respond to each other. For these reasons, Knight (1990) rejects the utility of new social movement theory premised on post-material values for understanding popular movements in Mexico, asserting the inseparability of materiality and broader demands. Instead, Knight (1990, p. 98) views popular movements as continuities within change that are part and

Zapatista...No fue, sino hasta el surgimiento de #YoSoy132 que se empezó a resarcir la urdimbre colectiva del activismo universitario.

⁷⁴ *...sobre todo debemos aceptar el desafío de asumir la herencia de los grandes conflictos sociales, como el ferrocarrilero, el estudiantil y el armado en la conformación del México de hoy. Esos conflictos y esas acciones colectivas contribuyeron decisivamente a generar las condiciones de una cultura de resistencia que...pareciera expresarse de manera contundente a lo largo y ancho del país.*

parcel of the cyclical nature of Mexican politics, which he defines as “a rolling cycle of renovation, stabilization, ossification, protest, and renewed renovation”. In much the same sense, I argue that #YoSoy132 needs to be understood as an instance of continuity within change, instead of the dramatic rupture so frequently posited in the literature.

The legacy of an authoritarian State has long obliged trade unions, militant students and other organised sectors of the working class to organise autonomously at the grassroots level to avoid political domination. Hegemonisation of the formal political terrain and the dangers of co-optation and manipulation in contact with the State have also provoked ongoing adaptations that give struggles for social justice and democracy their dynamic and enduring qualities. As the political terrain began to open up in the late 1990s, presenting new opportunities for the co-optation of dissent, new areas for struggle intensified. Autonomy and non-partisanship have become commonplace organisational modes (Foweraker 1990, p. 6). Although clientelism persists, the deeply paternalistic character of the presidential system is giving way to partisan struggles which, although reproducing and proliferating these clientelistic practices, are today combatted through demands for universal political rights. By 1990 popular movements were demanding rights instead of petitioning the State (Craig, 1990, p. 273). Likewise, broad participation, rotating leadership and collective decision-making are common features of grassroots activism (Craig, 1990, p. 275).

From this perspective we can understand the founding principles of #YoSoy132 of autonomy and non-partisanship as part of an unfolding process of political experimentation and cultural change in response to enduring ideals and deep-rooted problems. The Zapatistas exemplify this reflexive, evolving character in the face of the domineering political culture that has come to permeate all political parties. Following their short-lived insurgency, the EZLN, who spent over 10 years preparing in the jungles of Chiapas, attempted to negotiate with the State to have their rights as indigenous people respected and enshrined in law. However, the continual betrayal by the PRI and the ongoing military presence in their territory, as well as harassment, obliged the Zapatistas to cease negotiations (Muñoz Ramírez, 2003). Given the lack of institutional channels for change, the EZLN changed strategies, occupying a number of territories and proclaiming autonomy and self-government. They then set up autonomous, self-governing communities called *caracoles*. Although localised, these practices have resonated widely, provoking ongoing reflection on the links between

culture and politics at the global level within the anti-systemic tradition and for autonomous, indigenous and peasant struggles across Latin America and beyond.⁷⁵ The public university tradition of rotating leaders and assembly democracy was also directly influenced by the Zapatista's grassroots model of democracy. In #YoSoy132 such practices served to prevent consolidated individual leadership, opportunism and betrayal, explained Juana (UNAM).

Zapatismo thus not only ruptured with the harmonious representation of national unity, but opened up a new political and democratic imaginary that set the scene for struggles in the 21st century. The Zapatistas have been crucial to the reformulation of resistance in terms of autonomous, horizontal and anti-neoliberal resistance that has resonated worldwide. Moreover, they have been a key player in the ongoing reconfiguration of indigenous and peasant struggles across Latin America in the context of wide-scale extractivism. Today the Zapatista maxim "a world where many worlds fit" consciously avoids the homogenisation and exclusion associated with 'the people' as one. Likewise, "walk asking" and "command obeying" are Zapatista phrases that capture the reflexive and democratic character of their constantly evolving movement, which at the present moment includes the posting of the first indigenous woman candidate for the 2018 presidential elections, together with a broad coalition of indigenous communities under the Indigenous Council of Government.⁷⁶ In its own way, #YoSoy132 followed in these footsteps. Indeed, for Juana (UNAM), the lessons of Zapatismo were central to the movement's identity: "I think that this generation has been influenced, firstly, by the Zapatista struggle...as a symbol of resistance in Mexico in the face of neoliberalism and capitalism...I think that that, above all, gave an identity to 132."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ As we shall see in Chapter Four, the Zapatistas were a key reference point for the alter-globalisation movement of the 1990s and early 2000s and for the cyber-Left culture that informed the most recent wave of global protests including #YoSoy132.

⁷⁶ *Congreso Nacional Indígena (CIG)*.

⁷⁷ *Creo que esta generación ha sido influenciada, primero por la lucha zapatista...como símbolo de la resistencia en México ante el neoliberalismo, ante el capitalismo...yo creo que eso sobretodo nos daba identidad al 132.*

Neoliberalism and democratisation

Theoretically globalisation is an integrative process, it integrates nations, but in reality what it [is] doing, neoliberalism in this case, the process of globalisation, free trade, [is] to eliminate a part of that population, annihilating it forgetting it, erasing it from the face of the Earth.⁷⁸

— Subcomandante Marcos, EZLN (in JuanioTigrillo, 2017)

For this Left, civil society is inserted in a long struggle of the popular sectors, but at the same time it marks a rupture with discourses and forms of political organisation that are viewed as obsolete. The language of class (of emancipation, revolution) is being substituted by a language of rights and identity. There is less talk of the popular movement and more of social movements. But if civil society appears to be the new face of the Left, it is not an exclusive actor of it...The neoliberal discourse that described the welfare State as a formation that limited the entrepreneurial capacity of individuals, making them dependent on the interventionist character of the State, and that defended the necessity for a slimmer State and a society co-responsible for its own well-being, had become axioms for all the political spectrum.⁷⁹

— Leal Martínez (2014, p. 461)

The 1980s and 1990s were a period of intense political mobilisation and contestation of the regime from all sides. In 1981, Rolando Cordero and Carlos Tello remarked on the profound significance of the processes underway around them for the future of Mexico. *A Dispute for the Nation*, as their book title put it, had emerged from the economic decline of the period and the growing tension between two alternative models: the revolutionary path, heavily reliant on the national treasury but suffering

⁷⁸ *Se supone que teóricamente el proceso de globalización es integrador, integra a las naciones, pero en realidad lo que hacía es, el neoliberalismo en este caso, el proceso de globalización mundial, el tratado de libre comercio era eliminar una parte de esa población, aniquilándola, olvidándose de ella, borrándola de la faz de la tierra.*

⁷⁹ *Para esta izquierda, la sociedad civil se inserta en una larga lucha de los sectores populares, pero al mismo tiempo marca una ruptura con discursos y formas de organización política que son vistos como obsoletos. El lenguaje de clases (de emancipación, revolución) va siendo sustituido de un lenguaje de derechos y de identidad. Se habla menos del movimiento popular y más de los movimientos sociales. Pero si bien la sociedad civil aparece como una nueva cara de la izquierda, no es un actor exclusivo de la misma...El discurso neoliberal que describía al Estado benefactor como una formación que limitaba la capacidad emprendedora de los individuos, haciéndolos dependientes por su carácter intervencionista, y que defendía la necesidad de un Estado adelgazado y de una sociedad co-responsable de su propio bienestar, se había convertido en axiomas para todo el espectro político.*

from corruption; and the neoliberal path, the supposed corrector of inefficiencies capable of kickstarting the economy. The social unrest of the 1970s coupled with the economic crisis had strengthened and united the business class. With the State in crisis, these groups organised themselves politically to mount pressure and insist on neoliberal economic policies and technological change as the singular solution to the problems facing the nation (Cordero & Tello, 1981, p. 68). In 1987, following internal struggles between a rising technocracy and the old-guard nationalist PRI, a new democratic current emerged to challenge the right-wing turn from within the hegemonic party. This current was led by Lázaro Cárdenas's son, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano, who eventually abandoned the PRI before mounting an electoral challenge in representation of the nascent opposition coalition of the National Democratic Front⁸⁰ in the name of economic justice and political democracy (Walker, 2013, pp. 170–171). The pent-up energies of this period culminated in the 1988 election, which can be read as the last great ideological dispute in Mexican politics.

In 1982 Mexico became the first country to default on its external debt. In the face of mounting foreign debt, President Miguel de la Madrid (1982–1988) was responsible for locking Mexico into a series of structural adjustments dictated by the IMF and the World Bank. The de la Madrid administration responded to the debt crisis by devaluing the peso and privatising the vast sum of State-owned enterprises, excepting oil and power, raising exports to the United States and severely lowering import tariffs, driving Mexico deep into recession (Alcántara et al., 2013, pp. 143–144). The price of macro-economic stability was the reduction in public expenditure on health, education and housing, resulting in the concentration of wealth, rising informal employment and an education gap of 30 million people (Alcántara et al., 2013, p. 144). The severe economic mismanagement of the PRI government justified the dismantling of the interventionist State (González Casanova, 2013, p. 207). The implosion of the welfare State and the ISI model under the weight of corruption and clientelism spelled the beginning of the end of the social pact that underpinned Mexico's post-revolutionary rule. The corporate basis of the social pact was at the root of the crisis, such that the defunct revolutionary national project coincided with the delegitimisation of 'the

⁸⁰ *Frente Democrático Nacional* (FDN).

people’ and with it, the status of the subject of social rights enshrined within the legislation of the post-revolutionary State (Leal Martínez, 2014, p. 444).

The economic crisis opened the doors to economic liberalisation as a result of the strict loan conditions imposed by the World Bank and the IMF (Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb, 2002, p. 557). Yet as we have already noted, neoliberalism was also authored by social forces within the country (Babb, 2002; Morton, 2003, p. 633)—including by economically strong sectors of society whose *de facto* powers gave them the capacity to intervene in the State (de Sousa Santos, 2004, p. 58). The transition from State-led developmental economy to neoliberalism was an imposition by the business class and international institutions, backed up by the mass media and a new technocratic political class with major social, political and economic repercussions (Revueltas, 1993, p. 217). By associating these processes with democratisation, neoliberal advocates gained legitimacy (de Sousa Santos, 2004, p. 59). At the time Smith (1996, p. 251) criticised an economistic and technocratic tone of debates over the correlation between neoliberalism and democracy, warning that electoral reforms might usher in a liberalised economy but did not guarantee democracy.

In the face of an increasingly technocratic government, the future of the nation depended in large part on the results of the 1988 election between Cárdenas Solórzano, defending a return to a genuinely popular nationalist government, and Carlos Salinas de Gortari, prescribing a deepening of neoliberalisation. Salinas defeated Cárdenas Solórzano following an inexplicable crash in the new computerised vote counting system. The 1988 ‘system crash’ that brought Salinas to power epitomised the updating of democratic simulation in a modernised setting in an atmosphere of secrecy that saw the reversion of Cárdenas Solórzano’s lead. In the name of global competitiveness, Salinas then committed Mexico to the signing of NAFTA whose primary purpose, according to Noam Chomsky, was “to block the threat of a democracy opening and to lock Mexico in by treaty arrangements” (in Chomsky & Dietrich, 1999, p. 99). Chomsky affirms that the prospect of a national, populist government emerging from a democratic opening caused concern amongst North American business elites who acted quickly to ensure favourable conditions for their interests (in Chomsky & Dietrich, 1999, p. 99).

Mexico has been considered both a prototype and an ideal type for the dissemination of neoliberal economics in the reconfiguration of not only the political

economy but also the national narrative (Babb, 2002, pp. 12–13). The very viability of neoliberalism as a political and economic project depended on the undoing of the revolutionary legacy, both discursively and constitutionally. As such, Salinas revived the ideal of social liberalism associated with the patriotic liberalism of the 19th century Independence struggles as “a substitute for revolutionary nationalism as a Mexicanist source of political ideas” (O’Toole, 2003, p. 277). This new nationalism reconfigured ‘the people’ as individual, abstract and autonomous, and recast national sovereignty as competitive advantage within a globalised economic order. Salinas therefore embodied the endurance of the hegemonic regime despite its transfigured ideological façades. As a result of neoliberal economics, virtually all of the key areas that President Lázaro Cárdenas had championed—education, land, petroleum, unions—have since been weakened, reversed or dismantled.

While the PRI moved towards forsaking the revolutionary project for good, neoliberalism offered a fertile terrain for the modernising of old practices: updating populism and clientelism for a new era without establishing public controls on spending that in turn fostered corruption (Revueltas, 1993, p. 225). Morton (2003, p. 643) argues that the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL) established by Salinas:

combined material and institutional aspects...of poverty alleviation in order to rearrange state–civil society relations and the coalitional support of the PRI...it attempted to diffuse potential social discontent through selective subsidies, to accommodate social mobilisation through “co-participation” and to undermine the strength of left-wing opposition movements.

PRONASOL favoured the accumulation of capital by updating the State’s strategies of control: appropriating the language and mobilising role of grassroots organisations whilst redefining traditional corporatist benefactors as consumers (Morton, 2003, pp. 643–644). Even as he updated populist strategies towards neoliberal ends, Salinas managed to give a sense of historical continuity to the PRI: differentiating between “reactionary” and “revolutionary austerity”, the president represented his administration’s changes as the latter, implying coherence between the revolutionary history of the nation and neoliberalism as socially driven (Sheppard, 2011, p. 513).

In the midst of a turbulent political and economic landscape, a new political actor emerged out of the rubble of the 1985 earthquake that devastated Mexico City. Facing an unresponsive and obstructive State, citizens organised to rebuild their homes.

The Overall Coordinating Committee of Disaster Victims, formed in mid-October 1985 in response to the ineffectiveness and corruption of officials, comprised a number of organisations and groups, spanning the working poor and middle classes (Walker, 2013, p. 186). The autonomous and self-organising power of the citizens who rebuilt their lives after 1985 generated a powerful myth in the democratisation narrative: the birth of a civil society. This myth of the birth of civil society obscured the way class divisions caused tensions between the experienced protestors of the working class and the entitled middle classes who dominated media attention (Walker, 2013, p. 186). In an analysis of the decades following the event, Leal Martínez (2014, p. 453) documented the role of the press in the reconfiguration of ‘the people’, from the legitimate moral carrier of the values of solidarity in the pursuit of the class struggle, to a mere descriptor of the poor and excluded. The discursive shifts underway in the public sphere were not merely fashionable labels brought about by neoliberal globalisation. Terms like ‘civil society’ effectively masked a whole spectrum of competing political ideals with new homogenising concepts. ‘Democracy’, ‘civil society’ and ‘participation’ would come to be the very grounds for contested ideals of nationhood and for the organisation of society.

Rafael Lemus (2015) recounts the unfolding of these narratives from within Mexico’s most influential circles of public intellectuals to expose the ideological function of a new civic subject divorced from the class struggle and appropriate to the purposes of neoliberalism. Analysing differences between the accounts of the earthquake victims presented by Octavio Paz and Enrique Krauze on the one hand, and that of Carlos Monsiváis on the other, Lemus (2015) observes how the first pair promote a vision of the civil society mobilisations that concurs with that proposed by Leal Martínez (2014), as exemplary of fraternity and solidarity. Monsiváis, on the other hand, describes the continuity of the mobilisations within the framework of popular mobilisation, emphasising the political and antagonistic character of the protests with respect to the regime. The weight of the interpretation of the former functioned to re-signify the collective subject from *el pueblo solidario* to an autonomous civil society suited to the purposes of a technocratic government and a neoliberal version of democracy and a co-responsible civil society (Leal Martínez, 2014, p. 444). The myth stuck, as did the political ramifications.

This apparent transition from popular struggles to citizen-based demands brought a new lexicon of universal norms and values deemed incompatible with particularistic, class interests. At the same time, electoralism brought about new kinds of civic associations which saw nationwide popular movements, whose main strength was in the streets, largely replaced by local, particularistic movements negotiating in private (Olvera, 2003, p. 67). This period witnessed the arrival of the third sector in which civil society representations were conflated with NGOs and autonomy was reduced to a depoliticising agent which, under formally democratic conditions, has no need to confront the State (Dagnino, Olvera & Panfichi, 2006; Olvera, 2003). For better or worse, a professional version of civil society was emerging in parallel to the ongoing struggle for democratisation. Indeed, many of the civil society organisations that emerged from the earthquake would be decisive in pressuring for citizen control over the Federal Electoral Institute⁸¹ (IFE) that helped to dislodge the PRI from the presidency (Bizberg, 2010, p. 41).

At a time of seemingly profound political transformations, the 1994 Zapatista uprising was a pertinent reminder of the death toll that neoliberalism spelled for indigenous communities and peasants, and thus of the ongoing relevance of unanswered social justice claims. The 1994 elections expressed the complexity of civil society, dividing progressive forces in two: those in favour of an autonomous model of organisation inspired by Zapatismo, and those favouring greater citizen control over the elections and government transparency, united under the umbrella organisation, *Alianza Cívica*.⁸² The general perception of nearing democratisation led to greater support for the latter, marginalising the Zapatistas as a result (Bizberg, 2010, p. 41). Despite, and indeed because of their differences, both Zapatismo and democratising movements like *Alianza Cívica* confirmed an inescapable fact: the modern Mexican polis is multi-faceted, plural and contested.

⁸¹ *Instituto Federal Electoral*.

⁸² Civic Alliance.

A failed transition

The long democratic process responded to the ongoing and growing political consciousness and discontent of the Mexican people, particularly evident since 1968 (Bizberg & Zapata, 2010, p. 14). Demands for union autonomy, human rights, freedom of association and free and competitive elections obliged a protracted process of political liberalisation in which executive power was slowly diminished (Favela, 2010, p. 119). Decades of struggle including popular movements, NGO advocacy and electoral struggles forced open Mexico's closed political system. President Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000) granted public financing to political parties to make them more competitive and turned Mexico's electoral institutions over to a citizen's commission, leading to a "half transition to democracy" (Olvera, 2010b, p. 84). In 1997 and 2000 the PRI lost its absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate respectively (Favela, 2010, p. 121). By channelling popular discontent through an electoral struggle, the PRI ultimately sought to prevent the radicalisation of protest (Olvera, 2010b, p. 84; Pineda, n.d.). The simulation of democracy and the prospect of institutionalised democracy served to co-opt reformist movements, offering a narrowly defined recipe for proceduralism in place of substantial democracy, whilst carrying on many of the same practices in slowly changing settings.

In 2000, after 71 years in power, the authoritarian PRI was replaced by the conservative PAN. Vicente Fox's populist slogan "*Ya!*", "Enough!", framed his candidacy as the hope of the nation, leveraging a decade's worth of societal demands for democracy, transparency and clear and fair elections (Preston & Dillon, 2004, p. 496). The ex-CEO of Coca Cola Mexico also purportedly proclaimed that his government was one "of business people and for business people" (Meyer, 2013, p. 89). The transition did not bring democracy. Instead, all of the major political parties "learned how to benefit from the status quo" (Selee, 2011, p. 70). Bizberg (2010, p. 40) sums up the problem:

The transition never escaped from the hands of the authoritarian elites, who always maintained it in the electoral plain. A social opposition was never

organised that could extend the transformations into the social sphere and derail the governmental project.⁸³

In addition, President Fox condemned the democratic opening to impotency when he invited the PRI to co-govern the transition with the PAN; today the term ‘PRIAN’ serves as a colloquialism to signal the near indistinguishable nature of their policies. Favela (2010, p. 103) asserts that the liberalisation of politics in Mexico was not equivalent to democratisation, since citizens do not exercise power but merely select between pre-sanctioned possibilities. Even as political liberalisation undermined many of the formal agreements that held up the authoritarian regime, at the informal level these practices continue to signify profound obstacles to democratisation.

Indeed formal democratisation created a whole new range of problems for Mexico by fragmenting the political landscape. This granted greater power to the media as political actors. Where previously the State offered Televisa protection and benefits in return for loyalty to the official line, this relationship has been reconfigured (Guerrero, 2010, p. 23) and the hierarchy inverted (Meyer, 2013, p. 90). Today, the media duopoly Televisa and TV Azteca together concentrate almost 95% of all frequencies (Guerrero, 2010, p. 25). Electoralism also makes politicians dependent upon advertising and propaganda campaigns, obliging them to seek beneficial relations and positive coverage. In this context, political parties spend millions of the State’s money on propaganda campaigns (Guerrero, 2010, p. 25). Media giants gain exceptional symbolic and real power as governing becomes little more than marketing (Hernández Lujano, n.d., p. 26). This power translates into direct access to legislature. The concept of ‘*Telebancada*’ describes the group of ex-television workers-turned politicians who have infiltrated Mexican politics since 2000 and whose purpose is to defend the interests of Televisa and TV Azteca within Mexico’s Chamber of Deputies (Islas, 2014, p. 81).

As an alternative narrative to democratisation, Pineda (n.d.) describes liberalisation processes as the “deformed amplification of the political class”.⁸⁴ This

⁸³ *La transición nunca escapó de las manos de las elites autoritarias, que siempre lograron mantenerla en el plano electoral. Nunca se organizó una oposición social que pudiera extender las transformaciones al ámbito social y descarrilar el proyecto gubernamental.*

⁸⁴ *La amplificación deformada de la clase política.*

amplification is the backdrop against which a self-serving multiparty system extended corporate and clientelistic practices for their own ends (Bizberg, 2010, p. 42; Pineda, n.d.). According to Pineda (n.d.) the “deformed amplification of the political classes” broadens, deepens and deinstitutionalises the practice of making discretionary use of power for private ends, fomenting a criminal State. Corruption, which once served to grease the engines of the presidential system, has been re-oriented towards the needs of organised crime (Morris, 2010, p. 143). The deinstitutionalisation of corruption provides fertile terrain for the cultivation of a criminal State, in which distinctions between the State and criminal networks disappear (Pineda, n.d.). Buscaglia (2014, p. 13) describes the absence of democratic social and political consensus in transitions from authoritarianism (such as Mexico’s) as generating a power vacuum that can be filled by de facto oligarchical and criminal powers that substitute themselves for the State, corrupting it and leading to escalating violence in the competition to control markets, both legal and illegal.

The result of the failure and possible retrocession of democracy since the return of the PRI to power in 2012 is a contradictory and ambiguous regime that Lorenzo Meyer (2013) aptly terms ‘authoritarian democracy’ or ‘democratic authoritarianism’. Today, perceived corruption, dishonesty, abuse of power and a lack of transparency are amongst the main causes of citizen distrust in institutions. In 2011, 50% of Mexicans perceived authority as arbitrary (Camp, 2013, p. 215). These conditions have led to growing dissatisfaction with democracy in Mexico. In 2011, Mexicans were the most unsatisfied with democracy in Latin America: 73% expressed dissatisfaction, of which 14% expressed a preference for authoritarianism over democracy (Camp, 2013, p. 317). And in 2016, only 48% of Mexicans supported democracy over any other political regime type (Latinobarómetro, 2016, p. 11). The underlying propensity to support a tougher government that ensures less crime and more economic distribution evidences the societal fascism that is the true pillar of authoritarian governments in Latin America (Dagnino, 2006; de Sousa Santos, 2004). #YoSoy132 emerged from within a political climate marked by the growing autonomy of de facto powers from the State and a citizen body practiced in political rights and framed by a democratic paradigm (Solís, 2015a, pp. 125–126). In its various critiques, #YoSoy132 responded to the multi-level exclusions of Mexican politics and to the revitalisation of historic struggles which, in the face of a failed or ‘elusive democracy’ (Olvera, 2010b), remain open wounds for Mexico.

Concluding remarks

Given the persistent absence of democratic institutions and effective and genuine participatory mechanisms at the national level, the question of political culture has become a significant angle for rethinking the bind of Mexican politics. Along these lines, the ideal of a horizontal, decentralised, active and critical citizen body is emerging to challenge a legacy of social control and hierarchical social and political relations. These developments need to be examined against a history that is rife with manipulation and the containment of dissent and whose legitimacy once rested upon reappropriating popular histories and ideals for political gain but today is enforced through ideological imposition and brute violence. In a context of media monopolies, heightened insecurity and growing frustration with the failure of the State to fulfil the material needs of the people and to guarantee their basic rights, #YoSoy132 demanded 'authentic democracy'. For a new generation raised under the expectation of liberal democracy and fed up with the practical failures of Mexico's political institutions, #YoSoy132 became a vehicle for denunciation and the revival of longstanding ideals. As a heterogeneous movement at the crossroads of continuity and rupture, #YoSoy132 would fling open the meaning of democracy and subject it to contestation and debate.

In 2010, remarking upon the rise of new forms of social activism characterised by an engaged citizenry, Bizberg speculated on whether or not emerging forms of social action could be considered evidence of a new culture of Counter-Democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008). These questions arise from the observation of the emergence of an essentially negative form of sovereignty expressed as pointed opposition to specific actors or policies and manifested through multitudinal marches and more diffuse forms of public opinion (Bizberg & Zapata, 2010, p. 18). Although he considered it too early to know definitively, Bizberg (2010, p. 52) suggested that it was likely that many of the most important post-alternation movements could be considered examples of Counter-Democracy. The key question, according to Bizberg and Zapata (2010, pp. 18–19), is whether or not such examples illustrate novel forms of political action, or of the limits of democracy under neoliberal coordinates. Any investigation into the matter, they stress, ought to examine questions of collective identity and the formation of social actors; moreover, any analysis must be clearly situated within changes since the late 1970s against a backdrop of the persistence of 20th century struggles (p. 19). The authors conclude that only from this perspective can, and should, we detect continuity

and rupture in current actions. In Chapter Seven, I will make my own case for viewing #YoSoy132 as strengthening a culture of Counter-Democracy that seems to express both new forms of political action *and* the very limits of democracy under neoliberalism, as Bizberg and Zapata (2010) hypothesise.

Chapter 3: The encounter

We have broken with the artificial prejudices of the division of the identity between students from public and private schools. We are simply students, without distinction, figures of struggle, knowledge, passion, energy, rationality and of a present that demands us to work to stop being the country of lost opportunities.⁸⁵

— #YoSoy132 (“Declaration of Principles”)

In the previous chapter I described some key democratising struggles against the backdrop of a longer history of the political consolidation and decline of the hegemonic PRI. We have also seen how the neoliberalisation of education in Mexico is generating ongoing resistance from public students in the name of social justice and in defence of the revolutionary gains of a free, quality public education. In contrast, wealthy private university students have been conspicuously absent from protest (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 138). Unlike public education, protest does not form part of the dominant institutional culture of the major private education systems (Guillén, 2016, p. 150). This generalised non-participation of elite private universities in protest movements partly explains the shock and excitement produced by the events at Ibero and the events that followed. It was in this context that #YoSoy132 created an historic opportunity to traverse socio-cultural and political divides and make contact with ‘the other’. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned yet unelaborated remark about #YoSoy132 is that it united students from public and private universities. Despite this astonishing occurrence, few scholars have critically analysed the processes involved in forging this unity, or reflected deeply on its significance for the movement, with notable exceptions (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015; Pineda, 2012).

This chapter explores how #YoSoy132 arose from the seeming transgression of this divided educational system. I begin by analysing Mexican universities as sites for the reproduction of social inequality that manifests in class antagonisms, ideological disputes, negative stereotyping and mutual distrust. Following this, I probe the

⁸⁵ *Hemos roto los prejuicios artificiales de la división de la identidad entre estudiantes de escuelas públicas y privadas. Simplemente somos estudiantes, sin distinción, figuras de lucha, conocimiento, pasión, energía, racionalidad y de un presente que nos reclama trabajar para dejar de ser el país de las oportunidades perdidas.*

experience of the encounter and the initial proclamation of the unification of all students, irrespective of their institution. A euphoric sense of de-alienation is described as a moment of mutual recognition in shared indignation commonly experienced by students in their first encounter on the streets. This euphoria nourished a contagious feeling of hope that traversed socio-political divides, opening up a unique political opportunity in a high-stakes electoral context. However, from the outset deep-seated class antagonisms also threatened to undermine cooperation between the students, provoking efforts to subsume tensions beneath a common student identity based on a shared sense of privilege and responsibility. Student unification only temporarily papered over deep divisions, which would nonetheless return with a vengeance in time. In the aftermath of the elections, as we shall see, #YoSoy132 began to implode internally under the weight of class antagonisms and the uneasy coexistence of the political cultures of the public and private universities. In the beginning, however, this unexpected encounter was accompanied by an exhilarating experience of togetherness, generating a powerful sensation of new political possibilities.

The significance of public and private

The class distribution of the different kinds of institutions implicitly selects groups of students with more or less homogenous characteristics that reinforce the hierarchy of occupational structures. In these institutions a legitimately accredited education, beyond its academic value, emphasises the dominant structure of labour, segmented, hierarchical, including forms of status and power.⁸⁶

— Guadalupe Olivier Téllez (2007, p. 12)

⁸⁶ *La distribución por sector de clase en los distintos tipos de instituciones, de manera implícita selecciona grupos de estudiantes con características más o menos homogéneas que refuerzan la jerarquización de la estructura ocupacional. En estos institutos se ofrece formación escolar legítimamente acreditada que, más allá de su valor académico, enfatiza la estructura laboral vigente, segmentada y jerárquica, incluyendo las formas de estatus y poder.*

[C]lasses only exist through struggle and...struggles create classes. Class is not a positivistic category; class is made of experience, different types of habitus, historical memory and sociopolitical objectives...we have to relate these positions to concrete struggles and warring subjectivities if we are to truly understand what is happening in society.

— Mario Espinoza Pino (2013, pp. 236–237)

Although put to one side in favour of a politics of inclusivity or buried beneath a strategic unity, class differences would prove a significant source of richness as well as tension within #YoSoy132. Class is understood here as relational, embodied, socially produced and reproduced, and as having political consequences (Pino, 2013, pp. 236–237). Education is one of the key ways in which class is reproduced in Mexico. Understanding the effects of class and educational affiliation on collective identities, political culture and warring subjectivities is central to understanding the significance of the encounter of public and private universities on the development of #YoSoy132. As discussed in the previous chapter, politicised public university students are the symbolic, and often real, carriers of the ideals of an inclusive and equal society. Conservative public opinion frames public students as violent and intransigent. Participants agreed that the participation of elite private university students helped to break the stigma of student politics, reaching new audiences who would otherwise be unlikely to take notice or participate. Notwithstanding this generalised shock, balanced assessments of this dynamic relationship have been few and far between.

I understand the encounter of public and private as initiating a process of mutual discovery and negotiation in the face of a mixture of class antagonisms and engrained prejudicial social representations of ‘the other’. Whether in the form of the social representation of the aloof bourgeois student or the violent agitator, these perceived differences were the starting point of the encounter: a narrativised manifestation of structural inequalities and historical divisions. Class is manifested in different forms, from suspicion based on the Marxist conviction of the incompatibility of class interests to differences in culture, lifestyle and material consumption (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 140); political and cultural references (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 144; Pérez Monroy, 2015); perceptions of reality; social circles; political experience; ideologies; and even humour. Classist preconceptions and prejudiced social representations propagated by the mass media and reproduced socially are pervasive: *fresas*, *juniors*, *nacos*, *revoltosos*, *violentos*, *burgueses*, *grillos*—*los mismos de siempre*. These labels,

which #YoSoy132 first outright rejected and later attempted to replace, were the starting point for the encounter and a significant obstacle in the process of political unification.

In a region in which the completion of secondary education is achieved by a small percentage of the population, education is viewed as the privilege of a small minority (Camp & Cetto, 1981, p. 421). Whether measured in terms of access, opportunities, division of labour or prestige, social stratification also characterises the public–private divide in higher education in Mexico. Access to education is significantly determined by parental income and high incomes correlate positively with higher education completion rates (Camp, 2013, p. 89). Likewise, economic pressure is a significant cause of non-completion. Only 5 in every 100 people from the lowest social stratum have access to tertiary education compared to 60 in 100 for the highest; that is, 5% of the poorest Mexicans have access to higher education, compared to 60% of the richest (Tuirán & Muñoz, 2010, p. 383). Although 72% of students are enrolled in public institutions, 66.8% of Mexico's higher education institutions are private (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 142).

Mexico's private tertiary education is enormously diverse and difficult to characterise (Olivier Téllez, 2007, p. 160). Private education is divided into two distinct groups: elite institutions and those that absorb demand (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 142). The most economically favoured families seek out the most prestigious national and international institutions; the least favoured, when unable to access public institutions, enrol in under-regulated, inefficient and low-quality private institutions (Noriega Chávez, 2010, p. 674). Within this diversity the majority of participants from private universities active in #YoSoy132 were from the most favoured (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 143). Hence, the public–private distinction that is at the core of my interest in the forging of political solidarities refers to elite private universities.

Elite private universities gained momentum in the aftermath of the 1968 student rebellion and in the face of the massification of public universities such as UNAM. As a result of massification, elites perceived that the public education system was failing to produce social stratification and was threatened by extreme politicisation; these perceptions informed the rationale for the development of a wave of elite private universities in the second half of the 20th century to which elites migrated (Sillas Casillas, 2005, p. 11). Today Mexico's elite private tertiary institutions are characterised by size and exclusivity and maintained by restrictive admission policies, which provide

70–90% of the institutions’ revenue (Sillas Casillas, 2005, p. 9). The Autonomous Institute of Technology Mexico⁸⁷ (ITAM) is emblematic of this tendency. César (UNAM) describes ITAM as:

A school of elites in Mexico, it is the most expensive in Mexico, you pay 70,000 pesos per semester, here [at UNAM] you pay 20 cents, the *compañeros* that go to ITAM are *compañeros* with a very high economic status...the *compañeros* from UNAM, we are the children of workers, of peasants or of the middle class, not people with much money; and that school in particular [ITAM], has formed the economic elites of the country, I mean the teachers...the academic staff are people that work in the government and that have directed the Bank of Mexico and are aligned with the International Monetary Fund; it is a very small school too, it has around a thousand students, maybe.⁸⁸

For Julia from Ibero, paying 25,000 pesos⁸⁹ a month for her education, “it is a punishment that they send you to a public school, because you know that the level of education is awful, it is not comparable with private [education]”,⁹⁰ though UNAM, she adds, is an exception.

Part of the attractiveness of elite private universities is that they facilitate informal paths to power (Camp, 2013, p. 118) as students gain access to powerful networks (Meyer, 2013, p. 150). Once, UNAM dominated the formation and recruitment of Mexico’s educated political leaders (Babb, 2002; Camp & Cetto, 1981, pp. 450–451). However, since 2000, private institutions have become increasingly influential in public office (Camp, 2013, pp. 119–120). A law student from ITAM, Gabriela, described ITAM as “a small, private, very neoliberal university, I mean it is

⁸⁷ Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México.

⁸⁸ ...el ITAM es una escuela de elite en México, es la universidad más cara de México, tú pagas 70 mil pesos por un semestre, aquí [UNAM] tú pagas 20 centavos, los *compañeros* que van al ITAM son *compañeros* de un nivel económico muy alto...los *compañeros* de la UNAM, que somos hijos de trabajadores, de campesinos o de la clase media, no es gente con mucho dinero; y esa escuela especialmente [el ITAM], ha formado a las élites económicas del país, o sea los profesores...la planta académica es gente que trabaja en el gobierno y que ha dirigido al Banco de México y está aliada al Fondo Monetario Internacional; es una escuela además pequeña, tiene una matrícula como de unos mil estudiantes quizá.

⁸⁹ Approximately AU\$2500.

⁹⁰ Es un castigo que te manden a una escuela pública, porque sabes que el nivel de educación es pésima, no es equiparable a la privada.

like ‘the factory of Mexican politicians’”.⁹¹ The trend towards elite private institutional leadership reinforces the separation of an increasingly small minority of political elites from the majority and results in a political class insensitive to the concerns of the majority (Meyer, 2013, p. 151). Whereas previously public universities had provided a space for socialisation that transcended class, permitting a degree of integration, today the public–private divide isolates the elites from the masses (Meyer, 2013, p. 148; Olivier Téllez, 2007, p. 207). Overall, institutions like ITAM block social mobility and perpetuate and strengthen minority elites (Olivier Téllez, 2007, p. 168). That elite private institutions are increasingly and disproportionately represented across all levels of public and political life (Acosta Silva, 2012, p. 18) exacerbates the effects of the educational divide on the formation of future elites and workers. These institutionalised patterns of class separation not only disproportionately influence the life opportunities of students in ways that systematically privilege a minority, they also create growing class cleavages as public institutions are increasingly excluded from positions of power and privilege.

Social stratification is also reproduced through the division of labour as private university students prepare to become future bosses and leaders. In a conversation on the topic, a history professor from Ibero described private universities as “brutally classist”, explaining that what students learn is “an attitude”: to be the boss. Corroborating this division, Marta (UNAM) exclaimed: “[They are] studying to give us orders, to be our boss[es], because they are the ‘juniors’...the children of the bourgeoisie of our country”.⁹² Inequality is further deepened as elite private university graduates are favoured in the job market (Noriega Chávez, 2010). In an international study of university graduate employment outcomes involving nine Mexican higher education institutions, including three public and three private universities, de Vries and Navarro

⁹¹ *...el ITAM, es una universidad chiquitita, privada, muy neoliberal, o sea que, es como la “fábrica de los políticos en México”.*

⁹² *...[e]l universitario de la universidad privada, que está estudiando para mandarnos a nosotros, porque él está estudiando para ser nuestro jefe, porque son los juniors, porque son los hijos de la burguesía de nuestro país*

(2011, p. 14) found that elite private university graduates earned on average four times that of their public counterparts and are less burdened by unemployment—an overt disparity that is unique within the PROFLEX study. The findings also showed that private university graduates are more represented in managerial positions and in private companies than their public university counterparts (p. 15). Similarly, Tamayo (2011, p. 272) asserts that “beyond the prestige of some elite institutions, these tend to favour certain predetermined class sectors, excluding poor students from the best working conditions. The market faithfully shows class inequality”. Tamayo (2011, p. 272) relates the confession of an ex-employee of the Secretary of Finance that “[public offices] increasingly function as managers and private companies... [and that] the top positions are reserved for graduates from ITAM. UNAM graduates are simply not received, they are very stigmatised”.⁹³

Class distinctions are embedded in and further reproduced through institutional identities. The purpose of these institutions, when and why they were created and for what, influences institutional values and educational programs available to students. The Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education⁹⁴ (ITESM) and ITAM were amongst the first wave of private elite institutions in the 1940s that responded to the interests of Mexico’s modern bourgeoisie for a pragmatic, lay and capital-oriented education (Olivier Téllez, 2007, p. 52; Sillas Casillas, 2005, pp. 15–16). Like ITAM, ITESM emphasises values that generally conflict with those of public institutions. According to Jorge (ITESM): “Tec [ITESM]...systematically teaches you: ‘it is you against the world...you earn it for yourself, and it is your effort and you, as a person, who is going to earn it for yourself’”.⁹⁵ The competitive individualism and leadership skills cultivated through elite private university education provided fertile ideological grounds upon which #YoSoy132 was able to offer a distinct mode of political identification, a self-referential ‘I am’. Individuality was a new element which, according to Marta (UNAM), represented a change:

⁹³ *Cada vez las oficinas del Estado funcionan [más] como gerencias y empresas privadas. En el departamento donde trabajaba, como en muchos otros, los puestos de dirección están destinados para egresados del itam [sic]. A los de la unam de plano ni los reciben, están muy estigmatizados.*

⁹⁴ *Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores Monterrey.*

⁹⁵ *...el TEC...te enseña sistemáticamente: “...eres tú contra el mundo y tú gánatelo, y es tu esfuerzo y eres tú, persona, la que vas a ganártelo”.*

Even in the way of seeing oneself in the world, and it could be that it is a new generation that doesn't feel represented by an ideology or a movement, because in the beginning it wasn't an ideology or a movement, it was them, it was I, I am a student, I am not a vandal like Televisa said, so you can see a change there, a generational change in how they see themselves compared to the rest [of the people].⁹⁶

The entrepreneurial social formation that characterises elite private education marks a clear distinction from the collective and social character of the legacy of public higher education struggles. In the following chapter I explore this first-person identification as part of the attraction of #YoSoy132 as a new political style that resonates with the postmodern sensibilities and neoliberal rationalities set out in Chapter One. The shift from the self-asserting individual to the individual in collectivity suggests that #YoSoy132 both reproduced the ideological effects of late modern capitalism as well as redeployed them for critical purposes in an attempt to transcend the multitudinal barriers erected by neoliberalism.

Institutional identities further reinforce class differences based on cultural reference points and value systems, preventing a common identifier across Mexico's vast student population. This is clearest in the alignment of elite private institutions with a global, neoliberal education in contrast with the resonances of revolutionary nationalism in the identities of the country's most renowned public educational institutions, such as Poly (IPN) and UNAM. In spite of a common patriotism suggested by the objective of transforming Mexico, private institutions are much more globally focused, whilst the most prestigious public universities are bastions of national consciousness and guardians of historical memory. The individualising values implicit in the "entrepreneurial spirit" and "internationally competitive" competencies of ITESM graduates (ITESM, 2015)⁹⁷ contrasts strongly with the revolutionary nationalism of UNAM's motto: "*Por mi raza hablará el espíritu*"—My spirit will speak for my

⁹⁶ *Hay un cambio, ¿no? Incluso en la forma de como verse en el mundo, y puede ser una nueva generación en la que no se siente representada por una ideología ni por un movimiento, porque al principio no era una ideología ni un movimiento, eran ellos, era yo, yo soy estudiante, yo no soy vándalo como o dijo Televisa, entonces ahí se ve ese cambio, generacional, de cómo verse frente al resto.*

⁹⁷ ITESM's mission statement is: "We educate leaders who have an entrepreneurial spirit, a humanistic outlook and are internationally competitive" (*Formamos líderes con espíritu emprendedor, sentido humano y competitivos internacionalmente*).

people—indicating an awakening from oppression that echoes the era of *Vasconcelismo* (UNAM, n.d.). As a Jesuit institution, Ibero has a tradition of defending human rights and indigenous communities (Meléndez Preciado, 2012, p. 12). Nonetheless, as one of its history professors told me, Ibero is divided between conservative PAN supporters and the Catholic Left: a mixture of Heidegger and Hugo Boss, as he put it.

As a corollary of these institutional identities, participants expressed a sense of identity that was nourished by the core values of their institutions. These values were part and parcel of the complexity of building a student movement that not only faced the structural antagonisms of public and private, but was confronted by a range of conflicting institutional values. For Jorge (ITESM) the sheer diversity of value systems of the different educational institutions was perceived as “violent”:

I am hoping to graduate and work in the media, for example, a business; I gave two circles, that of my school and that “new one”, and I only have to learn two languages, the values from here and the values from there; from one day to the next it is the values of here and the values of there, the values of ITAM...of Tec [ITESM]...of UNAM...of Anáhuac...of UAM Xochimilco...I mean, it is not confronting one difference...that did not happen, it was “all of them” and that was very violent.⁹⁸

Individuals like Gabriela who described herself and others from ITAM as “*bichos raros*”, “strange bugs” that defied pre-existing moulds, reveal how individuation and resistance persist within and in relation to broader institutional socialisation regimes. However, as Olivier Téllez and Tamayo (2015, p. 143) maintain, independent of the class origin of alumni and of the existence of scholarship programs, elite institutions socialise students in the dominant institutional identity that “re-signifies and unites its members”.⁹⁹ Hence, although Favela (2015a, p. 164) argues that strong internal diversity prevents any association of universities with class, it seems clear that the collective identity of Mexico’s major educational institutions, and the values and sense

⁹⁸...yo estoy esperando graduarme y entrar a un medio de comunicación por ejemplo, a una empresa, tengo dos círculos, el de mi escuela y “ese nuevo”, y tengo que aprender esos dos lenguajes nada más, los valores de aquí y los valores de allá; de un día a otro es los valores de aquí, los valores de allá, los valores del ITAM, los valores del Tec, los valores de la UNAM, los valores de la Anáhuac, los valores de la UAM Xochimilco...o sea, no es enfrentarte a una diferencia nueva...no pasó eso, era “todos” y eso fue muy violento.

⁹⁹ ...resignifica y cohesiona a sus miembros.

of purpose that these identities engender, and general social perception of them, are manifest in everyday life.

Ideological differences between the country's most prominent tertiary institutions find expression through political culture. For instance, private universities are characterised by respectful and moderate critique of the institutions, in strong contrast with the class-conscious students of public universities and the tradition of grassroots activism and assembly democracy (Benumea Gómez, 2016). For this reason, the Ibero protests against Peña Nieto were so shocking and the protestors could be framed as pseudo-students, because their actions went explicitly against the expectation of private university comportment. In fact, political elites derided the students for not measuring up to the established mode of moderate engagement characteristic of the political culture of an elite institution. No one expected the PRI candidate to encounter such vociferous opposition at Ibero, as he surely would have at a public university (Rovira Sancho, 2014, p. 62). Political elites do not attend public universities such as UNAM for the reason that they would be met with hostility, as Diego (UNAM) explained. The anti-capitalist, anti-neoliberal and anti-systemic critique made by UNAM, Poly (IPN), the Metropolitan Autonomous University¹⁰⁰ (UAM) and UACM, for instance, is the antithesis of the conservative, technocratic and neoliberal tendencies associated with elite private institutions. Guadalupe (ITAM) explained that the neoliberal education at ITAM meant that “people tend a lot to have a more right-wing perspective and that conflicted a lot with the movement”.¹⁰¹

These differences are reinforced by stereotypical social representations. On the one hand, the history of student struggles at Poly and UNAM engenders a sense of belonging and pride amongst its politicised students. On the other hand, this identity is plagued by the stigmatisation of student politics, particularly since neoliberalism took root. Marta (UNAM) sums up the negative stereotype of student activists at UNAM and the problems it created for cooperation across the student divide:

¹⁰⁰ *Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.*

¹⁰¹ *...el ITAM es una universidad bastante especial, es una universidad neoliberal... la carrera más importante es economía y todas las carreras así estudies derecho, así estudies telemática que nada tiene que ver, llevas economía y llevas economía que es neoliberal... entonces la gente tiende mucho a tener un perspectiva más de derecha y eso se peleaba mucho con el movimiento.*

It has to do with the problem of classism in this country, which is very strong, very, very strong. And I think that it also comes from the strike at UNAM, because they always see the public student as lazy, *naco*, as the one who doesn't pay for his education, whose education doesn't cost him anything, the fossil, the one who takes years to graduate...the striker. Because that was the image that Televisa and TV Azteca constructed of UNAM, that image of the striker did not disappear...So all of that construction that has also been from the media, of the public university student, face to face with the private university student, that is studying to give us orders...how are you going to dialogue with the person who exploits you; with those who are in power now, the new political classes that came with Salinismo, the technocrats?...now that ideological part separated us. I think it is ideological, the social class.¹⁰²

Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana) gave an outsider's insight that corroborates this perception: "I mean, I knew that they were, those that most, let's say, had a political tradition: the CGH [General Strike Committee], the strike of '99; they were called "well, a bunch of '*grilleros*', or, 'those stoners'".¹⁰³ Casual comments such as these were frequent and reflect the predominant social representations expressed in the perceptions and views of participants. The vigorous opposition of public students to neoliberalism and their self-conscious support for working class struggles and as the bearers of struggles for equality place them as the antipode of elite private universities. Ideological divisions, reinforced by negative social representations, underscored a feeling of mutual suspicion when public and private students came together. César (UNAM) explained that the private university students were wary of having their

¹⁰² ...tiene que ver con un problema de clasismo en este país, que es muy fuerte, muy muy fuerte. Y yo creo que también se viene rastreando desde la huelga de la UNAM, porque siempre se ve al estudiante del público como el vago, como el naco, como el que no paga nada por su educación, que no le cuesta nada su educación, el fósil, él que tarda muchos años en graduarse...el huelguista, ¿no?, porque fue la imagen que construyó Televisa y TV Azteca de la UNAM, no se quitaba la imagen del parista. Entonces toda esa construcción que también ha sido mediática del universitario público, frente al universitario de la universidad privada, que está estudiando para mandarnos a nosotros...entonces cómo te vas a poner a dialogar con él que te explota, ¿no? Con él que ahora está en el poder de esa nueva clase política que llega con el salinismo, los tecnócratas, ¿no? Porque uno de universidades privadas, ahí están estudiando la lógica de neoliberalismo...ahora sí que esa parte ideológica nos tiene separados. Yo creo que es ideológico, la clase social.

¹⁰³ O sea, conocía que ellos eran los que más, digamos, como tradición política tienen: el CGH [Comité General de Huelga], la huelga del 99; decían "pues bola de grilleros" ¿no?, o pues "los pachecos esos".

emerging movement taken from them, perhaps of having the legitimacy of their cause undermined by the threat or perception of radicalism.

Given that the majority of participants from private universities came from the economically favoured classes at the country's most prestigious institutions (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 142), #YoSoy132 represented a unique encounter of future leaders with the bulk of students increasingly excluded from these positions. Not surprisingly, the presence of ITAM and other elite institutions in a social movement provoked suspicion amongst the politicised public students, as the arrival of the public students caused concern amongst some private university students. Gabriela (ITAM) detailed the tensions and the resistance ITAM students faced within the movement and vis-à-vis the broader ITAM community. On the one hand, ITAM students faced accusations of non-genuine participation and even infiltration, and on the other, they had to deal with opposition from the administration and other students. Gabriela described how ITAM students would have to placate both sides and show the movement that "we are youth just like them and that we have the same desire to change the country, and that we are also criticising the same power structures".¹⁰⁴ One of the great merits of #YoSoy132 was to open up previously non-existent spaces for interaction amongst Mexico's tertiary education students. Before #YoSoy132, most participants in this study had never interacted with students from other institutions and never imagined doing so. Gabriela remarked: "Everything is designed so that we hate each other";¹⁰⁵ and the prejudice went both ways: "don't you speak to those guys at UNAM, you are prohibited...you are from a rich school, you are from another class, don't hang out with them!" and vice versa: "they are the rich people that take your money and your land, don't speak to them!"¹⁰⁶

Social divisions were compounded by distance, creating a physical separation that kept students from different institutions apart. Jorge (ITESM) assured me that before the movement he "would never have interacted with someone from Ibero...on a

¹⁰⁴ *...enseñarles que éramos jóvenes igual que ellos y que tenemos el mismo deseo de cambiar al país, y que también estamos criticando a las mismas estructuras de poder ¿no?*

¹⁰⁵ *Todo está hecho para que nos odiamos.*

¹⁰⁶ *De "tú no hables con los de la UNAM eh, lo tienes prohibido, o sea, tú eres de la escuela rica, eres otra clase social, no te lleses con ellos"... "[E]sos son los ricos que te quitan tu dinero y te quitan tus tierras, no hables con ellos".*

day-to-day basis you do not interact with them, they live on the other side of the city”.¹⁰⁷ The daily realities that mark the subjectivity of participants, their experiences, expectations and aspirations, friendship circles, interests, languages and possibilities, meant that seemingly innocuous situations held significant social weight: whether you drove your own car or came two hours on crowded public transport, or if you could afford to go for pizza and beer at Coyoacán¹⁰⁸ were constant reminders of inequality. In her observations of the internal differences of the movement, Palacios Canudas (2013, p. 140) emphasised culture, lifestyle and material consumption as socio-economic markers; these included clothes, accessories, cars, mobiles, musical tastes, internet access and authors that are read. Compared with a student Left practiced in Marxist terminology, Julia (Ibero) remarked, “I grew up on the internet, I had never read Marx or *Capital*”.¹⁰⁹ The distance between the students was not merely physical or ideological, but also cultural.

Despite being separated in everyday life, virtually all participants confessed that they were the object of prejudice or that they held preconceptions about ‘the other’. Guadalupe (ITAM) gave some insight into the extent of the separation:

Within the same study body, the universe of universities was enormous, ITAM getting together with Poly [IPN], was like something that would never have happened if it hadn’t have been for 132, it is like a mirror of what Mexico is, and at the end of the day there are many social divides and we see each other as different, I think that between public and private schools we saw each other as different.¹¹⁰

Without knowing each other, students housed an excess of preconceptions and prejudices about ‘the other’, many of which derived from or were exacerbated by media representations. The encounters that did exist amongst these segmented groups did not necessarily dispel negative preconceptions, but may have served as a justification for

¹⁰⁷ ...jamás me hubiera acercado a alguien de la Ibero, y es la verdad, en el día a día no te acercas a ellos, viven del otro lado de la ciudad.

¹⁰⁸ A trendy neighbourhood in south-western Mexico City.

¹⁰⁹ Yo crecí en las redes, nunca había leído Marx ni *Capital*.

¹¹⁰ ...dentro del mismo estudiantado, universo de universidades era enorme, el ITAM juntándose con el Poli [ITM], era como que algo jamás iba a pasar si no hubiera sido por el 132, es como un espejo de lo que es México, que al final sí tenemos muchas divisiones sociales y nos vemos ajenos, entonces creo que entre escuelas públicas y privadas nos veíamos ajenos.

them. Coming from El Claustro de Sor Juana, a small private religious school, Alejandra described students from Ibero, ITAM and Tec (ITESM) as “*fresas*”, rich kids with no political interests. The journalism student described her perceptions of the universities before becoming involved in #YoSoy132:

I have friends from before, from high school and everything, and they went to Ibero...but I know they are people that...don't give a damn about social and political problems...or that want to be big business people...I didn't know anyone with a strong political stance...Or from ITAM, much less, the guys from ITAM are a thousand times more stuck up, I mean, ITAM is business and Tec is the same, I mean because of how they teach you things, it is “a little neoliberal school”.¹¹¹

Worlds apart and divided by fear and loathing, how then did these students come to see each other as part of the same struggle, to feel that they needed one another to transform their country and prevent it from further declining? How did students come to see their futures as intertwined and to let go of some of their class-based resentments? Even to share a sense of comradeship? Or at least, what enabled them to cooperate in the fomentation of political solidarities? What was the basis of their cooperation and what potential and limitations did these motivations and circumstances entail? How did the encounter of the students impact the nature of the movement and its trajectory in Mexico City?

¹¹¹ ...tengo amigos de antes, de la prepa y todo, que se fueron a la Ibero...pero sé que son gente que...le interesa un carajo el pedo social y político...o que quieren ser súper empresarios...no conocía a nadie con una postura política fuerte...O del ITAM, menos, los del ITAM son mil veces más fresas, o sea, el ITAM es “empresario” y el Tec igual, o sea por cómo te enseñan las cosas es “pequeña escuela neoliberal”.

We are a damned group of bourgeois kids offended because they called us *acarreados*. We are not making a social movement!¹¹²

— Julia (Ibero)

We really didn't think that a movement would come from what we did...the first time we protested was against Peña, but when 132 was really created it was because we came out to defend our right to freedom of expression and information and to defend what we had done from being corrupted.¹¹³

— Elena (Ibero)

Unity in #YoSoy132 was both pragmatic and impassioned, the product of a unique political opportunity within a dire socio-political context. Albeit unevenly, broad sectors of society were affected by the larger social, political and economic context. The decomposition of social and political life, economic stagnation, extreme inequality and a political class characterised by impunity, corruption and elitism—all underpinned a generalised discontent. Indignation was heightened by the partial and promotional role of the mass media in the elections, which undermined any semblance of democracy for many concerned onlookers. In these conditions, the events at Ibero and its immediate aftermath acted as a catalyst of discontent. #YoSoy132 provided a much-needed mechanism for expressing latent anger, frustration and anxiety over the return of the PRI that traversed social and political divides. It also created an organisational imperative propitious to the nourishment of political solidarities. If only temporarily, the electoral conjuncture gave impetus to the transgression of Mexico's tertiary education divide, opening up a unique political opportunity to try to prevent the imposition of Peña Nieto to power and to call attention to the national emergency spelled by the return of the PRI to presidency.

¹¹² *Somos un maldito grupo de niños burgueses ofendidos porque nos llamaron acarreados. No estamos haciendo un movimiento social.*

¹¹³ *Nosotros pues realmente no pensamos que iba a salir un movimiento de lo que hicimos...la primera vez que salimos fue en contra de Peña, pero cuando realmente se creó 132 fue porque nosotros salimos a reivindicar nuestro derecho a la libertad de expresión y de información, y de que no se corrompiera lo que nosotros habíamos hecho.*

The imminent return of Mexico's formerly hegemonic PRI to presidency was facilitated by its old ties to Mexico's media monopoly, Televisa. Despite representing the formerly hegemonic regime, the young presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto had been marketed as the fresh face of the "New PRI", and was enjoying a 20-point lead over his rivals in the lead-up to the 2012 elections (Rovira Sancho, 2012, p. 423). Six years prior, in 2006, as Governor of the State of Mexico, Peña Nieto had authorised the brutal repression of protesters opposing the construction of an airport on their communal land in Atenco. During the repression the mass media deployed tactics of psychological warfare, portraying the protesters as violent thugs and encouraging harsher police responses (Fazio, 2013). Peña Nieto's dark history and dubious political connections would not remain concealed beneath his carefully confected appearance, particularly following a visit to Mexico City's prestigious private Iberoamerican University on 11 May 2012. Unbeknownst to the PRI candidate, a group of students from the Jesuit, Iberoamerican University had not forgotten the incident and came prepared to confront the candidate. When questioned by students on the matter, the presidential hopeful assumed personal responsibility, declaring: "it was a resolute action to re-establish order and peace in the legitimate right of the Mexican State to use public force".¹¹⁴ The response, harkening back to the justification of the 1968 student massacre by President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964–1970), was met with a spontaneous reaction that quickly culminated in the ejection of the candidate from campus amidst screams of "Ibero doesn't want you!" and "murderer!" (Carrillo Garnica, 2014, p. 116). In an electoral conjuncture marked by the impending victory of Enrique Peña Nieto, announced daily in the mass media and echoed in the polls, #YoSoy132 shattered the façade of order and inevitability.

In retribution for the protests and to protect the image of the candidate, influential PRI figures in coordination with the mass media unleashed a delegitimisation campaign portraying the protestors as violent, paid agitators, fascists, intolerant and student impersonators (González Villarreal, 2013, p. 40). These commonly deployed and frequently successful tactics generated a startling response: 131 protesters from Ibero rebutted by uploading a video to YouTube in which they denounced the

¹¹⁴ ...fue una acción determinada para restablecer el orden y la paz en el legítimo derecho que tiene el Estado mexicano de usar la fuerza pública.

manipulation of their identities (Guzmán Garibay, 2016, p. 93). The video was viewed 661,000 times in a single day (Guillén, 2013, p. 473) and became a worldwide trending topic overnight (Meléndez Preciado, 2012, p. 13). The strong symbolic message was shared through multiple social media platforms going viral (Gómez García & Treré, 2014, p. 503). #YoSoy132, meaning ‘I am #132’, began as a hashtag, a simple expression of solidarity that rapidly catalysed an unexpected “outbreak of indignation”¹¹⁵ (#YoSoy132, “Declaration of Principles”). This initial defensive reaction was the origin of #YoSoy132 (Fernández Poncela, 2013, p. 178). The spontaneous eruption of discontent in the ranks of Mexico’s elite private universities constituted an astonishing disjuncture in an electoral context without variation, triggering unforeseeable consequences.

Compared with the largely spontaneous nature of the outburst against the candidate in response to his own poor phrasing regarding Atenco, Peña Nieto’s campaign stood out as a charade, a poorly planned spectacle that presumed that amongst fellow elites, the candidate would be free from criticism. The labels *porros* and *acarreados* carried a heavy dose of irony—not only because the practices of paying both assailants and supporters are a fundamental part of the PRI’s own anti-democratic repertoire—but because on the day of the protests Peña Nieto’s team brought their own swathe of *acarreados*. Arriving early and standing out in bright red tee-shirts and plastic wigs in the likeness of Peña Nieto’s own signature hairstyle, PRI sympathisers filled the audience, sporting printed placards stating: “*#Contigo hasta los Pinos*” [“With you until the presidency”] (Figueiras Tapia, 2012, pp. 42–43). The mere presence of *acarreados*, some later identified as students from ITAM, was evidence that old practices were alive and well in the ‘new’ PRI. To top it off, denunciations of cash bribes of 200 to 500 pesos were offered to Ibero protestors on the day to refrain from lifting placards and from asking the candidate difficult questions (Islas, 2014, p. 85). The candidate’s visit exposed the broader simulation underway in the campaign as a whole.

By contrast, preparations by a small group of student protesters cut through the façade of dialogue between Peña Nieto and the students and broke with the expectation of formality and good manners characteristic of the status of Mexico’s elite private

¹¹⁵ ...*estallido de indignación*.

universities. One of the protestors on the day and subsequently an active participant in #YoSoy132, Elena (Ibero), described how red-dye filled fountains symbolised the blood of femicide to remind onlookers that under Peña Nieto's governorship the rate of fatal gendered violence in the State of Mexico was the highest in the nation—this in a country in which seven women and girls are killed daily. Similarly, paper masks were distributed in the likeness of the controversial former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari to represent the power behind the figure of the candidate. In the lead-up to the visit, a group of students had been circulating a documentary with the untold story of Atenco, exposing Peña Nieto's responsibility for the brutal repression, so that at question time, the persistent raising of Atenco finally obliged the candidate to respond. Elena (Ibero), who helped plan the protests, explained:

I think that Atenco has been very symbolic in terms of representing power, the authoritarianism of the PRI...the theme of the imposition of projects, of megaprojects, all of this is very common in Mexico...how they covered the theme of Atenco in the media...there were only photos of the protestors at Atenco with sticks and they never showed that they assassinated two minors, the gendered violence...The fact that sexual torture was used and that the State had not been made responsible for it. So there have been so many themes that Atenco touches, being so close to Mexico City, so it has become a clear label of the government of Peña Nieto even before he was president.¹¹⁶

If Peña Nieto's affirmation of responsibility in a Jesuit university known for its solidarity with indigenous struggles caused him to be booed off campus, then the attempt to manipulate the incident generated genuine ire amongst the student community who had felt justified in exercising their democratic rights. That the fraudulent regime, in complicity with the manipulative mass media, denounced the protestors as a non-student minority of opposition supporters, fascists and intolerants,

¹¹⁶ *Atenco yo creo que ha sido muy simbólico en cuestiones de representar el poder, el autoritarismo del PRI...el tema de la imposición de proyectos, de megaproyectos, eso es algo como muy común en...como se cubrió en tema de Atenco en los medios...sólo salían fotos de la gente de Atenco levantando palos y nunca se mostró que asesinaron a dos menores de edad, la violencia de género...el hecho de que existió la tortura sexual, y que el Estado no tuviera responsabilidad al respecto. Entonces han sido tantos temas que han tocado el tema de Atenco, estando tan cercano a la Ciudad de México, entonces pues se ha vuelto una etiqueta muy clara del gobierno de Peña Nieto desde antes de ser presidente.*

only reinforced the perception of staged elections, adding fuel to the fire and ensuring the protests would not remain an isolated incident.

The events sent genuine shock waves across the nation, breaking with the expected compliant behaviour of elite private students and inspiring camaraderie in unexpected places. In spite of a deep division between students of public and private universities, the protesters were met with solidarity from their public university counterparts, constituting a secondary rupture in the dominant perception: that public and private students are inherently antagonistic. The demonstration of indignation and solidarity with the victims of Atenco contradicted the stereotype of disinterested wealthy students, revealing commonalities in the rejection of injustice. Francisco, an experienced activist and participant of the FAA, related the personal and political significance of the events:

The specific case of Atenco, which was what detonated the confrontation by the students, was the natural point of encounter, of a lot of sympathy, immediately. So the first motivation was political sympathy, the second was that the presidential elections were close and we saw the dynamic of the PRI and we believed that to make a front and be able to stop his arrival as president, that there had to be an ample student organisation, and we believed, following what happened in Ibero, that we could stop it.¹¹⁷

The initial protests had been over Peña Nieto's responsibility for Atenco, however the mass media's blatant attempts to reinforce a positive image of the candidate without regard for accuracy or objectivity and at the expense of the students' dignity refocused attention to Televisa's undemocratic role in manipulating public opinion in favour of the PRI candidate. As a result, the democratisation of the media for free and informed elections would become one of the principal slogans associated with the young movement.

¹¹⁷ ...el caso específico de Atenco que fue lo que detona la confrontación entre los estudiantes fue pues el punto de encuentro muy natural, de mucha simpatía, de inmediato. Entonces la primera motivación fue la simpatía política, la segunda era que estaban muy próximas las elecciones a presidencia y veíamos como una aplanadora la dinámica en la que el PRI estaba organizando las cosas y creíamos que para hacerle frente y poder detener, sí, su llegada a la presidencia, tenía que ser una organización estudiantil muy amplia y creíamos que a partir de lo que sucedía en la Ibero podríamos hacerle frente.

Because of its origins in an elite private university, #YoSoy132 can be considered an anomaly (Gun Cuningham, 2017, p. 195). There is a consensus that if the protests had happened at UNAM, the outcomes would have been very different. The fact that the protestors were students from Ibero encouraged solidarity from other private university students who, usually absent from protests, felt a “natural sympathy” towards their fellow students with whom they identified, explained Francisco (FAA). Guadalupe (ITAM) conceded that it was the particularity of the students from Ibero that made her sympathetic:

Well everyone was surprised by what happened at Ibero, nobody expected it, nobody saw it coming and well personally it moved me and I realised that we were in this electoral process that was boring and it was in itself outrageous because the outcome was already decided...we all had that sensation inside but we needed to see that others had it too to encourage us to do something, so that when that happened at Ibero I was personally very excited and I said, “well something is happening that is a bit more important” and that was when I got decided to help, without knowing the dimensions it would take...definitely it was the fact that they were students from Ibero which caused that empathy and that sensation of saying: “Ok, I am also going to do something”.¹¹⁸

Pilar (FAA) concurred: “what was new about 132 was that it was a movement that was born from a private university and so then there was the possibility of many private schools getting involved”.¹¹⁹ Having personally experienced the manipulative capacity of the mass media, the Ibero students quickly interpreted the incident as a problem of a lack of access to information and the absence of basic democratic rights like freedom of speech. One week after the Ibero protests, on 18 May 2012, two contingents of students from Mexico’s elite private universities marched on the headquarters of Televisa in

¹¹⁸ *Pues a todos nos sorprendió que pasara lo que paso en la Ibero, nadie se lo esperaba, nadie lo veía venir y como que bueno a mí personalmente me movió y me di cuenta que estábamos en ese proceso electoral que era de flojera y era en sí era indignante porque era ya contado... todos teníamos ese sentimiento adentro pero necesitamos ver que los demás también lo tuvieran para animarnos a hacer algo, entonces yo personalmente cuando pasó lo de la Ibero me emocioné muchísimo porque dije, “bueno algo está pasando un poquito más importante” y fue como que le entro a ayudar, sin saber que dimensiones tomaría...definitivamente yo creo que sí fue el factor que hubieran sido los alumnos de la Ibero el que causó esa empatía y ese sentimiento a decir: “órale, pues yo también me animo a hacer algo”.*

¹¹⁹ *Lo que fue novedoso en el 132 fue que en un movimiento que nació de una escuela privada y que entonces que hubo posibilidad de que muchas escuelas privadas conformaran.*

Santa Fe and San Ángel demanding respect for information as a “human right” (Rovira Sancho, 2014, p. 53). The students did not know it then, but their valiant acts of defiance inspired others and helped to break the silence, apathy and fear surrounding the elections.

#YoSoy132 evidenced the extent of discontent in the fact that even the next generation of elites was prepared to take a stand. Despite accumulated frustration at the worsening economic conditions, structural violence, growing insecurity and anxiety at the probable return of the ex-hegemonic party (Alonso, 2013, p. 20; Rovira Sancho, 2014, p. 54), the elections had been characterised by the absence of organised, public opposition and by a seeming consensus constructed in the mass media and registered in public opinion polls. The atmosphere of consensus and optimism among authorities, experts and *opinionistas* regarding Peña Nieto’s election on the radio, in newspapers and on television created a silencing effect (Meyer Rodríguez, Ríos Calleja, Sánchez Nuevo & Bañuelos Ramírez, 2013, p. 34; Rodríguez Cano, 2012, p. 106). This silence was compounded by the absence of a collective signifier that would be capable of mobilising a new generation that did not identify with existing possibilities for collective action, despite sharing a profound sense of exclusion and indignation.

In contrast to the quiet on the streets, the internet whirled with discontent coming from an urban, middle class and educated sector of the population disaffected with party politics. On 1 May 2012, eleven days prior to the Ibero protests, @lvoon tweeted: “who will sign up for the #anti-EPN march?” (de Mauleón, 2012). Without any identifiable organiser, on 19 May, a mass protest took place against the PRI candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, with reports of between 30,000 (Aragón & Monterde, 2016, p. 74) and 46,000 attendees (Guillén, 2013, p. 474). The two waves of discontent—the spontaneous rejection of the PRI and the nascent private university organisation against Televisa under the name of ‘#YoSoy132’—caused the latter to be absorbed into the larger movement that exploded onto the streets, extending the call to democratise the media to include a rejection of Peña Nieto (Pineda, 2012, p. 3). Ibero was propelled to the front of the growing wave of discontent, explained Juana (UNAM). Although the initial organising committee fought to retain their autonomy, #YoSoy132 was engulfed in a larger, albeit diverse and unorganised movement against the PRI as the epitome of corruption and authoritarianism in Mexico.

Participants' reported motivations for involvement in the movement revealed rising intolerance of the general decomposition of social and political life in Mexico and of the intellectual poverty and undemocratic vacuity of a presidential election in which content and debate were replaced by marketing and mediocrity. Growing insecurity and the lack of accountability and responsibility of government representatives amidst an epidemic of corruption and impunity fuelled latent discontent with the political classes. In one word, participants described their motivation: *hartazgo*—they were fed up. María, a biologist from UNAM summed it up: “as a movement that stood up [YoSoy132] represented a whole generation that was fed up, that was not willing to permit another fraud happening, to let things happen without saying anything”.¹²⁰ *Hartazgo* and the desire to transform Mexico brought the students together onto the streets at the protest at Estela de Luz on 23 May.

Euphoria on the streets

Off the back of the protests at Ibero, students from Mexico's elite private universities called for the democratisation of the media as an essential condition for an authentic democracy, and the rest of the student body respected this demand (Pineda, 2012, p. 10). The first communiqué by the Interuniversity Coordinator (CI), the small group of students who organised the Estela de Luz protest, established the centrality of the democratisation of the media and its relationship to public opinion and electoral democracy: “In essence, our movement seeks the democratisation of the media with the aim of guaranteeing transparent, plural information with a minimum criteria of objectivity for the formation of a critical consciousness and critical thinking”¹²¹ (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 314). The communiqué commenced with the incitement, “it is time to fight for a freer, more prosperous and just Mexico”,¹²² coincidentally echoing the ITAM

¹²⁰ ...como movimiento que se levantó representaba a toda una generación que ya estaba harta, que ya no estaba dispuesta a permitir que pasara, que hubiera, un fraude más, dejar pasar las cosas sin decir nada.

¹²¹ En esencia, nuestro movimiento busca la democratización de los medios de comunicación con el fin de garantizar una información transparente, plural y con criterios mínimos de objetividad para fomentar una conciencia y pensamiento críticos.

¹²² ...es momento de que pugnemos por un México más libre, más próspero y más justo.

mission statement: to contribute to the development of “a freer, more prosperous and just society”¹²³ (ITAM, 2015).

The physical encounter of the student masses on the streets generated a collective de-alienation and the sensation of togetherness and mutual recognition. Between 46,000 and 50,000 people marched on the monument, Estela de Luz, a symbol of corruption and waste (Favela, 2015b, p. 226; Guillén, 2016, p. 160; Morton, 2012, p. 31); for thousands of participants, this was their first time protesting and the first experience of being together on the streets (Rivera Hernández, 2016, p. 168). An exemplary show of solidarity came from students from Poly (IPN), whose reputation for involvement in working class struggles made them an unlikely ally of the bourgeois Ibero students. Participants from private universities recalled the massive contingent of students from Poly that arrived yelling “Ibero, hold tight, Poly is rising up”¹²⁴: a demonstration of camaraderie in recognition of the unique political opportunity opened up by the students from Ibero and their bravery in denouncing the manipulation of their identities. Gabriela (ITAM) described the gesture as “one of the most beautiful things that I have ever heard”.¹²⁵ In the collective imagination, Poly could not be more different from its private counterparts. The polarity of Poly and Ibero served to augment the significance of solidarity and the sense of historic urgency, creating cause for celebration. But if the unification of public and private students was to be more than a momentary sentiment, the diverse body of students would have to negotiate meanings and reinvent languages, particularly class, as a fundamental dividing line of Mexican politics and the educational system.

Hartazgo was the common denominator motivating participant action, from frustration with the state of Mexican politics, to the economy and rising insecurity, and anxiety at the imminent return of the PRI to power. Yet participants were also motivated to get involved in #YoSoy132 by solidarity with the students from Ibero, sympathy with the demand to democratise the media and opposition to Peña Nieto’s neoliberal reforms. For Elena, Julia and Mario from Ibero, the plan was not to make a movement, but to

¹²³ ...contribuir a la formación integral de la persona y al desarrollo de una sociedad más libre, más justa y más próspera.

¹²⁴ *Ibero, aguanta, el poli se levanta.*

¹²⁵ *Para mí las cosas más lindas que he oído fue en la marcha de la Estela de Luz, escuchar a los del Poli decir “Ibero aguanta el Poli se levanta”, o sea, eso es como “guau” porque es el Politécnico y la Ibero.*

protest against Peña Nieto and then to protect their identity and integrity from distortion. Once on the streets the experience of collective de-alienation and the sensation of mutual recognition generated the hope that something could be done and the possibility for unified collective action. Yet in this first moment, the political cultures of public and private were already present; the private university organisers wanted to retain political neutrality by focusing on the democratisation of the media, yet an anti-Peña sentiment was already manifest and explosive. In the face of the probable return of the PRI and the finalisation of the neoliberal structural reforms that have since worked to standardise education, dismantle the rights of workers and teachers and open up the State petroleum enterprise Pemex to foreign capital, the stakes were high. For César, a militant socialist with years of experience #YoSoy132 represented:

An opportunity to conform a national movement that could derail the counter-reforms that have been implemented in the country for the last three decades. And it was a new opportunity, since 1999, to organise ourselves again, to go out on the streets and to change the social reality...we saw the opportunity to organise ourselves and strengthen our influence, to take forth our ideas about what was happening in the country, that in all aspects of the national life it is the ending of the gains of the Mexican Revolution.¹²⁶

Although celebrating the unity of public and private, César (UNAM) admitted that experienced activists from public universities were waiting for their opportunity to take the reins of the movement.

The string of unexpected events catalysed widespread collective frustration and fear at the return of the PRI, opening up a political opportunity—an historic moment to act which was by no means uniformly interpreted. Guillén (2016) argues that the heterogeneity of the protestors at Estela de Luz reflected at least two key tendencies that would come to define the movement: the private university students stressing novelty, non-violence and non-partisanship as well as the democratisation of the media; and the

¹²⁶ *La principal es que nuevamente surgía una oportunidad para conformar un movimiento nacional que detuviera las contrarreformas que se han venido implementando en el país desde hace tres décadas. Y era una nueva oportunidad, desde 1999, de volver a organizarnos, salir a las calles e intentar cambiar la realidad social... vimos la oportunidad de organizarnos y fortalecer nuestra influencia, llevar adelante las ideas que nosotros teníamos acerca de lo que está pasando en el país. Y como te dije, fundamente para revertir lo que está pasando en el país ¿no?, que en todos los ámbitos de la vida nacional es acabar con las conquistas de la Revolución Mexicana.*

experienced public university students critiquing the structural conditions to be combatted, thus linking, at first only symbolically, the nascent movement with the organised Left. According to Guillén (2016), moving the analysis from the personal to the collective level helps to make visible the hegemonic tendencies that were already starting to shape the movement—competing forces that reflected the very cultures and agendas of the public–private divide and that would come to influence the development of #YoSoy132 from a hashtag to a political subject. These competing representations are thus integral to the organic development of #YoSoy132, representing from early on the distinct aspirations and experiences of the youth and students who joined #YoSoy132. For César (UNAM), the private university students could not contain the anger and aspirations of the public students, once mobilised.

If solidarity brought together the various universities, competition to influence the direction of the movement occurred almost immediately. Despite suspicion on both sides, UNAM students Juana, David and César acted to bring the movement onto the streets and into the public universities. The experienced public university students wanted to politicise the original agenda whilst the privates were wary of losing control of the movement to the publics (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 144). The insertion of the public universities would link the discontent of the students with that of society in general, and with the oppressed and exploited sectors in struggle in particular. For a generation embedded in postmodern sensibilities and neoliberal rationalities, the world of counter-hegemonic politics was foreign and dubious. On the other hand, the moment and the possibilities opened up by the convergence of the masses on the streets in a high-stakes context was too important to pass by. The elite private students wanted to retain control over the movement, but understood the significance of the historical moment at hand and the weight of the public universities on the streets. In the beginning, suspicion, class antagonisms and competing interests were balanced by mutual need and the hope that together they could prevent the imposition of Peña Nieto to the presidency, and with it, the return of the PRI to power.

Indignation and hope were cross-cutting factors that facilitated a sense of mutual recognition in the rejection of the imposition of a candidate and a refusal to remain silent. The encounter between the students transformed #YoSoy132 from a hashtag denoting self-identification based on indignation and solidarity to a nascent student movement with national resonance, opening the divided student body to dialogue on

their collective future as Mexicans. When the students came together they did so across, and in spite of, differences—objective and subjective, large and small. In their encounter they found similarities, faced their own prejudices, established networks, enriched their understanding of the other in politics and took with them lessons for future mobilisations. To begin with, in spite of the degree of trust or distrust, of solidarity or empathy, there was a generalised concern for the future of the nation and a common understanding that this was the moment to be heard and to make a difference. What that difference was, or the degree of desired change, varied amongst individuals and across universities. Above all there was an urgent need to act, to break out of the silence and apathy surrounding the 2012 elections. During the initial phase of #YoSoy132, a feeling of hope and possibility was palpable and so the students put aside their differences to take advantage of the political opportunity at hand. However, the issue of class was a lurking question and early encounters revealed the chasm between the political logic of public and private university students and what it is they wanted.

Unification

After the march on the 18th of May...we got together all weekend to plan the march for the 23rd of May...there were those from Ibero, from ITAM...from Anáhuac, people from various faculties in UNAM...about 30 of us...and in the beginning the dynamic was, well, “who are you, why are you here and what do you want?” And literally, well those of us from ITAM really wanted at that point: “the democratisation of the media”, and those from UNAM: “to change the system”, and I remember that we had this enormous discussion about, “but, what is the system? And what do you want to change?” And it was a huge discussion and we wrote up the list of demands, but to get to that there was a whole discussion of more than a day about what it was to change the system.¹²⁷

— Guadalupe (ITAM)

¹²⁷ *Después de la marcha del 18 de mayo...nos juntamos todo el fin de semana a planear la marcha del 23 de mayo...habían los de la Ibero, los del ITAM...del Anáhuac, gente de varias facultades de la UNAM...éramos como 30 personas...y al principio la primera dinámica fue, bueno ¿quién eres?, ¿por qué estás aquí? Y ¿qué es lo que buscas? Y literalmente, bueno nosotros los que íbamos del ITAM realmente queríamos en ese momento: “la democratización de los medios de comunicación”, y los de la UNAM: “cambiar el sistema”, y me acuerdo que tuvimos toda una discusión enorme de, pero ¿qué es el sistema? ¿qué quieres cambiar? Y fue toda la discusión y redactamos el pliego petitorio, pero para llegar a eso fue toda una discusión de más de un día de ¿qué era el cambiar el sistema?*

From the earliest moment of contact between public and private students, it was evident that who they were and what they wanted were different, if not opposed. From the predominantly technical and pragmatic approach of private university students to the overwhelmingly socio-political emphasis of the publics, the way students perceived the problem and the solutions they proposed were at odds. The neoliberal creed of the future leaders educated at ITAM and the popular consciousness of UNAM are instructive of this breach. Guadalupe (ITAM) was emphatic:

At ITAM nobody thought about changing the system, they were not thinking of becoming a socialist country or something radical like that, on the contrary, they thought of very specific things like: to achieve a media communications system that was more open and democratic; to achieve a political reform that allowed citizenship participation, very concrete objectives, that maybe were going to generate certain changes afterwards, but they did not see them as a change of the system.¹²⁸

These divergent—and from the perspective of the class struggle, antagonistic—approaches to #YoSoy132 spelled a significant challenge for the emerging movement (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 144). As Guadalupe (ITAM) outlined above, the extent of change, whether in essence or in potential, was the source of immediate disagreement. To unite the students and overcome these tensions #YoSoy132 needed to construct a collective identity and create a set of spaces to negotiate, cooperate and coordinate collective actions. In the face of class tensions the students projected a unified image externally, whilst internally working to generate agreement on the aims of the movement within the specific context of the elections.

The instrumentalisation of unity was part necessity and part strategy. To avoid internal conflict the students would have to overcome their prejudices and work together. The construction of a unifying collective identity was fundamental to allow the movement to work together to take advantage of the moment. On this point it is worth quoting Javier, a sociology student from UNAM, at length:

¹²⁸ ...en el ITAM nadie pensaba como en cambiar el sistema, no pensaban en volvernos un país socialista o algo así que fuera muy radical, al contrario pensaban en cosas muy puntuales como: sí lograr un sistema de medios de comunicación que fuera más abierto y democrático, si lograr una reforma política que permitiera una participación ciudadana, como objetivos muy concretos, que tal vez eso iba a empezar a generar ciertos cambios después, pero no lo veían como un cambio del sistema.

So that was a huge achievement for us to be able to remove that prejudice and to say that we are all university students, we are all youth, we all want to change the country, well let's get rid of these labels because they are also labels that divide us, that limit us and we are all the same, so it was very important at that moment because no one believed we could do it. Part of the society and part of the political system said: "no, they are going to fight amongst themselves, or they said, UNAM is going to eat them up...so there is no problem"...luckily we had the strength to say, "you know what, it's not going to be like that, we all put in the same effort, and the proposals are these", so that was like a first great moment.¹²⁹

Despite being educated for opposing purposes, their shared identity as tertiary students also provided some initial common ground for coming together and cooperating.

Fundamental to the question of education was a sense of collective responsibility as a result of privilege—students had access to information, skills and knowledge that the majority lacked. By focusing on shared privilege and a corresponding sense of public responsibility that persisted despite structural inequalities, #YoSoy132 was able to build a necessary foundation for cooperation. Inequalities in social status and future prospects were put aside, momentarily, in favour of recognition of a shared privilege and a common undertaking to prevent the imposition of Peña Nieto to the presidency. Gabriela (ITAM) explained:

Being at a university is a privilege that not everyone has in Mexico...it opens a world of knowledge to you and the power of a critical mind and to be able to question things. And that for us was a positive, I mean "we are students, what do we do with this privilege?"¹³⁰

Cooperation between public and private also enabled the sharing of experiences and the crossover of knowledge, giving participants direct insights into each other's

¹²⁹ *Entonces eso fue un gran logro para nosotros el poder quitarnos ese prejuicio y decir todos somos universitarios, todos somos jóvenes, todos queremos cambiar el país, pues vamos a quitar estas etiquetas porque también son etiquetas que nos fraccionan, que nos limitan y todos somos iguales, entonces fue muy importante en ese momento porque nadie daba un peso porque lo fuéramos a lograr. Parte de la sociedad y parte del sistema político decía: "no, se van a pelear entre ellos, o decían, la UNAM se los va a comer...entonces no hay problema"...por suerte tuvimos la fuerza de decir, "sabes qué, no va ser así, todos jalamos parejo, y las propuestas son estas", entonces ese fue como el primer gran momento.*

¹³⁰ *El estar en una universidad es un privilegio que no tiene cualquier persona en México...te abre el mundo al conocimiento y a poder tener una mente crítica y poder cuestionar. Y eso para nosotros era en pro, o sea, era "somos estudiantes, ¿qué hacemos con este privilegio?"*

institutional cultures. For Javier (UNAM), the private university students were very calculating, methodical and structured in their focus, which he admired. Likewise, Francisco (FAA) related:

The private schools contributed heaps of things, because all of my life I come from public schools, we don't understand and we don't do, it has to do with efficiency, there I did see in the meetings that we went to, they were very efficient, they were very structured. Under this schematic logic, more American, of systematising, coordinating and that for me was very cool, like to see that and realise that it worked well.¹³¹

On the other hand, Javier (UNAM) was not alone in commenting that the organising and mobilising experience of the publics who had “marched a thousand times”, brought fundamental politicising tools—from occupying public space to creating pamphlets and stencils and running an assembly:

The public universities have more practical experience, if you want to see it like that, questions like organise a march, make posters, make pamphlets, it is something that the public universities already had experience in and that the guys from the private universities, didn't know how to do and they learned.¹³²

Another common factor in their student identity was the particular skills, interests and experiences that students brought with them. #YoSoy132 benefitted immensely from this combination of attributes and energy, from the sensation of being able to ‘give back’ without sacrificing one’s individuality and to create new associations based on common interests and in the creation of shared knowledge. Not only did this interdisciplinary approach contribute to the collective knowledge of the movement and its understanding of complex problems, such as reforming the media, but it was highly motivating and enriching for participants. Through cooperation, the best of both public and private university education contributed to cohesive and dynamic collaborations,

¹³¹ ...aportaron un montón de cosas las escuelas privadas, porque yo vengo de escuelas públicas toda mi vida, no entendemos y no hacemos, que tiene ver con la eficiencia, ahí yo sí veía en las reuniones a las que fuimos, eran muy eficiente, eran muy estructurados. Bajo esta lógica esquemática, como más americana, de sistematizar, coordinar y eso para mí fue como muy padre, como verlo y darme cuenta que funcionaba mucho.

¹³² Las universidades públicas tienen más experiencia práctica si lo quieres ver así, cuestiones como sacar una marcha, hacer carteles, hacer panfletos, es algo que las universidades públicas ya tenían experiencia haciendo y que lo chicos de las universidades privadas, no sabían cómo se hacía y aprendieron.

probably the most celebrated of which was the third presidential debate on 19 June. Students organised and executed, collectively and democratically, a debate between three of the four candidates, minus Peña Nieto, who declined, citing the movement's opposition to his character. The debate had an innovative format and engaged in problematic areas that had been overlooked or sidelined in the superficial charades of the media coverage of the elections.

In the face of the closing-off of democracy by the de facto power of the mass media and the predominance of an unrepresentative political class, the public and private students drew on a combination of technical skills and humanist conceptions embedded in their education to revive questions of collective and public interest and to reflect on the necessary conditions for an authentic democracy. One of the most complete and tangible examples is the movement's counter-report, a 288-page document in which students, collaborating in working groups and with academics and civil organisations, thematically critiqued six key areas of public policy.¹³³ These six axes were based on the movement's fighting program, which I will discuss further in Chapter Five.

The counter-report was released on 1 September 2012 to challenge the claims of outgoing President Felipe Calderón's final presidential report; it critiqued the failures of the regime and proposed alternatives to the major social, economic and environmental problems of the country. Student privilege was matched by a strong sense of social responsibility that not only transcended differences but leveraged these in an interdisciplinary way to provide comprehensive insights into complex questions and to involve participants in in-depth discussions and political debates over the implications of these that gave shape to the final recommendations. Preparation for this document involved ongoing debates, according to Marta (UNAM), between "humanists" and "technocrats", allowing participants the unique opportunity to challenge assumptions, beliefs and epistemologies of 'the other' in a respectful environment. Such achievements testify to the potential of #YoSoy132 in bringing together future leaders,

¹³³ The full 288 page document was published on the movement's official website, yosoy132media.org but the site has since been deleted. I have not been able to find this document anywhere else online, but am able to produce it upon request.

activists, professionals and bureaucrats to discuss matters of paramount national interest and to create common agendas and arrive at shared understandings through debate.

Concluding remarks

The encounter brought together the fragmented social sectors of public and private whose class character is deeply ingrained in the collective imaginary but diffused by everyday separation. It initiated a collective effort to politically unite the student body, thereby temporarily transgressing the educational divisions. Despite the role of prejudicial social representations in stoking these antagonisms, the pre-emptive proclamation that there is no difference between publics and privates needs to be read as a bid to construct a unified image that drew upon the initial sensation of euphoria to exploit the political opportunity at hand. Even though students came to experience their personal and generational similarities, on the collective level, class could not be so easily swept away. To suggest, as Favela (2015a, p. 164) has, that class is an invalid, outmoded or erroneous category for understanding tensions within #YoSoy132 is problematic. While Favela cautions us to the homogenising tendency inherent in these separations, such doubts are insufficient to dismiss the issue of class in public higher education and its impact on the movement. Despite the predominance of heterogeneity across and within tertiary educational institutions, a sociological account of the tertiary education system demonstrates the core stratifying role of elite private institutions and illuminates the nature of the encounter and the challenges in constructing political unity. Class is a structurally embedded and intractable feature of Mexico's social landscape that cannot be overcome by mere volition. It is thus a necessary point of departure for understanding the tensions that lurk beneath the surface of #YoSoy132 but also as the very possibility opened up by the student encounter and the promise of transversal solidarities.

I have analysed how #YoSoy132 exploited an unexpected political opening to construct a strategic student unity with the broad, albeit unrealistic, goal of stopping the imposition of Peña Nieto to power that had been years in the making. I have also argued that the instrumentalisation of unity required the renunciation of class antagonisms in the pursuit of seemingly common goals within an electoral context that transformed indignation and inevitability into hope and possibility. At the same time the novelty of #YoSoy132, arising from an elite private institution, provoked the search for a new

political language that was more appropriate to the aesthetic tastes and cultural sensibilities of a globalised, cosmopolitan sector of the movement. A new language of protest would also be necessary to overcome the stigmatisation of student politics and to encourage greater participation by a broader range of individuals. As a corollary, #YoSoy132 encouraged experimentation and innovation to avoid the familiar trappings of Mexican politics: co-optation, sectarianism and repression. In the following chapter I analyse how these factors combined in the construction of a new political style that partially reconfigured the image of protest and the ideal of democracy in Mexican politics.

Chapter 4: A new political style

Above all in the beginning it was a beautiful movement, people from absolutely all classes, beautiful ladies in high heels with straightened hair, people with mohawks that went to march.¹³⁴

— Julia (Ibero)

In its first four months of existence, #YoSoy132 spread across the country with their own histories and dynamics that had nothing or little to do with the birth and circumstances of the Iberoamerican University. Outside of Mexico City, the movement acquired new identities and local and regional demands. It is not only students now, as many states make #YoSoy132 their own and housewives, workers, youth who do not study and civil society in general join in.¹³⁵

— Gloria Muñoz Ramírez (2012, p. 177)

The previous chapter concluded that the encounter between public and private university students initiated a strategic unity to take advantage of the historic opportunity opened up by the protests at Ibero in a high-stakes context. In an effort to mobilise broadly against the return of the PRI, #YoSoy132 would have to circumvent social divisions and overcome barriers to collective action. To transcend the anti-solidaristic effects of Mexico's major structural, sociocultural and political divisions, the nascent movement encouraged inclusive and flexible modes of identification. These broadly inclusive aspirations resonated with a global political climate of dissent that preceded #YoSoy132, allowing the students to further exploit the unique political opportunity following the protest at Estela de Luz. This chapter describes these innovations as constituting a new political style based on an abstracted individual equality, moral responsibility and voluntaristic associations that acted as cross-cutting tools and mirrored contemporary social movement dynamics on a global scale.

¹³⁴ *Sobre todo que al principio era un movimiento precioso, gente de absolutamente todas las clases, niñas guapísimas en tacones con pelo planchado, gente con un mohawk iban a marchar.*

¹³⁵ *En sus primeros cuatro meses de existencia, el #YoSoy132 crece a lo largo y ancho del país con historias y dinámicas propias. Nada o poco que ver con el nacimiento y circunstancias en la Universidad Iberoamericana. Fuera de la Ciudad de México, el movimiento adquiere nuevas identidades y demandas locales y regionales. Ya no es sólo el estudiantil, sino que en muchos estados hacen suyo el #YoSoy132 y se vinculan a él amas de casa, trabajadores, jóvenes que no estudian y sociedad civil en general.*

Within a climate of hope and rebellion, digital communication technology facilitated the creation and dissemination of a new political style through the visible marker #YoSoy132. The new style urged participation, inviting individuals to take up the banner and principles of #YoSoy132 to try to transform Mexico through a unity of actors to be built one more at a time, allowing the proliferation of protest in almost every state in the republic. Calls for creativity, horizontality and individuality removed barriers to identification and participation, leading to an explosion of autonomous and spontaneous interventions that challenged the imaginary of a singular or homogenous people. This was to be a political style that refused the sacrifice of subjectivity and plurality as the cost, too high, demanded by previous participation in popular and democratic movements. However, in tension with this fervently embraced ambition, it seems that the terms of the new political style did not equally empower all. Indeed, these innovations proved to contain deep ambiguities that inhibited the realisation of their radical democratic agenda. This chapter will first explore some of the features of the movement that did generate novel forms of solidarity. It will then work through some of the problems to provide a more nuanced and critical account of the effects of this new style on the democratisation of an inherited authoritarian political culture.

The Mexican Spring

If indeed the imaginary of #YoSoy132 was nourished by anti-neoliberalism and, in part, by anti-capitalism, in the centre of their demands was an idea of an alternative democracy, ethical, participatory and anti-partisan. In that sense, prefiguratively, the forms that the movement assumed are inspired by the experiences and practices of the recent movements of the Indignados and Occupy, which in part go back to alter-globalisation: horizontality, spontaneity, creativity, a networked form and communication on social networks.¹³⁶

— Luz Estrella and Massimo Modonesi (2012, p. 240)

¹³⁶ *Si bien el ideario del Yo Soy 132 [sic] se nutre de antineoliberalismo y, en parte, de anticapitalismo, en el centro de sus reivindicaciones está una idea de alternativa democrática, ética, participativa y antipartidaria. En esta dirección, a modo prefigurativo, las formas que asumió abrevan de las experiencias y las prácticas de los movimientos recientes de los indignados y los Occupy, los cuales en parte remontan al altermundismo: horizontalidad, espontaneidad, creatividad, forma red y comunicación vía redes sociales.*

Off the heels of an explosive “international cycle of contention” (Tejerina, Perogorria, Benski & Langman, 2013), #YoSoy132 has been seen as bringing Mexican politics into the 21st century with a global, civic subjectivity in an era of rising discontent and demands for the augmentation of democracy (Navarro Montaña, 2016, p. 177). In a context of broad, international political and economic crisis this protest wave, variously labelled “movements of the crisis” (Della Porta & Mattoni, 2014, p. 2) or “movements of the square” (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 2), swept the globe in countries as diverse as Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, Hong Kong, Chile, Brazil, Spain, Greece, Canada and the United States. Exploding in succession, each movement reacted within a specific environment but all coincided in their indignation with the status quo of contemporary politics—that is, the neoliberal rationale that hollows out democracy, privatises the commons, and produces precarious life conditions from North to South with the active complicity of both authoritarian and liberal regimes. These movements ushered in a renewed critique of political economy in a period of precarity and austerity (Benski & Langman, 2013). Taken together they have been seen to represent “the reinvention of democracy from below through popular assemblies, horizontality, radicalism, direct action, experimentalism, democratic diversity, leaderless self-management and consensus decision-making”¹³⁷ (Aguiló, 2015, p. 63). Occupying major plazas, engaging in open assemblies in public spaces and utilising digital media to spread their message, these brief democratic experiments cut across social and cultural barriers allowing individuals to see their common problems and to relate them back to political problems.

Although focusing on grievances at the national level, this protest wave transcended domestic borders and local geographies, expressing a global self-consciousness (Gerbaudo, 2017). Otherwise disparate, localised struggles were interconnected through social networks, shared values and common symbols that resonated widely and generated transnational solidarities (Pleyers, 2017). At the same time these protests also represented a refocusing on the nation-state as distinct from the alter-globalisation movement that preceded them. Gerbaudo (2017) captures this dynamic in two key symbols: the mask and the flag—the V for Vendetta mask

¹³⁷ *Son, por tanto, luchas políticas y sociales por la reinención de la democracia desde abajo a partir del asamblearismo popular, la horizontalidad, la radicalidad, la acción directa, el experimentalismo, la diversidad democrática, la autogestión sin líderes y la toma de decisiones por consenso.*

associated with the worldwide hacker group, Anonymous, and the national flag, permitted where most other identifying symbols were discouraged or prohibited. Broad slogans and relatively empty demands such as “we are the 99%” and “real democracy” and abstracted references to “the people” helped to unite otherwise divergent sectors of society under a common umbrella (Prentoulis & Thomassen, 2014, p. 224). Other common features include: indignation, horizontality, affect, inclusivity, the clever and intensive use of social networks, an ethical individualism, mass public occupations and spontaneity (Benski & Langman, 2013; Gerbaudo, 2012, 2017; Pleyers, 2017; Prentoulis & Thomassen, 2014; Rovira Sancho, 2014; Tejerina et al., 2013). By and large these movements also rejected ideologies, instead problematising representation and instrumental reasoning, stressing ordinariness and a majoritarian discourse dissociated from partisan and sectarian tendencies (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis, 2014).

Although comprising movements of anyone and everyone, generationally, this protest wave corresponds to the transition from Generation @, or X, to Generation #, or 2.0 (Feixa, Fernández-Planells & Figueres-Maz, 2016; Portillo, Urteaga, González, Aguilera & Feixa, 2012). Feixa et al. (2016) distinguish these generations by the conversion from “informational capitalism” to “savage capitalism”, and from “virtual” time to “viral” time, in which politics are both “glocalised” and personalised. Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana) described social networks and the internet as “another way of telling the world what is going on ... a different way of communicating amongst ‘globals’”.¹³⁸ In its very name #YoSoy132 reflected the political change from group-collective identities to individual subjectivities (Portillo et al., 2012, p. 171). #YoSoy132 began as a hashtag that “signified addition, that you were that other member, that other person that was disposed to support the cause”,¹³⁹ explained Javier (UNAM). For this generation, concepts like democracy, social justice and dignity “are, first and foremost, personal practices and demands”¹⁴⁰ with implications for living together (Pleyers, 2017, p. 97). In this context “Liquid Organising” has replaced formal

¹³⁸ *El 132 salió de un hashtag, o sea somos un hashtag de Twitter...a nivel mundial internet y las redes han sido fundamentales...otra manera de decirle al mundo que las cosas están pasando...es una manera distinta de comunicarnos entre “globales”.*

¹³⁹ *Con el hashtag usando el lenguaje de las redes sociales, significaba la adición, que tú eras ese otro miembro, esa otra persona que estaba dispuesta apoyar esa causa.*

¹⁴⁰ *Son primero y, antes que nada, prácticas y exigencias personales.*

membership with voluntary participation in a cause (Gerbaudo, 2012). Favouring experimentation and novel forms of aggregation over programmatic action (Rovira Sancho, 2014, p. 55), these movements overwhelmingly exchanged collective identities for self-representation (Rovira Sancho, 2012, p. 426). In important ways #YoSoy132 thus represented the possibility for multiple, flexible modes of identification and belonging that allowed a new generation to self-identify and participate in political action.

These movements were also marked by a mixture of continuity and rupture with the alter-globalisation movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Gerbaudo (2017, p. 26) argues that the movements of the square “opted for the notion of citizenry as a libertarian adaptation of the People, to emphasise the emergent and bottom-up nature of the contemporary revolutionary subject”, therefore overcoming the minoritarianism of alter-globalisation struggles. The technological, horizontal utopias of the “cyber-Left” (Wolfson, 2014) were reappropriated and repurposed by an individualised, hyper-mediatic generation of “*indignados*” fed up with ordinary politics but lacking an alternative of their own. The origins of the international cyber-Left and the alter-globalisation movements have been attributed to the 1994 uprising of the EZLN (Portillo et al., 2012, p. 139; Wolfson, 2014, p. 5). Hence in reproducing political forms based on spontaneity, non-partisanship, broad, transversal appeals, and ethical, inclusive, creative, plural and horizontal principles, Modonesi (2014, p. 150) considers that #YoSoy132 was “Zapatista without being Zapatista”.¹⁴¹ Through these mechanisms #YoSoy132 refreshed the ideals of inclusivity, equality and non-partisan participation for a new generation without prior political experience.

Castells (2013, p. 10) describes the key ingredients in the chain reactions that create social movements: emotion, empathy, communication, and togetherness—this last being “a fundamental psychological mechanism to overcome fear”. In the case of #YoSoy132, change happened from one day to the next: “now it wasn’t just you angry watching the news in your home, it was all of a sudden thousands and thousands in the

¹⁴¹ *En este sentido, podemos afirmar que el #YoSoy132 fue zapatista sin serlo, en la medida en que respondió a un patrón que se gesta como intento de superación de formas históricas de los movimientos sociopolíticos del siglo xx.*

streets projecting that anger”¹⁴² recalled Juana (UNAM). José in San Luis Potosí and Jimena in Cozumel, inspired by news of #YoSoy132 in the capital city, organised locally to address the specific problems of their area whilst relating them back to broader national problems such as the unrepresentative political classes and Peña Nieto’s pending neoliberal reforms agenda. #YoSoy132 first replicated itself online and then people, without necessarily knowing one another, came out onto the streets across the national territory (Rovira Sancho, 2014, p. 59). Within an international scenario of dissent and a national political climate of rising frustration and fear in the face of the impending return of the PRI, #YoSoy132 emerged unexpectedly, spreading hope and generating enthusiasm in distinct regions of Mexico. In this context, self-organising “cells” emerged spontaneously and organically including parents, workers, teachers, minors and members of organised civil society (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 177). Within weeks, local chapters had emerged throughout the republic, from Morelos and Veracruz on the west and east coasts, to states as divergent as Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, Baja California Sur, Quintana Roo, Guadalajara, Oaxaca and Sinaloa (González Villarreal, 2013, pp. 205–112). Outside of Mexico City repression was conspicuous and ongoing, yet for Virginia Rico from #YoSoy132Michoacán, friendships and solidarity strengthened resolve and helped to overcome distances (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 189), making #YoSoy132 a truly national phenomenon.

¹⁴² ...ya no era simplemente que tú estuvieras enojado en tu casa viendo las noticias a de repente ser miles y miles en las calles proyectando esta rabia.

A new political style?

Amongst the university youth of Mexico, to be #YoSoy132 is fashionable. Therein lies its potency and vigour. The movement has become the principal identifying mark of a generation. To join it is a distinctive, original and unedited form of relating to politics, society and culture, that breaks with the past and inaugurates a new time.¹⁴³

— Luis Hernández Navarro (as cited in Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 7)

It is something that I confess I had never seen, that thing, like a new generation of youth in the streets with so much energy, so much interest, but who came precisely from not participating in anything political, and the fact that the private universities were there, that gave the movement a different tone because they were not the same rigid, lazy UNAM students as always, but it was something different, and there was an identitarian thing, like it became fashionable, everyone wanted to be an activist.¹⁴⁴

— Francisco (FAA)

In its origins #YoSoy132 brought a fresh critique of Mexico's rancid political institutions and offered new means for belonging that ideally extended to anyone who identified with the movement. Rather than formal organisations and hierarchical, centralising structures, #YoSoy132 signified voluntary associations within autonomous and horizontal networks. For many 'first timers' in activist politics, this dissociation from traditional organisational forms drew them to the movement. Mario (Ibero) and Javier (UNAM) reflected that, despite always having had an interest in politics, they had not felt comfortable with and were not attracted to the existing political options for activism. For these youth, #YoSoy132 represented an alternative form of political participation (Rivera Hernández, 2016). For Gabriela (ITAM) it was a case of rethinking democracy in a context of an over-saturation of ineffective, boring and counterproductive protests and ideological imposition: "we want to reinvent new ways of doing things, we can take good things from the past, but we don't have to use the

¹⁴³ *Entre la juventud universitaria de México, ser #YoSoy132 es lo de hoy. De allí su potencia y su vigor. El movimiento se ha convertido en la seña de identidad principal de una generación. Adscribirse a él es una forma distinguida, original e inédita de relacionarse con la política, la sociedad y la cultura, que rompe con el pasado e inaugura un nuevo tiempo.*

¹⁴⁴ *Es algo que yo también confieso que yo no había visto, si esa cosa, como una nueva generación en las calles de chicos con tanta energía, con tantas ganas, pero que venían justo de no haber participado en ninguna cosa política, y el hecho que estuvieran escuelas privadas, le dio un matiz distinto al movimiento porque no eran los rijosos, vagos de la UNAM de siempre, sino era una cosa distinta, y ahí permea una cosa identitaria, como se puso de moda, todo el mundo quería ser activista.*

same structures if they are not working”.¹⁴⁵ #YoSoy132 offered a fun, informal and expressive mode of doing politics, helping to overcome barriers to collective action, including non-identification, stigmatisation, disaffection and fear. I propose that we understand these cross-cutting features as the basis of a new, plural political style that emerged in response to a fragmented political body and absent an oppositional force capable of challenging the return of the PRI.

Moffitt and Tormey (2014, p. 394) describe populism as a political style, by which they mean “a repertoire of performative features which cuts across different political situations that are used to create political relations”. The authors draw on the notion of political style to describe how, independent of ideological content, contemporary populism shares performative elements that both express and create subjectivities and political ideals (pp. 387, 390). They define populism as a political style along three axes: (a) an appeal to the people; (b) a crisis situation; and (c) bad manners. Finally, they suggest that populism might be seen as offering an “immanent critique of certain forms of democratic politics” (p. 393).

Drawing on this conceptualisation, I propose to analyse the function of the novel political style as promising to cut across socio-political divisions and to inspire a new generation to take action, expressing and creating a generational subjectivity in the formation of new political relations. However, in contradistinction to Moffitt and Tormey’s account, focused on a polarising, top-down logic of populism, I suggest that the new style inverted these political relations through a grassroots pluralist reconfiguration of ‘the people’. For the purposes of explaining the political function and appeal of stylistic innovations for the case of #YoSoy132, I reconceptualise the three key axes described above as: (a) an appeal to individuals; (b) imminent return of the PRI; and (c) irreverence. Instead of appealing to a singular, exclusionary and homogeneous people, #YoSoy132 reconfigured the collective democratic subject as plural and inclusionary by appealing to the individual citizen as the basic political unit of the whole.

¹⁴⁵ *Nosotros queremos reinventar nuevas formas de hacer las cosas ¿no?, podemos agarrar cosas buenas de lo que se ha hecho en el pasado, pero no tenemos que, las mismas estructuras, volver a usarlas si ya no están funcionando.*

#YoSoy132 mobilised one and all, imploring citizens to join the struggle to transform Mexico. At the heart of the appeal was a direct invitation to be #132 that reconfigured the collective subject in individual, personal terms—as affected but also responsible. For Marta (UNAM), the movement’s mobilising call emphasised the idea that all Mexicans are impacted by the situation at hand, and allowed individuals to identify themselves in the equation; *Yo Soy*, “I am”, indicated that “I am also the affected one”.¹⁴⁶ It was an “I in collectivity”, which according to Marta was introduced by the private universities: it suggested that “I too am affected”, instead of having to be “us for the movement”, for those who suffered, because “we do not have problems”.¹⁴⁷ If moral indignation was the underlying transversal sentiment that manifested in a refusal to remain silent, then the corresponding imperative was to take responsibility and act to make change. Action and participation were facilitated by an open and inclusive identity in which to be #132 was a matter of self-identification and aggregation. The reiteration that ‘anyone can be #132’ entrenched individual autonomy as the basis of a shared identity.

In a context of broad disaffection and latent indignation, #YoSoy132 appealed to individuals to freely and autonomously associate with the movement. Through the invitation, *¡Súmate!* or Join in!, #YoSoy132 allowed participants to become one more without specifying exactly what this entailed. Individuals were free to come and go, to get involved and to organise, debate or interact in a fluid and voluntary manner. Anyone could “put on the shirt” and be #132; it was a “free movement” in which participation was a matter of self-identification, a kind of affective identification felt through constructive critique (Fernández Poncela, 2014, pp. 136–137). Flexible modes of identifying and participating encouraged encounters and convergences which, despite their ephemerality, can have unexpected and lasting effects. On this point Córdova Rojas (2016, p. 214) suggests that “Free organisation allows participants to commit themselves to determined actions; it congregates a mixture of people with passion and interest that can relate, that configure existential imaginaries, utopias, artistic practices

¹⁴⁶ *Yo también soy la afectada o el afectado.*

¹⁴⁷ *...es un cambio muy importante porque siempre el activista era para el movimiento, para el que está allá, porque ellos son los que sufren, nosotros no tenemos problemas.*

and forms of living”.¹⁴⁸ This flexibility motivated a diversity of participants who contributed with their unique skills and knowledge to an effervescent atmosphere of contestation. As Mario (Ibero) recalled:

It was very motivating, everybody put in a huge effort and put all of their creativity and the knowledge they had acquired over their lives at the service of resistance, so in the streets it was not heavy, like the unions, typical of what we are accustomed to, but a joyful march, full of colour, of original phrases and distinct actions.¹⁴⁹

#YoSoy132 was a “*convocatoria*”, an open call that allowed private individuals to come together to cooperate and participate as #132 without formally belonging to an organisation (Favela, 2015b, p. 233). That is, #YoSoy132 signified “an idea of being able to affirm what you want without intermediaries, at the time and date that you determine”,¹⁵⁰ as Julio (ITESO) asserted.

Experimentation with a new political style was the result of a mixture of conjunctural necessity and contemporary subjectivities. A fresh image and a creative and inclusive style were necessary to cut across ideological and class barriers to prevent the eruption of internal class conflicts. Given the history of clientelistic and corporatist politics, this new political style expressed the strategic need to prevent co-optation, hegemonisation and control, stressing horizontality and non-partisanship as protections for autonomy. Moreover, a broad and inclusive image was necessary to prevent the emergence of sectarianism that would weaken the movement, leaving it marginal and vulnerable to co-optation and repression. According to Juana (UNAM) “creativity was a fundamental axis of #YoSoy132, in how to redo political forms: firstly because of its participants who sought to be more creative, and secondly because the historic situation

¹⁴⁸ *La organización libre logra sin embargo comprometer a sus participantes en acciones determinadas; congrega a un conjunto de personas con pasiones e intereses que se pueden concatenar, que configuran imaginarios existenciales, utopías, prácticas artísticas y formas de vida.*

¹⁴⁹ *...fue algo muy motivante, todo el mundo puso gran esfuerzo y puso en empleo de la resistencia, toda su creatividad y todo el conocimiento que había adquirido a lo largo de su vida entonces en las calles no era pesada, de sindicatos, típica a la que estamos acostumbrados, sino una marcha alegre, llena de colores, de frases originales, y de acciones distintas.*

¹⁵⁰ *...una idea de poder afirmar lo que tú quieres sin intermediarios, en la fecha y hora en que tú lo determinas.*

permitted it and required it”.¹⁵¹ The new style was also a tool for overcoming the fear, boredom, disaffection and stigma associated with student politics in particular, and protest in general.

These strategic needs combined with new communicative modes to offer a personalised mode of participation that also functioned as an immanent critique of what many considered an obsolete and authoritarian political culture. Participants described how old forms of communication—leaflets with long texts or manifestos read at the end of marches imploring “proletarian, unite with our cause”—were all forms which were not only thoroughly stigmatised in the collective imaginary, but boring, ineffective and potentially counterproductive. In an effort to “construct a ‘we’ in diversity”¹⁵² (Santoyo Rosas, 2015, pp. 169, 172), #YoSoy132 would abandon the semantics of class-consciousness, the language of the Left, displacing it with a discourse of citizenship, rights and participation. Cultural festivals, circus workshops, graphic expositions, collective murals, poetry slams, rock concerts and moving performances (Rovira Sancho, 2012, p. 440) were some of the interventions that made protest fun and attractive.

In a context of banal public opinion, the most urgent task of the movement was to try to generate public debate and critical consciousness in the hope of preventing the media’s imposition of the PRI candidate on election day. Audiovisual material was especially powerful in denouncing Peña Nieto, his links to Televisa, and what he represented as a candidate for the PRI, helping to get the message across. Pilar (FAA), described film as a tool for conscientising audiences and sensitising them to the world; for her, video is a more effective tool than political discourse. Art and performance were also privileged media for reinserting repressed histories and collective memories into public spaces (Rivera Hernández, 2016, p. 181). On 13 June 2012 the FAA Projected “Light132”¹⁵³ on the walls of Televisa’s headquarters in Chapultepec, exposing the media monopoly’s complicity in a series of highly symbolic repressions, including the massacres of the student movements of 1968 and 1971 and of peasant and popular

¹⁵¹ *...en el 132 fue un eje fundamental la creatividad, el cómo rehacer estas formas políticas, primero por sus participantes ¿no?, quienes buscaban ser más creativos, y la otra porque la situación histórica lo permitía y lo requería.*

¹⁵² *#YoSoy132 se propuso construir un “nosotros” en la diversidad.*

¹⁵³ *Luz132.*

movements such as Acteal in 1997 and Atenco in 2006 (Rivera Hernández, 2016, p. 176). Occupations and video projections in public spaces manifested the power of horizontal collective organisation in generating non-coercive forms of power—power to, rather than power over—that simultaneously prefigure new collective imaginaries and political cultures, challenging official versions of history and subverting dominant social symbols.

Irreverent graphic material also helped to spread the message, providing an important cross-cutting and politicising tool for both contesting and subverting power. The event at Ibero was a reminder of the candidate's incapacity to improvise, exposing his dependence on teleprompters and reinforcing the students' sensation of being spectators in the simulation of democracy. Just one hour after Peña Nieto hid out in the bathrooms at Ibero, an invitation to the presidential hopeful circulated social networks, exemplifying the sarcastic flavour of Mexican humour: "We are waiting for you with the bathrooms open!"¹⁵⁴ (Favela, 2015b, pp. 225–226). According to Favela (2015a, p. 159) laughter enabled unexpected affinities, subverting the masculine, singular and grave voice of traditional politics and generating hope. Irreverence not only subverts the political authority that underpins the performance of power, it encourages creativity and spontaneity as communicative tools. In a mediatised political scenario, the image of politicians is increasingly central to their success, and in the case of Peña Nieto, this was particularly so (Arteaga Botello & Arzuaga Magnoni, 2014, p. 121). "The idea that he was a candidate who was never dishevelled, his quiff is perfect, and that we managed to ruffle it up, was very attractive to me",¹⁵⁵ recalled David (UNAM). Memes of Peña Nieto's perfectly styled hair replaced by a turd drew attention to the media-confected image of the candidate. Another criticised his ignorance, mocking the presidential hopeful for not knowing the price of tortillas and justifying his ignorance by stating "I am not the lady of the house", adding sexism to incompetence.

However, humour is not in itself progressive or transformative. It can lend itself to moments of levity without challenging the norms of established political discourses. As Walker (2013, p. 48) demonstrates, Mexico's conservative middle and business

¹⁵⁴ *¡Te esperamos con los baños abiertos!*

¹⁵⁵ *A mí me parece muy atractiva la idea de que era un candidato que no se despeinaba, su copete está muy perfecto, y logramos despeinarlo.*

classes used a combination of jokes, rumours and threats to try to destabilise Echeverría's (1970–1976) administration in response to the president's effort to turn the predominant economic model of “stabilising development” into “shared development” to address the rising inequality as a product of the Mexican Miracle. In that scenario humour was an effective tool for conserving the status quo and challenging the State to prevent progressive change. In Echeverría's case, subversion pushed Mexico further towards the Right, undermining the president's political capital and forestalling his planned democratic opening, educational reform and shared development, which might have led to more equitable social outcomes (Walker, 2013, p. 71). Notwithstanding purely reactionary uses of humour, Favela (2015a, pp. 159–160) insists that in the viralisation of politics by #YoSoy132 implied a partial displacement of charismatic leaders and serious orators by dispersing power towards ludic and affective forms.

In combination with a viral politics and an active and intensive usage of social media, the new style purported to break with the necessity for representation and leadership to promote an autonomous public able to participate and reflect on matters of collective interest. In a country whose public life is marked by the absence of debate and the monopolisation of the media, such self-activating publics are potentially transformative. In addition to its oppositional, critical function, the new style provided an affective and moral basis for coming together and cooperating in a context of social fragmentation and fear tied to a state of rising insecurity. Julio (ITESO) described how by bringing together emotion with a vision of commonality based on affectivity, #YoSoy132 encouraged the public to take an interest in the other, and in the events taking place around them. Affective ties and flexible, voluntary forms of association helped connect individuals with shared interests and concerns. For Pilar (FAA), #YoSoy132 meant “meeting people that have the same interests and worries as you”,¹⁵⁶ whilst for Gabriela (ITAM), #YoSoy132 is an identity that shaped her participation in later projects with others from the movement. In this way, she explained: “these nuclei are being created, like networks of people with whom you like to work and that more or

¹⁵⁶ *Se sentía algo como para encontrarte gente que de repente tenía intereses afines o que tenía preocupaciones afines, ese día marcó un poco mi participación activista desde entonces hasta ahora.*

less have the same ideology”.¹⁵⁷ As Gómez and Treré (2014, p. 502) reflected, #YoSoy132 was experienced by many as a powerful means of peer-to-peer communication that allowed participants to come together and share their hopes and fears, to build relations and foment a new sociality to counter the effects of poor politics, insecurity, the criminalisation of protest and the marginalisation of youth.

The new political style did not only propose to construct a strong sense of belonging that could empower citizens to participate and intervene in public life in the face of disillusionment and fear. More broadly, it aimed to engage society in discussions on the fate of the nation in the lead-up to a presidential election, create networks of like-minded people and generate enthusiasm for change. In a postmodern era of disaffection with traditional politics, #YoSoy132 has been applauded as the seed of another way of doing politics and the intimation of a mode of being together that is plural, inclusive and democratising. However, praise for these innovations occludes a more nuanced consideration of the compatibility of this new style with the cultural sensibilities and democratic visions promoted by neoliberalism. Moreover, the effectiveness of these innovations for challenging the very social formations that underpin the reproduction of contemporary subjectivities has not been critically examined. In the next section, I delve into some of the complexities and problems of the new political style that have largely been overlooked in more optimistic accounts.

New subjectivities

In certain ways, the politics of sensitivity has adapted political action to cultural production and neoliberal tastes, its humanitarian sensibility and general depoliticisation... Other problems of the politics of sensitivity are that what they represent in political terms is vague, and that they transform political action into a question of expression.¹⁵⁸

— Irmgard Emmelhainz (2016, p. 128)

¹⁵⁷ *Para mí más bien es una identidad que... he estado en muchos proyectos desde entonces y sí... como que es con la gente que estuvo en 132 [sic], se van creando estos núcleos, estas como redes de personas con las que te gusta trabajar y que tiene más o menos la misma ideología.*

¹⁵⁸ *De cierta manera, la política sensible ha adaptado la acción política a la producción cultural y a los gustos neoliberales, a su sensibilidad humanitaria y a la despolitización general... Otros problemas de la*

#YoSoy132 is an identifier, without doubt, but it is not an essentialist reference or adscription, nor is it a reaction of communities or localities, it is the common constructed and shared by the different parts, on the level of socioeconomic, class, cultural, ideological and condition...#YoSoy132 is a political and subjective production of the multitude in Mexico in May 2012, during the electoral campaigns.¹⁵⁹

— Roberto González Villarreal (2013, p. 126)

If political style establishes the role of performance in expressing and creating subjectivities (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p. 390), then what kind of subjectivity is under construction when we speak of a new political style in #YoSoy132? This is essentially the problem at hand: how to understand what #YoSoy132 was and what it represented for democratising struggles in Mexico. Observing the emergence of a new subaltern subject on Mexico's political scene, Pineda (2012, p. 1) states that “understanding this collective, polymorphous, diverse, contradictory subject, is an essential task to understand the next steps of the subaltern struggles in Mexico”.¹⁶⁰ Pineda (2012, p. 9) describes a broad spectrum of political tendencies that composed the internal politics of #YoSoy132 of which he identifies “the outraged” as the largest and most interesting tendency.¹⁶¹ Considering his interest in grasping the nature of this new subaltern subject and his experience as a militant scholar and participant in the movement, Pineda's (2012, pp. 9–10) rich description of *los indignados* is worth citing in full:

Thousands of unorganised youth, sick of the situation in the country, of the evident television lies, tired of the violations and arbitrariness of power, the outraged do not have a singular ideological reference point. Indignant at the repression in San Salvador Atenco, or the thousands of deaths due to drug trafficking, they had not found a mechanism for participation nor expression; #YoSoy132 appeared as the best way to do it: close, novel, fresh, irreverent, and moreover, politically correct, moderate, but critical, independent...they are

política sensible son que lo que representa en términos políticos es vago, y que transforman a la acción política en una cuestión de expresión.

¹⁵⁹ #YoSoy132 es un identificador, sin duda, pero no una referencia esencialista ni una adscripción, ni una reacción de comunidades o localidades, es el común construido y compartido por los diferentes de nivel socioeconómico, de clase, de cultura, de ideología, de condición...#YoSoy132 es una producción política y subjetiva de la multitud en México, en mayo de 2012, durante las campañas electorales.

¹⁶⁰ Entender a este sujeto colectivo polimorfo, diverso, contradictorio, es tarea esencial para comprender los siguientes pasos de las luchas subalternas en México.

¹⁶¹ The “outraged” is the label also commonly attributed to the Spanish and Greek protest movements: *los indignados* and *Aganaktismenoi* respectively.

also those who, with an exacerbated distrust of organisation and anti-systemic discourses, overvalue mediatised and creative action, and occasionally disdain grassroots organisation, politicisation and analyses rooted in a certain ideology, with postmodern tinges that take the use of social networks as an innovation in forms of doing politics to the point of delirium. They are those who literally put on the tee-shirt #YoSoy132 (which they sell at marches and other mass activities), because they have formed a political youth identity that screams: I am outraged! I want to do something! I want to participate!¹⁶²

The above description sheds new light on the celebratory accounts of rupture, providing a much more nuanced and problematising account of the emerging political subject. I want to suggest that instead of challenging neoliberalism, the *indignados* appear to embody it, or at least to replicate many of its core political assumptions and subjective elements.

As a manifestation of an ongoing crisis of representation, movements like #YoSoy132 are said to be opening up new political possibilities, beyond representation (Tormey, 2015, pp. 8–9). Yet who is addressed and empowered by discourses and practices of self-representation and networked politics? According to González Villarreal (2013, p. 125), #YoSoy132 is a multitude: from neoliberals to socialists, from students of humanities to students of sciences and economics, workers, brothers, sisters, academics, and professionals of all political persuasions and socio-economic statuses. More specifically, the multitude are students and workers of immaterial goods—software developers, designers and activists who neither identify with, nor respond to, unions or parties; they are singularities in multiple relations whose cooperation constitutes a multitude, a disperse, fluid, circumstantial and open network creating meaning, values and critique within a particular context: the 2012 elections (González

¹⁶² “*Los indignados*”: miles de jóvenes no organizados, hartos de la situación del país, de las evidentes mentiras televisivas, cansados de violaciones y arbitrariedades del poder, los indignados no tienen referencialidad ideológica única. Indignados por la represión en San Salvador Atenco, o por las miles de muertes por la guerra contra el narcotráfico, no habían encontrado mecanismo de participación ni de expresión; #yosoy132 apareció como la mejor forma de hacerlo: cercana, novedosa, fresca, irreverente, y además, políticamente correcta, moderada, pero crítica, independiente...son también los que con una desconfianza exacerbada en la organización y en los discursos antisistémicos sobrevaloran las acciones mediáticas y creativas, y menosprecian en ocasiones la organización de base, la politización y el análisis anclados en cierta ideología con tintes posmodernos que lleva al delirio la utilización de las redes sociales como innovación en las formas de hacer política. Son los que, literalmente, se ponen la camiseta de #yosoy132 (que se vende en marchas y otras actividades masivas), porque se ha formado una identidad política juvenil que grita: estoy indignado! Quiero hacer algo! Quiero participar!

Villarreal, 2013, p. 126). Given the discussion on consumer activism and entrepreneurialism in the previous chapter, we might deduce that if neoliberalism constitutes the “contemporary parameters within which we come to construct our personal biographies” (Hearn, 2012, p. 25), then the *indignados* are enmeshed in a logic that subordinates symbolic cultural production and human creativity to the demands of the market in the form of branding. In other words, the new political style, with its strong affective and creative elements, appears to replicate a political subjectivity close to that in which immaterial labour produces modes of selfhood expressed through affective ties to corporate brands (Hearn, 2012).

This is a generation for whom individualisation—in which individuals are responsible for their own life stories (Beck, 1997, p. 95)—is omnipresent, even if some actively resist its detrimental social effects. We have already seen how contemporary subjectivities are moulded by the predominance of temporary projects and by an entrepreneurial outlook in which personal qualities—charisma, flexibility, creativity and communicative capacity—become informal criteria for inclusion (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). By another token, the internalisation of this marketing logic has facilitated the ready transference of creativity and immaterial labour for political ends. If capitalism strengthens itself through the appropriation of critique, then the neoliberal turn, which redeploys progressive and even subversive language to its own ends, ought to be under suspicion. Along these lines, Fenton and Barassi (2011, p. 191) argue that grasping the broader context of contemporary politics allows us to rethink the liberating effects of individual agency and critically assess the outcomes. Describing how neoliberalism redefines autonomy in relation to egocentric practices that isolate and atomise individuals and encourage fragmentation, Fenton and Barassi (2011, pp. 191–193) suggest that in this context social media and individual autonomy might be experienced as personally freeing, without necessarily having a democratising effect on society.

In this light, the moralising account of individuals as both victim and responsible for the fate of Mexico opens up a double possibility. On the one hand, it draws attention to the shared nature of collective problems, and on the other it charges the individual—albeit in collective form—with responsibility to resolve those problems through action. In itself this might not be a problem. However, without an understanding of the causes of the very problems they confront, such calls can be depoliticising. By appealing to the

individual in vague terms of national crisis whilst preserving in all instances the individual's right to identify and participate at his or her convenience, this new political style expresses a subjectivity that is moulded by the belief that broad changes come from individual agency and critique. This view is very easily accommodated into a neoliberal version of democracy. As Bauman (2013, p. 23) laments:

We are perhaps more “critically predisposed”, much bolder and intransigent in our criticism than our ancestors managed to be in their daily lives, but our critique, so to speak, is “toothless”, unable to affect the agenda set for our “life-political” choices. ...contemporary society has given to the “hospitality to critique” an entirely new sense and has invented a way to accommodate critical thought and action while remaining immune to the consequences of that accommodation, and so emerging unaffected and unscathed—reinforced rather than weakened—from the tests and trials of the open-house policy.

This aspect suggests that, rather than a decisive break with politics as usual, the new political style represents an updating of protest that contains great affective potential, but, by working within the framework of acceptable political language, does not engender a direct threat to the political status quo.

In her critical analysis of the relationship between cultural production and neoliberal subjectivities, Emmelhainz (2016) singles out *la política sensible*. This might be translated as the “politics of sensitivity”: a niche of contemporary art and cultural production, one of whose particularities is the logic of intervention in which the rendering visible of exploitation and misery intends to provoke a sense of agency in spectators (Emmelhainz, 2016, pp. 126–127). The logic of this kind of “artivism” is to graphically expose injustice such that individual witnesses are morally compelled to take responsibility by intervening or speaking up publicly. Similarly, human rights and environmental activism are geared towards compelling an audience to take action, usually in the form of signing a petition or donating to an organisation.

In a context in which revolutionary violence is either utopian or criminalised and therefore morally unthinkable, and in which the overriding tendency is to reproduce liberal sensibilities which in fact circumvent real political action, Emmelhainz (2016, pp. 132, 129) criticises the politics of the sensitive as “artivism” that is unwilling to pay the (exorbitant) price of real political struggle. In this context, being informed has become a kind of politicisation in and of itself, claims Emmelhainz (2016, p. 129),

while injustice is normalised as the politics of sensitivity is disengaged from prior critical theorising necessary to political action.

Emmelhainz (2016, pp. 197–198) describes the pre-2012 electoral period as a moment of effervescent civil participation that highlighted a multiplicity of specific issues, supplementing the electoral spectacle and enacting “a new form of structuring governance that transcends partisan politics”. Some of the media produced in the name of #YoSoy132 illustrate the problem. An early video entitled *El Manifiesto #YoSoy132* (La Silla Rota, 2012) depicts individuals dressed in black tee-shirts bearing the white #YoSoy132 logo, who entreat society to take action in the face of an impending crisis. Speaking in representation of the movement, the students solicit the help of the press and international organisations, emphasising the links between informed citizenship, the democratisation of the media and freedom of expression, and expressing solidarity with those who have stood up for justice—including Atenco, femicide victims, indigenous resistances, repressed student protests, exploited workers and oppressed sexual minorities—reiterating an identification as #132 in the name of “an authentic democracy”. One by one the students describe the state of the country, citing violence, poverty, inequality and a lack of justice: “your country and mine is suffering, we live submerged in a deep crisis”. Another student asserts: “we will not accept this situation any longer”; then another: “Today, the youth have ignited a torch in the public life of the country”; “let’s assume this historic moment with bravery, responsibility and integrity”; “let’s not wait any longer, let’s not stay quiet any longer, let’s unite, let’s organise, Mexico needs us”.¹⁶³ Resembling an advertisement for a human rights organisation, the manifesto enumerates the problems facing Mexico, makes demands and invites non-specific action, but fails to identify the responsible parties, much less expose the systematic basis of such injustices or refer to a collective identity beyond a vague nationalism.

Another video entitled *SOS Yo Soy 132* (Occupy Hamburg, 2012) represents #YoSoy132 as a global expression of the rejection of tyranny and of the defence of freedom of expression and access to information. The video contrasts images of

¹⁶³ *Tu país y el mío está sufriendo, vivimos sumergidos en una crisis profunda...No soportaremos más esta situación...Los jóvenes hemos encendido una luz en la vida pública del país, asumamos este momento histórico con valentía, responsabilidad e integridad. No esperemos más, no callemos más, unámonos, organicemos, México nos necesita.*

repression with individual figures standing alone against the black backdrop of a studio narrating the state of Mexican politics, contrasting authoritarianism with political rights and presenting repression as a perversion of the protective role normatively ascribed to the public forces irrespective of historical fact. One by one they implore the presumably global audience:

We need the support of all students internationally. If this regime wins the elections again, our defeat will be repression. In less than a month we will choose our president, help us to watch over our electoral process. With the eyes of the world on Mexico, it will be difficult for them to falsify the voice of the people. There is a Mexican embassy in your country, be present, manifest your support, we need it. It is the moment to make democracy a worldwide and real phenomenon.¹⁶⁴

Individual actions aimed at vigilance, denunciation and visibility are asserted as necessary and vital actions to achieve a free vote and an authentic democracy, and the elections are held up as the defining moment for the triumph of democracy or the falsification of the voice of the people.

The above examples point to a second issue critically analysed by Emmelhainz (2016). What is referred to as the “good public”: those whose discourse, intentions and social status render them visible, audible and credible in a country plagued by structural hierarchies and pervasive prejudices. Under neoliberalism, critical thinking has been marginalised and public discussion displaced onto cultural industries and the mass media. Emmelhainz (2016, pp. 47, 54) describes how these changes have produced a select number of approved cultural commentators whose role is to reiterate neoliberal sensibilities and elite interests, exercise self-censorship or promote right-wing conservatism. In this context, the proliferation of critique by the “good public” generates an excess of information and opinion that renders disagreement banal. Whilst the “good public” is a welcome symptom of a healthy democracy, the “bad public” provides a necessary counterpart to demarcate the criteria for speaking and the limits of

¹⁶⁴ *Necesitamos el apoyo de todos los estudiantes a nivel internacional. Si este régimen gana nuevamente las elecciones, nuestra derrota será la represión. En menos de un mes elegiremos a nuestro presidente, ayúdanos a vigilar nuestro proceso electoral. Con los ojos del mundo puestos en México, difícilmente falsarán la voz del pueblo. No permitamos que México sea víctima nuevamente del fraude electoral, hay una embajada de México en tu país, hazte presente, manifiesta tu apoyo lo necesitamos. Es momento de hacer de democracia, un fenómeno mundial y verdadero.*

critique. Whether for poor, working class and indigenous subjects silenced and vilified in the media, or investigative journalists whose facts threaten to expose the full extent of corruption and impunity, freedom of speech is a limited good in Mexico. Avoiding repression, then, is not merely a matter of media-friendly spectacles and democratic moralism, but of moderate language and even self-censorship.

The pervasiveness of media vilification of popular protest as self-interested or somehow manipulated by third parties distorts the very function of protest as disruption, misrepresenting legitimate protests as public nuisances. Although expressing opposition to these forms of psychological and cultural domination by the mass media, for the most part #YoSoy132 remains within the confines of media-friendly behaviour to avoid vilification and to gain public sympathy. Albeit unwittingly, an emphasis on individual freedom of expression and moral indignation associated with this new style and the origins of #YoSoy132 replicates the distinction between good and bad publics. On occasion, participants actively insisted on avoiding giving the slightest offence, in the form of graffiti and even, initially, the very act of blocking the streets in protest, as was the case at the Estela de Luz protest. Guadalupe (ITAM) describes how in the first march by the private universities “we wanted to march on the sidewalk, but because we genuinely did not want to bother third parties, and we didn’t understand”.¹⁶⁵ Intentional efforts to dissociate the movement from the image of protest and the more aggressive forms of street politics need also to be read, then, in terms of the pervasive stigmatisation of the “bad public” through excessive repetition of the selfish motivations of marginalised and oppressed groups whose public demonstrations are continuously portrayed as affecting the rights of others to free passage. Through these portrayals the media implicitly criminalises dissent, setting the stage for repression (Emmelhainz, 2016, p. 37).

Broader socio-political factors shape the kinds of acceptable participation in Mexico’s conservative public sphere dominated by neoliberal rationalities. Acceptability is understood here as media-conferred legitimacy in processes that actively circumscribe more radical action by isolating and marginalising collective struggles of the “bad public” (Emmelhainz, 2016). However, without confrontational

¹⁶⁵ *Queríamos marchar por la banqueta, pero porque nosotros genuinamente era, no hay que molestar a terceros y no entendíamos.*

tactics, many collective social actors would lack sufficient resources to effectively pressure the State to respond to their demands. It is precisely the ability to block a street, occupy a space or otherwise organise stoppages and strikes that gives the working classes their political clout. This ‘muscle on the street’, as it is sometimes described, is what is under attack by moralising separations of acceptable and unacceptable protest forms. While ‘going viral’ can generate debate, discussion, scandal and can help to mobilise people, social media does not physically disrupt the flow of capital—in fact it contributes to it—and on the contrary can result in continuous reactions that do not necessarily bring about resolutions or consolidate alternative political projects. Hence, although some actors might feel empowered and understood by the ideology of indignation and the self-representative forms of identification put forth by the new style, not everyone would feel that their interests and concerns are properly represented by such innovations.

The pervasive invasion of neoliberal putative common sense in public and private spheres alike obliges us to consider the consequences of a politics of communication aimed at making injustices visible through cultural media. Such appeals are not new but are reinforced by the hyper-connectivity of the times. Along these lines, Sierra Caballero (2015, pp. 35, 38, 40, 40–41) observes 10 problematic aspects underlying emerging forms of citizenship in video-activism: narcissism and individualism versus socialisation; collective action versus media impact; articulation versus autonomy; alternative versus independent; and cooperative production versus social division of creative work. Whilst superficially similar, the critical potential of these stylistic innovations relates to questions of content and organisation. A closer analysis reveals a number of tensions arising from the ambiguous convergence of neoliberal and emancipatory frameworks in the domains of art and activism and some of the criteria for challenging the status quo.

Video activism as a political tool, like the new political style I have been describing, needs to be critically analysed to avoid conflating critical and emancipatory intentions with the reproduction of dominant values. Sierra Caballero (2015, p. 38) singles out #YoSoy132 and its Spanish counterpart, 15M, as ambiguous examples, juxtaposing social mobilisation, politicisation and critical consciousness with the integrated spectacle of postmodernism in the cultural production and consumption of techno-aesthetics. Rather than take for granted the movements’ prefigurative,

emancipatory or democratic qualities, Sierra Caballero (2015, pp. 38–39) emphasises the breach between the spectacle of information and political pedagogy to insist on their opposing outcomes. While the immediate effects of spectacular protest and pedagogical activism are not always clear-cut, I think that awareness and intention matter. The point is that style, image or form do not, in themselves, bear any necessary or straightforward relationship to critical outcomes. “Artivism” can explicitly involve collaborative processes in opposition to hegemonic thinking and be aimed at the creation of new critical political subjectivities (Córdova Rojas, 2016). However, when it comes to critically analysing a complex, contradictory and contested movement like #YoSoy132, it cannot be assumed that all aesthetic interventions are inherently democratising or emancipatory.

It is the process and not the product that is politically transformative. Such a distinction includes differentiating between political art—or propaganda—and making art politically, in critical, collective processes that challenge dominant social relations rooted in competitive entrepreneurialism (Emmelhainz, 2016, p. 145). The Second Manifesto exemplifies a product and not a process. Indeed, *2do Manifiesto #YoSoy132* (mxahoraonunca, 2012), directed by Grupo Argos and produced by leftist public intellectual, Epigmenio Ibarra, provoked the formation of the FAA (Autonomous Audiovisual Front) (Rivera Hernández, 2016, p. 180). Francisco, a member of the FAA, described how the first video had a massive media effect for a few individuals from the initial, self-denominated University Coordinator, a working group without representation in the movement. In contrast, he described the creation of the FAA:

Since we defined ourselves politically as distant from corporations and political parties and in the construction of our own autonomy, we decide not to participate in that and what we signified was a second audiovisual moment. ... that [first video] even generated the first frictions, because it was understood that there was a group that was supporting a student movement with resources, with forums, with cameras, and in good part it was coopting the movement, because it was understood that that was going to benefit a certain political sector of the Mexican Left which was, concretely, López Obrador, and we

distanced ourselves a lot from that, we were not going to benefit any political candidate.¹⁶⁶

This distinction illuminates the complex terrain of the mediatisation of politics and protest. It is not form itself—whether film, the internet or horizontal networks—that is democratising, despite its potentially politicising communicative effects. Rather, integrity and critical reflection turn production processes into transformative practices.

I have argued that the ambiguity of the new political style prevents us from claiming any necessary and straightforward relationship with democracy on its behalf. Although suggesting ways to reconceptualise ‘the people’, protest and solidarity beyond ideological and class constraints, these innovative forms are not necessarily easily distinguished from the celebration of pluralised forms of individual creativity that are the hallmarks of the convergence of postmodernism and neoliberalism. It seems that in order to ensure that this new style does not reproduce the same neoliberal rationalities and postmodern cultural sensitivities that undercut the public and political character of democracy, some basic distinctions must be made. In an era of information saturation, corporate media platforms, a cultural logic infused with neoliberal sensibilities and a pervasive structural logic of discrimination and exclusion, the creation of a new political style that places the individual at the centre and displaces direct discursive critique, collective identity formation and programmatic action onto affective means of identifying and relating and personalisable expressions of discontent, can disguise how neoliberal social formations infiltrate protest. Indeed, assumptions of equal voice based on individual self-identification and horizontal action can obscure questions of access and cultural competency that undermine the efficacy of these ideals in practice and risk playing into the hands of a neoliberalised vision of democracy.

¹⁶⁶ *Nosotros como nos definimos políticamente pues con distancia de empresarios, con distancia de partidos políticos y en la construcción de nuestra autonomía, decidimos no participar en eso, y lo que nosotros significamos es un segundo...eso sí genero incluso las primeras fricciones, pues por que se entendía que había un grupo que está apoyando con recursos, con foros, con cámaras a un movimiento estudiantil, que en buena medida estaba cooptando al mismo movimiento, porque entendían que eso iba a beneficiar a cierto sector político de la izquierda mexicana que en concreto era López Obrador, y nosotros nos distanciamos mucho de eso, nosotros no vamos hacer nada para beneficiar a ningún candidato político.*

Mediating factors

Maybe we didn't make an effort to bring more people on board ... because maybe not everyone has the personality to approach ... or maybe they do not have the friendships, yes, the personality, maybe they are not extroverted, they don't know how to get involved, but, what do you do to involve those people, and to involve new sectors? So in that sense yes, well maybe we were not that inclusive.¹⁶⁷

— Gabriela (ITAM)

We live in a hierarchical and vertical society everywhere in the world ... and these kinds of things like the ego, such as "I want to stand out and all the light on me" don't permit us to live in a, let's say, authentic horizontality, to put it that way.¹⁶⁸

— Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana)

I have argued that the new political style arose from the felt need to overcome class divisions, fragmentation and historically problematic political organisational forms in order to generate enthusiasm for change. We have also seen how a new political style created space for the subjective expressions of 'the outraged' that resonated with a new generation of youth keen to participate politically in non-formal settings. The promise of inclusive, affective and flexible modes of belonging was befitting of the times. So too was the tendency towards reproducing a "politics of sensitivity" (Emmelhainz, 2016) that places responsibility for structural injustices at the feet of individuals, even whilst inviting collective forms of struggle. In this individualised realm, what factors endowed certain participants with agency in influencing public discussions and collective sentiments? This section briefly explores some of the informal and objective barriers to full and equal participation, such as time, skills, know-how and contacts that constrain equalising aspirations rooted in networked politics and horizontality. Such questions bring into view the tensions between structure and agency that are obfuscated by personalised participation and networked terminology. The intersections of material and

¹⁶⁷ *Nosotros igual y no nos esforzamos por jalar a más gente...porque no todo mundo igual y tiene la personalidad para acercarse...o igual no tiene las amistades, o ajá, la personalidad, igual no es extrovertido, no sabe cómo empezar a involucrarse, pero ¿cómo le hace para jalar también a esa gente, y para jalar a nuevos sectores? Entonces en ese sentido sí, pues igual y no fuimos tan incluyentes.*

¹⁶⁸ *Vivimos en una sociedad jerárquica y vertical en todo el mundo...y este tipo de cosas como el ego tal cual el "yo quiero sobresalir y la luz para mí" no permiten que podamos vivir en una horizontalidad digamos auténtica, por así decirlo.*

cultural factors are viewed as under-acknowledged problems in this new aesthetic terrain.

In Mexico, as elsewhere, the digital divide bears witness to broader social inequalities that reinforce a range of socio-cultural exclusions. According to Gómez García and Treré (2014, p. 499), only a minority of Mexicans are actively connected and influential in the digital world, such that “we have to think of Mexico in terms of two overlapping public spheres that interact in complex ways and reflect the inequalities evident in the country”. Material circumstances thus constitute the first and most significant barrier to equal access and participation. Access to digital communication technology in Mexico is mediated by age, socio-economic status and geography. Overall, middle class youth in urban centres dominate the connectivity spectrum in which a little less than a third (29%) of Mexican homes have computers, of which 70% are connected to the internet (Portillo, 2014, p. 177). A digital divide is also reflected in Mexico’s “two youths”; for instance, 77% of middle and upper middle class youth owned computers in 2007, compared to 0.5% of lower class youth (Reguillo-Cruz, 2007, p. 229). Similarly, only 20.2% of youth had private access to the internet, compared to 5.7% amongst lower class youth and 0.4% amongst youth in the lowest socio-economic strata (Reguillo-Cruz, 2007, p. 229). In this way, unequal access and deep inequalities shape the very categorisation and experience of belonging in Generation # (Portillo et al., 2012, pp. 168–169).

Portillo (2014, p. 188) emphasises the use of Twitter and social networks in combating the monopolisation of information, organising and sharing information, and generally being heard. Yet despite the great enthusiasm for the democratisation of communication technology, corporations along with certain prestigious figures continue to dominate communication (Carillo Garnica, 2016, p. 126). Torres Nabel’s (2015) network analysis of #YoSoy132 uncovered 17 central structuring actors that influenced #YoSoy132 of whom 4 key individuals with over 100,000 followers enjoyed disproportionate influence. Torres Nabel (2015, pp. 7–8) maintains that this dynamic means that 90% of information shared on Twitter, for instance, is produced by 10% of actors, while the vast majority are spectators and consumers. As such he challenges the predominant conception that social networks create plastic, horizontal relations, contributing to a growing number of studies that expose much more rigid and

hierarchical structures in which key influential actors program and reprogram the bursts of collective action in ‘events’ like #YoSoy132.

Lack of material access to these technologies creates important barriers to belonging in a globalised, digitally connected movement. Moreover, material and cultural factors do not exist in isolation from one another but are interpenetrating (Fraser, 1996, p. 39). For those with unimpeded access to the physical devices and with the technological know-how, communicative capacity and potential influence is enhanced. Voice and visibility are closely bound up with the task of communicating which is in turn linked to resources, skills and technical know-how. In this case Mexico’s “digital natives”—young middle and upper middle class private education students (Portillo, 2014, p. 178, citing Ortega y Ricaurte, 2011, p. 44)—are naturally positioned to take advantage of such dynamics. Likewise, the everyday use of such devices creates a culture in the image of its users. For instance, Julia, one of the original Ibero protesters involved in the creation of the video response, plainly stated “we are kids of the internet. So when we needed a right to reply, I did not think of a letter or anything, I thought of something visual. The visual works and nothing else”.¹⁶⁹

If access creates the first level of exclusion, then a second, related dimension of power and agency is communicative capacity. Gerbaudo’s (2012) study of the movements of the squares found that in the absence of formal leaders, informal, soft or “liquid leaders” with privileged access to certain media exercised invisible and unaccountable power by heavily influencing the self-representation of movements. Liquid leadership expresses how communicators become unofficial organisers and leaders outside of solid organisational forms. Gerbaudo (2012) identified many of the leaders who played a crucial role in the mass mobilisations—young, middle class and educated individuals such as Facebook administrator, Wael Gohnim, in Egypt and Fabio Gandara and Pablo Gallego in Spain and Twitter activists, like Mahmoud Salem in Egypt, followed by thousands. Contrary to the stated horizontality of recent global movements, Gerbaudo (2012, p. 135) argues that the power-law probability distribution favours a handful of communicators, giving rise to de facto leadership by those able to channel and trigger emotion. Despite horizontal aspirations, like its contemporaries,

¹⁶⁹ *Somos niños del internet. Entonces cuando necesitábamos un derecho a réplica, no se me ocurrió una carta ni nada, pensé en algo visual. Lo visual sirve, y nada más.*

#YoSoy132 could not finally inhibit the possibility of the rise of an unelected leadership with unequal influence on the movement's self-understanding.

In many ways the digital realm reproduces the hierarchies and exclusions of the physical public sphere. In her critique of Habermas's account of the bourgeois public sphere, Fraser (1990, p. 64) argues that cultural styles constitute "powerful informal pressures that marginalize the contributions of members of subordinated groups both in everyday life contexts and in official public spheres". If the formal bracketing of inequalities in public sphere deliberations assume that social justice is not a requirement of participatory parity (Fraser, 1990), it appears as though similar assumptions are uncritically echoed in the affirmation that anyone can be #132, suggesting an abstracted individual equality decoupled from explicit aspirations to socio-economic justice for an authentic democracy. Contrary to egalitarianism associated with online environments, Flesher Fominaya and Gillan (2017) demonstrates how traditional power imbalances, such as gender, are translated into the virtual realm, leading to complex forms of digitally mediated exclusion. Flesher Fominaya and Gillan (2017, p. 397) urges reflexivity about power in the digital realm and attention to activist attempts to overcome such divides as necessary corrections to the distorting effects of narratives that flatten or neutralise online power differentials.

Finally, although in principle networks are always open, in reality they are based on human connections, the most substantial of which are made through face-to-face organising in the form of assemblies or in projects. Such encounters can reinforce existing barriers based on socio-economic status, ideological affinities and specific interests. Excepting *voceros*,¹⁷⁰ who were positioned to communicate with a range of diverse others, it seems that the transversal aspirations of the movement were in fact more akin to a process of re-grouping that undermined the very ideal of transversal solidarity, and fragmentation that threatened the call for unity. Rosa (UNAM) recalled "we would get together in groups and the privates as well...personally I had no contact with [the private university students]".¹⁷¹ On the public-private divide María (UNAM)

¹⁷⁰ Spokespeople for the movement, elected in the assemblies.

¹⁷¹ *...nos juntábamos en grupos y los de las privadas también...en lo personal no tuve contacto [con ellos].*

too remarked: “I think that the limits of the circles stayed intact”,¹⁷² except for certain activities around specific issues. Pilar (FAA) doubted whether the movement transcended the initial experience of unity that the students felt when they came together on the streets, assuring me that “groups existed, but of each to their own, the private universities and the publics”.¹⁷³ If, as Jorge (ITESM) put it, mutual recognition and unity only existed within each nucleus, an obligatory question becomes: how did this new style construct something common out of plurality without reproducing fragmentation and hard nucleuses?

Concluding remarks

132 ... was an enormously mediatised phenomenon ... the biggest contribution of 132 was to bring to light the grave problems of a country that imagined itself to be democratic, despite the existing level of impunity ... and to generate a deeply critical debate about democracy, the mass media and the institutions, in the framework of the electoral campaign that presented as monotonous and predictable.¹⁷⁴

— Guiomar Rovira Sancho (2014, p. 63)

Less Tweets and more analysis, less Face[book] and more face to face relations with the student community as a whole; less viral action and more strategy; less likes and more organisation; less activism and more horizon; less Madero and more Flores Magón.¹⁷⁵

— Enrique Pineda (2012, p. 18)

On 2 October 2012, Enrique Pineda reflected on the state of the movement, its achievements and possibilities. Amongst his many nuanced, sympathetic and critical reflections, he concluded that dissociated from theoretical and practical understandings,

¹⁷² *Yo creo que se mantuvieron los límites de los círculos.*

¹⁷³ *...lo que sí podría casi asegurar es que grupos de trabajo como esta universidad no existieron o sea existieron grupos pero cada quien, las universidades privadas, las universidades públicas.*

¹⁷⁴ *El 132...fue un fenómeno enormemente mediático...la gran aportación del 132 fue sacar a la luz los graves problemas de un país que se pretendía democrático a pesar del nivel de impunidad existente...y generar un debate profundamente crítico sobre la democracia, los medios de comunicación de masas y las instituciones, en el marco de una campaña electoral que se pretendía monocorde y previsible.*

¹⁷⁵ *Menos twits y más análisis, menos face y más relaciones cara a cara con la comunidad estudiantil en su conjunto; menos acción viral y más estrategia; menos likes y más organización; menos activismo y más horizonte; menos Madero y más Flores Magón.*

autonomy had descended into cacophony and wasted opportunities, warning that “the outraged” needed to engage in political discussion if they were to instigate anything more than an effervescent protest movement. Pineda (2012, p. 15) warns against the decline of autonomy into disorganisation, atomisation or excessive individualism, insisting that autonomy is not antithetical to instances of synthesis that facilitate action and creativity and prevent both eternal debate and abstract nuances. This depoliticised understanding of autonomy is an effect of the stress on individualism in the political style that promises to liberate activism from burdensome collective identities and taxing formalities. At the same time Pineda (2012, p. 15) reflected on the rising tendency to oppose media-based politics to stronger actions such as roadblocks, and stressed the tactical complementarity of the two to both gain public support and legitimacy and to pressure the State and the powers that be. Crucially, he added, these distinct tactics needed to be collectively decided following a strategic, political analysis and not at a whim as had been the tendency of the libertarian logic of the *indignados*.

However this free, individual and autonomous political style is but one component of the movement. One which was particularly visible in its origins and that helps explain why #YoSoy132 has been considered to break with ‘politics as usual’. Yet the explanatory power of rupture is both limited and limiting. To understand #YoSoy132 as an unstable, contested and contradictory phenomenon we must deal with its processes of organisation, institutionalisation and collective representations, in this case emanating from the organisation of a student-led social movement. In this respect, I have already argued that the new political style served to temporarily transcend the public–private divide, lowering barriers to collective action and reaching out to new audiences. In the following chapter I describe and analyse the organisational structure and underlying principles that gave form and content to the movement and the contestations, contradictions and emerging possibilities that evolved out of them. Drawing on a history of grassroots, left-leaning, student organisation, this nascent identity with its corresponding collective organisational forms and strongly social agenda presented a direct challenge to the new political style that explicitly avoided ideological argumentation and overtly exclusionary criteria for participation.

Chapter 5: Bifurcation

It is important to signal that in its trajectory, the configuration of the movement became more complex, given the institutional diversity, of public and private, of class, of social sector, of organisation and of ideology that revealed important contradictions in the identity [of #YoSoy132].¹⁷⁶

— Guadalupe Olivier Téllez and Sergio Tamayo (2015, p. 143)

The very construction of the collective identity of #YoSoy132 has come about as a consequence of a tension between the enormous traditions of struggle of the Mexican students and the most recent mobilisations at an international level.¹⁷⁷

— Nahúm Monroy (2012, p. 2)

Two moments defined the collective identity of #YoSoy132. The first was the response of the 131 students from Ibero who refused to be stigmatised as political agitators, denouncing the manipulation of their identities and asserting the legitimacy of their protest. The second moment occurred at the first national assembly at Las Islas, UNAM three weeks later in which the nascent movement positioned itself as the next iteration of a long line of social struggles. These events put into play two distinct but not entirely incompatible identities: a pluralising, individualising solidarity in self-inclusion, and a unifying common inheritance as Mexican students. The introduction of assembly democracy brought public university students directly into decision-making processes, en masse, leading to the deepening of critique and the widening of the movement's original agenda from the democratisation of the media to include a critique of neoliberalism. This introduction of student tradition into #YoSoy132 conflicted with the emergent political style that problematised politics as usual and purportedly freed and empowered the individual. The interplay between these two pillars of the movement's

¹⁷⁶ *Es importante señalar que en su trayectoria, la configuración del movimiento se fue haciendo más compleja, dada su diversidad institucional, de carácter público y privado, de clase, de sector social, de organización y de ideología. Se revelaban importantes contradicciones identitarias.*

¹⁷⁷ *La misma construcción de la identidad colectiva de #YoSoy132 se ha dado como consecuencia de una tensión entre las enormes tradiciones de lucha que tienen los estudiantes mexicanos y las más recientes movilizaciones a nivel internacional.*

collective identity opened up the scope for participation, but generated tensions around the meaning of #YoSoy132.

This chapter critically analyses the main features of the student movement that enabled collective organisation and facilitated the forging of political solidarities by opening up questions of ‘who we are and what we want’ and instituting a set of rules and procedures for participation (the “Declaration of Principles”). The violation of these agreed norms could justify public expulsion from the movement. Beyond strictly ethical assumptions, it is possible to view the strategic importance of the principles in encouraging decentralisation and autonomy whilst retaining an apparent core. However, rather than a uniformly understood and practiced code of ethics, the principles were in fact deeply ambiguous. The principles are thus diagnosed as an informal control on the representation and scope of #YoSoy132, which is reinforced by the repetitive discursive coupling of individual autonomy with respect for the principles. The normative core and the practical functions of the assembly model are also analysed. The promise of direct democracy giving individuals equal voice within established limits comes up against the vulnerability of the assembly model to the usual problems associated with the exercise of positive freedoms: opportunism, sectarianism, imposition, hegemonisation and internal conflict. Finally, some of the constituent tensions that arise out of the bifurcation and the paradoxes they produce are explored as means of thinking through the fraught and contested construction of political solidarities.

From I to Us

#YoSoy132, being based on university youth, had directly descended from other university movements.¹⁷⁸

— Javier (UNAM)

[The students] did not content themselves with an open call on social media and a diffuse sense of belonging, instead they initiated an organisational process that began in the schools and was articulated in the assemblies. Between the 23rd and the 30th of May an assembly process was initiated in dozens of schools that finally converged in the first Interuniversity General Assembly (AGI) at Las Islas of University City

¹⁷⁸ #YoSoy132, al estar basado en los jóvenes y en las universidades, tenía ascendencia directa de otros movimientos universitarios.

[UNAM]. In dozens of schools the students organised in assemblies, established agreements and named representatives. All without any previous organisation or a general call out, they simply organised assemblies according to the tradition of the Mexican student movement.¹⁷⁹

— Joel Ortega Erreguerena, 2017, p. 164

The first national assembly introduced familiar representations of Mexican politics into the movement which, until that point, had been characterised by an apparent rupture with politics as usual. On 30 May, just two weeks after the initial protests at Ibero, 6000 people converged on Las Islas, the symbolic heart of student politics at University City, UNAM (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 80). Attendees included 150 delegates from student assemblies to civil society organisations, parents of children assassinated in the war on drugs, academics and autonomous collectives: “it looked like the mirror of all the problems that the movement was taking on”¹⁸⁰ (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 80). Participants on the day voiced a whole new set of concerns, opening up the range of issues under discussion. These were reflected in 15 working groups that were formed on the day for the discussion of collective problems, including the environment, education, health and the political posture of the movement (Aragón & Monterde, 2016, p. 74). Thematically, the first assembly imprinted a social character on the young movement, foreshadowing the proliferation of demands and introducing an explicitly anti-neoliberal agenda that bore no resemblance to the initial demand to democratise the media (Estrello & Modonesi, 2012, p. 224; Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 147). Many of these themes would eventually come to be expressed in the movement’s six-point program, announced a month later, including the transformation of the neoliberal economic model. The preamble to the program would assert: “Neoliberalism impoverishes, excludes, marginalises and violates us, which is why the #YoSoy132

¹⁷⁹ *No se contentaron con una convocatoria abierta a través de las redes sociales y un sentido de pertenencia difuso, sino que iniciaron un proceso organizativo que partía de las escuelas y se articulaba en las asambleas. Entre el 23 y el 30 de mayo se desató en decenas de escuelas un proceso asambleario que finalmente desembocó en la primera Asamblea General Interuniversitaria (AGI) en Las Islas de Ciudad Universitaria. En decenas de escuelas los estudiantes organizaron asambleas, establecieron acuerdos y nombraron representantes. Todo sin que existiera ningún tipo de organización previa o una convocatoria general, simplemente se realizaron asambleas de acuerdo a la tradición del movimiento estudiantil mexicano.*

¹⁸⁰ “...se vio como un espejo de todos los problemas que el movimiento estaba abarcando”, Mariana Favela, postgraduate student, UNAM.

movement pronounces itself in favour of an economy that is human, just, sovereign, sustainable and peaceful”¹⁸¹ (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 319).

In an interview with collaborators of *Desinformémonos* (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 156), Max Alcántara, a science student at UNAM, differentiates the periods from the response of the students from Ibero to the encounter at Las Islas. Max explains that during the first stage the main slogan became the democratisation of the media and the second, beginning with the first mass assembly, marked the initiation of the “politicisation”¹⁸² of the movement, understood in terms of the antagonistic opposition to Peña Nieto and his impending neoliberal reforms. This oppositional identity affirmed the widespread fear and repudiation of the PRI that was expressed in an anti-Peña Nieto sentiment. In effect, the assembly at Las Islas initiated the beginning of a discreet second stage in the development of the movement (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2016, p. 146). In contradistinction to the movement’s individualistic, media-centred, civic imaginary (Montaño Navarro, 2016), the articulation of a clear social critique—denouncing neoliberalism for its corrosive effects on social life, the concentration of wealth, deepening precariousness and proliferating violence—reaffirmed a latent class consciousness underpinning notions of popular and national sovereignty. This substantive vision of democracy extends beyond freedom of expression to include notions of equal access to goods and services and equal opportunity in the construction of political life. An explicitly anti-neoliberal stance reaffirmed the centrality of public ownership of key industries for the protection and promotion of collective rights and universal social services.

The adhesion of the public university students spelled the massification of the movement (Pérez Monroy, 2015, p. 144) and promised the revitalisation of the student politics for justice. Emblematic of this turn was the speech composed by the Working Group for Memory and Collective Consciousness,¹⁸³ captured on video and uploaded to YouTube (Imágenes en Rebeldía, 2012). The video testifies to the students’ claiming of their place in history. A young man whose back is turned to the camera and who faces

¹⁸¹ *El neoliberalismo nos empobrece, excluye, margina y violenta, es por eso que el movimiento #YoSoy132 se pronuncia a favour de una economía humana, justa, soberna, sustentable y de paz.*

¹⁸² *Politización.*

¹⁸³ *Mesa de Memoria y Conciencia Colectiva.*

towards a crowd of emotion-filled faces stands with a single piece of paper in hand. He begins:

The State has already told its story; silence wants us to disappear into obscurity. Today we break that silence to recover history, our history. We don't forget the efforts and the struggles of the worker and peasant movements. Of Magonism, Villism, Zapatism, the railway movement or the medical movement. We don't forget the important movements of our history. The expropriation of the petrol, Vasconcelism, the struggle for university autonomy, the armed social insurrections of the 70s. We don't forget the student processes. The defense of the National Polytechnic Institute accommodation in '58.¹⁸⁴

Sporadic cheers act like a thermometer, measuring the intensity of the collective sentiment. The first massive cheer erupts from the crowd in the next line, "[in memory of] the student movements of '68 and the Corpus Christi massacre of students in '71",¹⁸⁵ testifying to the ongoing resonance of 1968 as a student resistance to authoritarianism and for democracy. The orator advances chronologically from working class struggles to recent injustices, a species of collective catharsis erupts from the crowd (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 74) in response to the declaration that:

We are the inheritors of the armed Zapatista movement, of the massacre at Acteal, of the unpunished femicides of Juárez City, Chihuahua and principally of the State of Mexico. We have to raise our voice at this point and say: Yes, we are the inheritors of the repressions of Atenco and Oaxaca in 2006! Yes comrades. The #YoSoy132 movement is us.¹⁸⁶

The resistances of the indigenous peoples of Wirikuta and Cherán receive loud applause. Perhaps this is because they are more recent or perhaps because they are

¹⁸⁴ *El estado ha contado ya su historia, el silencio nos quiere dotar de olvido. Ese silencio hoy lo rompemos para recuperar la historia, nuestra historia. No olvidamos los esfuerzos y las luchas de movimientos obreros y campesinos. Del Magonismo, el villismo, el zapatismo, el movimiento ferrocarrilero y el movimiento médico. No olvidamos los movimientos trascendentes de nuestra historia. La expropiación petrolera, el vasconcelismo, la lucha por la autonomía universitaria, la insurrección social armada en los años setentas. No olvidamos los procesos estudiantiles. La defensa de los albergues del Instituto Politécnico Nacional en el '58.*

¹⁸⁵ *Los movimientos estudiantiles en el '68 y el jueves de corpus en el '71.*

¹⁸⁶ *Somos herederos del movimiento armado del zapatismo, de la matanza de Acteal, de los impunes feminicidios en Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua y principalmente del Estado de México. Hemos de alzar nuestra voz en este momento y decir ¡Si, somos herederos de las represiones en Atenco y en Oaxaca en el 2006! Si compañeros. El movimiento #YoSoy132 somos nosotros.*

emblematic of the rising trend in autonomous self-defence in the face of a repressive State, touching on Mexico's open wounds in ways more distant memories do not. These resistances resonate as the living representation of Mexico's most oppressed and, at the same time, most combative peoples. However, it is the declaration that "We are the demonstration of the indignation before the war on drugs and its more than 60 thousand dead"¹⁸⁷ that provokes the greatest outburst, followed by the affirmation that "All of this history is us. Justice is what we ask for because this is our movement",¹⁸⁸ provoking the crowd to spontaneously and unanimously chant "Justice! Justice! Justice!"

The speech not only inserted a dimension of popular struggle and historical consciousness into the nascent movement, it also evoked a strong generational impulse, which, aside from an identification with the global wave of protests, was eminently nationalist and distinctively Mexican. The declaration of historic memory and collective consciousness framed the students as the next generation of youth, as the "children of Mexico"—both victims and agents—claiming their place in history. Moreover, it served as an acknowledgment of the ongoing effects of Mexico's traumatic history and as a declaration of solidarity with their causes. Recalling the event, David (UNAM) expressed the sentiment as: "one of those moments that reflects the soul of the movement",¹⁸⁹ asserting that the history of social struggles "is a suppressed memory that they try to erase on a daily basis; it is a memory that is alive because it is in resistance".¹⁹⁰ For Juana (UNAM), it was this historic memory that gave the movement its identity:

It was just that which gave us an identity; and you went to the marches and all of the posters said the same thing, without agreeing in the philosophy, you saw placards about the repression, the massacre of '68...#YoSoy132 was to begin with a collectivity, it was to say "we are not alone, we are more, but above all we have this history behind us and today it is our turn".¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ *Somos la indignación ante la guerra contra el narcotráfico y sus más de 60 mil muertos.*

¹⁸⁸ *Toda esta historia somos nosotros. Justicia es lo que pedimos porque este es nuestro movimiento.*

¹⁸⁹ *...es uno de esos momentos que llega a reflejar el alma del movimiento.*

¹⁹⁰ *Es que es una memoria aplastada y que a diario se trata de borrar, es una memoria que está viva porque está en resistencia.*

¹⁹¹ *...era justo lo que nos daba identidad; y tú ibas a las marchas y todo los carteles decían lo mismo ¿no?, sin ponernos de acuerdo en esta filosofía, tú veías carteles de la represión, de la masacre, del*

The speech laid a foundation stone in the construction of a student movement that, despite being characterised by multiplicity, expressed a clear historical purpose in continuing the struggle for democratic freedoms and equal rights. Salazar Villava and Cabrera Amador (2013, p. 37) assert that while being composed of different cultural and political traditions and a diversity of classes, “[#YoSoy132] reclaims a shared historical inscription that recognises the tradition of struggle and social revolt...as a frame of political confrontation”.¹⁹² The speech clearly signifies the performative articulation of a collective will that attempts to transcend the particularities of individual expressions of indignation and to channel them into a collective antagonism to confront the political project of the neoliberal elites.

Part of the process of forming a unified student movement therefore involved the recuperation of a collective historic memory. Javier (UNAM) recalled that “we tried very seriously to rescue those struggles that we felt society would identify with and that we ourselves identified with”.¹⁹³ These identifications rescue the class character of traditions of popular struggle through mass mobilisations, contentious action and demands for collective rights and popular sovereignty. The absence of certain references in the speech is as telling as the presence of others. The speech remembered the grassroots rebellions of Villa, Zapata and the Flores Magón brothers, but not former presidents Benito Juárez or Francisco Madero. Nor did recent civic movements or civil organisations like *Alianza Cívica* merit a mention. The emphasis on revolutionary, working class, student and indigenous resistances thus directly aligned #YoSoy132 with a popular identity steeped in victimhood and valour. This identity was also tied to a generational inheritance of historical impositions by a self-interested political elite in the electoral frauds of 1988 and 2006, and to the burden of successive economic crises beared by the middle classes and popular sectors. The organisation of student unity was represented by the adoption of the assembly model (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 105).

¹⁶⁸...#YoSoy132 fue para empezar una colectividad ¿no?, fue el decir “no estamos solos, somos más, pero sobretodo tenemos una historia detrás y hoy nos toca a nosotros”.

¹⁹² El #YoSoy132 se enraíza en diversas tradiciones culturales y políticas y tiende a expresar también una diversidad de clase. A pesar de ello reclama una inscripción histórica compartida que reconoce tradiciones de lucha y revuelta social...como marco de confrontación política (Salazar Villava & Cabrera Amador, 2013, p. 37).

¹⁹³ ...tratábamos de manera muy seria de rescatar aquellas luchas con las que sentíamos que la sociedad podía ser identificada y que nosotros mismos nos sentíamos identificados.

The first national assembly capitalised on an upsurge in the expression of popular discontent, creating mechanisms for mass participation in the movement's decision-making structures. The assembly at Las Islas marked the beginning of a gradual and ongoing expansion in the decision-making processes of #YoSoy132, opening up the movement to the participation of hitherto sidelined public students who could now collectively represent their particular faculty, campus or institution. Norma, a biologist from UNAM for instance, felt motivated to participate once the movement expanded:

Well at the first assembly here at CU, at Las Islas, here outside, that's when I began to get involved...then it wasn't just private universities, but it was a more ample mobilisation of "let's do something", and it was like "Wow, how cool, let's do it".¹⁹⁴

Likewise, Rosa, from the FCPyS at UNAM, was impressed by the video of the Ibero students but did not participate until the assembly at Las Islas. The institutionalisation of an assembly model allowed for grassroots student participation to articulate the concerns and interests of the various actors.

The insertion of an antagonistic element into the movement's collective identity also reveals the symbolic and real weight of UNAM in student politics. Militants like César from the FCPyS at UNAM clearly intended to turn the movement into a vehicle for opposition to the neoliberal agenda of Peña Nieto, even if these aspirations could not be openly declared. By expanding the scope of the original demands, #YoSoy132 "effectively acquired a dynamic that was more like the struggle on the streets",¹⁹⁵ recalled César (UNAM). The result evidenced a disjunction between those who began the movement and how it developed,¹⁹⁶ added César: "it was being nourished by everything, and it is inevitable, it is like a wave".¹⁹⁷ A result of this expansion, the leadership of the private university students diminished (Estrello & Modonesi, 2012,

¹⁹⁴ *Pues cuando fue la asamblea aquí en CU, en Las Islas, aquí afuerita, ahí fue cuando empecé a involucrarme... ya no nada más eran escuelas privadas ¿no?, sino fue el llamado amplio a "vamos a hacer algo" ¿no?, y fue "órale, que padre, pues vamos a hacerlo".*

¹⁹⁵ *...efectivamente adquirió una dinámica más de lucha en las calles.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ese es un punto de quiebre, que incluso si te interesa puedes analizarlo. Hay un punto de quiebre entre quiénes inician el Movimiento y luego hacia donde se expande el Movimiento.*

¹⁹⁷ *...era nutrirse de todo, y es inevitable, es como una ola, César.*

p. 226). While #YoSoy132 retained its allusion to the events at Ibero and the role of social media in the origins of the mobilisations, these references became secondary within the organic organisation of the student movement, a process that not only revealed the agency of politicised students but the real heterogeneity of youth experiences, political ideals and aspirations (Guillén, 2016, p. 149).

The assertion of a popular history was at odds with the inclusive language of self-identification and networks. The promise of inclusivity and a fresh style initially energised the movement. However, this new zeal could not contain the aspirations of the student body at large; nor could it preclude the resurgence of social critique in a high-stakes electoral context. In contrast to the emphasis on individual indignation and informed citizenship, the first national assembly reconceptualised indignation in collective terms, expressing deep concern for the precariousness of social life, the concentration of wealth and power and the forceful imposition of neoliberal reforms. The introduction of a social critique reaffirmed the social and political significance of student movements in Mexican history and opened up the possibility for alliances with popular movements that would have been unthinkable in the movement's initial stage.

The political and organisational implications of this discourse would also further differentiate the movement in this second stage from the original emphasis on the mass media and a conscious vote by pushing for an expanded agenda based on structural change. Social critique afforded a political language and an identity that attempted to explain the problems at hand and to offer alternatives to them. It thus marked a sharp contrast to the list of liberal demands made at the Estela de Luz protest, which were prefaced by the demand for the resolution of “the current situation of misery, inequality, poverty and violence”, but omitted to explain the structural roots of such conditions and to recognise their longstanding nature. Instead, the speech emphasised the democratisation of the media to ensure informed citizens capable of “making better political, economic and social decisions”¹⁹⁸ (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, pp. 313–314). This early vision thereby tied existing problems to mass media generated ignorance and obscured the long history of electoral fraud, ideological imposition and violence that have blocked democracy in Mexico. Without supplanting the original ideals, the

¹⁹⁸ *Queremos que la situación actual de miseria, desigualdad, pobreza y violencia sea resuelta...tomar mejores decisiones políticas, económicas y sociales.*

massification of the movement brought a new socio-political agenda and lived experience, provoking a bifurcation in its nascent identity.

The assemblies were a reminder of the living memory and identity of the ideals that inspired the Mexican Revolution and the continued struggle to defend them in an era in which ‘the people’ and revolutionary change have lost their widespread appeal, if they have not been outright rejected and stigmatised. The collective ‘us’ with its sovereign aspirations favours the majority over the individual. These developments disconcerted those who saw in #YoSoy132 an opportunity to break with tradition and forge a new path free of unified collective identities, overarching truths, teleological assumptions and hegemonic politics. Moreover, the construction of a unified identity reflected an underlying class consciousness and a residual leftism that contradicted the open and inclusive individualised identity associated with the movement’s origins. By redirecting indignation towards an antagonistic politics, the revival of an older political style stood in opposition to the friendly and irreverent style that gave the movement its claims to authenticity. Yet the adaptation of existing identities and traditional organisational forms was not solely the outcome of militant agency, but reaffirmed a deeply rooted culture of grassroots struggle that extended the meaning of democracy to include notions of social justice, self-organisation and mass participation in exercising popular sovereignty. Between the freshness of its origins and the re-emergence of a sense of historical rootedness lay unforeseen possibility as well as blatant contradiction. These distinct and in some ways opposing elements produced a rich dynamic of contestation that becomes visible once we look beyond surface appearances.

Principles

We declare that we are a: non-partisan...; peaceful...; student-based...; lay...; plural...; social...; political...; humanist...; autonomous...; committed and responsible...; democratic movement.¹⁹⁹

#YoSoy132 (“Declaration of Principles”)

Before the assembly at Las Islas, UNAM, #YoSoy132 had been organised by the Interuniversity Coordinator²⁰⁰ (CI), a small group of representatives from private universities and public university students acting in self-representation. This organising committee was highly controversial. Participants from inside and outside the CI described the suspicion and distrust that surrounded the group for acting without the approval of the assemblies. The ensuing criticism from the anti-systemic Left within the movement highlighted a clear disjuncture in the conceptualisation of the problem and solution. It also illuminated the intimate links of this fraught conceptualisation to the question of democracy at stake: “For the UNAM students, it was not appropriate to emit a manifesto before the constitutive assembly”²⁰¹ (González Villarreal, 2013, p. 232).

The disbanding of the CI following the assembly at Las Islas opened up decision-making processes from small, closed circles to a mass student movement. The collective dispersed, but not without leaving its indelible mark on the movement. Although the CI’s influence was attenuated through the development of assembly-based decision-making, some individuals retained an unequal influence (Pineda, 2012, p. 3). During its brief existence, the CI deeply influenced the external image of the movement through the promotion of an informed and reasoned vote, excluding the possibility of abstention and therefore pre-emptively establishing a limitation from the perspective of a more radical politics. Instead #YoSoy132 would be publicly perceived as an electoral movement that expressed faith in the institutions and adherence to the rule of law.

¹⁹⁹ *Declaramos ser un movimiento apartidista...; pacífico...; de base estudiantil...; laico...; plural...; de carácter social...; de carácter político...; de carácter humanista...; autónomo...; comprometido y responsable...; democrático.*

²⁰⁰ *Coordinadora Interuniversitaria.*

²⁰¹ *Para los estándares unamitas, no era adecuado que se emitiera un manifiesto antes de la asamblea constitutiva.*

The CI was also influential in lobbying for the founding principles. Despite ultimately being decided collectively and appropriated individually, the principles were the result of processes involving conflict, negotiation and power relations within the movement (Palacios Canudas, 2013, pp. 144–146). The formal adoption of the principles was decided at the second General Interuniversity Assembly (AGI) at Ibero on 11 June 2012 with 70 votes in favour, 2 against and 38 abstentions (González Villarreal, 2013, p. 276). The principles built upon the image of non-partisanship and non-violence announced at the protest at Estela de Luz (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 314). However, the leadership role of the CI in shaping these principles contradicts the principle of horizontality and reflects its members' unequal power and influence as initiators of the movement. The implications of the initial CI leadership are substantial, particularly given the centrality of the principles in defining, and in some ways confining, the movement. The agency and impact of particular sectors of the movement is seen to be significant in shaping the overall public character and internal accords of #YoSoy132. For all their good intentions, the CI clearly exemplified the persistence of power relations in horizontal groups.

The Declaration of Principles proclaimed #YoSoy132 to be: non-partisan, student-based, lay, plural (including all individuals that assumed the movement's principles), social, political, humanist, autonomous, committed, responsible, democratic (conceived of as dialogue with equity in access to information and participatory) and permanent (González Villarreal, 2013, pp. 276–281). Agreement on a minimal set of principles apparently offered a formal, abstracted coherence that could transcend disagreements and provide common ground amongst heterogeneous participants. However, as we shall see, disagreements over the meaning of key principles such as non-violence also revealed how the principles could be discursively invoked to block debate and prevent possible conflict resolution. Key to this understanding is that the formal adoption of the principles imbued them with an appearance of representativeness, whilst reinforcing the sanctioning power of the AGI. The principles underpinned the authority of the collective sovereignty, and their emergence from intense deliberations provided them with a claim to democratic legitimacy. That the minimal requirement for being #YoSoy132 was respect for the movement's principles therefore also affirms the legitimising role of the assemblies and attests to the collective power exercised by the sovereign assemblies.

In reality the principles connoted a social contract between participants by establishing the norms or rules for belonging. The delimitation of boundaries was designed to act as a guarantee against opportunism and impositions by sanctioning and codifying the prior limitation of individual ambitions, protest tactics and political horizons. Organisationally, the principles delimited the acceptable kinds of politics, as explained by César (UNAM):

The movement had local assemblies, each local assembly decided, it had autonomy, in the framework of the principles of the movement; meaning, you can be part of the movement as long as you take the...anti-neoliberalism, the struggle against the imposition of the PRI and non-violence, anything that you do within those principles you can adopt the flag of the movement, when you start a violent movement, for example, you are out of the movement.²⁰²

To “be” #132, one had to respect the movement’s principles, even if one did not agree with them. As Gabriela (ITAM) recalled:

If anything was clear it was the principles that governed us...I believe in unity, but I have limits, I am tolerant until a certain point, I mean, I do not tolerate violence for example...I am not willing to work with people who are in a political party within the movement, because it is exactly what we are struggling against.²⁰³

This rule-binding character of the principles reinvents the liberal strategy of promoting abstracted norms for behaviour and belonging that reinforce the privileged conditions of certain actors, sheltering them against the radicalisation of protest tactics. Operating from atomistic, individualising assumptions about the autonomy of each person vis-à-vis one another, the underside of the principles is that in reality they reflect the life conditions of the privileged few and serve to restrict the limits of the movement. The

²⁰² *El movimiento tenía asambleas locales, cada asamblea local decidía, tenía autonomía, en el marco de los principios del movimiento; es decir, tú puedes ser parte del movimiento siempre y cuando tomes las... el anti-neoliberalismo, la lucha contra la imposición del PRI y ser un movimiento pacífico, cualquier cosa que tú hagas dentro de estos principios puedes adoptar la bandera del movimiento, cuando inicias un movimiento, por ejemplo, violento, estás fuera del movimiento.*

²⁰³ *No pues eso, si algo había claro eran esos principios que nos regían ¿no?, y era el apartidismo por ejemplo, y la no violencia... sí yo creo en la unidad, pero tengo límites ¿no?, y soy tolerante hasta cierto punto, o sea, no tolero la violencia por ejemplo... no estoy dispuesta a trabajar por gente que está en un partido político dentro del Movimiento, porque es justo por lo que estas luchando en contra.*

formal adoption of the principles also had the effect of placing the rules off limits for questioning, something which would cause conflict over time.

While the principle of horizontality can be interpreted as an expression of the rejection of representation and a search for unmediated forms of action, it also proved to be a practical measure to protect the movement from betrayal. Jorge (ITESM) and Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana) described the media strategy of constructing movement leaders and then causing them to fall from grace. The autonomy of individuals and assemblies was subject to an agreement of non-representation: there were no leaders and no one could speak for the movement. Most notably, Antonio Attolini, the ex *vocero* from ITAM who ended up working for Televisa (“#YoSoyTelevisa”, 2012), was publicly barred from the movement for his perceived betrayal. Juana (UNAM) explained:

There is a myth behind leadership, that they are going to say something that does not really represent the bases...but the other thing is totally cooptation, and because the media in this country create leaders, whether or not they exist. And that was the case of Antonio Attolini, he did not represent even the most minimal figure in the movement...but he was created by the media to such a point that one day when he went to Televisa it looked like the movement had fallen, it was finished in the media.²⁰⁴

Julia (Ibero) lamented that “with Attolini everybody thought we had been coopted”.²⁰⁵ In defence, #YoSoy132 invoked the principle of horizontality: “it is horizontal, so there are no leaders. If you start to say that you are a leader, like Attolini, then you are not 132 because it goes against the spirit or the principle of being 132”,²⁰⁶ remarked Mario (Ibero). The principles were thus supposed to protect the movement’s public image by mediating participation to minimise the potential for co-optation and opportunism. They also provided a rationale for dissociating the whole from any of its parts, should any

²⁰⁴ *Hay un mito detrás del protagonismo ¿no?, que va a decir algo que no representa realmente a las bases...pero la otra es la cooptación totalmente, y porque los medios de comunicación en este país generan liderazgos, existan o no, y ese fue el caso de Antonio Attolini, que él no representaba una figura mínima dentro del movimiento...pero fue creado por los medios de comunicación a tal grado que un día cuando se va a Televisa parece que el Movimiento se cae, y mediáticamente termina ¿no?*

²⁰⁵ *...con Attolini todo el mundo pensaba que nos habían cooptados.*

²⁰⁶ *...es horizontal, entonces no hay líderes, si tú comienzas a decir que eres un líder, como Attolini, entonces ya no eres 132 porque va en contra del espíritu o el principio de ser 132.*

individual or group act inappropriately, as with the expulsion of Attolini from the ITAM assembly.

Organising without leaders not only had the practical aim of limiting the effects of betrayal, opportunism and co-optation, but the institutionalisation of horizontality also emitted an ethical message: horizontality was projected as prefiguring equality in social relations, affirming the necessity for the democratisation of political culture and social life. Although horizontality was designed to prevent opportunism and betrayal and to promote an ideal of equal citizenship, in reality the movement could not prevent the emergence of informal leaders. Although anyone could be #132, not all voices were equal in influence. As we know, “Even ‘leaderless’ groups have informal leaders” (Freeman, 1970 as cited in Wood, 2012, p. 12). Generally, private university students with moderate political postures were favoured by the mass media (Estrada Saavedra, 2014, p. 112). Nonetheless, it is fair to say that an abstract equality in the form of individual self-representation was not designed to promote equal influence, but rather to project the ideal of commonality based on plurality and non-domination, as a self-referential style that promoted individual expression above collective representations. As I argued in the previous chapter, the emphasis on horizontality obscured the fact that some voices were more equal than others within the public sphere, masking the persistence of power relations.

In line with its global contemporaries, #YoSoy132 built an open and inclusive identity to avoid the fragmentations and exclusions of traditional politics and to encourage mass mobilisation by appealing to a wide audience. By making the principles the common denominator, #YoSoy132 intended to reproduce a “cultural logic of networking”, a way of doing politics that is characterised by “openness, fluidity and flexibility, and the search for accompanying political norms, forms and practices” (Juris, 2009, p. 222). #YoSoy132 invited and encouraged anyone who wanted “democracy with principles”²⁰⁷ as María (UNAM) put it, to join the struggle. As loose guidelines for collective action, the principles allowed for mutual recognition amongst participants and protected the autonomy of individuals, assemblies and collectives. Those who defended the plurality and autonomy implied by the initial meaning of #YoSoy132, advocated for

²⁰⁷ ...*la democracia con principios*.

the principles as the most inclusive participatory mechanism. The basic minimum principles provided a flexible mechanism for belonging that suited a diversity of tactics, giving autonomy to individuals and collectives within established frameworks: “We didn’t have to agree, we didn’t have to be geniuses, we only had to arrive at principles, and respect them...and as such to have five central principles and each person could do what they wanted”,²⁰⁸ asserted Francisco (FAA). The creation of a collective agreement based on a set of principles effectively encouraged spontaneity and autonomy, since no one was obliged to seek permission for their actions, so long as they remained within predetermined limits.

By promoting an ethical participation above engagement in instrumental reasoning, advocates of individual autonomy downplay the arduous processes of collective constructions in favour of an “each to their own”²⁰⁹ mentality. This individualistic reasoning validates participation *qua* participation and promotes individual autonomy as an end in itself, thus falling short of a critique of power that could explain the emergence of new hierarchies and exclusions masked by inclusive discourses. Even then, individual autonomy has clearly defined limits. Belonging is dependent on respect for the principles as the formally sanctioned rules for taking up the banner of #YoSoy132. The principles should therefore be seen as a non-coercive mode of ensuring a degree of coherence and discipline. They serve the function of circumscribing the participation of those actors whose self-control cannot be assured. In particular, this circumscription aims to avoid the radicalisation of the movement and consequentially, its marginalisation and repression. By binding participation to respect for the principles, #YoSoy132 asserted a code of ethics that makes the individual responsible, but reserves the collective right—thanks to the sovereign status of the assemblies—to publicly revoke the membership of non-compliant individuals. Hence this ‘free movement’ retains the final authority, which it can draw upon to protect the movement’s integrity.

A formal organisational structure and a set of principles were supposed to be the glue that held together the inclusive and individualistic character of the movement’s

²⁰⁸ *...no teníamos que ponernos de acuerdo, no teníamos que ser como genios, no teníamos, más que llegar a principios, y respetarlos...y así como tener cinco principios rectores y cada quien hiciera lo que quisiera.*

²⁰⁹ *Cada quien.*

original style and the popular aspirations of the second stage. At any rate, they were significant milestones in the forging of political solidarities across diverse student communities. The principles reinforced the collective identity of the movement along its distinct lines: as an individualised mode of participation conditional upon proper behaviour and as an expression of the collective will of the students in their own self-definition. On the one hand, the mutually reinforcing relationship between individual autonomy and collective sovereignty suggests a unique compromise between distinct political logics and identities. On the other hand, this relationship was far from problem free and indeed the principles would eventually cause this strategic unity to show its cracks. An agreement on a minimal set of principles was an important show of student unity in the early stages, but its ambiguous deployment and the refusal of some sectors to discuss the full meaning and implications of certain principles under changed conditions also planted the seed of self-destruction.

From their inception, the principles therefore contained the potential to unify and to separate. Referring to the principles, Gabriela (ITAM) affirmed that “what united us at first is what divided us in the end”.²¹⁰ Most notably, the principle of non-violence was plagued by ambiguity and tension. Under altered circumstances, rising frustration with the impending imposition of Peña Nieto, and the impotence and complicity of the electoral authorities, a growing demand to revise the principles emerged from within the movement. Unwillingness to tolerate any inkling of violence, which for some included destruction of private property, provoked pacifists to reclaim the sovereignty of the collective and the democratic nature of the principles. Gabriela (ITAM) stressed the point:

In the beginning you agree on the basics, and if you enter something new you have to take into account that you are entering into something that has been working for a while, and you have to adjust to the things that were decided; I mean, you cannot arrive suddenly and say “no, you know what, we are not peaceful”.²¹¹

²¹⁰ *Lo que primero nos unió luego nos dividió.*

²¹¹ *Lo que primero nos aglutinó, después nos dividió...te pones de acuerdo en algo básico al principio ¿no?, y si tu entras a algo nuevo tienes que tomar en cuenta que estás entrando a algo que ya lleva rato trabajado, y que tienes que acoplarte a las cosas que ya se decidieron ¿no?; o sea, no puedes llegar a decir de repente “no, ¿saben qué?, no somos pacíficos”.*

Yet as Palacios Canudas (2013, pp. 145–146) observed, the principles were approved in an ambience of intense conflict and in large part because of the lobbying of the CI, and at the time an agreement was made to resolve the dispute at a later point, something which was never done. Gabriela (ITAM) described the desperation that set in as participants realised that their efforts to prevent the return of the PRI or to achieve a free and informed election, as was variously the case, would not result in tangible outcomes. Facing the failure of the movement to engage in deeper discussions Gabriela (ITAM) conceded: “we were scared of touching on those themes because we were scared of creating ruptures, or of the other side triumphing”, explaining that to avoid seemingly insoluble problems “we would say ‘here are the limits of the movement: non-partisanship and non-violence’”.²¹² In the final instance, those who could most convincingly re-establish the legitimate limits of the principles won out against those who pushed to reconsider them in a changed context.

The practical consequences of a lack of debate over the significance of non-violence were serious. By favouring unity at all costs, debates became superficial, according to Juana (UNAM), or false, according to Guadalupe (ITAM). Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana) described how reluctance to reflect critically on these issues was a serious flaw for the movement, insisting that: “non-violent action is not the same as pacifism, nor is peaceful at all costs the same as strategic pacifism, direct action is not the same as violence”.²¹³ Compounding this vagueness were the rising tensions in the face of the imposition of Peña Nieto following the failure of the Federal Electoral Tribunal of Judicial Authority²¹⁴ (TEPJF) to annul the elections in the face of ample evidence collected by #YoSoy132. Additionally, the democratisation of the movement’s decision-making structures to include popular sectors led to a clash of political cultures and exposed the movement to infiltration and deliberate attempts at sabotage. Rising internal frustrations and the clear limitations of the institutional path to change led

²¹² ...tuvimos miedo de tocar esos temas en la asamblea porque teníamos miedo que se crearan los rompimientos o que triunfara otro lado ¿no?, como que eran cosas que teníamos... que decíamos “acá están los límites del movimiento, apartidismo y no violencia”, y no se discute, pero por el hecho de no discutirlo también se fueron creando problemas que sabíamos que estaban ahí pero no logramos como solucionar.

²¹³ ...no es lo mismo acción no violenta que acción pacífica, ni es lo mismo pacifismo a toda costa que pacifismo estratégico, no es lo mismo acción directa que violencia.

²¹⁴ Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación.

certain sectors to become radicalised, calling for the abandonment of the principle of non-violence. Ensuing conflict suggests that non-violence was the limit of class cooperation and of unity more broadly. Yet Guadalupe (ITAM) admitted that had these questions been discussed in depth, the movement would have broken apart.

On 1 December 2012, protesters gathered at the Legislative Palace of San Lázaro, Mexico City as Enrique Peña Nieto prepared to be inaugurated as president. Outside, individuals and groups identifying as #YoSoy132, including paid provocateurs, clashed with the authorities, giving way to violent repression—a “pseudo massacre”, as Gabriela (ITAM) put it. The 1st of December was the first and only experience of mass repression in the capital city for #YoSoy132. The repression also led to the arbitrary detainment of 107 young people, mostly between 20 and 30 years of age, but including some minors, many of whom had been badly beaten and unconstitutionally refused access to lawyers or family (Naranjo Estrada, 2016, p. 192). Favela (2014, p. 244) narrated the events of the day, the confusion and terror, and its result:

That day they imposed more than a president on us, they imposed a rhetoric of power in masculine and singular, the rhetoric of violence. They imposed the fetishisation of power that seeks to convince us that power rests in a seat and not in our decisions.²¹⁵

Participants described how the mass media had been preparing the ground for the repression by stigmatising and criminalising the movement. The day, commemorated as 1DMX, marked the definitive return of authoritarianism to Mexico backed up by the manipulative mass media (Naranjo Estrada, 2016, p. 192).

The open conflict that surrounded the outbreak of violence on 1 December cautions us to look not only to the content of the principles but to their negotiation and wider significance in which those arriving late, excluded initially from foundational processes, were obliged to accept the principles as a condition of participation as those who initiated the movement later refused to debate the meaning of the initial internal agreements. The inability to negotiate an alternative to violence lies in the hands of both parties in this respect—those who did not respect the principles, and those who refused

²¹⁵ *Ese día nos impusieron más que un presidente, nos impusieron la retórica del poder en masculino y singular, la retórica de la violencia. Impusieron una fetichización del poder que busca convencernos de que éste descansa en una silla y no en nuestras decisiones.*

to re-open the debate that remained incomplete. That said, #YoSoy132 would unlikely have achieved a strong unified image and a set of agreements had its decision-making been more inclusionary from the start. Likewise, had the movement not declared itself non-violent, it is highly likely that it would not have been as massive and well-received as it was initially. For María (UNAM) the principle of non-violence was key to her participation: being non-violent was a necessary condition for the movement to be listened to, and moreover, it was coherent with their rejection of State-sponsored violence.

The principles added coherence as well as the seeds of contention, sometimes enabling united action and at other times generating disabling disagreements, misunderstandings and frustration. While synthesising distinct political logics in an inclusive unity that apparently transcended differences, the principles responded to a pressing need for an instrumental unity that accepted ambiguity over precision and hence housed multiple and often contradictory aspirations. Cross-class collaboration rested on a tentative unity that was the product of a specific conjuncture and an apparently common goal: to prevent the imposition of Enrique Peña Nieto to power. In the absence of this unifying goal, the ideals of horizontality and rational consensus that marked the movement's origins gave way to chaos and inefficiency as 'deaf ears' and ideological 'blocs' cancelled out dialogue and debate. As we shall see in the following chapter, in the face of changed circumstances and an inability to dialogue through serious disagreements, the movement became internally divided and the assemblies were largely abandoned as legitimate spaces for deliberation. Although the principles were supposed to provide an inclusive, formalised account of the movement that did not betray its fundamental openness, their very conception was a product of exclusions and a self-limiting view of politics that resisted going beyond the electoral context, thus reinforcing the conjunctural limits of the movement and its vulnerability to the familiar binary of dissolution or radicalisation.

Organisational structure

Between the negotiations and power struggles, the result was the assembly model as the contribution of the publics and the principles as the input of the CI, constituted in its majority by private university students.²¹⁶

— Ana Palacios Canudas (2013, p. 146)

The movement's official organisational form was decided at the Faculty of Architecture, UNAM on 31 May, the day after the assembly at Las Islas. The assembly model was composed of local, autonomous cells that sent representatives—later revocable and rotating—to the AGI (Pérez Monroy, 2015, p. 143). Although the local assemblies retained their autonomy, the AGI was the maximum authority—the source of official postures, declarations and demands (Alonso, 2013, p. 24). The organisational structure was based on the sovereignty of the collective, but this power was decentralised, to ensure that no group came to dominate representation and the autonomy of each assembly remained sacrosanct (Pineda, 2012, p. 13). The structure was adapted to decentralise power and prevent the emergence of hierarchies and the foreclosure of plurality. Nonetheless, the struggle for hegemony would be continuous and disagreements would emerge over perceived structural inequalities from all sides. The centralisation of power in the hands of the student body of the capital city was audibly questioned and criticised by the regional assemblies that responded to the general call to be #132 and organised locally before demanding a place at the decision-making table. The difficulty of coordinating across the complexity of the national context and the gap between the political, social and cultural realities of the capital city and the states ultimately proved an insuperable hurdle, generating regional discontent and denunciations of centralism, as we shall see in the following chapter.

The assembly structure was designed to allow coordination and negotiation across the university divide and between the various local assemblies. The assemblies thus reinforced the student identity of the movement and facilitated the creation of official proclamations, postures and the like, giving concrete political content to the

²¹⁶ *Entre las negociaciones y luchas de poder, el resultado derivó en un modelo asambleario como contribución de las públicas y los Principios como aportación de la CI, constituida en su mayoría por universidades privadas.*

signifier ‘#YoSoy132’. The movement’s new structure was comprised of local assemblies, at either faculty or institutional levels depending on size and how they defined their own identities. The autonomy of local assemblies allayed fear that the politicised public students would take over the movement. These distinct assemblies came together at the AGI to debate what had been decided upon at the local level. Representatives, called *voceros*, were in charge of putting forth the position of their assembly at the AGI and the *mesa* presided over the running of the assembly. Javier (UNAM) explained the dynamics:

The local assemblies worked like the first cell, like this indivisible organism, in the local assemblies members came together under their shared identity of belonging, the universities had assemblies by faculty or institution, here in UNAM just in University City there was an assembly per faculty or school...The Polytechnic [IPN] worked by institution...the UAM also by institution...Ibero the same and ITAM...In the beginning there was just the General Interuniversity Assembly or AGI, that was this organ where all the local assemblies came together, expressed their proposals, the political discussion was had and in the end a plan of action was made, which was as much theoretical as practical...Later the movement kept growing, other sectors that were not university-based wanted to join the movement, civil organisations, neighbourhood assemblies, so we created a regional structure, because it was growing around the country.²¹⁷

The internal democratisation of the movement that saw the inclusion of popular and regional assemblies in decision-making processes would nonetheless dilute the student profile of the movement and generate friction over the meaning of the core principles. The ensuing decline of the student identity verifies the fact that to be #132 was not merely a matter of individual adherence, but the result of a collective construction,

²¹⁷ ...las asambleas locales funcionaban como la primer célula, como este órgano indivisible, en las asambleas locales se juntaban los miembros que tenían identidad de pertenencia, las universidades tenían asambleas por Facultad o por Institución, aquí en la UNAM tan solo en ciudad universitaria había una asamblea por cada facultad o escuela...El politécnico trabajaba por institutos...las UAM igual por institución...la Iberoamericana igual, el ITAM... en un principio solamente existía la asamblea general interuniversitaria o AGI que era este órgano donde todas las asambleas locales se juntaban, vertían sus propuestas, se hacía la discusión política y se terminaba haciendo un plan de acción, que era tanto teórico como práctico....Después el movimiento fue creciendo, otros sectores que ya no eran universitarios se querían aglutinar en el movimiento, estas organizaciones civiles, estas asambleas barriales, entonces creamos una estructura regional, porque también se fue expandiendo alrededor del país.

which was in turn influenced by its constituent parts with limits for expansion beyond the Mexico City student community.

In the capital, the assembly model continued a tradition of student politics in place since the 1990s: a grassroots, horizontal structure with democratically elected delegates and centralised commissions for operationalising collective decisions (Pérez Monroy, 2015, p. 144). This model for direct participatory democracy had been utilised in 1968 and again in the UNAM strikes of 1986 and 1999 (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 161). UNAM's experience of student politics was reflected in the emphasis on dialogue and rotating *voceros*, the latter viewed as necessary to avoid the co-optation and betrayal of potential leaders. The assembly of FCPyS, UNAM, for example, worked on the basis of two *voceros* who were elected as representatives of their assembly at the AGI. These *voceros* were rotated at first together and then one at a time to maintain communication and continuity, explained Juana (UNAM). Local autonomy might have eased concerns about hegemonising tendencies. However, it also allowed for various interpretations and practices. These divergences generated conflict and confusion (Pineda, 2012, p. 11). This was perhaps most notably the case of ITAM, whose *voceros* enjoyed considerable autonomy from the bases and were liable to speak without representation, evidenced on numerous occasions by Antonio Attolini, who participants disparaged for making declarations in the media that contradicted decisions made in the AGIs.

If the principles were supposed to preserve the plurality and openness of #YoSoy132, the assembly model aimed to bring together the student body to deliberate and decide upon collective actions and the purpose and direction of the movement as well as to provide a mechanism for representing the will of the students. The adoption of the assembly model transformed unmediated expressions of discontent into an organisational structure that would be capable of articulating the diversity of voices and interests and representing them in the public sphere. Hence in their very function the assemblies appeared to be at odds, or at least in tension, with the tendency towards self-representation, spontaneity and dispersion underlying the new political style. The assembly model also imparted a particular image and meaning to the movement, as we have seen, of historical continuity with social struggles in defence of collective rights and popular sovereignty. This too contradicted claims to inclusivity and indeterminacy associated with the movement in its origins.

Whereas the principles functioned subtly to circumscribe the nature of participation and the horizons of the movement, the assembly was an overtly political arena for debate and deliberation. The assembly model was designed to enable the grassroots, participatory and dialogical construction of a collective will. Official communications and movement posturing thereby purported to express the sovereign voice of the contingently assembled parts. As a result, the AGIs were also sites of ideological disputes and real politics, which had been problematised and revoked by proponents of networked visions of horizontality and democracy. However, the assemblies also provided unparalleled spaces for participation in collective debates in which all voices were to be treated equally, even if, in the last instance, opportunists would attempt to impose their will by manipulating debates or directing discussions, as Mario (Ibero) alleged.

The assemblies could be conflictual and volatile spaces for other reasons, too. Mario (Ibero) described how the assembly model depended on a sincere disposition towards consensus in order to be efficacious and democratic, yet these factors were cancelled out by polarising debates, such as that around the principle of non-violence, in which no one was listening or willing to shift in their views. As a result of these tendencies, many participants expressed not only their disillusionment with the assemblies, but distrust towards them as models for old-style politics in which anti-democratic methods can be used to impose agendas, manipulate discussions and, ultimately, to hegemonise movements. Bloc voting, majoritarianism and bureaucratic *mesas* were commonly decried by participants as anti-democratic. As Gabriela (ITAM) explained, anyone could raise their hand and speak but the four people elected for the *mesa* of that assembly “always have a lot more power...because they are the ones who had the final word, who decided when a discussion was over, when something had to be voted”.²¹⁸

The ‘vices’ associated with these structures, it should be noted, are both structural and conjunctural, shifting over time in response to a changing external environment. Firstly, concern was raised over the structural inequalities in the number

²¹⁸ *Obviamente dejan hablar y si tu levantas la mano tiene que dejarte hablar, pero tiene siempre mucho poder el que está en la mesa ¿no?, buenos los cuatro, o sea, la mesa, porque ellos son los que ponen la palabra, son los que deciden cuando se acaba una discusión, cuando se tiene que votar algo o no.*

of votes depending on mode of identification and organisation and its initial student-only character. Different evaluations of this problem hint at its complexity. While for Juana (UNAM) the structural inequalities of the movement were reflected in the vote in ways which do not represent numerical equivalents, comparing the hundreds who share a vote at the FCPyS to the “20 or so” from the small elite private institution, La Salle. In the same sense, but referring to the predominance of UNAM, Jorge (ITESM) described the problem in terms of representational identities:

the people from Polytechnic [IPN], who were more numerous than UNAM, had 10% of the votes of the UNAM, because the people of Polytechnic prioritised the “representation of the institution” over “segmented representation”...so the way in which UNAM vindicates its autonomy ends up expressing itself in the weight that the university has in the assemblies, which is different to those from “Poly”...so it also depends a lot on that. So when all of a sudden there is an over-representation in the decisions, in a posture, in a vision, the rest, the minorities, who are not minorities, many feel less empathetic with the decisions.²¹⁹

The tension between the ideal of a unified student body, without distinction, as per the movement’s own rhetoric, and the realities of autonomous assemblies battling it out for influence within the AGI, speak to the challenge of maintaining unity and generating an internal balance of perspectives and power.

Parallel to the problem of structure was one of agency; not all participants were experienced in assembly democracy. Paradoxically, the model both equalised individual student participation and engendered new power imbalances between individual students, political tendencies and local assemblies, and between the capital city and the states. The allocation of votes—perceived as arbitrary and unequal—provoked some resentment in those who felt manipulated or imposed upon by more politicised, experienced students. Tensions between democracy as a practice and a process and

²¹⁹ ...la gente del Politécnico, que en términos numéricos tiene más estudiantes que los de la UNAM, tenía como un 10% de los votos de la UNAM, porque la gente del Politécnico prioriza la “representación de la institución” a la “representación segmentada”...entonces la manera en que reivindican la autonomía los de la UNAM se termina expresando en el peso que tiene la universidad en las asambleas a diferencia de los del Poli...entonces también depende mucho de eso. Entonces cuando de repente se está sobre-representada en las decisiones una postura, una visión, a los restos, a las minorías, que no son minorías, muchos se sienten menos empáticos con las decisiones.

democracy as an end best achieved through rapid organisation, networked actions or aesthetic interventions arose with the slow pace and increasing inefficiency of assembly democracy, with some assemblies lasting up to 12 hours. As Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana) saw it, this slow process requiring long discussions and agreement obliged the movement to be reacting to, instead of creating, conjunctures. She found that the ideal of horizontal debate in mass assemblies consisting of diverse postures leads more often to bureaucracy than to consensus:

wanting to be excessively democratic can also lead us to be bureaucratic, and to end up being nothing horizontal, because horizontality suddenly was nothing...I mean, 280 people debating the themes of 8 central axes...it was a mess!...So it was like there was a lot of emphasis on being democratic but we ended up falling again and it became very slow and we lost a lot of opportunities, so instead of taking action and of us creating the opportunities we ended up reacting because we did not have time to debate.²²⁰

Elena (Ibero) too lamented: "I think that 132 was very governed by the need to seek democracy inside of itself, [and] that hindered many things".²²¹ The problem of assembly democracy was inefficiency and stagnation born out of the very "desire for democracy"²²² observed Mario (Ibero).

This democratic chaos in which attempts to close the gap between democracy as means and as ends is part of the messiness of lived democracy that Szolucha (2013) describes in the Occupy movement. The assembly model that the movement adopted in the immediate aftermath of the encounter at Las Islas provided opportunities for

²²⁰ *Híjole, es que hay una línea bien delgada que yo creo que todavía tiene que seguirse construyendo, dentro o fuera de 132 o de cualquier otro movimiento. Porque el exceso de querer ser democrático también nos lleva a ser burocráticos, y a terminar siendo cero horizontales, porque la horizontalidad de repente era ya nada...o sea, 280 personas discutiendo temas de ocho ejes centrales...¡era un desmadre!... Entonces era mucho como énfasis en querer ser democráticos pero caíamos de nuevo que se volvía tan lento que perdíamos muchas coyunturas, entonces en lugar de accionar y de crear nosotros la coyuntura terminábamos reaccionando porque no nos daba el tiempo de discutir.*

²²¹ *...yo creo que 132 estuvo muy regido por esa necesidad de buscar la democracia dentro de sí mismo, que eso entorpeció muchas cosas.*

²²² *...la cuestión es que si se llegó a una organización en la cual se estancó porque su mismo anhelo de democracia...se modelo de organización fue difícil llevarlo, porque había discusiones larguísimas para llegar a un acuerdo [...the problem is that it came to be organised in a way which stagnated it because of the same desire for democracy...that organisational model was difficult because there were very long discussions to get to an agreement. So it was very tiresome and very slow, but if everyone did their bit, it was possible to agree].*

dialogue and politicisation and a chance to put into practice the ideals of democracy and horizontality that the movement espoused. It permitted discussion and organisation around collective action and the movement's direction, and debate for the first time for large numbers of students across class and educational backgrounds. Yet the success of the model depended upon several factors: genuine participation and openness and willingness to debate and negotiate, respect for the principles of the movement, and respect for the plurality of ideas. Mutual acknowledgement and openness to debate were necessary conditions for the assemblies to function effectively but these proved to be dependent on other factors that could not be maintained in the face of changing circumstances.

While representing an unprecedented space for collective deliberation within the diverse student body, the time-intensive deliberative character of the assemblies eroded energies and exacerbated tensions, particularly when the enabling context of the elections disappeared. The propensity to conflict and vulnerability to hegemonic struggles and imposition were part and parcel of what was being avoided in the search for another kind of politics, one in which power was dispersed through individual and small-group collective action viewed as impermeable to external control and co-optation. Despite decentralising and horizontal aspirations, the institutionalisation of the movement and the constitution of the founding principles emerged from and reinforced the centralisation of power in the student sector of the capital city. By drawing out the power dynamics underpinning both the principles and the assembly model, the perspective of bifurcation exposes two distinct visions of democratic politics: a conflict-free pluralistic identity and a conflict-ridden construction of a unified student movement. In the next section, I discuss the paradoxes and unresolved tensions of this bifurcated identity and relate them to the disputed representations and democratic imaginaries that they appear to entail.

Paradoxes and unresolved tensions

In the social networks participation had been open...There was no director or space to deliberate and agree on a common message, everything happened in accordance with the model of distributed communication...In contrast, in the student assemblies you had to be a student to participate...they deliberated, they named representatives and finally they took up the agreements of the movement; two distinct dynamics that often articulated but on other occasion did not coincide and produced disagreements.²²³

— Joel Ortega Erreguerena (2017, p. 165)

Some of the lines of tension that shaped #YoSoy132 have already been analysed in the literature. For instance, Ortega Erreguerena (2017, p. 159) diagnoses #YoSoy132 as the synthesis of contemporary networked forms of collective action “with an open identity, without a central coordination and [with] a rhizomatic behavior” and the student tradition of assembly democracy with central decision-making mechanisms and a closed identity, asserting that “in the interaction between these elements [#YoSoy132] has its central features and its principal contradictions”. Similarly, Pérez Monroy (2012) describes the collective identity of #YoSoy132 as emerging from the tensions between the enormous tradition of student politics in Mexico and the global manifestations directly preceding #YoSoy132. Along these lines, Benumea Gómez (2016) argues that internal tensions produced by the political cultures of public and private universities undermined the longevity of the movement and its capacity to transcend the electoral conjuncture. I will discuss the role of these political cultures in the changing trajectory of the movement more fully in the following chapter. Salazar Villava and Cabrera Amador (2013, p. 34), too, concede that despite its radical heterogeneity, constant tensions existed between the tendency towards a unifying youth movement and the dynamism of dispersed collectives acting rapidly and spontaneously. These tensions are expressions of competing political logics that enter into dialogue following the

²²³ *En las redes sociales la participación había sido abierta...No existía ningún cuerpo directivo ni un espacio para deliberar y acordar un mensaje común, todo se daba de acuerdo al modelo de la comunicación distribuida. ...En cambio, en las asambleas estudiantiles, para participar había que formar parte de una escuela...se deliberaba, se nombraban representantes y finalmente se tomaban los acuerdos del movimiento. Dos dinámicas distintas que muchas veces se articularon pero que otras no coincidieron y tuvieron desencuentros.*

encounter of the students and their search for an organisational model to facilitate coordination whilst preserving diversity and autonomy.

Following on from the arguments presented so far, I want to examine these political tensions by examining the core underlying values of individual autonomy and collective sovereignty and their relationship to interpretations and practices of democracy. The first is reinstated through the negation of representation and dissociation from collective identities and ideologies, and is inscribed in flexible, individualised forms of participation and belonging. This voluntaristic, individualistic involvement primarily acted upon the public sphere to express a plurality of voices, preventing the perception of homogeneity and, supposedly, preventing closure. From this perspective, participation is framed as an intrinsic good, irrespective of its content: it is the free and active participation of citizens in their social and political realms that matters. Although the principles delimited the kinds of actions associated with #YoSoy132, the image of the movement that arose from the new political style had the effect of freeing up creativity and empowering individuals—within the limits of the framework of the principles—with the aim of fostering a friendly image designed to gain positive attention and to influence public debates. For many participants in this study, this way of doing politics was motivating and empowering. As we have seen, this open, inclusive, yet individualistic form of participation expresses, and hopes to create, a cosmopolitan subjectivity in alignment with the global perspective of connected youth analysed in the previous chapter. This vision of politics nonetheless did not satisfy the whole of the political needs and interests at stake.

#YoSoy132 also possessed a self-constructed and self-directed sovereign power that was in direct tension with a purely individual mode of constructing political solidarities. Assembly democracy affirmed the self-organising and deliberative capacity of the student body. However, the assembly structure could also be used as a vehicle to try to direct the collective energies of the movement for the benefit of specific interests or towards certain ends. Precisely because of the experience of leftist militants from the public university with this organisational format, the possibilities for manipulation and hegemonisation generated suspicion from the outset: “there are ways of manipulating outcomes”, insisted Mario (Ibero). The backlash against this kind of power, and its potential misuse, was both direct and indirect. For instance, vocal advocates of an open, plural and individualistic participation, like Mario (Ibero) and Julio (ITESO),

emphasised the coordinating function of the assembly, subjecting its representativity to resonance on the streets and online. Hence, paradoxically, the collective power arising out of democratic deliberations was subject to ratification in the form of likes and shares, as a measure of approval and proof of representativity.

As we have already seen, the freeing up of the individual from the apparent burden of homogenising identities originally energised certain sectors of the movement, allowing for individual expression and a multiplicity of perspectives and interests, empowering those who did not identify with any particular social grouping or political tendency. The result was a veritable explosion of interpretations. Maintaining that #YoSoy132 was not a movement, but many with the same name, Jorge (ITESM) elucidates the dynamic:

And why many with the same name? Because the call was that, everyone could mobilise, and since everyone could mobilise each person said what it was about, but everyone could give it the same name, and it was like that. Some called for a movement against the State, others a movement with electoral aims...others for a movement in favour of the truth, others for the democratisation of the media, others for freedom of expression, others for the Mexican Spring; I mean, everything began with distinct diagnoses, distinct methods and distinct ends. And inside each of these mobilisations there was internal recognition, I mean, sometimes it was hard to recognise ourselves, but it was progressively clear, and soon grossly clear, that the movement was called differently and that we belonged to different sectors.²²⁴

The refusal to submit private interpretations of #YoSoy132 to collective agendas might have been personally freeing, but it fails to account for the ways that individual freedom is entwined with the fate of the collective—something which was clear for students like Juana (UNAM) who espoused a strong class consciousness. Instead of reinforcing power at the individual and group level through debate and coordination, individual

²²⁴ Y ¿por qué varios con el mismo nombre?, porque la convocatoria fue así, todo mundo podía convocar, y como todo mundo puede convocar cada quién dice de qué se trata, pero todo mundo le puede dar el mismo nombre, y así fue. Algunos convocaron a un movimiento contra el Estado, a otros a un movimiento con fines electorales, que no lleguen al poder, otros al movimiento en favor de la verdad, otros al movimiento por la democratización de los medios, otro por la libertad de expresión, otro por la Primavera Mexicana; o sea, todo partió de diagnósticos distintos, con métodos distintos y fines distintos. Y adentro de cada una de esas convocatorias sí había reconocimiento interno, o sea, a veces nos costaba trabajo reconocernos, pero sí era cada vez más claro, y pronto era groseramente claro, que se convocó de maneras distintas y que nosotros pertenecíamos a sectores distintos.

autonomy as the basis of a plural ideal in which each was able to name the movement risked “the colonisation of the private”, in the sense Bauman (2013) describes. The result would be cacophony and confusion online and in the public sphere.

Another problematic paradox arises when the inevitable extension of foundational values of individual autonomy and plurality to include demands for social justice are treated as secondary or tangential, rather than as a valid expression of collective discontent and a key condition for the realisation of an authentic democracy. The discrepancies opened up between a struggle for democratic freedoms and social justice (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 145) are indicative of a deeper problem. Despite attempts to marry individual autonomy with collective sovereignty, the bifurcation of #YoSoy132 ultimately manifests an underlying class consciousness and particularistic conception of an ‘us’ that resists universalisation. In contrast, insistence on the authenticity of the movement’s initial individualistic identity contradicts the very plurality such a posture seeks to preserve. The perspective of the bifurcation therefore upsets problematic binaries that insist on a genuine version of #YoSoy132. Instead, I argue that we ought to tease out the significance of this disputed territory to try to grasp the contribution of each side to the richness and complexity of the movement and as signs of the deeply contested status of #YoSoy132 within a broader historical framework. To see these competing imaginaries as valid expressions of a self-defining public that necessarily involves tensions and power plays is to open up a dialogue between them. Only in this way can we avoid falling back into facile categorisations and rhetorical negations that can legitimate prejudices and obscure privileges, insisting on the rightfulness of any one narrative above the rest.

These constituent tensions exist in a dialectical relationship in ways that reflect a broader split in contemporary egalitarian, emancipatory politics. As the volume *Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today* (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis, 2014) makes demonstrates, questions of unity, representation, collective identities and autonomy are the stakes of these practical and theoretical debates. The editors set out the debate between the “horizontal, non-representative networks of autonomous multiplicities, on the one hand, [and] the struggles of popular blocs that claim to represent universal interests and strive to impose their sovereign will, on the other”, thereby demarcating the predominant rival interpretations of democratic agency and strategies of social transformation today (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 5). For

my purposes such debates are instructive of the very contestations that occupy us in this section of the chapter and in this thesis in general. Nonetheless, some contributors to the edited volume find the very notions of sovereignty and autonomy that underscore these debates to be automatically totalising, universalising and problematically Western-centric conceptions (Day & Montgomery, 2014). Others find that they have become rigid binaries that obscure the mutual contamination, and productive potential, of both hegemonic and autonomous practices and pursuits within these complex uprisings (Katsambekis, 2014). For their part, Prentoulis and Thomassen (2014) reveal how autonomy is hegemonically constructed, thus bringing home the importance of naming and representing in the contestations that occur around the desired kinds of radical democratic practices and their future possibilities. What matters, in this sense, is not to offer the most accurate depiction of the subjects of contemporary protest, but to grasp how totalising tendencies of theories of both hegemony and the multitude can lead to closure of the potential for dialogue or synthesis.

In seeking to overcome the binary of the people versus the multitude, Katsambekis (2014) proposes the idea of the “multitudinous people”, thus retaining the irrefutable bases of contemporary democratic movements: plurality and claims to represent the people. Taking on board the arguments and insights of these debates, we ought to read the paradoxes and contestations around #YoSoy132 as indicative of broader developments in contemporary democratic struggles. In this case, the methods and theories employed to make the case for seeing #YoSoy132 as a novel phenomenon, for instance, already contain the potential for totalisation and closure that legitimates the rejection of more clear-cut instances of hegemonic politics. However, if we take up Prentoulis and Thomassen’s (2014) insights into the hegemonic construction of the concept of autonomy, we can see how aesthetic, individual or autonomous categorisations effectively become conceptual vehicles for not only representing subjects, but constructing them. For instance, the repetitive coupling of the meaning of #YoSoy132 with the incident at Ibero, or the individual with principles, becomes an effective tool for hegemonising the movement in ways that contradict the very plurality that is being upheld. The tendency to outright refute the validity or authenticity of more traditional expressions of protest should be taken as an extension of internal debates more than an indisputable representation of the essence of #YoSoy132.

The ‘multitude’ is potentiality, but as Katsambekis (2014) points out, what prevents the ‘multitude’ from becoming a ‘people’ at precisely the moment that the plural parts combine in spontaneous unity against a common enemy? Such a moment would seem to indicate the very process that leads to the ‘hegemonic people’, in Laclau’s (2005) terms, as a negative articulation of the people (in Katsambekis, 2014, pp. 175–177). If the people are never really fixed or homogenous in practice but a momentary crystallisation of diverse social forces in struggle, then what is the concern for the return of ‘politics as usual’, as a politics of hegemony, unification and representation, in #YoSoy132? Perhaps the problem is that ‘the people’ in Mexico, and the democratic aspirations associated with it, are correlated with a class consciousness that can quickly dissolve into bitter sectarianism and dead-end dogmatism. However, if we can, as Katsambekis (2014, p. 178) proposes, separate the specific content from the political logic, then perhaps we would see that the new political style offers up a new image of the people based on the logic of autonomy and horizontality that nonetheless remains an expression and a strategic construction of a political subject and not a real portrayal of some immutable subject upon which the political ambitions of an eternal, external other is imposed. Rather than uncritically reinstate these portrayals as genuine or imposed models, we can perhaps rethink and reopen these tensions in such a way as to gain insight into the very essence of the democratic potential of #YoSoy132, as a culture of debate and contestation over the public and the common that necessarily involves tensions between past and present, individual and collective, autonomy and sovereignty.

In concluding these brief reflections, it seems important to reiterate the theoretical and practical resonance of these competing political logics at the level of the movement and individual interpretation, since the so-called self-referentiality of participants is already an expression of adscription to a particular political ideal. For instance, there are those who insist that #YoSoy132 is too plural to categorise because it is not possible to know each individual’s position (Andrés Torres, ITAM, cited in Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 142). Such a posture once again locates the meaning of the whole within the interpretation of each person, an interpretation which in fact privileges individual sentiments and aspirations above collective processes. This problem underlines the importance of comparative methodologies that shed light on the political dimension of apparently purely subjective interpretations to understand the dynamic and

contested nature of that same heterogeneity and, therefore, to render it comprehensible within a social reality.

In sum, we would do well to consider how individual preferences play out in participant perceptions of the quality or kind of democratic politics at issue. Palacios Canudas (2013, p. 147) observed that lobbying, majority rule and voting in blocs were common tactics within assemblies that were badly viewed, but that those who opposed them were usually numerically inferior or at a disadvantage in a particular debate. Given that the private universities constituted a numerical minority, it is not surprising that they would tend to be most defensive of an individual identity and more critical of the collective power of assemblies. In addition to the socialisation processes that underpin the particular identities and political cultures of their educational institution. Equally, it is not surprising that the social critique of #YoSoy132 was advocated by those with a high degree of class consciousness locating in the unity of the people the greatest prospect for achieving change. This was a result of the importance of strategic organising and numbers on the streets to pressure political elites for change. Given the many tensions that run through this bifurcated identity, political unity is shown to be more than an external appearance. The construction of political solidarities was also a process that involved considerable effort on the part of participants to listen to one another and try to find points of agreement that did not require sacrificing autonomy or diversity or dissolving into cacophony. The productive tensions that underpinned this tense co-existence were thus intrinsic to the self-constitution of the movement and to ongoing negotiations that shaped, although they did not exhaust, the public face of #YoSoy132.

Concluding remarks

Because united we are more, that was how #YoSoy132 was born.²²⁵

— #YoSoy132 (“Declaration of Principles”)

In effect, the bifurcation of #YoSoy132 expressed the return of a residual, albeit weakened class consciousness with a corresponding antagonistic political identity and social critique. The second organisational moment initiated by the massification of the movement therefore spelt a rupture with the original connotations of #YoSoy132, revealing an expanded meaning of the movement that opened up intense debates over organisational forms and foundational principles. I have shown that a vision of commonality grounded in individual freedom and equal citizenship—or equal capacity to self-identify as #132—existed in clear tension with the vision of a unified movement with a strong historic memory on the side of the oppressed and clamouring for structural change through grassroots organisation and mass mobilisation. Although theoretically social critiques can be seen as an extension of the value of freedom of conscience, in effect the underlying values of individual autonomy and collective sovereignty informing these interpretations reflect distinct and even opposing political logics. Broadly speaking, these logics are: an individualised conception of politics that differentiates itself from pre-existing political identities, and a collective student identity that recovers demands for social justice underpinning a substantial vision of democracy in the sense of the material conditions for exercising popular sovereignty.

The perspective of bifurcation emphasises the tensions that arise as a result of the mass participation of public university students and their distinctly popular style of politics in contrast with the more global, contemporary and cosmopolitan subjectivity underpinning the new political style of the *indignados*. The bifurcation is thus cast as occurring as a result of the redeployment of tradition and a class-based collective consciousness in contrast to the open, inclusive and innovative political style described earlier. I contend that this split in the movement’s identity engenders a dialectic of continuity and rupture that introduces familiar representations of Mexican politics into #YoSoy132, generating an implicit dispute over the representation of the movement and

²²⁵ *Porque unidos somos más de 131, así nació el #YoSoy132.*

its trajectory. Embracing these tensions allows us to avoid the reification of #YoSoy132 in its initial stage, as a short-lived “insurgency” (Favela, 2015b) or “event” (Arditi, 2015) by engaging with the complexities involved in the construction of a unified student identity announced at the Estela de Luz protest. The bifurcation should thus be conceived of as involving a series of constituent tensions relating to political cultures, collective identities, organisational forms, practices and political horizons, something that the next chapter takes up. At the heart of the complex character of #YoSoy132 lies a conflict over the representation of the movement.

While Ortega Erreguerena (2017) sees #YoSoy132 as the synthesis of networks and assemblies, I argue that the bifurcation opened up the space between individual identification and collective identities, broadening the scope for participation but neither resolving underlying tensions nor harmonising competing value systems. The non-resolution of these values, identities and objectives appears to be both the condition for mutual recognition and cooperation between the students, and the very limit of such a possibility outside of a short-term conjunctural framework. Likewise, these productive tensions could be considered the very grounds upon which #YoSoy132 can be seen as contributing to a genuinely democratic political culture that neither demands uniformity to embrace commonality, nor sacrifices collective power at the altar of individual impulses.

The assertion of a systemic critique ultimately reveals the impossibility of excluding the questions of social justice and material inequality from truly plural debates on democracy, whilst the stress on plurality and autonomy demonstrate the ongoing need to democratise democracy. This debate need not imply a sectarian or homogenising class identity or a liberal equality of abstracted individuals, but could advance an intersectional politics that preserves plurality whilst acting in solidarity, strategically and empathetically, neither shying away from conflicts nor assuming a simple flattening of differences. This is the unrealised promise of #YoSoy132. In a final paradox, the open and inclusive political style aimed at transversal unity exposed the limits of indignation of the initiators of the movement and the unexamined class divide that had been key to enabling an instrumental student unity. The following chapter continues in this direction by examining the evolution of the student unity within and beyond the electoral conjunction, examining the contingencies and ultimate limitations of inter-university cooperation.

Chapter 6: An authentic democracy

Now it is the worst of authoritarianism with the worst of neoliberalism, and that had an effect more than anything on the youth who are having their opportunities reduced, with the privatisation of petrol, with the labour reforms of 2012...so all of that was reflected there, “we have to unite against this big, powerful enemy...anti-PRI-ism was a factor that united us, but we began to put forth other things.... but always with the idea that we were youth, mostly students, that did not want to live another one of those governments.”²²⁶

— Diego (UNAM)

So we exposed not only the fucked government and the present situation that we live in, but we said “it’s that these guys have us tied up by the neck, and these people are completely guilty that our president will be Peña Nieto and that his wife will be ‘lady Televisa’”, so by visibilising that, and the power that these great corporations have and how they manage the laws for their own convenience, well I think that it is something that had not been seen before within the resistances and within the Mexican struggles.”²²⁷

— Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana)

Chapter Two elaborated on the historical significance of the PRI to Mexican political life as both an obstacle to democratisation and in ultimately betraying the ideals of the Mexican Revolution. The PRI ultimately embraced neoliberal economics and sought to realign its own nationalist narrative with the demands of a global economy. Although accompanied by the promise of democracy, neoliberal policies did not dismantle corporatist structures or clientelistic practices that thus continue to serve as mechanisms for social control and democratic simulation today. The imminent return

²²⁶ ...ahora es lo peor del autoritarismo con lo peor del neoliberalismo y eso tuvo un efecto más que todo en los jóvenes con que cada vez nos recortan más las oportunidades en este país, con la privatización del petróleo, con las reformas laborales del 2012...entonces todo eso se refleja ahí, “hay que unirnos contra ese enemigo que es grande y que es poderoso”...el anti-priismo era el factor que cohesionaba, pero nosotros empezamos a meter otras cosas...pero siempre con la idea de que éramos jóvenes, en gran parte estudiantes que no quería vivir otro gobiernos de estos.

²²⁷ Entonces como que visibilizamos no sólo al gobierno jodido y a la situación actual que se vive, sino decir “es que estos güeyes nos tienen amarrados del pescuezo, y estas personas son completamente culpables de que nuestro presidente sea Peña Nieto y de que su esposa sea “Doña Señora Televisa”, y entonces al visibilizar eso, y el poder que tienen esas grandes empresas y como ellos manejan las leyes a su conveniencia, pues bueno creo que era algo que no se había visto anteriormente dentro de la resistencia y dentro de la lucha mexicana.

of the PRI therefore implied not only the return of the old authoritarian PRI—albeit operating in an altered scenario—but the accentuation of neoliberalism through a series of structural reforms that would further dismantle labour rights, public services and State-owned enterprises. The twin objectives of the democratisation of the media and blocking the imposition of Enrique Peña Nieto to power unified the movement without foreclosing its scope. At first these goals offered a broad and ambiguous framework that was able to represent the concerns of an otherwise dispersed and heterogeneous movement. In a context of high hopes and plural participation, intensive debates facilitated the deepening of critique.

In a context of crisis and opportunity, students drew on different notions of justice built into their education systems. Broadly speaking, private university students appealed to freedom of expression and freedom of access to information as basic pillars of a functioning representational democracy. The public university students emphasised social justice in defence of collective rights and public services as crucial to any notion of democracy. These distinct concepts of justice were deployed to depict and denounce the empty nature of Mexican democracy and to make demands aimed at resolving the most pressing issues. In this way #YoSoy132 revitalised two of the major axes of Mexican democratic struggles: popular sovereignty and liberal rights-based activism. This chapter analyses the double-edged sword of student unity. On the one hand, a commitment to a unified image obliged and indeed fostered debate, facilitating expanded understandings and deepened critiques. On the other, this unity rested on a short-term electoral conjuncture that reveals the ultimate frailty of the political solidarities underpinning student unity. Outside of the electoral context class antagonisms resurged, ambiguities hardened into ambivalence, and deliberation and cooperation spiralled into conflict.

Revitalising liberalism and resuscitating the sovereign people

The united students of this country believe that a necessary condition to correct this situation [of misery and inequality] consists in empowering the citizen through information, since this permits us to make better political, economic and social decisions. Information makes it possible for citizens to demand and criticise their government, the political actors and the business class of their society in a reasoned way. As such, #YoSoy132 makes the right to information and the right to the freedom of expression its principal demands...in this sense, we call upon all the oppressed to unite in the same struggle: for freedom, for justice, for the dreams that we share and for the future we deserve.²²⁸

— #YoSoy132, Estela de Luz (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, pp. 313–314)

To say “we want informed elections” was because we knew that the media was not playing in favour of democracy, so it was a way of saying “no, no, no, wait, look, let’s look at what is happening, Televisa is lying to us, Televisa has always lied, so we are going to look somewhere else and let’s understand what is happening in this country, let’s see things as they are”. Like Atenco, we turned to see the case of Atenco, we turned to see the cases of corruption, of femicides in the State of Mexico, we turned to see all of this and let’s say, “No! We don’t want the PRI”.²²⁹

— Elena (Ibero)

In its origins at Ibero, #YoSoy132 was an expression of middle and upper middle class students’ indignation at the state of electoral politics, the degradation of public life and the repression at Atenco. For these students, the expectation was not for ‘another world’, or even ‘another democracy’, but for the fulfilment of the liberal democratic aspirations that have long eluded Mexican politics: freedom of expression,

²²⁸ *Los estudiantes unidos de este país creemos que una condición necesaria para corregir esta situación, consiste en empoderar al ciudadano común a través de la información, ya que ésta nos permite tomar mejores decisiones políticas, económicas y sociales. La información hace posible que los ciudadanos puedan exigir y criticar, de manera fundamentada, a su gobierno, a los actores políticos, a los empresarios y a la sociedad misma. Por eso, YoSoy132 hace del derecho a la información y del derecho a la libertad de expresión sus principales demandas...En este sentido, hacemos un llamado a todos los oprimidos a uniros en una misma lucha: por la libertad, por la justicia, por los sueños que compartimos y por el futuro que merecemos.*

²²⁹ *Decir “queremos elecciones informadas” era porque sabíamos que los medios de información no estaban jugando a favor de la democracia, entonces era una forma de decir “no, no, no, a ver, miren, veamos lo que está pasando, Televisa nos está mintiendo, Televisa nos ha mentado siempre, entonces vayamos y busquemos por otro lado y entendamos lo que está pasando en el país, veamos las cosas, como lo que no se ve”, como Atenco, volteamos a ver el caso de Atenco, volteamos a ver los casos de corrupción, de feminicidios en el Estado de México, volteamos a ver todo esto y digamos “no, no queremos al PRI”.*

the right to information, robust public debates, respect for the rule of law, and transparent and accountable governments. Rosa (UNAM) summed up the sentiment:

For the movement I think that it was, “if we are going to do democracy, let’s do it well, and doing it well means informing ourselves, and doing it well means not buying votes...having a good debate in which candidates go and really debate. Democracy with people that are interested in what we, in what the country needs and with citizens who can be informed about the proposals, about who they are, what they want, as well as citizens that can form their own opinion about something”. I mean, a healthy democracy, I think that the movement moved towards that, it moved towards “I don’t like democracy here because this is not democracy, because we have to do it well”.²³⁰

According to Estrada Saavedra (2014, p. 117), #YoSoy132 makes the failings of the political and electoral system visible, joining other collective actors who: “without rejecting representative democracy desire, however, to deepen it and make it effective, complementing it, in the sense of a counter-balance, with active, critical and contestatory participation”.²³¹ Along these lines, #YoSoy132 took up the dominant imaginary of liberal democracy and leveraged it upon itself in the hopes that it would fulfil its promise (Aroch-Fugellie, 2013). By reaffirming the norms of liberal democracy, #YoSoy132 evidenced the gap between the constitution and reality, the longstanding incongruence between norm and practice in Mexican politics that results from a deeply rooted authoritarian political culture in which informal politics trumps formal rules.

If justice is understood in terms of transparency, accountability, formal rights and respect for process, then the role of Televisa in imposing a candidate negated the

²³⁰ *Para el movimiento yo creo que era, “si vamos a hacer democracia vamos a hacerlo bien, y democracia bien significa informarnos, y democracia bien significa no comprar votos...hacer un buen debate en donde sí van los candidatos y sí debaten. Una democracia con gente que está interesada en lo que nosotros, en lo que el país necesita y con ciudadanos que pueden estar informados sobre cuáles son las propuestas, sobre quiénes son, qué quieren, además ciudadanos que puede formarse a sí mismos una opinión sobre algo. O sea, una democracia sana, creo que el movimiento iba hacia eso, iba hacia “no me gusta la democracia aquí porque esto no es democracia, porque tenemos que hacerlo bien”.*

²³¹ *En efecto, el 132 funciona como un dispositivo que permite visualizar las fallas de los sistemas electoral y político mexicanos. En este sentido, su lucha se suma a la de otros actores colectivos que, sin rechazar la democracia representativa desean, sin embargo, profundizarla para hacerla efectiva, complementándola, a manera de contra balance, con la participación activa, crítica y contestataria de agrupaciones y movimientos, en principio, por fuera de los circuitos institucionales del sistema político.*

very prospect of representation in any meaningful sense. In condemning this abuse of power, #YoSoy132 in general and private university students in particular, evoked civil society as the moral counterweight to a corrupt and self-interested political system. In an effort to exert influence on voters—particularly to reconsider who Enrique Peña Nieto was and what he represented—#YoSoy132 renewed the democratising role of civil society: to influence public opinion in order to influence power, in this case through an electoral campaign rather than direct involvement in shaping policy legislation. This initial vision for #YoSoy132 involved a moderate yet fresh critique of politics with a clear intention of impacting the electoral process and therefore its outcomes. The liberal–progressive bloc revitalised the image of a critical and autonomous civil society, acting prudently but decisively towards specific ends.

Despite the movement’s polyfocality, the liberal progressive bloc was centrally positioned and appeared as the dominant representation in the mass media (Pineda, 2012, p. 8). The predominance of liberal demands in the media reflected classist, exclusionary selection processes characteristic of the mass media as Televisa and TV Azteca deliberately “selected certain kinds of students to value-frame their news stories”²³² (Estrada Saavedra, 2014, p. 112). In this sense, proponents of the liberal imaginary renovated conventional political discourses, penetrating the mainstream public sphere and generating public discussions (Estrada Saavedra, 2014, p. 117). Insistence on the non-representation of individual voices—whether through a self-referential identity or outside of a strict role as rotating and revocable *voceros*—did not rule out the effects of framing by mass media. In fact, the media played a large part in positioning leaders such that individuals were implicitly presented as opinion leaders with the apparent moral authority to define the movement’s official posture (Estrada Saavedra, 2014, p. 112). The implicit power to frame the movement’s meaning through access to mass media generated both internal tensions and power struggles, for example between the Ibero contingent, #Masde131, and the UNAM postgraduate assembly (Estrada Saavedra, 2014, pp. 112–113).

²³² *Por ejemplo, con criterios clasistas y discriminatorios relativamente obvios, algunos medios (como tv Azteca o Milenio) seleccionaban a cierto tipo de estudiantes para marcar valorativamente sus notas informativas.*

The ideal of liberal democracy was welcomed as exemplary of the moral and civic valour of concerned citizens along the lines of the “good” publics described by Emmelhainz (2016). This was heightened by friendly protests and the face of private universities in the mass media. Aroch-Fugellie (2013, p. 363) argues that #YoSoy132 gained leverage “by foregrounding the private university students as the movement’s persona in order to allow for the mobilization of students from other social classes, and increasingly, from other sectors of society”. Juana (UNAM), too conceded that the more moderate and friendlier protests of the privates gained the attention of the media and contributed decisively to the movement’s high profile, contrasting their reception in the mass media to that of the public university students who would have been represented as a “bunch of vandals”.²³³ The moral authority of #YoSoy132 was derived from its reiterated emphasis on a better democracy and an implacable denunciation and vigilance in the face of the elections (Navarro Montaña, 2016, p. 187). As such, #YoSoy132 gained recognition from early on (Guillén, 2014, p. 468). By successfully placing a particular notion of justice in the mass media, the liberal–progressive bloc was able to clearly influence the framing of Mexico’s absent democracy, and with it, the requisite solutions.

Critique from elite institutions was constrained within the dominant discourse of electoral democracy. Benumea Gómez (2016, p. 212) describes the institutional political culture of the elite private universities as characterised by moderation, respectful critique and pragmatism as a result of close contact with economic and political elites and the strict regulation of any other kind of politics. Overall, the private university students insisted on respect for the country’s political institutions and legal paths to change (Benumea Gómez, 2016, p. 212). The liberal–progressive bloc within the movement also insisted on the creation of a third television network and recognition and respect for the country’s institutions and the rule of law, seeking citizen watchdogs to monitor the government and its institutions (Pineda, 2012, p. 8). Referring to the proponents of this posture as largely but not exclusively from the private universities, Pineda (2012, p. 8) describes how the liberal–progressive bloc disliked the radical implications of the anti-neoliberal posture and were excessively alert to the movement’s autonomy vis-à-vis the institutional Left. In the beginning the ITAM assembly famously

²³³ ... “*bola de vándalos*”.

yet unsuccessfully attempted to block the movement from declaring itself anti-neoliberal. Guadalupe (ITAM) admitted that, because of their neoliberal education, the ITAM assembly had a much more right-leaning perspective, yet explained that the ITAM assembly was divided into those who adapted to the flow of the movement and the less flexible participants who refused.

Liberal ideals of justice that focused on the claims of rights-bearing citizens set in place a moderate institutional critique that was limited to electoral reforms that would countenance free competition, procedural fairness and transparency. In direct contrast, and indeed apparent contradiction, public university students in general and militant public university students in particular upheld a vision of justice that was far ampler and more substantive. Justice in this sense extended to include the social goods of equality, access and opportunity that could only be achieved if the people could exercise sovereignty. The absence of democracy, meaning social justice through popular sovereignty, extended to a critique of the very possibility of electing a representative that might serve the interests of the majorities. Institutionalised practices of vote buying, clientelism, *acarreo*, coercion, intimidation, assassination of political leaders and consecutive electoral frauds present clear obstacles to democracy that were insufficiently attended to by the discursive call for informed citizens for free and fair elections. César (UNAM) described how these practices mean that there is no real democracy in Mexico, adding that the electoral path to democracy is closed to the Left. With an oligopoly like Televisa wielding enormous media influence, César (UNAM) explained, “there are nil possibilities of having social change through elections”, adding, “the people are not going to be able to have a government that reflects their interests if it is not by fighting on the streets”.²³⁴ César framed this conviction within the historical experience of popular struggles whereby rights were not handed down but fought for on the streets, through the class struggle.

The neoliberal agendas that have captured the Mexican State and corporate power have meant that democracy, even in its most minimal expression of the right to

²³⁴ *Con un poder mediático... con un oligopolio como es Televisa y las televisoras, que imponen a un candidato y que lo casan con una actriz de telenovela, como es la esposa del presidente, y que van preparando esa imagen para imponer al candidato, hay nulas posibilidades de que por medio de las elecciones haya un cambio social...la gente no va a poder poner un gobierno que refleje sus intereses si no es luchando en las calles.*

political representation, has eluded the Mexican people. Instead, technocratic elites and foreign powers draw up international trade deals that stipulate anti-popular policies, which are frequently enforced through coercion. Hence, in an electoral context in which the mass media was imposing a president, the problem was not merely one of process, transparency and a free and informed vote as the liberal imaginary held, but that the entire electoral apparatus had been designed to prevent the people from choosing their leaders, from influencing the direction of their country and, ultimately, from participating in the fate of the nation. Francisco (FAA) lamented:

Democracy does not exist in Mexico, it doesn't exist because if we understand it as the capacity of the people to choose their governors, as a first and very superficial definition, we do not have that capacity...they have denied us the capacity to decide the destiny of our country...the energy reform that forms part of our identity as Mexicans, having possession over the petrol and this kind of thing is something we have lost completely, and it hasn't been a democratic process, a few people decided it, the United States more or less decided it, Mexico submitted.²³⁵

From this perspective, democracy is not possible given that a closed, authoritarian system masquerading as democratic excludes the Left from power and locks out 'the people' from participating. Even the centre-left, represented by Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), is barely permissible within the neoliberal agenda as two presidential elections characterised by mass media vilification have verified.²³⁶ For the radical Left, the belief that AMLO offers a watered-down populism that retains its hierarchical, centralised agenda feeds the belief that democracy cannot be achieved at the polls. The centre-left leader nonetheless retains an entrenched popular support base. Despite #YoSoy132's non-partisan principle, one of the major tendencies within the movement was, according to Pineda (2012, p. 8), pro-AMLO. The tacit support for, and

²³⁵ *La democracia en México no existe, no existe porque si entendemos que es la capacidad del pueblo para elegir a sus gobernantes o como una primera definición como muy superficial, no tenemos esa capacidad...nos han negado la capacidad de decidir sobre el destino de nuestro país...la reforma energética que forma parte de la identidad como mexicanos, el tener posesión sobre el petróleo y este tipo de cosas es algo que hemos perdido por completo y no ha sido un proceso democrático, lo decidieron unos cuantos, lo decidió casi que estados unidos, México se sometió.*

²³⁶ In 2006 AMLO was demonised in the mass media in the aftermath of the elections for encouraging supporters to occupy downtown Mexico for over a month in protest over what is largely held to have been a fraudulent election for the PAN. Part of Televisa's strategy in its contract to promote Peña Nieto to presidency in 2012 was to undermine AMLO in public opinion (Villamil, 2012).

on occasion convergence with, AMLO's campaign agenda were exaggerated in the mass media to try to delegitimise the movement and the elections came to dominate the focus of the movement. Such that Galindo-Cáceres and González-Acosta (2013, p. 170) lamented that the 'aesthetic movement' had become equated with the institutional Left in public opinion, reducing it to a marginal and insignificant factor in the conjunction.

In contrast to the moderate liberals who believed that change could come through information and influence—through the conscious and informed vote of citizens—a radical anti-systemic position from the public university sector insisted that the imposition of a president represented much more than the PRI candidate. It signified a whole notion of politics, society and justice that was antithetical to the needs, interests and aspirations of the popular majorities. Through established methods including assemblies, brigades and alliance building, the grassroots political culture of the nation's foremost public institutions was revived alongside the ideals of popular sovereignty in a context of an institutionalised neoliberal consensus, a divided Left, an oppositional vacuum, and a weak populism from the centre-left candidate. Yet a discourse of anti-imposition that kept the movement unified in the face of the victory of the PRI was evidently self-limiting: past the presidential inauguration on 1 December 2012, the movement would have no common weapons with which to fight.

Pre-empting a seemingly unavoidable imposition, more militant sectors of #YoSoy132 pushed for the creation of a struggle program in a bid to transcend the elections and to deepen the movement's demands. The program converged on issues of national importance that had been flagged at the first national assembly at Las Islas, UNAM on 30 May. The six axes of the program were: education, science and technology; economy; health; the media; national security; and political transformation and ties with other movements. These topics formed the backbone of the movement's struggle program, which was announced publicly during the peaceful 24-hour encirclement of Televisa, Chapultepec on 26 July 2012 ("Los 6 puntos del plan", 2012). The preamble to the declaration made explicit the consequences of the return of the PRI for democracy, social justice, national sovereignty and the future of the country:

We warn that in the case of the consummation of the imposition the old regime that practices State-sponsored violence, repression, authoritarianism, generalised corruption, concealment, opacity in public decision making, coerced voting and other such anti-democratic practices, will be restored. EPN should not be the president *not just* because of the antiquated regime that he

represents and for his collusion and subordination to Televisa, but because of the threat that looms over our country—the privatisation of petrol in favour of north American transnationals, rising taxes for the people, the labour reform that legalises the brutal exploitation of workers and the loss of indispensable labour rights. Finally, the privatisation of the health sector and of workers' pensions, all of which will be imposed and backed up by media like that we stand before today.²³⁷ (Muñoz Ramírez, 2012, p. 329)

The speech denounced the negation of popular sovereignty in the simulation of democracy and the foreclosure of the future. It depicted a metaphoric wall of disinformation representing minority and the marketisation of the public sphere: “the wall that protects corporations that poison our food and make our children sick; that makes health a luxury good in benefit of the corporations and foreign laboratories”,²³⁸ in this way connecting the monopolisation of the media to a political regime that sells the nation's collective future to the highest bidder.

Generational debate

So far, I have sketched the relationship between the different notions of justice at play and their relationship to the predominant political critiques and demands for democracy within the movement. In theory, these standpoints—electoral and anti-systemic—are competing if not opposing worldviews. Even if electoralism represents a strategic option in some instances, the employment of old authoritarian mechanisms of fraud, coercion and clientelism in imposing neoliberal agendas suggests the limits of electoral democracy for radical change. On the other hand, the notions of democracy and justice that underpin the predominant political cultures of the public and private

²³⁷ *Advertimos que en caso de consumarse la imposición se restauraría el viejo régimen político que practica la violencia de Estado, la represión, el autoritarismo, la corrupción generalizada, el encubrimiento, la opacidad en la toma de decisiones públicas, la coacción del voto y demás prácticas antidemocráticas. EPN no debe ser presidente no sólo por el régimen caduco al que representa y por su colusión y subordinación a Televisa, sino por las amenazas que ciernen sobre nuestro país la privatización del petróleo a favor de las transnacionales norteamericanas, la elevación de impuestos para el pueblo, la reforma laboral que legalice la brutal explotación de los trabajadores y la pérdida de derechos laborales indispensables, por último, la privatización del sector salud y de las pensiones de los trabajadores, todas ellas serán impulsadas y respaldadas por medios como ante el que hoy nos manifestamos.*

²³⁸ *La muralla que protege a empresas que envenenan nuestra comida y enferman a nuestros niños; que vuelve a la salud un artículo de lujo en beneficio de corporativos y laboratorios extranjeros.*

universities represented both a challenge and an opportunity for #YoSoy132. The distinct political visions represented a challenge because they produced competing and at times contradictory representations of the movement. For instance, insistence on free and informed elections could become a discursive tool for marginalising social demands in the call for authentic democracy. Yet the combination of these distinct ideals of justice could also be an opportunity to engage in debates that resulted in deeper, more nuanced and critical understandings of the problems and the proposed solutions.

In her observations of the movement's internal dynamics, Palacios Canudas (2013, p. 156) noted that the public universities prioritised the prevention of Peña Nieto's imposition over the democratisation of the media. Nonetheless, interpretations of the meaning of imposition ranged from a media-constructed president achieved through a process vitiated by irregularities and inequities, at one end, to the imposition of an unequal and exclusionary economic system held up by a political system that coercively imposes structural reforms, at the other (Ortega Erreguerena, 2012, p. 1). Despite these two meanings, Ortega Erreguerena (2012, p. 1) claimed that "the discourse of the 'imposition' was understood by the majority of the population as a criticism centered on the elections and that reduced the horizon of the movement",²³⁹ thus focusing on the behaviour of a single party over a critique of the entire system of clientelism and corporatism. This public perception was no doubt reinforced by the focus of the mass media on more moderate sectors of the movement.

Differences in objectives reflected distinct identities (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, pp. 147–148) and were embedded in specific critiques. Juana (UNAM) described the ambivalence of the private university students who united for the democratisation of the media but who were not sure if they wanted to become involved in an anti-imposition campaign: "at one point they confused the 'evil' part of Televisa for making the protests at Ibero look as though they never happened, another thing was to go

²³⁹ *Para el sector preocupado por las elecciones reflejaba la imposición de un candidato en un proceso con irregularidades e inequidades muy claras. Pero la "imposición" también se entendía como la base de un sistema político que de manera constante "impone" reformas estructurales y un modelo económico desigual y excluyente. Sin embargo, el discurso de la "imposición" fue entendido por la mayoría de la población como una crítica centrada en las elecciones y así el movimiento redujo su horizonte.*

against the system that permitted it to do so, I mean, that collusion”.²⁴⁰ Norma (UNAM) attributed the vagueness of anti-Peña Nieto sentiment to the plurality and festivity of the movement’s origins, which was even more pronounced because it included Panistas. However, Olivier Téllez and Tamayo (2015, p. 145) note that the massification of the movement with the entrance of the public universities caused some private university students to leave the movement. High levels of mistrust towards students on both sides of the public–private divide persisted in the face of this celebratory unity: wariness toward the petit bourgeois students who started the movement, as some from UNAM saw it, and concern about the intentions of public university students by those who initiated the movement.

For those who remained beyond the initial stage, significant differences were manifested in debates over the stance regarding Peña Nieto and the PRI. Interpretations ranged from neutral to personal to political. David (UNAM) recalled how ITAM used a discourse of citizenship to avoid any clear political posture, attempting to frame #YoSoy132 without any fundamental antagonisms: “ITAM said ‘we are not anti-Peña or anti-neoliberal, we are just a movement’”.²⁴¹ On another level, personal attacks on the figure and character of Peña Nieto mocked the candidate for his ignorance, lack of culture and conceit: for not being able to name three books that had marked his life or Mexico’s minimum wage or the price of tortillas; “[a]ll of these errors cost him strong criticism in the cultural sphere and the community of Tweepers and Facebookers shredded his image”²⁴² (Los Brigadistas-UNAM, 2012, p. 1). In contrast, Brigadistas-UNAM (2012, pp. 1–2) stressed that the problem was not ignorance but deepening repression and dispossession of the poor—in short, the economic and social politics and corruption represented by the PRI. These examples speak to the constant and underlying tensions between distinct political cultures and the sometimes less-than-subtle ways

²⁴⁰ ...ellos en algún momento se confundió (sic) la parte de Televisa, su “maldad” por hacer parecer que las protestas de la Ibero jamás pasaron, y la otra era ir en contra de un sistema que permitía que Televisa lo hiciera ¿no?, o sea, como esta colusión.

²⁴¹ [...] el ITAM dijo “no somos anti-Peña ni anti-neoliberales no, simplemente somos un movimiento”.

²⁴² Aun antes de que formalmente empezaran las campañas electorales, Peña Nieto demostró que sin el auxilio de sus apuntes y sus tarjetas, es bastante ignorante, inculto y prepotente. No supo decir cuáles eran los tres libros que han marcado su vida (si es que existen), no conoce el precio de las tortillas y no pudo decir cuál es el monto del salario mínimo en el país que quiere gobernar. Todos estos errores le valieron críticas muy fuertes en el medio cultural y que la comunidad de tuiters y feisbukeros lo hiciera pedazos.

these tensions played out as disputes over the framing of the movement, its self-understanding and critiques.

Differences between the political cultures of the public and private universities were manifold. Ideological, organisational, identity-based and strategic differences played out in key debates over the movement's political postures, between the "ITAM technocrats" and "UNAM humanists", as Marta (UNAM) put it. ITAM notoriously opposed the anti-neoliberal stance of the movement but was defeated. For César (UNAM), private university opposition to the return of the PRI was primarily anti-authoritarian, as opposed to social, referring to the class perspective associated with public institutions. César described how 30 years of neoliberal economics, minority domination and imposition had caused: "a deterioration of the community and social coexistence that is reaching alarming rates".²⁴³ The movement's anti-neoliberal posture thus alerted the public to the consequences of Peña Nieto's structural reforms—"we call it a retrocession in the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable classes, of the workers",²⁴⁴ continued César. The combination of education and everyday realities influenced the weight given to certain issues in the way students perceived the problems and solutions at stake:

When there were some of us that wanted the movement to fight...to say that we are worried about the work situation and the salaries, the *compañeros* from the private universities didn't, they were not worried in the same way, they were more attentive to the situation of the media, it is not a casual difference, it is due to clearly marked class differences.²⁴⁵ (César, UNAM)

Similarly, David (UNAM), who had been involved in student politics at FCPyS, UNAM and had fought for a range of issues related to access to material goods and services—against the privatisation of photocopiers, for a subsidised canteen and student access to

²⁴³ *Entonces desde su visión del desarrollo nacional es un retroceso para el nivel de vida de la población, para la misma convivencia social, en México tenemos un deterioro de la comunidad y la convivencia social, que está llegando a niveles alarmantes.*

²⁴⁴ *...nosotros le llamamos retroceso porque es un retroceso en los derechos de las personas más pobres, de las clases más desprotegidas, de los trabajadores.*

²⁴⁵ *Cuando habemos compañeros que en el movimiento queríamos pelear... por decir, estamos preocupados por la situación del trabajo y los salarios, y los compañeros de las universidades privadas no, no estaban preocupados de la misma forma, sino que estaban más atentos a la situación de los medios de comunicación, no es una diferencia fortuita, se debe a identidades de clase totalmente marcadas.*

health and security on campus—remarked that it could be difficult for his classmates with more favourable economic situations—who drove cars instead of taking the long ride on the metro from peripheral *barrios*—to understand such demands.

Within the framework of the elections when spirits were high and unity was important, debate could result in new understandings that synthesised different and even opposing perspectives. By stressing the role of de facto powers in setting the agenda for debate, the movement not only highlighted the existence of ongoing structural obstacles to democracy that run contrary to the constitution, it also identified concrete entities—Televisa and TV Azteca—responsible for the situation. However, the democratisation of the media also offered an entrance point for a much wider critique of Mexican politics and democracy. It could thus be transformed from a pragmatic reform appeal to the expression of an anti-oligarchical sentiment and a critique of elitist political culture. The issue thus offered a lens that could be refocused on the inequalities and violence engendered by the political and economic systems, problematising rationalities and exposing complicities. Beyond its original formal and legalistic conceptualisation, the demand for the democratisation of the media became a means for critiquing the very role of the media in structuring and representing reality for political and economic ends and against its purportedly democratic function:

That debate generated much of what we understand by democracy today, and what became clear to us, one of the achievements, was that we said that there cannot be democracy in this country if the media keep having the power that they have, as formers of public opinion, those who impregnate common sense with the dominant ideology; there cannot be democratic elections with a television duopoly that has more than 90% of the communication infrastructure that tells you who to vote for.²⁴⁶ (David, UNAM)

The democratisation of the media thus went from a pragmatic demand to a critique of ideological domination, stripping away the façade of democratic legitimacy to reveal the

²⁴⁶ *Ese debate arroja mucho de lo que entendemos por democracia hoy en día, y lo que nos quedó claro, uno de los logros, fue que dijimos, no puede haber democracia en este país si los medios siguen teniendo el poder que tienen, como formadores de la opinión pública, los que impregnan en el sentido común la ideología dominante, no puede haber unas elecciones democráticas con un duopolio televisivo que tiene más de 90% de la infraestructura de comunicación que te dice por quién votar.*

mechanisms at work behind the revamped promise of modernity and progress through further neoliberalisation.

The practical need to define the task of democratising the media presented an opportunity to deepen an understanding of the problem of media concentration for Mexican democracy. The result was a more radical perspective based on social rights and access for community radio. Although the telecommunications reform proposal lacked the full support of the movement and was unsuccessful at penetrating the political institutions, Marta (UNAM) described how the proposal developed by the Media Working Group envisioned a three-way split between public, private and community, critiquing not only the lack of legal access in the form of concessions, but the economic exclusions that consolidate media power in the hands of two networks: Televisa and TV Azteca. The emphasis on technical and legal know-how and on practical experience and a humanistic commitment to social justice underscored these distinct political and institutional cultures and the unique product that was #YoSoy132. In cooperation, #YoSoy132 contained significant critical potential in exposing the role of de facto powers in the simulation of democracy, as César (UNAM) and others made clear. Through these processes the students put into practice a grassroots participatory democracy that transformed their understandings of themselves and one another, politicising a generation and opening up the possibility for future collaboration.

During the elections different groups managed to work together for what was apparently a shared objective: to prevent the imposition of Enrique Peña Nieto to power. Notwithstanding competing interpretations, the twin emphases of Televisa and Peña Nieto provided sufficient focus to permit an enormous array of actions and initiatives, including near-continuous protests and the execution of eight AGIs in the span of two months (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 194). Despite the persistence of mutual distrust, the search for rational consensus was the product of an internal balance of powers brought about by the inability of any group to dominate another (Pineda, 2012, p. 10). The unity of the parts was possible because of good judgment on the part of the proponents of the main ideological tendencies, each understanding that the other contributed something to the movement and had its place. As Pineda (2012, pp. 10–11) explains:

UNAM militants understood that the private universities had been the linchpin in the movement's success, the private students knew that the movement had been massified with public university participation, and both understood that

tacit support for the candidate of the institutional Left had its place within the electoral context and the movement's anti-Peña stance.

The introduction of a fighting program might have diluted the focus on the initial unifying symbols of Televisa and Peña Nieto (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 191). However, it also allowed for more patient work to be carried out in terms of the specific content of each working group and the complexities and nuances to be deliberated and debated by interested parties with distinct views. Such detailed and focused deliberations thus resulted in a richer and deeper knowledge of the problems at hand. This possibility is illustrated by the movement's *Contrainforme*, a 288-page document addressing the current state of the six major axes of the movement's program. The counter-report was elaborated by movement participants in conjunction with civic activists and experts in the fields and provides both a critical analysis of the state of the country and alternative perspectives from which to generate public debate (“#Yosoy132 presentará ‘Contrainforme’”, 2012). In their counter-report #YoSoy132 (2012, p. 112) addressed the multifaceted consequences of neoliberalism, including increased dependency on international markets and, correspondingly, new forms of exploitation and alienation. The report condemned rising costs, falling wages, the precariousness of the labour market and the poverty level of 60 million people, compounded by poor national economic growth (#YoSoy132, 2012, pp. 116–117).

Against the optimism of international capital, #YoSoy132 (2012, p. 2) condemned the ongoing socio-economic exclusion and violence accompanying the deepening of neoliberalism:

Six years, as always, of obscene riches for a few while we are hungry, we are excluded, we are unemployed, we are youth without opportunities, six years that we have been dispossessed of our land and our natural resources. Six years, again, of privileges for the *charro* unions in education, of education to form our cheap labour, whilst we do not have access to a critical education for a dignified life.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ *Seis años, como siempre, de riqueza obscena para unos pocos mientras que nosotros tenemos hambre, somos excluidos, somos desempleados, somos jóvenes sin oportunidades, seis años en que hemos sido despojados de nuestra tierra y nuestros recursos naturales. Seis años, otra vez, de privilegios para los sindicatos charros en la educación, de educación para formar mano de obra barata, mientras que nosotros no tenemos acceso a una educación crítica para una vida digna.*

The report claimed that neoliberal policies had led to rising unemployment (5.4%), a growing informal sector (14 million), absent redistributive policies and disproportionate youth unemployment; further, it had transformed the State into the repressive arm of internal elites and transnational capital (#YoSoy132, 2012, p. 118). Criticising the ideological hegemony and de facto power of Televisa in manufacturing Peña Nieto's campaign, the report condemned the unholy alliance of Televisa and the PRI as placing intolerable limits on the prospect of a free and informed democracy. The document asseverated:

Six years, again, in which the politicians do not dialogue with society but we, those who have raised our voices and organised ourselves to resist, have been criminalised, insulted and silenced. Six years in which they have wanted us to see a Mexico that only exists as the official version, six years reproducing their lies through the communications media whom they serve.²⁴⁸ (#YoSoy132, 2012, p. 2)

Dialectic of authentic democracy

“¡Híjole!”²⁴⁹ replied a number of participants in response to the interview question on the meaning of democracy in Mexico. This expression, accompanied by a sigh, expressed participants' beliefs that real democracy remains absent in Mexico. Participants in this study expressed a shared indignation at the corruption and hollowing out of the ideals of democracy not only as frustration and condemnation, but as a painful reality: democracy exists only “on paper”, as Javier (UNAM) put it, “as dead law”.²⁵⁰ For them, the significance of democracy ranged across “an ideal to pursue”, an “aspiration”, a “dream”, “that which does not exist”, “the most profaned concept”, “corruption”, “opacity”, “imposition”, and “voting”; democracy in Mexico signified elitism, simulation and aspiration. As Durán Matute (2015) sees it, contemporary Mexican political institutions constitute a simulation of democracy in which citizens are

²⁴⁸ *Seis años, de nuevo, en que los políticos no dialogan con la sociedad pero nosotros, los que hemos levantado la voz y nos hemos organizado para resistir, hemos sido criminalizados, denostados y callados. Seis años en que han querido que veamos un México que sólo existe como versión oficial, seis años reproduciendo sus mentiras a través de los medios de comunicación a quienes sirven.*

²⁴⁹ Geez!

²⁵⁰ *Existe la democracia creo yo en el papel, en ley como le diríamos aquí ley muerta.*

reduced to spectators, unable to influence the direction of their country. For Francisco (FAA), the political elites and de facto powers—the mass media and cartels whose market interests far exceed drug markets—have denied the people the right to choose their country’s destiny.

In this context #YoSoy132 reinvigorated the 2012 elections along two distinct lines. In its electoral focus #YoSoy132 reactivated the liberal ideals of civil society. With time, the students also became increasingly linked with popular movements in resisting Peña Nieto’s planned structural reforms. If the former predominated in electoral times, the latter gained currency after the elections. A critical civil society view was focused on a revitalisation of the public sphere based on pluralistic interventions in public spaces, clever use of social media and by engaging the mass media. The objective was to generate debate and discussion around the stranglehold of de facto interests over Mexico’s precarious democratic institutions. In forming alliances with popular struggles, the students sought to organise opposition to try to block the advance of the neoliberal reforms. The net combination of civic and popular social imaginaries in #YoSoy132 (Navarro Montaña, 2016) generated a more robust and ampler vision of democracy by drawing attention to both the institutional failures of the democratic transition and the socio-political effects of neoliberalism. Together these traditions injected new energies into the electoral campaign and the public sphere. However, the elections represented the deadline for many, after which the movement’s relevance might become questionable. In the interim, in the interior of #YoSoy132, students deliberated on a strategy regarding the impending elections.

When it came to deciding whether or not the movement should denounce the fraudulence of the elections a priori—by virtue of the multi-million-dollar contracts between Peña Nieto and Televisa to promote the candidate and the millions of pesos spent over the legal limit of campaign—ITAM had a decisive role in ensuring that the movement did not undermine the autonomy of the citizen-run IFE (Federal Electoral Institute). The contentious decision would have vast implications for the movement. David (UNAM) described the assembly of UAM, Xochimilco on 26 June, in which divisions erupted amongst the students between those who thought that IFE was a failed institution and that other kinds of politics were needed, and those who wanted to give IFE one last chance, as the most intense moment of the movement: “we were at breaking point, many *compañeros* ripped their voting papers and were leaving...they

began to yell ‘unity!, unity!’, well in the end we agreed that we would give one last chance to IFE”.²⁵¹

Likewise, the debate over the movement’s electoral stance reflected an internal divide on a key strategic issue. Confronting the prospects of dissolution under the weight of a diversity of positions, the students opted to maintain unity and to avoid co-option by the partisan Left, whilst frontally critiquing the PRI candidate by promoting a free and informed vote:

Why Peña and not Vásquez Mota or AMLO? We would say that we live in a political system in which you know who is going to win before the vote...and in which Televisa plays a very important role. That is why we appealed for a vote for whoever you want, but that you knew who they were, and that you knew what their proposals were, and that is what a political system like Mexico’s, that is full of manipulation, does not let you do.²⁵²

To retain unity in a moment of intense pressure and near fragmentation, it was decided that IFE would be given the chance to prove its capacity to preside over free elections—following the electoral fraud of 2006—and that meanwhile the movement would document any irregularities on election day and make a case to the TEPJF in the event that Peña Nieto won. Guadalupe (ITAM) explained that since ITAM would never have acted to undermine the tribunal’s decision, the movement agreed to contest the process instead as a means of negotiating consensus and preventing internal divisions over the issue, seeking agreements that did not get to the root of the problem. This superficial unity reflected a short-term commitment that was predominantly electoral, and when the elections ended, the frailty of this unity began to surface.

#YoSoy132 officially conveyed its anti-neoliberal political posture as opposition to the social and environmental costs of the concentration of wealth, the destruction of the environment, the impoverishment of the working classes, the de-humanisation of

²⁵¹ ...estuvimos a punto de rompernos, muchos compañeros se iban, rompieron sus papeles de voto y...empezaron a gritar, “¡unidad!, ¡unidad!”, bueno, al final se consensó que le damos una última oportunidad al IFE.

²⁵² ...¿por qué Peña y no Vásquez Mota, o por qué no AMLO? Decíamos que vivimos en un sistema político en el que antes de la votación ya se sabe quién va a ganar...en el que Televisa juega un papel muy importante. Por eso es que apelamos a un voto por el que tú quieras pero que sepas quién es, y que sepas cuáles son sus propuestas, eso es lo que no te permite el sistema como el mexicano, que está lleno de manipulación.

education and the dispossession of the original peoples.²⁵³ This posturing represented a significant step towards a more combative stance in alignment with popular struggles and indigenous resistances. Given the history of fraud in Mexican politics and the mass media bias denounced by the movement, it seems that #YoSoy132 could have made the case for either absenteeism—*voto nulo*—or a strategic vote for the left-of-centre candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO)—*voto útil*. This last option was clearly favoured by a broad sector of the movement that had already shown tacit support for the PRD candidate (Pineda, 2012, p. 8). The movement's non-partisan and inclusive principles would have been violated had the movement assumed this strategy and undoubtedly it would have lost the allure of its freshness, alienating those opposing representative politics and the non-institutional Left. The position on the vote not only revealed the ability to negotiate and accept contradictions, but also the power of ITAM to foist its position upon the rest with significant consequences.

The private students did not only promote a pragmatic and reformist stance. They influenced the representation of democracy and the movement's positioning in an electoral campaign both in the media and internally. The liberal–progressive bloc most effectively hegemonised the public persona of the movement and imposed its version of the movement's agenda: the democratisation of the media and a free and informed election. Whilst unity was maintained, the greater weight of the electoral tendency ensured that it was maintained in favour of a more conservative politics and a restricted organisational horizon (Méndez Moissen, 2014, p. 236). On 1 July 2012, #YoSoy132 mobilised more than 3000 members to act as accredited electoral observers (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 203). Moreover, #YoSoy132 encouraged citizens to document irregularities on the day, providing online platforms to upload evidence that would be used in the case of fraud. In downtown Mexico City a protest camp set up at the monument to the Revolution named *Acampada Revolución* was conceived as a physical

²⁵³ ...el movimiento se reafirma como anti-neoliberal, entendiendo neoliberal como el conjunto de reformas económico-políticas que han tenido una serie de consecuencias sociales a nivel nacional tales como: la destrucción de la diversidad cultural y biológica, la concentración de la riqueza en unos cuantos, la sobreexplotación indiscriminada de los recursos naturales, la pauperización de las condiciones laborales y de vida de los trabajadores, el despojo de los pueblos originarios, la intención de la deshumanización de la educación mediante su mercantilización y el incremento de la pobreza.

space for the movement to receive information on the irregularities of the elections (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 203).

Notwithstanding their efforts and in the face of widespread evidence of fraud, coercion and vote-buying, the following day Enrique Peña Nieto was announced the winner. The announcement provoked a series of marches on 2, 3, 11, 15, 22 and 26 July (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 203). Moreover, #YoSoy132 would report around 2500 cases of irregularities and make two reports to the IFE on 3 July and 2 August (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 203). Vote-buying in the form of prepaid Soriana²⁵⁴ debit cards totalling Mex\$54 million, signed contracts with Televisa to support Peña Nieto's campaign and to discredit rivals like AMLO, and campaign spending of approximately six times the legal limit, were the most flagrant abuses of power that were disregarded as the IFE, and then the Federal Electoral Tribunal, announced Peña Nieto's victory at the polls (Morton, 2012, p. 28). Following more than 10 hours of deliberation by representatives of 108 different schools, #YoSoy132 produced a document detailing its position on the elections:

In the face of the election of the 1st of July we denounce that this did not develop in an ambience of peace and legality, in which supposedly antidemocratic practices such as State violence prevailed; vote buying and coercion, profiting from the condition and necessities of our people; media manipulation; the deceptive use of surveys and other illicit practices that altered the essence of free, informed, reasoned and critical suffrage.²⁵⁵ (Martínez, 2012, July 5)

In the aftermath, disillusioned sectors of #YoSoy132 understood that democracy would not be achieved through the electoral path, which was closed to change from below not only due to de facto powers, but to the institutions charged with overseeing the conditions for a free and fair vote (Alonso, 2013, pp. 35–36). Facing the limitations of liberal democratic interventions in the public sphere and their restriction to a series of political rights without regard for the systemic exclusions faced by the majority of

²⁵⁴ A popular chain store in Mexico.

²⁵⁵ *Frente a la jornada electoral del 1 de julio denunciemos que ésta no se desarrolló en un ambiente de paz y legalidad, en donde prevalecieron prácticas presuntamente antidemocráticas como la violencia de Estado; la compra y coacción del voto, lucrando con la condición y necesidades de nuestro pueblo; la manipulación mediática; el uso amañado de las encuestas y otras prácticas ilícitas que alteraron la esencia del sufragio libre, informado, razonado y crítico.*

Mexico's poor and working class population, a more antagonistic politics emerged, strengthened from within the movement.

The underlying dialectic of institutional and anti-systemic politics reveals a deeper rift between the predominant visions of democracy, their practice and purpose in #YoSoy132. Over time, disagreements arose as to the emphasis on democratic freedoms versus social justice (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 145). Submerged beneath a discourse that slid between unity and plurality, this dialectical relation re-emerged with a vengeance in the aftermath of the elections. The vitality that came from maintaining the internal balance of powers between two key axes of Mexican politics dispersed with the rise of a more popular politics based on alliances and programmatic action. The latter could not produce the same enthusiasm as that which was produced in the early days. While the electoral path imposed its own self-limits, the popular turn faced a recurrent set of problems: the lack of trust and resonance that the different Lefts experience in mainstream Mexican public opinion contributed to a lack of public support and helped prepare the ground for the brutal repression on 1 December 2012. By taking up these familiar representations of Mexican politics, #YoSoy132 moved within a well-worn path of the possible, thus becoming vulnerable to the same problems that have confronted past movements: infiltration, co-optation, internal conflict, radicalisation, marginalisation and repression.

Internal hegemonic struggle

I think that [#YoSoy132] was so powerful because it united people who had nothing to do with each other and that we thought would never coincide in a space, and they coincided and that unity was precisely generated in terms of a conjuncture, and when that conjuncture disappeared the differences began to be seen and they were many, very marked, and when that conjuncture disappeared the differences came to the surface and began to rupture.²⁵⁶

— Guadalupe (ITAM)

²⁵⁶ *Yo creo que fue tan fuerte porque se unieron personas que no tenían que ver y que pensábamos que nunca iban a coincidir en un espacio y coincidieron y precisamente esa unión se generó en torno a una coyuntura, y cuando desapareció esa coyuntura se empieza a ver esas diferencias que eran muchísimas, muy marcadas y cuando desaparece esa coyuntura fue cuando se empieza a salir a flote las diferencias y a romper.*

Conjunctural unity was a double-edged sword. On the one hand it was a necessary condition for debating questions of ‘who we are and what we want’ as first-hand exercises in grassroots democracy. On the other hand, the superficiality and contingency of those political solidarities were insufficient for ensuring long-term organisation and deeper debate, and for withstanding shifting internal correlations of power and changing external conditions. Hence outside of an enabling context, what was once an enriching if contested space, became a battlefield for increasingly opposing perspectives. When commitment to a common front declined and the shallow foundations of unity were exposed, what followed was a protracted passage to internal rupture. The once participatory assemblies became spaces of growing hostility, false debates and frustration as the loss of diversity and internal balance of powers turned consensus politics into majoritarian decision-making and converted an intelligent unity into an internal hegemonic struggle.

Beneath efforts to construct and maintain student unity around two core demands lay multiple lines of tension and competing narratives. From the beginning there existed two tendencies that sought to control the image and direction of the movement: an electoral tendency; and those employing a systemic critique and seeking organisation for a long struggle (Méndez Moissen, 2014a, p. 235; Ortega Erreguerena, 2012, p. 1). Contestations were kept in check and prevented from descending into conflict by the immediate demands of the electoral context. In the aftermath of the elections, suppressed tensions between public and private cultures and between proponents of liberal and popular imaginaries resurfaced as an ongoing debate over tactics, principles and the future of the movement. At the assembly of UAM, Xochimilco tactical questions involving the question of strong versus symbolic actions provoked “the first visible fissure in the movement”²⁵⁷ (Palacios Canudas, 2013, pp. 192–193). As we saw in the previous chapter, the upsurge in conflict over the principle of non-violence was a decisive factor in undermining the cooperation, trust and longevity of the movement, as neither the pacifists nor those advocating strong actions could agree on the meaning or limits of the principle; nor would the struggle program offer an attractive enough alternative to resolve the conflict.

²⁵⁷ ...la primera fisura del movimiento visible.

The post-electoral period from July to December was marked by the predominance of an ambiguous discourse of imposition that carried both moderate and radical meanings. It could imply a moderate critique of the procedural irregularities surrounding Peña Nieto's election. A radical interpretation implied that the imposition of a candidate was, by extension, the imposition of ideological and class domination under strengthened neoliberal policies. The shift from an inclusive democratic discourse to an increasingly antagonistic politics based on pressuring the government through direct action took the movement closer to the popular bases of Mexican politics—the unions, community organisations and indigenous, peasant movements—and was accompanied by a growth in social concerns. Javier (UNAM) explained that as the theoretical question and the scope of concerns expanded, differences began to emerge, both theoretical and practical, in terms of the movement's future that wore down participants and generated friction. "In the end we took up so many demands, that, as we say here: 'he who takes on a lot, ends up achieving very little'",²⁵⁸ Javier concluded.

The transition from a moderate electoral movement to the search for popular alliances evidenced a sharp turnaround in the public image of #YoSoy132 in the aftermath of the elections. The loss of the electoral context and the subsequent abandonment by large sectors of the movement's most inexperienced actors left a small group of committed activists (Pérez Monroy, 2015, p. 145). The post-electoral period also coincided with the growing legitimacy of anti-systemic discourses prevalent in militant traditions within UNAM and other public institutions (Pineda, 2012, p. 8). The identity of #YoSoy132 became increasingly social and antagonistic bringing about an internal hegemonic struggle as the leadership of the movement passed from the private universities with their liberal-democratic convictions, to the public universities in opposition to the privatising schemes of neoliberal politics (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 148). During this stage, #YoSoy132 coordinated with the Mexican Electricians

²⁵⁸ *En un principio #YoSoy132 lo único que buscaba era impedir que Peña Nieto llegara a la presidencia de la república [...] Entonces eso nos mantenía muy cohesionados al principio, después cuando la cuestión teórica crece y crecen las demandas, y la misma población y así mismo nosotros nos exigíamos, no solamente decir: es que no solamente Enrique Peña Nieto, no es que no llegue a la presidencia, hay problemas que vienen de mucho muy atrás [...] Siendo así empezaron a haber diferencias, tanto en la forma de hacer el trabajo teórico, de cómo llevarlo a la práctica, y conforme fuimos avanzando como movimiento, nos fuimos desgastando [...] el mismo desgaste del método asambleario y de cómo avanzamos como movimiento, también generaba asperezas [...] al final recogimos tantas demandas, que como decimos aquí: "el que mucho abarca, poco aprieta".*

Union (SME), the National Coordinator for Education Workers (CNTE) and the People's Front in Defense of the Land in Atenco (FPDT) in the organisation of the Second National Convention against the Imposition of Enrique Peña Nieto²⁵⁹ (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 146). The event took place on 14 and 15 July, in San Salvador, Atenco (Palacios-Canudas, 2013, p. 287), with more than 300 organisations in attendance ("Acuerda Convención de Atenco", 2012, July 15).

Olivier Téllez and Tamayo (2015, p. 157) describe the return to more traditional movement repertoires as weakening the movement's influence in the public eye. In an article in *Proceso* entitled "#YoSoy132: Three risks",²⁶⁰ political analyst Denise Dresser (2012) issued a warning to the movement to avoid radicalisation and subordination to outsider demands and agendas, referring to SME, CNTE and FPDT as "organisations with [legitimate grievances but] a more questionable image amongst society".²⁶¹ Similarly, in the conclusion to an opinion piece in *Letras Libres*, Televisa Hora 21, Foro TV newscast anchorman, Julio Patán (2012), referred to the movement's alliances with SME, CNTE and FPDT, lamenting its tragic trajectory:

What is a movement that erases graffiti and that represents the whole political spectrum doing in the company of those machinations? Defining itself, maybe. Or simply revealing its deep 'I', in the zillionth citizen movement coopted by radicalism that organises in blocs without margin for militant ambiguity or dissidence. The ambiguity will persist, we don't know who 132 is.²⁶²

Patán's derision is representative of a particular perspective on the fates of popular movements and the perceived illegitimacy of working class struggles, reinforcing the distinction between "good" and "bad" publics that Emmelhainz (2016) critiques. The former is broad, inclusive and non-violent, implied by the erasure of graffiti, while the latter is radical, intolerant and militant; this viewpoint reifies both ends of the spectrum without regard for context or condition.

²⁵⁹ *Convención Nacional Contra la Imposición.*

²⁶⁰ *#YoSoy132: Tres riesgos.*

²⁶¹ *...organizaciones con una imagen más cuestionada entre la sociedad.*

²⁶² *¿Qué hace el movimiento que borra grafitis y representa a todo el espectro político en esas compañías y en esas maquinaciones? Definirse, quizá. O simplemente revelar su yo profundo, el del enésimo movimiento ciudadano cooptado por la radicalidad, que, esa sí, se organiza bien, en bloque, sin margen para la ambigüedad militante o la disidencia. La ambigüedad perdura: no sabemos quién es 132.*

Among non-participant-scholars, Alonso (2013, p. 35) is virtually alone in applauding the transcendence of the electoral emphasis and increasing engagement of democracy with those from below, insisting that the original civil, non-partisan and electoral movement had not been “badly viewed by those who took care of the reproduction of the political situation”.²⁶³ Instead, Alonso (2013, p. 37) admired the turn towards Mexico’s grassroots movements that has obliged a commitment to “a pedagogy of the arduous democracy of those from below”.²⁶⁴ Yet as Pineda (2012, p. 18) vividly details, the “generational, political and class gap” between middle class students and the popular sectors was manifested in “severe contradictions in the attempt to walk together”, affirming:

They are youth that know a lot about social networks and have an unbeatable creative capacity; however they know little about the rest of the movements in struggle and their assessment of them is plagued by class prejudice. They are youth that, despite everything, organise themselves quickly and with a collective intelligence without precedents but, at the same time, exhibit an increasingly radicalised liberal position whose ideological framework obstructs an analysis of a more advanced strategy.²⁶⁵

Militant participant-scholars have lamented the reluctance of sectors of the movement to analyse the political conjuncture and engage in strategising, instead favouring a continuing dependence on ‘mediatic’ actions (Pérez Monroy, 2015; Pineda, 2012). Solís (2015a, p. 135) contends that:

Of all the mistakes made by #YoSoy132, the one with the biggest repercussions was the absence of an ideological debate inside the movement. At the beginning of the conjuncture this was impossible to do because of a natural condition: the lack of organisation. Later, postponing it meant an easy exit, given that

²⁶³ *El primer énfasis fue electoral y consiguió poner en cuestión el libreto de las televisoras. Un movimiento que desde lo cívico, al margen de los partidos, impulsaba la participación electoral no fue mal visto por quienes cuidaban la reproducción de la situación política.*

²⁶⁴ *Ha tenido que aprender que su potencial está en las asambleas locales, en las que el método de discutir lo ha obligado a pasar por una pedagogía de la ardua democracia de los de abajo.*

²⁶⁵ *Son jóvenes que saben mucho de redes sociales y tienen una capacidad creativa inmejorable; no obstante, conocen poco del resto de los movimientos en lucha y su valoración sobre ellos está plagada de prejuicios de clase. Son jóvenes que, a pesar de todo, se organizan de manera más rápida y tienen una inteligencia colectiva sin precedentes pero, al mismo tiempo, ostentan una posición liberal que se radicaliza de manera creciente, cuyo marco ideológico obstruye un análisis y una estrategia más avanzada.*

initiating an ideological debate would have generated the possibility of an internal division, since there were many differences. Put another way, in pursuit of short-term unity, the content and political direction in the long term was sacrificed.²⁶⁶

Pineda (2012) concurred, adding that the radicalisation of a liberal ideology prevented deeper analysis and a more advanced strategy. The lack of an agreeable alternative, a short-term vision of unity, and an expanding social agenda addressed through a far less appealing path of programmatic action, all contributed to a loss of cohesion and common ground. Under new circumstances, the competing visions that had somewhat fruitfully coexisted during the elections became irreconcilable, foreclosing dialogue and heightening conflict.

The aftermath of the elections would ultimately reveal the conjunctural and instrumental limits of student unity and the incommensurability of the social realities and political cultures of public and private students (Olivier Téllez & Tamayo, 2015, p. 145). Disagreements over the objectives of the movement and internal struggles to expand or reduce the political horizons began to play out internally even as an obligatory unity concealed, at least for a time, the real interests at stake. César (UNAM) described how some private university students claimed that the movement had been for a fair election and that it had ended with the victory of Peña Nieto, to which he and others replied that they were fighting to transform the country, “and so the ideological differences began to augment”.²⁶⁷ David (UNAM) explained that there would be a point where these students would have to leave behind those who were very stuck on an electoral discourse. Similarly, Juana (UNAM) affirmed: “I believe in the class struggle and it was impossible to remain united”.²⁶⁸ Despite the discourse of public and private

²⁶⁶ *De todos los errores cometidos por #YoSoy132, el de mayores repercusiones fue la ausencia de un debate ideológico al interior del movimiento. Al inicio de la coyuntura fue imposible realizarlo por una condición natural: la falta de organización. Más adelante, postergarlo significó una salida fácil, puesto que entablar una discusión ideológica hubiese generado la posibilidad de una división interna, ya que las diferencias eran muchas. Dicho de otra manera, en aras de la unidad a corto plazo, se sacrificó el contenido y rumbo político para el largo plazo.*

²⁶⁷ *...cuando pasa la elección y algunos compañeros queremos ir más adelante ya hay compañeros que... por ejemplo, empiezan a surgir en las universidades privadas compañeros que dicen que no, que el movimiento era para una elección justa, y que como le había dado el triunfo a Peña Nieto ahí se acaba la lucha, y nosotros dijimos “¡no!, nosotros no estamos luchando nada más por una elección, estamos luchando por la transformación del país”, entonces esas diferencias ideológicas fueron aumentando.*

²⁶⁸ *...yo creo en la lucha de clases, y eso era imposible de seguir unido.*

unity and shared objectives, Juana and César (UNAM) explained that the difference was one of either taking to the streets or working for deep transformations.

Under changed conditions, different factors undermined the democratic functioning of the assemblies, bringing into question the viability of horizontal models within large, diverse groups and suggesting the need to prioritise rapid action over lengthy debates. Recourse to majoritarian forms of decision-making emerged when assemblies were divided on fundamental issues and no consensus was possible. The biggest threats to the functionality of horizontal, direct democracy were described by participants in terms of: opportunism; political inexperience; immaturity; inequalities in structure and experience; the tendency towards majority rule, bureaucracy and long, slow decision-making processes; high levels of diversity including diametrically opposed ideological perspectives that led to internal struggles; and the formation of ideological blocs undisposed to negotiate. In short, participants who criticised the horizontality of the movement's internal structure were concerned about the reproduction of the same vices that the movement denounced in the political class. The functionality of the assembly model required lengthy debates which, when discussing polemic issues, were reduced to superficial treatment of problems without deep discussion on the source, and implications, of divisive issues. This was most evident in the debate on non-violence described in the previous chapter.

The resurgence of vigorously pursued class and ideological differences, following the loss of unifying conjuncture, was deepened by the movement's own internal democratising processes as non-student assemblies were integrated into the previously exclusionary decision-making structures of the movement. September 2012 brought internal de-structuring, polarised identities, dispersed interests, disorganisation and less media visibility (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 209). By the eighth AGI at Saltillo, Coahuila on 8 and 9 December, participation had fallen to 48 from over 100 *voceros* at the height of the movement, with no participation from private universities (Palacios Canudas, 2013, pp. 163–164). The minutes of the Coahuila AGI acknowledged the exhaustion of legal paths to prevent the imposition of Peña Nieto to power and the limits of marches, meetings and symbolic encirclements, and the need to engage in more civil disobedience (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 206). The amplification of the movement to include popular sectors from October occurred at a time of rapidly waning participation in the assemblies (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 126). As a result of the 10th

AGI at UACM San Lorenzo Tezonco on 6 and 7 October, open popular assemblies were incorporated into the movement's decision-making structures, and as such the AGIs were renamed 'National Assemblies' (AN) (Palacios Canudas, 2013, p. 126). This internal democratisation opened the floodgates to both irreconcilable positions as well as to opportunism, infiltration and disarticulation.

On 1 December 2012, #YoSoy132 experienced direct-State repression for the first time in the capital city. The events of the day ended in the death of one person, the loss of another's eye, and around 100 arbitrary arrests. Amongst those arrested was David (UNAM), who assured me that upon leaving the protests he and a group of his friends had been arbitrarily detained for the simple fact of being young students carrying backpacks. Lacking any evidence against him, the authorities released David after three days. Deeply affected by the incident, he was determined to continue the struggle. The ensuing legal battle to release the detainees of 1DMX revealed a clear contrast between the social solidarity of those who organised themselves to defend prisoners of conscience—accused of “disturbing public order” and obliged to prove their innocence—and the complex and discretionary use of judicial power for political ends (Naranjo Estrada, 2016). Naranjo Estrada (2016, p. 192), one of a team of lawyers who dedicated themselves to defending the detainees, described the arduous process of releasing the detainees, which included illegal detentions, excessive use of force, politically motivated manipulation of the justice system, mass media complicity in criminalising protestors and general censorship and manipulation of the occurrences. Once released, the remaining participants came together to try to make peace and re-articulate the movement.

At a National Assembly (AN) in Huexca in January 2013, #YoSoy132 took on a new organisational structure named National Encounters (EN) involving new voting mechanisms. Palacio-Canudas (2013) described how the EN was nonetheless rejected by the regional assemblies who had tired of centralism and the majoritarianism of the Mexico City assemblies. The regional assemblies reactivated the working groups that had been in decline in the previous months around the movement's fighting program, adopting virtual, decentralised participatory spaces named National Virtual Encounters (Envi) (Palacio-Canudas, 2013, p. 184). María (UNAM) described the difference: “there aren't any representatives anymore and we are more democratic, I think, because of the

schema, the format, because of the decision-making procedures”.²⁶⁹ Although María (UNAM) continues participating actively in the Envis, the majority of participants affirmed that they no longer participated in the movement and indeed many were adamant that #YoSoy132 could no longer be considered a movement.

The new format gave continuity to the movement in terms of its content and national character, however, as a mass movement, #YoSoy132 all but disappeared from the public eye. #YoSoy132 ceased to be of interest to the media, and for many of the participants in this study ceased to be a legitimate banner for activism. Some even expressed indignation and suspicion that others might still be using the “brand”. In no uncertain terms Jorge (ITESM) affirmed that #YoSoy132:

Doesn't exist in organic terms...if there are no assemblies...to keep exploiting the *brand*, the name, what identifies us, is unjust. So then, I say that after the 1st of December, 2012, probably until February, 2013, since that organic structure doesn't exist, there are only nucleuses...of 5, 4, 3 people that today mark the continuity with a movement that marked thousands of us, seems to me to be an abuse.²⁷⁰

Yet despite the exodus from the movement and its now questionable legitimacy for many in the capital city at least, #YoSoy132 did not simply disappear without leaving a remainder. #YoSoy132 was both personally transformative, and collectively significant for those who were actively involved in the movement. The disappearance of the “brand” of #YoSoy132 from the public domain was, for many participants in this study, just the beginning of their activism.

²⁶⁹ *Ya no hay representantes y somos más democráticos creo, por el esquema, por el formato, por el procedimiento de toma de decisiones.*

²⁷⁰ *No existe en términos orgánicos...si ya no hay esas asambleas...seguir explotando la “marca”, el nombre, lo que nos identifica, es injusto. Entonces como tal, digo que después del primero de diciembre de 2012, probablemente para febrero de 2013, como ya no existía esa estructura orgánica, sólo existían núcleos...de 5, 4, 3 personas ahora vengán a marcar la continuidad de un movimiento que marcó a tantos miles de personas, me parece un abuso.*

Concluding remarks

How can we attend to democracy with so much particularity and so much inequality in the country? Well, for me democracy is precisely the amplification of the concept, not just equality, equity, but how to attend to diversity, and how to try to make a political system that is not unjust for some or another. But I think that the challenge is to attend to diversity and the particularities of the society.²⁷¹

— Marta (UNAM)

The differences were principally social and specifically about political culture, not only discursive, but practical, that they lived in their daily lives. They were differences regarding militant experience, political conception and strategy, and social position from which each participant perceived reality. The question that arises is: Under what context and social circumstances, under what conditions and educational contrasts did these youth understand democracy? Very probably the answer is: under an ideological plurality. That same plurality of focuses marked the differences that were evidenced in many student encounters.²⁷²

Guadalupe Olivier Téllez and Sergio Tamayo (2015, p. 145)

What did democracy mean to the participants of #YoSoy132? How did the movement understand its purpose and practice? And what impact did these understandings have on the trajectory of the movement and its lasting significance? These are some of the key questions that my research seeks to respond to. As Olivier Téllez and Tamayo (2015) suggest above, it is likely that the movement housed a plurality of conceptions of democracy that were not only manifested in encounters between the students, but came to shape them in turn. This chapter grappled with the changing internal configurations of power and influence in an effort to understand the meanings of authentic democracy as arrived at by #YoSoy132 and the trajectory of the

²⁷¹ *¿Cómo atender la democracia con tanta particularidad y con tanta desigualdad en el país? Entonces, para mí la democracia es justamente ampliar el concepto, no solo la igualdad, la equidad, sino cómo atender la diversidad, y cómo tratar que un sistema político no sea injusto para unos u otros. Pero yo creo que el reto es atender a la diversidad y las particularidades de la sociedad.*

²⁷² *Las diferencias fueron principalmente sociales y específicamente de cultura política, pero no solo discursivas, sino prácticas, que se vivieron en la vida diaria. Fueron diferencias en cuanto a experiencia militante, concepción política y estratégica, y posición social desde donde cada participante le daba lectura a la realidad. La pregunta que surge es: ¿Bajo qué contextos y circunstancias sociales, bajo qué condiciones y contrastes educativos los jóvenes entendieron la democracia? Muy probablemente la respuesta es: bajo una pluralidad ideológica. Esa misma pluralidad de enfoques marcó diferencias que se evidenciaron en muchos encuentros estudiantiles.*

movement. Such an understanding must take into account the instrumental nature of student unity and its dependence on an electoral conjunction for the construction of political solidarities. This perspective sheds light on the political forces, class interests and democratic contestations at play, which in turn must be rooted in a contextualised, socio-political and historic understanding of Mexican politics.

Rather than taking for granted the centrality of the elections to the movement as a whole, we ought to look beneath the surface to discover the assumptions and debates that underlie the movement's changing nature and discover the struggles that take place to contain or expand the movement's political horizons within an evolving trajectory. When we do so we see that the agglutinating and unifying capacities of the movement depended upon large doses of ambiguity and short-term visions that resist strategic analysis. In the final instance, a lack of shared understanding and interests led to ambivalent posturing around these discourses that closed down the possibilities for a respectful debate amongst plural perspectives. The public–private divide thus constituted a fundamental tension upon which the entirety of the student movement's fleeting unity was diligently yet precariously constructed. Irrespective of these outcomes, for individuals, in assemblies and as a movement, the first-hand experience of negotiating 'who we are and what we want', provided important political lessons that can be drawn upon in the future. In the final chapter I will consider the ways in which #YoSoy132 holds lasting significance for contemporary democratising struggles in Mexico.

Chapter 7: Lasting significance

Maybe we don't have the same name, but it was a whole generation that marked thousands of us.²⁷³

— Juana (UNAM)

The best thing about 132 was that many youth...participated for the first time, and that was marvelous, because I think there is a seed, it is impossible to kill an idea and I think that that idea was scattered in many people.²⁷⁴

— Francisco (FAA)

This chapter contemplates the lasting significance of the movement. I first explore the transformative effects of #YoSoy132 as they came to bear on participants' everyday lives and aspirations, then follow this with an overview of some key lessons and insights gained from the experience. I then briefly explore some of the perceived immediate effects of the movement, both tangible and intangible, on public life and politics in Mexico. Finally, I present some hypotheses on the contribution of #YoSoy132 to Mexican politics through the lens of recent political scandals and protest movements. I suggest that the legacy of #YoSoy132 can be fruitfully conceived as opening up two thus-far-unexamined possibilities for Mexican democratic politics. Insofar as the new political style recreates social bonds based on imaginative and affective ties collectively and responsibility, this new style exemplifies the ideal of Sharing Democracy (Ferguson, 2012). On the other hand, acting as an informal body of public opinion aimed primarily at contesting the abuse of power, this new style contributes to a culture of Counter-Democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008). Whilst the new style augurs the possibility of the former, it is also rooted in many of the political practices and assumptions of the latter. Although registering very different processes and outcomes, taken together these approaches to politics can have surprising effects.

²⁷³ *Tal vez ya no somos con el mismo nombre, pero pues sí fue toda una generación que nos marcó a miles.*

²⁷⁴ *Justo lo que yo creo lo mejor del 132 fue que muchos jóvenes...participaron por primera vez y eso fue maravilloso, porque yo creo que hay una semilla, pues es imposible matar una idea y yo creo que esa idea se regó por muchísimas personas.*

Personal transformation

The real movements, the ones that transform the situation, always have implicitly, a very important dose of creativity, because they are exceptional, because they do not always occur, and when they do they are like a social catalyst that motivates a whole galaxy of talents and people, the people themselves are transformed, or end up doing things they had never imagined doing. Suddenly you find a *compañero* that had always been timid giving a speech in a plaza full of people.²⁷⁵

— César (UNAM)

Before 132 erupted...I was in an emotional and existential crisis...when I arrived to 132 I felt that everything that had oppressed me, that had made me suffer, I could unleash all of that there. It transformed me because I met a lot of people in the faculty that I didn't know, that I didn't know existed, I made new friends, I got to know other friends better, yes, definitely it changed all of us who participated. It was incredible.²⁷⁶

— Diego (UNAM)

In Mexico City, the disintegration of #YoSoy132 was akin to atomisation. The movement disappeared only to be re-born in a thousand parts, re-embedding the founding principles into diverse political contexts and struggles: “I am part of an organisation that the movement generated. The movement derived heaps of organisational cells, artistic issues, political issues, a thousand and one issues”,²⁷⁷ exclaimed Juana (UNAM). Mario (Ibero) affirmed that his collective, Másde131 (Morethan131)—the Ibero chapter of #YoSoy132—remained organised, and its alternative media project had strengthened with time and experience. Francisco and

²⁷⁵ *Los verdaderos movimientos, los que transforman la situación, llevan implícita una dosis de creatividad muy importante, porque son excepcionales, porque no se presentan siempre ¿no?, y cuando se presentan son como una descarga social que pone a funcionar, o pone en curso, toda una galaxia de talentos y de personas, hasta las mismas personas se transforman, o las mismas personas llegan a hacer cosas que no se imaginaban que iban a hacer. De repente te encuentras a un compañero que toda la vida había sido tímido dando un discurso en una plaza repleta.*

²⁷⁶ *Antes que estallara el 132 cuando empecé en el activismo yo estaba por una crisis emocional y existencial...cuando llegué a 132 sentí que todo eso que me oprimía, que me hacía sufrir, todo eso lo pude descargar ahí, me transformo porque conocí a muchas personas en esta facultad que ni conocía, que ni sabía que existían, conocí nuevos amigos, conocí mejor a otros amigos, conocí el trabajo que cuesta organizar una actividad política a lo que había hecho antes, si definitivamente nos cambió a todos los que participamos. Fue increíble.*

²⁷⁷ *...formo parte de una organización que se generó del Movimiento. El Movimiento derivó en muchísimas células organizativas de cuestiones artísticas, de cuestiones políticas, de cuestiones de mil y un cosas ¿no?*

Pilar remain active in the FAA; Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana) too, is active in a collective that fights transgenic corn in Mexico. Others are active in multiple spaces, and many public university students remain active on campus defending the rights of students to participate in the administration of university life and for a free, quality public education. Gabriela (ITAM) continues to consider herself 132, affirming a personal identity that is commonly felt by participants in this study. #YoSoy132 thus lives on as an intense feeling of belonging, an identity and a sentiment in the participants whose lives were transformed by participation in the movement.

If there was one consensus, even with its varying degrees and expressions, it was that #YoSoy132 was a transformative experience. Participants expressed multiple ways in which their experience of #YoSoy132 changed who they were and what they wanted for themselves and their country, how they perceived politics and society, and how they related to others. For some, stepping outside their comfort zones to speak up on issues that mattered marked them deeply. This courage and the sense of agency it engendered surprised participants like Rosa (UNAM), who realised that she could participate without being a “great leader”, and who, despite remaining unsure as to the efficacy of protest, felt it was worthwhile because “I tried and we can all try. It leaves me with the spark that I can have an influence”.²⁷⁸ For Norma (UNAM), participating in #YoSoy132 gave her confidence in voicing her political ideas:

before I didn’t participate actively, it was very hard for me to suddenly stand up and say “I have something to say”...I used to get nervous, I had a lot to say, but because I was embarrassed I didn’t speak. And that marked me...the fact of standing up and saying “I have the right to speak, to express myself”.²⁷⁹

María (UNAM), like so many others, was inspired by the bravery of those 131 students who stood up to the authorities. As part of a shared generation of students, participants created and strengthened political communities, built friendships, generated new knowledge and insight, and strengthened their personal convictions. Although many

²⁷⁸ *me ha ayudado a darme cuenta, que no necesito ser un gran líder para involucrarme en el movimiento...aunque a veces dudo de que sirvan las marchas, pero, creo que valen la pena porque intenté y que todos podemos intentar. Me deja la chispa de que puedo incidir.*

²⁷⁹ *Antes no participaba tan activamente y era bien difícil para mí de repente el agarrar y decir “yo tengo algo que decir”...me ponía muy nerviosa, tenía muchas cosas que decir, pero por pena nos las dices ¿no? Eso sí me marcó...el hecho de agarrar y decir “yo tengo el derecho a la palabra, a expresarme.*

were likely disillusioned by the experience, for the majority of participants in this study #YoSoy132 created a before and after in their lives.

#YoSoy132 not only changed people's sense of self and self-worth, it changed their sense of purpose and their everyday environment. Elena (Ibero) remarked: "my life did a complete turn when I entered into 132, my life will never be the same, from the people I hang out with, to what I do, the personal and professional changes, everything".²⁸⁰ Elena (Ibero) described the changes around her:

After 132 there is a generation of youth and people that are more interested in their country, that are more aware of what is happening, I see it with my generation... [before 132] no young person in my social circle went onto the streets to struggle...now they do it, now there are many more that want to work in Human Rights, in political issues.²⁸¹

Similarly, Julia (Ibero) admitted, "Before [132] many of us would not even put a grain of sand for social change. And now, for my boyfriend and me, if we can, and if it is fun, we will do it".²⁸² The experience of being #YoSoy132 also deepened a sense of commitment for many participants, who now cannot see their lives outside of activism, who cannot turn their backs on injustice or their collective: "if you were part of this, you cannot turn your back on the injustices", commented Gabriela (ITAM), "it is a path that you chose, that you picked, because you also made a lot of friends, many brothers and well, you cannot leave your friends on their own".²⁸³ Mario (Ibero) echoed Gabriela's sentiment, describing how despite the sacrifices of activism, one cannot turn their back on their collective. In fact, Guadalupe (ITAM) and Julia (Ibero) confessed to feeling useless when they are socially inactive. María (UNAM) described her commitment to

²⁸⁰ *Para mí, en mi vida voy a tener un antes y un después y va a ser 132, mi vida dio un giro completo desde que entre a 132, mi vida nunca volvió a ser igual, desde la gente con la que me llevo, a lo que me dedico, los cambios personales que tuve en mi vida, profesionales, todo.*

²⁸¹ *Después de 132 hay una generación de jóvenes y de gente que está más interesada por su país, que está más pendiente a lo que pasa, yo lo veo con mi generación... ningún joven, mínimo de mi círculo social, salía a luchar a las calles, salía a gritar, salía a protestar, ahora lo hacen, ahora mucha gente quiere trabajar en derechos humanos, quiere trabajar en cuestiones políticas.*

²⁸² *Los que más estuvimos involucrados, hay un antes y un después del 132. Antes muchos ni pusimos un grano de arena para un cambio social. Y ahora, para mi novio y para mí, si podemos y si es divertido, que lo hagamos.*

²⁸³ *Si ya fuiste parte de eso no le puedes dar la espalda a las injusticias'; 'es un camino que elegiste que escogiste, porque también hiciste muchos amigos, muchos hermanos y no, pues los amigos no los puedes dejar solos.*

the movement and to the Envi format as part of her determination to change things that started with joining #YoSoy132.²⁸⁴

What began as an appeal for responsibility became a deeply-seated sense of personal and collective responsibility and commitment that was also a symptom of a new-found agency, of personal empowerment as a result of having tasted collective power. Gabriela (ITAM) was not alone in finding a lot of people with whom she felt she could work, and expressed feeling disempowered before #YoSoy132: “sometimes I felt a bit alone...you feel powerless, in some way, to achieve things”.²⁸⁵ For a generation segregated by the effects of neoliberal policies and divided by education, #YoSoy132 offered a remarkable opportunity to test social perceptions and to reflect personally. The experience of embarking on a shared political venture, for all its tensions, produced strong affective ties and enabled subjective learning processes. As Javier (UNAM) observed, emotions arise when you end up spending five days a week with people you barely knew before. Diego (UNAM) described how coexistence and discussion turned prejudices into affection and respect. Participating as #YoSoy132 involved confronting one’s preconceptions of ‘the other’ and theirs of you. With respect to the public–private encounter, Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana) affirmed: “a lot of prejudices were broken, it shattered my perspective a lot”.²⁸⁶ Despite these transformative experiences, most would admit that there is still a lot of work to do in breaking down barriers, and that a lot of prejudices remain.

The potent feeling of de-alienation and the euphoric sensation of togetherness and possibility that participants experienced propelled transformative action and reflection. #YoSoy132 gave a generation their first political experience and it opened up the prospect of future action, inspiring others and leaving friendships and networks that can be revived with time. “#YoSoy132 grew in me”, Javier (UNAM) poetically expressed:

²⁸⁴ *A partir de que me integré al Movimiento tomé la decisión de hacer algo... además de que no fuera en vano el trabajo; yo creo que por eso a lo mejor la insistencia en continuar... desde entonces yo me siento determinada a que esto cambie.*

²⁸⁵ *Para mí fue conocer a mucha gente con la que sé que puedo trabajar, o sea, porque a veces yo me sentía como un poquito sola... te sientes como sin poder, de cierta manera, de lograr cosas.*

²⁸⁶ *Se rompieron un buen de prejuicios. A mí me rompió la perspectiva muchísimo.*

I grew a lot as a person, not only as a political activist, but a human being...the fact of participating, firstly for having the courage to participate on my own conviction, not to do it for myself, that nobody had to tell me to do it. I really wanted to express everything I had inside with respect to these issues, that made me more sure of myself as a person, it also allowed me to meet a lot of really nice people...the way of understanding the other by getting to know them. I also learned important lessons like discipline, the development of work, I learned to work as a team with most people, I am a bit more patient with people...It made me a better student, as a social sciences student, the fact of forming part of it, it allows you to understand it in another way, because some sociological theories are very rigid or try to make sociologists this person that is outside of society, that doesn't participate.²⁸⁷

#YoSoy132 “transformed the people that participated, and in that sense it transformed the country”,²⁸⁸ remarked Jorge (ITESM).

Political lessons

So the fact that all of this was achieved, like this unity between public and privates that would eventually also involve peasant groups and different movements, and that, in spite of the differences, managed to sit down in an assembly, yes, that seems to me to be very important.²⁸⁹

— Elena (Ibero)

If the real democracy is people deliberating and deciding on that which is common, by its own existence, this movement puts into action an assembly democracy from below,

²⁸⁷ *Crecí mucho como persona, no solamente como activista político, sino como ser humano, a mí me lo personal me dejó un parte aguas importantes, el hecho de participar, primero de tener el valor de participar por convicción propia, no de hacerlo por mí mismo, que no hubiera nadie que dijera: hazlo. Realmente tenía ganas de expresar todo lo que tenía dentro con respecto a estas cuestiones, eso me hizo una persona más segura de mí mismo, también me permitió conocer a mucha gente que es muy agradable...la forma de entender al otro conociéndolo. También dejó cuestiones importantes como, cuestiones de disciplina, el desarrollo de trabajo, aprendí a trabajar mejor en equipo con la mayoría de la gente, soy un poco más paciente con las personas... Me hizo mejor estudiante, como estudiante de una carrera de ciencias sociales, el hecho de formar parte de uno, te permite entenderlo de otra manera, porque algunas teorías sociológicas son muy rígidas o buscan que el sociólogo sea este personaje que esta fuera de la sociedad y que no participa.*

²⁸⁸ *A la gente que participó ahí sí la cambió, y cómo la cambió, cambia al país.*

²⁸⁹ *[...] entonces el hecho de que se lograra eso, como esa unión entre universidades públicas y privadas, que eventualmente también se involucraran grupos campesinos y diferentes movimientos y que juntos, a pesar de las diferencias, se lograra asentar una asamblea, sí, a mí me parece algo súper importante.*

in which the ideas of the various students gather them together, cause them to amalgamate, to stretch, to reject, to fuse, creating other new and powerful ideas in those who have resolved to not be the object of the dominant party sectors, deciding to be a political subject on their own account.²⁹⁰

— Enrique Pineda (2012, p. 20)

#YoSoy132 is commonly said to have politicised a generation. Not only did it give thousands of youth and students their first experience of political participation, it also taught a series of political lessons that different participants have taken with them into the life after #YoSoy132. Ruiz Tovar and Salinas Amescua (2013) have studied the relationship between collective learning, social movement participation and the amplification of democracy based on a case study of 11 participants from the coordinator for #YoSoy132 in the state of Puebla. The authors identified 46 collective lessons in five distinct areas: assemblies, marches, camps, crisis management and media management, as well as individual and ‘transversal’ lessons (p. 20). Within assembly spaces Ruiz Tovar and Salinas Amescua (2013, p. 13) identified 12 distinct lessons including the assembly method, argumentation, discipline, the formation of criteria and respect for differences. Participants in this study learned technical know-how as well as personal, intersubjective, organisational and political skills, from creating stencils to organising a march or an assembly, and working as a team. Carlos Brito (2015), an active and visible participant in the media, called #YoSoy132

a nodal point in the life of many young people, whose circumstances obliged them to listen, to debate, to tolerate criticism, to construct [criticism]; to understand that the struggle happens where it is needed, not where it is easy; to live not only under the conditions of the code of individual identities but also with the complexity of the collective identity.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ *Si la verdadera democracia es la gente deliberando y decidiendo sobre lo común, por su propia existencia, este movimiento pone en acción una democracia desde abajo, asamblearia, en la que las ideas de estos variopintos estudiantes se reúnen, se amalgaman, se tensan, se rechazan, se fusionan, creando otras, nuevas y poderosas, en quienes han resuelto no ser objeto de los sectores dominantes partidarios, decidiendo ser sujeto político por su cuenta.*

²⁹¹ *El periodo de movilización significó para muchxs de quienes participamos en él un momento de aprendizaje, de formación, de crecimiento y de adquisición de habilidades comunicativas, políticas, organizativas, de articulación; de entender lo que es la resistencia, la diversidad de las luchas y el valor de mantener los principios. Se trató de un punto nodal en la vida de muchos jóvenes, cuyas circunstancias les obligaron a aprender a escuchar, a debatir, a tolerar la crítica, a construirla; a*

Participants also spoke of the importance of ethics and of not corrupting one's values: to navigate the world of politics that is not always pretty or ideal, as Maria (UNAM) reflected, "*sin mancharte*", without selling out. The value of trust, respect and reputation became clear, which as Francisco (FAA) put it, are like currency: trust is the basis of collective organisation in student politics.

Participants learned on the go, through doing and through interactions. According to Diego (UNAM), #YoSoy132 created spaces for mutual learning, within the movement and through interacting with broader communities. Political lessons were derived from putting theory into practice, through trial and error, humility, reflection and debate. Juana (UNAM), who prior to #YoSoy132 had strong political convictions but little first-hand experience, expressed how #YoSoy132 had impacted her: "in political work, in my political life, in my academic life". She added, "It was not the same to be always speaking about politics in the faculty to be trying to do something".²⁹² Alejandra (Claustro de Sor Juana) shared this sentiment:

I had not lived an experience of putting theory into practice. How do you contextualise Marx or Engels or Gramsci in a movement that is happening in 2011 or 2012? That is very interesting, because it is like bringing your ideals down to ground level and contextualising it in the conjuncture of your country, of your situation.²⁹³

Similarly, Pilar (FAA) described the difference between having ideals and practicing them: "When, let's say you leave the theory and you start to practice, not only with other people but with yourself; that is where the real transformation happens".²⁹⁴ Mario (Ibero) reflected on the difference between discourse and action: "on 11 May we yelled

entender que la lucha se da donde hace falta, no donde es fácil; a vivir no solo bajo las condiciones de identidad de fuero individual sino también con la complejidad de la identidad colectiva.

²⁹² *En el quehacer político, en mi vida política, en mi vida académica ¿no?, no era lo mismo estar hablando siempre de política en la Facultad a estar tratando de hacer algo.*

²⁹³ *Yo no había vivido una experiencia de poder llevar esa teoría a la práctica ¿no? ¿Cómo contextualizas a Marx o a Engels o a Gramsci en un movimiento que está ocurriendo en el 2011–2012?, y eso es bien interesante porque entonces es como bajar eso y aterrizarlo y contextualizarlo de acuerdo a la coyuntura de tu país, de tus situaciones.*

²⁹⁴ *Cuando digamos que dejas la teoría y empiezas hacer la práctica no solamente con las demás personas sino contigo, creo que hay sucede la transformación real.*

‘Atenco will not be forgotten!’ But we had not set foot in Atenco, and after the movement we are together with Atenco, defending it”.²⁹⁵

The encounters facilitated by the assemblies also demonstrated that class differences are real—not as static, essential characteristics assigned by society or the mass media or overriding determinants—but as a combination of subjective and objective factors that influence not only daily lives but political subjectivities. Through debate and deliberation with students from public universities, Mario (Ibero) gained insight into previously unknown realities and experiences and became sensitive to his high-minded ideals—hearing the life experiences of students from Poly taught Mario “to come back down to reality”.²⁹⁶ Such encounters are all the more important in a scenario in which, as Meyer (2013) observes, elite private universities are producing political and business leaders disconnected from the masses and insensitive to their needs and interests. Enrique Peña Nieto illustrated this perfectly when he admitted to not knowing the cost of tortillas or the minimum wage in Mexico. Although access to higher education is a privilege in Mexico, degrees of privilege separate the shared everyday experiences of public and private students. Breaking down the physical barriers to interaction rendered differences visible and open to discussion and critique.

Formalised processes provided the physical platforms to practise direct democracy in the constitution of a collective subject out of an exclusionary community of equals engaged in collective deliberation and decision-making processes. As spaces of equal and direct participation full of suppressed inequalities, disavowed privileges and sectional interests, all participants had an equal right to speak. The confrontations and collaborations that took place within these spaces provided a first-hand experience in grassroots organising and direct democracy. Despite its ultimate vitiation, assembly democracy provided an ongoing stage for the confrontation of worldviews and ideals that was significant in the politicisation of a new generation of elites, activists and professionals.

²⁹⁵ *El 11 de mayo gritamos Atenco no se olvida, pero no habíamos puesto un pie en Atenco, y después del movimiento estamos junto con Atenco defendiéndolo.*

²⁹⁶ *...por ejemplo las experiencias de vida, y las políticas de gente de por ejemplo de la gente del Politécnico, te da totalmente otra perspectiva, te da muchísima más información y pues, te baja también de tus ideas...te devuelven a la realidad.*

Conscientisation

We evidenced the de facto powers...we dismantled the PRI campaign and we showed an empty candidate, the candidate of ads that he really is, with all the limitations and incapacities that he has. I think we showed what can happen when we organise ourselves, the power that we have to make things shake, to make the State fearful, because in reality I think that they were very afraid of us.²⁹⁷

— Francisco (FAA)

There is a shared perception among many participants with regards to the achievements of #YoSoy132 and its significance within the contemporary Mexican social and political contexts. They commented that #YoSoy132 helped to change the image of youth as apathetic and apolitical to one of youth as committed and critical; it also helped to change perceptions of a generation who had felt strong moral impulses but lacked a means of identifying and participating politically. Elena's (Ibero) comments are representative in this sense of a broader feeling and are worth detailing at length:

[#YoSoy132] showed that youth can carry out feats of struggle, that we are not apathetic, that it is possible to work together to achieve something and above all the seedbeds of organisation...people realised that they can achieve things by working together...to have demolished the barrier between students...to enthuse a country that was depressed with resignation...the fact that the people went out on to the streets, that they took back hope, that they believed we could achieve something, that they cared about those ideals of democracy, because a lot of people have abandoned them on the shelf.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ *Evidenciamos a los poderes facticos...desmontamos la campaña del PRI y dejamos ver un candidato de aparador, un candidato de spots como realmente es, con todos los límites y con todas las incapacidades que tiene. Creo que planteamos una posibilidad de que pasa si nos organizamos, de cómo el poder que tenemos de cimbrar, de llenar de miedo al estado, porque en realidad yo creo que nos tuvieron mucho miedo.*

²⁹⁸ *[132] mostró que los jóvenes podemos llevar gestas de lucha, que no somos apáticos, de que es posible trabajar conjuntamente para conseguir algo y sobretodo los semilleros de organización... la gente tomó conciencia de que trabajar conjuntamente se puede....haber derribado esta barrera entre estudiantes... contagiar a un país que estaba deprimido en la resignación...el hecho de que saliera la gente a las calles, que retomara la esperanza, que creyera que podíamos lograr algo, que le importara esos ideales de democracia, porque muchos ya los tenían abandonados en un cajón.*

In terms of changes to public perceptions and the collective imaginary, participants stressed the success of #YoSoy132 in exposing the character of Enrique Peña Nieto, the political and economic projects he represented, and his collusion with the mass media. Through gaining visibility and insisting on certain issues, such as the media imposition of a president, #YoSoy132 showed who the real powers are that move Mexico and the emptiness of electoral democracy when it marginalises citizens and excludes their active input and participation. #YoSoy132 established the idea that “Televisa lies”, that “Peña Nieto is a puppet”, that the elections are simulated and that “we live in a lie” (Mario, Ibero).²⁹⁹

A virtual consensus existed on the fact that #YoSoy132 only minimally impacted institutional politics. In terms of tangible outcomes, participants mentioned the electoral outcome, in which the PRI did not win the majority and so was forced into negotiations with other parties. In practice, this came to be expressed as the Pact for Mexico, in which the three major parties (PRI, PAN and PRD) agreed to cooperate to implement the neoliberal structural reforms that the movement had fought against. Since then, all the reforms have been passed, lamented David (UNAM):

Everything has been privatised, all the electrical energy, Pemex, we have been knocked around...everything that remained of the welfare State that allowed for very different fighting conditions, today, well it is going to be very complicated.³⁰⁰

By and large, participants consider life to be worse under the PRI. César (UNAM) claimed that today the government was equally deaf or deafer, equally or more corrupt. At the same time, the belief in the need for other kinds of politics had been strengthened by the experience, although some have sought more direct institutional engagement. María (UNAM) also observed an increase in rhetorical nods to youth and the issue of the media monopoly.

²⁹⁹ *Colocó que Televisa miente, nadie en su sano juicio va a creer en Televisa. Colocó que Peña Nieto es un títere, y que las elecciones en México son una mentira, creo que con estas cosas, que vivimos en la mentira.*

³⁰⁰ *Todo se ha privatizado, toda la energía eléctrica, PEMEX, estamos muy golpeados. ...todo lo que quedaba del Estado de bienestar te permitía condiciones de lucha bien distintas, hoy en día no, entonces va a ser muy complicado.*

Amongst these apparent ‘nods’ was Peña Nieto’s proposed telecommunications reform. The 2013 telecommunications reform at first seemed to respond to the movement’s demands, however participants felt that the secondary laws betrayed those ideas expressed in the reform with a worse outcome. Guadalupe (ITAM) described increasing measures of surveillance and online repression as evidence of efforts to prevent future movements like #YoSoy132. Francisco (FAA) described how textbook repressive strategies that graduate from threats to infiltration, co-optation, physical assault, kidnapping and finally assassination are today being reconfigured for an online environment; the infamous Peña bots, aggression on Twitter and discrediting through the media are common features of current public life in Mexico. Francisco (FAA) explained that initially the State had difficulty in understanding #YoSoy132 in its dispersed organisational form, affirming: “we have to be capable of not containing ourselves, we have to be like water”.³⁰¹ Nonetheless dependence on digital communication technology and social media for networked forms of activism and viral politics engender a whole new problematic that requires attention.

A telecommunications reform that legalises mass surveillance, geolocalisation and censorship suggests the updating of authoritarianism for a digital context. The Mexican government’s war on drugs provides an ongoing pretext for inventing new repressive measures. In 2017, a scandal broke out when the Mexican government was exposed for the illegal use of spyware targeting human rights defenders, journalists and activists. Sold on the condition that it only be used to capture terrorists and drug cartel bosses, the Pegasus software turns a target’s smartphone into a “personal bug”, wrote *The New York Times* (Ahmed, 2017). In this context Treré (2016, p. 127) describes how the Mexican government is using “increasingly sophisticated techniques of control and repression that exploit the very mechanisms that many consider to be emancipatory technologies”, inverting this much celebrated potential “in order to manufacture consent, sabotage dissidence, threaten activists, and gather personal data without citizens’ agreement”. In these cases, and as a broader global phenomenon, discourses of

³⁰¹ *Les costó mucho trabajo como entender cómo nos organizamos, porque nosotros tampoco teníamos que mostrar cómo nos estábamos organizando. Y es que creo que es justo fue lo bueno, o sea eso es lo que hay que reconocer, en lugar de decir, eso está mal, porque no, no, así hay que hacerlo, tenemos que ser un crisol, tenemos que ser capaces de no contenernos, tenemos que ser como si fuéramos agua, un poco así, yo creo que tendría que funcionar lejos de entender las viejas o adaptarnos a las viejas formas organizativas.*

national security are being used to justify the violation of individual and collective rights through the indiscriminate and continual collection of personal data.

Beyond digital forms of repression that can facilitate physical intimidation and violence, direct-State repression remains key to disincentivising activism. The experience of effervescence and hope followed by conflict, marginalisation, criminalisation and finally repression had a deep impact on some participants and complicated the prospect of protest for years after 1DMX. Participants shared a sense of loss that a creative, playful and optimistic movement like #YoSoy132 could end in such a way. Francisco (FAA) expressed feeling shaken by the outcomes, contrasting the national effervescence of “the first moment the media were in love with us and everyone applauded us in the streets” with the scene “two months later [when] they were throwing bombs at us and most of the media was constructing the idea that we were violent and that we deserved it”.³⁰² Rosa (UNAM) expressed sadness at the events of 1DMX but was proud of the effort, affirming that “everything that we do, is directed at changing the hell that we live in”.³⁰³ Following his own experience of arbitrary detention, David (UNAM) admitted to having questioned whether or not it was worth it to keep fighting:

*A compañero died from the manifestation from a rubber bullet to the head... Another lost an eye, there were a lot of wounded people, there was a lot of violence. And being locked up as well. There was a lot of psychological violence, and after as well, calls to your phone, interventions on your Facebook or email. There was a lot of violence.*³⁰⁴

David described 1DMX as a planned strategy designed to give a clear message to the movement. Its effect was to make the expression of political liberties under the PRI

³⁰² *...en un primer momento los medios estaban enamorados de nosotros y toda la gente nos aplaudía en las calles y nos abrazaba, y 2 meses después nos estaban aventando bombas y buena parte del entramado mediático estaba construyendo la idea de que nosotros éramos violentos, que nos merecíamos eso. Digamos que sí me tocó mucho, me cimbó mucho.*

³⁰³ *A lo mejor no logramos gran cosa, pero intentamos. Quiero que todos sepan que todo lo que hacemos, va caminado a mejorar el infierno que estamos viviendo.*

³⁰⁴ *Hubo un compañero que se murió de la manifestación, de una bala de goma en la cabeza... Otro perdió un ojo, hubo muchos heridos, claro que había mucha violencia. Y estando dentro pues también. Hubo mucha violencia psicológica, y después también, llamadas a tu teléfono, intervenciones a tu Facebook o correo. Hubo mucha violencia.*

complicated; even in a progressive place like Mexico City, marches would be met with massive police presence.

Despite this, the relative quiet on the streets of Mexico City was abruptly broken in September 2014, when I was present doing my fieldwork. First, the students from Poly took to the streets to oppose reforms to their institution. And then, the news of Ayotzinapa broke, and once again the streets exploded within indignation and in solidarity with the family members and the classmates of 43 forcibly disappeared rural normal students from Iguala, Guerrero. Ayotzinapa would become emblematic of the frontal attack on the living legacy of critical socialist education and rural, peasant and student resistances and a painful reminder of the living authoritarian legacy of the PRI.

Sharing Democracy or Counter-Democracy?

#YoSoy132 is a shared irreverence against an unacceptable reality and the untamed affirmation of the reality of the possible.

— Mariana Favela (2015a, p. 235)

The real protection against the perpetuation of the phenomenon of media concentration or an authoritarian regime is with a truly conscious dimension of different, multiple social subjects; of a politics created in common and taken to the streets through diversity which can modify paradigms and imaginaries, and dislodge and undo these ideas that Mexico cannot be better, or that you cannot advance without corruption.³⁰⁵

— Julio (ITESO)

In the aftermath of #YoSoy132 a series of traumatic events have confirmed the rationale for the feared return of the PRI and have provoked a series of spontaneous mass mobilisations in the capital. The forced disappearance of 43 students from the rural normal school of Raúl Isidrio Burgos in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, on 26 September 2014 by local police forces is emblematic of a strengthened authoritarianism. Direct police shooting at allegedly intercepted buses left 6 dead and 25 injured at the scene

³⁰⁵ ...la verdadera salvaguarda para que un fenómeno de concentración mediático o un régimen autoritario no se perpetúe es con una dimensión verdaderamente consiente de diferentes, múltiples, sujetos de la sociedad; de que la política puesta en común y llevada a la calle a través de la diversidad puede modificar los paradigmas y los imaginarios, y desencajar y deshacer estas ideas de que en México no se puede mejorar o no se puede avanzar si no se transa ¿no?

(Hernández, 2016). Yet it was the forced disappearance of 43 rural normal school students that carried the most symbolic weight in Mexico. This was, firstly, because of what the normal rural schools represent, historically, socially, culturally and politically—that is, the continuation of a revolutionary socialist ideal through a communitarian project for the region’s poor peasant and indigenous children that is in direct conflict with processes of neoliberalism in the countryside. Prolonged efforts by the Mexican State to close down, starve out or otherwise disappear the uncomfortable inheritance of the Mexican Revolution have been accompanied by a criminalising rhetoric targeting rural normal schools as ‘hotbeds of guerrillas’ from the dirty war of the 1970s to the present (Chua Torres, Frère Affanni & Zapata, 2015, p. 22). Secondly, the negligent handling of the case by State authorities, involving ongoing instances of poor process, obstruction, manipulation, misinformation, intimidation and inaccuracy, have been vocally and continually denounced by international human rights agencies, foreign forensic teams on the ground in search of the students, the family members and classmates of the missing students, and millions in Mexico and around the world.

Ayotzinapa not only revealed the extent of the government’s repressive tactics through graphic images, like that of the corpse of Julio César Mondragon found at the scene, but also exposed the complicities between a deformed and parasitical political class in open collusion with drug cartels. In many ways, the events of Iguala were the last drop in an already full bucket of innocent blood and collective indignation; the news reactivated the contained anger of millions of people: “What happened to the students of Ayotzinapa put the word ‘narcogovernment’ in our mouths and put thousands of photographs of the country’s disappeared people in front of our eyes”³⁰⁶ (Chua Torres et al., 2015, pp. 25–26). The expression *narcogobierno* indicated a deepening of the problematisation of Mexico’s grave state of affairs (Chua Torres et al., 2015, p. 29). The slogan *¡Fue el Estado!*³⁰⁷ placed the blame squarely at the feet of the government, and the demand *¡Fuera Peña!*³⁰⁸ held the president personally accountable (Hernández Navarro, 2017, p. 38). An intensive use of digital communications technology and an aesthetics of solidarity emerged nationally and globally and protests were held almost

³⁰⁶ *Lo sucedido a los estudiantes de Ayotzinapa nos colocó en la boca la palabra “narcogobierno” y nos puso frente a los ojos las miles de fotografías de personas desaparecidas en el país.*

³⁰⁷ It was the State!

³⁰⁸ Out with Peña!

continually for many months on end. Despite enormous media visibility, international pressure and evidence revealing the direct involvement and knowledge of all three levels of government, the local police and the army (Hernández, 2016), the whereabouts of the students remains unknown to the present day.

The global indignation produced by Ayotzinapa spread rapidly through social media. Rovira Sancho (2015, p. 50) described the reactivation of that generation politicised by #YoSoy132: “The new multitude, impacted by the horror, the fear and the necessity to struggle for the life of the Ayotzinapa students, took to the streets”.³⁰⁹ Along these lines, Ávalos (2014, p. 163) maintains that #YoSoy132 left an ample network of political and affective relationships based on the form of working and affinity groups that coalesce around particular issues associated with distinct causes. By contrasting campaigns such as #LeyTelecom, #Deténme1Dmx and #YakiriLibre for freedom of expression and of protest, with the banal materialism of #PosMeSalto in response to the price hike in metro tickets, Ávalos (2014, p. 163) observes that those interested in democratic rights are not necessarily the same people who protest against price hikes. His discussion brings home the persistence of distinct conceptions of democracy at stake, and the ideals and interests that animate them, as protest appears to be more frequent and sporadic but also more ephemeral. Indignation at an anti-democratic elitist political culture does not automatically entail a critique of the political economy that underpins the abuse of power and ongoing systemic exclusion of the vast majority of citizens from power. Everyday economics does not seem to register as a major obstacle to, and negation of, justice for the underprivileged and exploited. Just as the amplification of social demands in #YoSoy132 was not met with the same broad enthusiasm and interest as strictly political concerns. This problematic distinction between politics and economics still seems to prevent deeper solidarities and critiques from emerging.

The outbreak of indignation that swept Mexico and the world following the disappearance of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa returns us in a powerful way to the questions raised by Bizberg and Zapata in 2010 regarding the current state of affairs of protest action in Mexico. Writing two years before the outbreak of #YoSoy132, the

³⁰⁹ *La nueva multitud, impactada por el horror, el miedo y la necesidad de luchar por la vida de los jóvenes estudiantes de Ayotzinapa, tomaba el espacio público.*

authors detected an emergent political culture that, they suggested, would need to be analysed against the backdrop of both the longer history of the 20th century but in particular, the changes induced in the past 30 or so years. Bizberg and Zapata (2010) questioned whether or not the growth of what seemed to be a culture of Counter-Democracy was in fact a novel expression of political action or a manifestation of the limits of democracy under neoliberalism. After #YoSoy132, these questions seem to be of heightened significance, although they seem to have been largely absent from scholarship on the movement.

I want to make the case for viewing #YoSoy132 as expressing both new forms of political action that could translate into a new democratic imaginary *and* the very limits of democracy under neoliberalism that Bizberg and Zapata (2010) hypothesise. In this respect, I have proposed that some aspects of the new political style of #YoSoy132 are compatible with the logic and function of neoliberalism, whilst others come up against the very limits of neoliberal democracy only to break new ground. The new style is seen to contain the seed of a grassroots democratic culture based on the principles of Sharing Democracy (Ferguson, 2012) whose effects are like to emerge clearly only over time. I would like to suggest some ways in which these tendencies were nascent in #YoSoy132 and how it might be seen to contribute to a rethinking of democratic politics in contemporary Mexico.

I will focus on the particular contribution of the new political style to democratic imaginaries in Mexico through the lenses of two distinct visions of democratic life: Sharing Democracy (Ferguson, 2012), and Counter-Democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008). Sharing Democracy (Ferguson, 2012) challenges and reconfigures imaginaries of ‘the people’ through flexible forms of belonging and creative interventions. Ferguson (2012) contends that such flexible identifications generate the conditions for the existence of multiple publics through the fomentation of freedom-centred and autonomous agencies that are, paradoxically, more flexible and therefore more stable than singular, homogenous and essentialising identities. Through experiments involving affective, responsible and plural instances of ‘the people’, Sharing Democracy (Ferguson, 2012) challenges homogenising and fragmenting representations of the people and works to recompose social ties of solidarity and an ethic of the common based on concern for ‘the other’. As an instance of Sharing Democracy, this new political style indeed appears to be a novel mode of doing politics in Mexico that could bring about a new

kind of democracy that escapes the legacy of both post-revolutionary Mexican nationalism and the neoliberal variant on Mexican nationalism discussed in Chapter Two.

In contrast, Counter-Democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008) is an ancient tradition that involves active citizen vigilance of the State and denunciations of the abuse of power. As an informally-mobilised body of non-governmental public opinion, Counter-Democracy serves as a moral and factual counterweight to the authorities (Rosanvallon, 2008). Rosanvallon (2008) explains that these tendencies intensify in the absence of justice, leading to a continuous stimulus–response reaction without a past or future, in a paradoxical delegitimisation of State actors and structures that nonetheless reinforces the legitimacy of the reigning institutional norms. From this perspective, the new political style I described in Chapter Four reinforces public opinion as the core of democratic life, risking accommodation within a neoliberal version of democracy that reduces public life to questions of transparency and creates a culture of negative social sovereignty based on rejection and limited to reactionary outbursts.

While Counter-Democracy is a longstanding tradition of countering the abuse of power, it takes on new dimensions and possibilities in an era of viral politics that enhances the capacity for spreading counter-information. Amplified by the networked possibilities for viral politics, a kind of Counter-Democracy is enacted in an incessant series of public scandals without necessarily putting liberal–democratic coordinates into question. Whilst Sharing Democracy is an ethical task aimed at imagining alternatives and therefore generates constitutive power, Counter-Democracy reinforces the standing norms and leverages for their fulfilment, even if it also does so creatively and emotively. It therefore strengthens instituted powers even as it challenges the actions of individuals or groups.

Ferguson (2012) offers the concept of Sharing Democracy as a tool for illuminating the constitutive role of human beings in the meaning-making that shapes social life and for rethinking democracy. Taking a phenomenological turn that challenges the emphasis in democratic theory on prerequisites of commonality, Ferguson (2012, p. 6) suggests that an understanding of democracy rooted in “our ordinary political freedom to remake the world” that privileges questions of *how* over *what* or *whether* we share, can provide the basis for an alternative conception of democracy. Indeed, readings of democracy grounded in assumptions of commonality,

argues Ferguson (2012, p. 6), can have significant anti-democratic implications by precluding human agency and thus collective responsibility. Moreover, such frameworks risk “ignoring or pathologizing those voices that challenge the presumption of commonality”, prioritising “the passive possession of commonality over the active exercise of political freedom” (Ferguson, 2012, p. 6). The central task of Sharing Democracy is therefore to constitute alternative, affective and autonomous instances of ‘the people’ through multiple, experimental political practices that assume collective responsibility for our imaginations and for how we perceive ‘the other’ (Ferguson, 2012). Shared Democracy is complex, layered and contested, displacing appeals to unity based on an assumed common identity and a singular vision for the future.

Sharing Democracy is premised on a freedom and agency-centred view of politics that does not require the sacrifice of individuality or difference but rather draws upon these as the basis of a new, flexible and open culture and identity. For Gabriela (ITAM), the best of #YoSoy132 was generated by the spontaneity of each person saying, “I am #YoSoy132 and I do this and I do that”.³¹⁰ Yet Sharing Democracy is not for individuals alone, but is rather the task of society at large if another future is to be meaningfully reimagined and brought into being. Hence the challenge remains to shift from multiple, fragmented and competing experiences to collective reflections for living together. Ardití (2012, p. 2) sees movements like #YoSoy132 as “insurgencies [that open] up political possibilities by challenging our political imaginaries and cognitive maps [more than] designing the new order”. By fomenting favourable conditions for coming together to participate in politics, an atmosphere of excitement and heightened, plural participation, insurgencies facilitate the kinds of encounters and unexpected moments that disrupt the everyday and enable change.

Imagination is fundamental to de-naturalising and destabilising hegemonic imaginaries through generating enthusiasm and debate by creatively questioning the foundations of politics. Sharing Democracy therefore involves exercising constitutive power whose effect is to challenge instituted norms and narratives. In short, the radical democratic potential for heterogeneous publics sharing democracy resides in the questioning of the basis of social life: in politicising ‘who we are’ and ‘what we want’,

³¹⁰ *...lo mejor se dio en la espontaneidad, donde cada quien podía decir “Yo Soy 132 y yo hago esto, y hago lo otro”.*

based on active and imaginative contestations and a shared commitment to responsibility and solidarity. For this reason, Ferguson (2012) proposes that protest coalitions exemplify the ideal of Sharing Democracy when they reject or challenge pre-existing identities and undermine hegemonic, totalising and unifying representations. Similarly, Medina's (2013) "pluralistic publics" embody non-hegemonic alternatives to the unity of 'the people' by propagating multiple, overlapping and interacting identities that permit the flourishing of contestatory practices. By stripping back all collective affiliations and generating a plurality based on individuals in collectivity, the new political style introduced by #YoSoy132 favoured the conditions within which such an undertaking might be possible. If only partially and momentarily, the new political style facilitated contestations over the public and democracy.

Insofar as the new style entails the potential for Sharing Democracy, it is in this dimension of critical, responsible and constitutive agency. For Francisco (FAA) the idea is "to create the subjective conditions...to change human beings to change the world, not as it used to be understood, change the State to change human beings, it is the other way around".³¹¹ For Julio (ITESO) this implies understanding that another possibility exists to the one that they tell you. Julio (ITESO) advocates for another politics based on plurality, emotion and disruption to avoid reproducing the authoritarian tendencies characteristic of Mexico's political culture. Stressing the unavoidability of diversity and complexity, Ferguson (2012) argues for a multilayered identity to combat propensities to reduce the subject of democracy to a singular construction. By eluding simplistic categorisations and employing plural aesthetics to produce affective ties, this new style offered a glimpse of what Sharing Democracy might look like. Favela (2015b, p. 222), clearly articulates a vision of this possibility in her work, which is summed up in the claim that a generation was formed "in the information, solidarity, empathy, and trust networks" of #YoSoy132.

At this point it is imperative to balance out the discussion with an analysis of the other side of the coin of the new political style. As discussed in Chapter Four, I perceive this new political style as marked by deep ambiguities that prevent us from making any

³¹¹ *...hay que dar las condiciones, no objetivas subjetivas, que es donde yo hago la diferencia, que es que cambie el ser humano para poder cambiar el mundo, no como antes se planteaba, cambiemos al estado para que cambie los seres humanos, es al revés.*

unequivocal claims as to its democratising meaning and potential. Further analysis of the assumptions and practices evidenced by this style shines a very different light on these innovations, one that is far more conventional and far less optimistic, but also perhaps more palpable and less rhetorical. I am referring to the culture and practices of Counter-Democracy identified by Rosanvallon (2008) as part of a long history of negative power within democratic traditions which, he claims, is on the rise in contemporary society.

Rosanvallon (2008, p. 65) observes that in the contemporary context, Counter-Democracy is creating a political style that transcends ideological markers. Yet rather than challenge representations of ‘the people’ to create new forms of power and agency, Counter-Democracy reinforces the tendency in governance to disappear the people altogether (Rosanvallon, 2008, p. 23). Counter-Democracy is therefore essentially unpolitical, failing as it does to develop a comprehensive understanding of problems associated with the organisation of a shared world (Rosanvallon, 2008, p. 22). Operating at the level of morality, which is the underlying condition of denunciation, Counter-Democracy expresses faith in the corrective capacity of political institutions (Rosanvallon, 2008, p. 43). Far from putting into question standing norms, Counter-Democracy reinforces them as denunciation “tends[s] to reaffirm and deepen collective norms and values” (Rosanvallon, 2008, p. 45). Finally, Counter-Democracy involves the expression of discontent but does not contain any constructive ambitions (Rosanvallon, 2008, p. 170). It is therefore limited to instances of veto power, cohering around a more or less empty “ideology of transparency” instead of a search for shared meaning, Truth or general interest (Rosanvallon, 2008, pp. 258–259). As such it is antithetical to the objectives of Sharing Democracy.

As instances of unmediated democratic life, free from representation and institutional constraints, Counter-Democracy is limited to a condition of permanent contestation, and power is reduced to negativity, which is frequently displayed in the form of volatile coalitions (Rosanvallon, 2008, pp. 15, 25). Contrary to the stability associated with a flexible and inclusive identity crafted out of heterogeneous protest movements in the ideal of Sharing Democracy, Counter-Democracy is marked by fragility and reactivity. In many ways, the new political style can be seen as deepening a tendency toward counter-publics as the expression of a reactionary informal body of public opinion whose impact appears most visibly online and in sporadic protest. Such a

conclusion is not incompatible with Navarro Montaña's (2016, p. 184) contention that #YoSoy132 belongs to a global category of democratising movements lacking ideology, leadership and a clear enemy and in favour of local democracy and citizen rights.

According to Navarro Montaña (2016, p. 199), #YoSoy132 built up civic power strategically through visibility, utilising amateur individual testimonies and professionalising content to actively produce, participate in and frame events. Through personable and emotive usage of digital communications technology, #YoSoy132 "acted like a vigilante of the 'moral truth' that seeks a better democracy".³¹² This "implacable vigilance"³¹³ earned the movement its perceived moral quality (Navarro Montaña, 2016, p. 187)—and thus, as we saw in the previous chapter, its access to conservative mass media. Visibility, morality and veto power might appear as antidotes to neoliberalism as the propensity to displace public decision-making onto private spaces; however, it seems that the legal mechanisms put into place by neoliberal policies make governments and corporations alike impervious to external pressure, even under extraordinary circumstances. This is heightened in an elite representative system designed to supplant questions of legitimacy with emphases on legality.

As an expression of Counter-Democracy, the depoliticised moral characteristics of this new political style might have gained the movement positive media coverage and broad social support. However, this same style appears to be impotent in terms of procuring State responsibility and so will likely only deepen popular frustration and citizen discontent whilst fragmenting opposition and reinforcing sporadic action dissociated from long-term organisation and alternative agendas. The current scenario of frequent eruptions of public discontent and largely blocked demands for justice reveal an ambience of continuing frustration mixed with the limits of a politics of visibility for democratic social change and social justice in an authoritarian neoliberal Mexico. Not only do the effects of viral campaigns appear to be both short-lived and largely ineffectual at forcing justice from the top, they also contribute to an oversaturation of information in a context of extraordinarily high levels of impunity and the seeming immunity of powerful public figures to the effects of scandal. Whether by inaction and omission or as a result of elite interests, or perhaps because of the State's

³¹² *Actúa como un vigilante de la "verdad moral" que busca una mejor democracia.*

³¹³ *Vigilancia implacable.*

ultimate monopoly over the legitimate use of violence, the institutional *modus operandi* of Mexican politics continues to combine silence, manipulation of facts and violence to contain dissent. Ayotzinapa is a clear case in point.

In Mexico today, examples abound of improper and corrupt conduct, State-sanctioned terror, an absent rule of law, and impunity. These include recurrent assassinations of investigative journalists, everyday occurrences of femicide and ongoing scandals involving corruption and the misuse of public funds, for example in the case of the *Casa Blanca*, directly implicating Enrique Peña Nieto's high-profile spouse. Citing these and similar examples, Emmelhainz (2016, p. 181) describes a scenario of permanent indignation that has characterised Peña Nieto's presidency:

The media powers inflate situations to manipulate popular emotions: from being in a permanent shock because of the incessant parade of dismembered cadavers and narcoblankets under the government of Calderón, the population has passed to a state of perpetual indignation with the concatenation of scandals linked to the corruption of power.³¹⁴

Observing the lack of outcomes in terms of the disappeared students, the demands for institutional change and the relatively rapid dissipation of protest energy, Rovira Sancho (2015, pp. 55–56) remarked on the lack of organisation generated by the multitude in action: the sporadic, intensely personal and performative qualities of the multitude generate exceptional hype, but inevitably dissolve. Public outrage at the *Casa Blanca* scandal and the tragedy of Ayotzinapa are contrasted with near total impunity: “the Mexican government remains standing and does not seem threatened by a civil society capable of agglutinating discontent in a common front beyond explosions of indignation”³¹⁵ (Rovira Sancho, 2015, pp. 55–56). Despite the great enthusiasm

³¹⁴ *El poder mediático infla las situaciones para manipular las emociones populares: de estar en shock permanente por el desfile incesante de cadáveres desmembrados y narcomantas bajo el gobierno de Calderón, la población ha pasado a estar en un estado de indignación perpetua con una concatenación de escándalos ligados a la corrupción del poder.*

³¹⁵ *¿Dónde está toda la fuerza movilizadora por Ayotzinapa 6 meses después? No se ha logrado dar con los cuerpos de los estudiantes. Tampoco se han obtenido cambios institucionales relevantes. A pesar de la denuncia periodística y en las redes de la fastuosa “casa blanca” propiedad de la esposa de Enrique Peña Nieto de procedencia sospechosa y del escándalo internacional ante la desaparición de los 43 el gobierno de México sigue en pie y no parece amenazado por una sociedad civil capaz de aglutinar el descontento en un frente común más allá de los estallidos de indignación.*

expressed for the potential of social media to bring about a more democratic Mexico, on their own such tools are clearly insufficient.

If hope for change exists, it is not coming from the pinnacles of power but from persistent efforts by Mexican peoples to reinvent themselves in struggle. In recent years, multiple public tragedies have been accompanied by insistent efforts to counter distorting and re-victimising narratives from public officials, by denouncing the cultural roots of injustice, such as misogyny, and recuperating the human face of tragedy through public acts in which victims of injustice are named and graphically portrayed. Such was the case of 22-year-old Lesvy Berlín Osorio, asphyxiated by the telephone cord of a public phone booth, at UNAM campus on 3 May 2017. Before an investigation could take place, the Attorney General of Mexico City released a statement in which he suggested that the victim had been failing her studies and had ingested drugs and alcohol prior to her death, treating the case as suicide and criminalising the young woman in turn. Family members, supported by protestors, rejected the remark, claiming that her death was a case of femicide, and demanded justice (Calderón, 2017). The Attorney General's statement illustrates how the discriminatory distortion of the facts becomes a tool for shaping public opinion and in deciding which lives matter and who is worthy of public support (Emmelhainz, 2016, p. 193). At the same time as indignation becomes a perpetual feature of contemporary Mexican public life, slow counter-narratives are being built up within protest spaces that persistently expose and denounce the structural and cultural foundations of injustice.

More recently, the devastation left by an earthquake that rocked Mexico City and surrounding areas on 19 September 2017 revealed the blatant violation of construction regulations in the capital city and high-level collusion. The collapse of thousands of recently constructed edifices was followed by government proposals to re-contract those same companies responsible for the devastation, instead of investigating and prosecuting them as might have been expected. Such instances should yield serious doubt about the political efficacy of the "ideology of transparency" (Rosanvallon, 2008), and raise questions about the capacity of depoliticised instances of indignation to generate substantial outcomes. At the same time, occurring exactly 22 years after the 1985 quake that symbolically gave birth to civil society, the 2017 earthquake once again demonstrated the collective capacity of ordinary people to organise themselves, to supplant an ineffective and obstructive government, and to put their bodies and lives on

the line in solidarity. Social networks became important means for communicating in the absence of State support. Using social media, the material needs of different affected areas could be communicated, brigades of volunteers could be organised, and updates could be provided on the status of traffic, collapsed buildings and affected communities across Mexico City and surrounds. All of this coordination was constantly transmitted through social media.

The events of the day and their aftermath are demonstrative of the gap between the political inefficacies of Mexican institutions in protecting citizens' lives and securing their basic material needs on the one hand, and the solidarity and grassroots organisational capacity of Mexicans on the other. Through social media it was possible to witness the solidarity of the people with one another, exemplified in vast supplies of medicine, food, water and rescuing tools donated by ordinary people in the effective absence of government or corporate support. The memory of the quake will undoubtedly contribute to the narrative of democratic self-organisation 'from below'. It also adds one more example of an absent State to the memory bank of complicities and corruption attributable to politics from above.

Concluding remarks

What remains then, is the reference and the memory, although not the social base of the movement. Nor do the objectives or the program exist, as they were constructed in 2012. However, there is the reverberating echo of an autonomous and independent movement, political but not partisan.³¹⁶

— Guadalupe Olivier Téllez and Sergio Tamayo (2015, p. 156)

This chapter explored participants' sense of personal transformation as part of their experience of the movement. Through deliberative processes participants came to know more about themselves, the singularity of their standpoint, and the genuine intentions of their adversaries-cum-allies, helping to undermine divisions and prejudices. By putting their ideals into practice, participants also confronted inertia, predetermination and fatalism, generating a sense of collective agency that can only be

³¹⁶ *Están, pues, el referente y la memoria, aunque no la base social del movimiento. Tampoco están ya los objetivos, ni el programa, tal y como se constituyeron en el año 2012. Sin embargo, está el eco reverberante de un movimiento autónomo e independiente, político aunque partidista.*

realised in struggle. Rather than transforming society at large or the political institutions in particular, #YoSoy132 transformed the individuals that participated in it, challenging preconceptions and stigmas, confronting and negotiating internal antagonisms, and altering the image of youth and protest in contemporary Mexico. Together, participants affirmed their creative capacity to shape the world and the sense of possibility that emerges from exercising collective agency. Armed with the experience, lessons and principles of #YoSoy132, participants continue to enact the spirit of #YoSoy132 as the desire to transform Mexico.

For a brief moment, #YoSoy132 promised to change the political climate of the country. Spilling out onto the streets and into the collective imaginary as an example of indignation transformed into action, the essence of #YoSoy132 was a shared sense of responsibility and a burning desire to make change happen. As a result of collective organisation, #YoSoy132 turned alienated and disaffected youth into active and engaged citizens. Despite the movement's subsequent disappearance from public life, the experience of participating in #YoSoy132 transformed the worldviews and aspirations of thousands of individuals in the pursuit of a more just and democratic Mexico. The strengthening of the authoritarian State following an energetic and righteous generation of youth and students who banded together under the name #YoSoy132 has been met with ongoing mobilisations, resistance and dispersed, collective forms of localised and single-issue, political action. In the same way that #YoSoy132 inherited a tradition of struggle, it also planted a seed that is today sprouting a diversity of expressions of citizen discontent, horizontal organisation, resistances and alternative political projects, giving continuity to the spirit of the movement albeit with other names and focuses. As such, #YoSoy132 can be rightly seen as (re)opening Mexican politics to critique and updating enduring ideals of justice, sovereignty and democracy for a new generation.

Conclusion

The movement was an exercise in how we want life to be, more than a democracy, a system for living. I think that one of the most important elements are discussion and debate, for any society that aims to be free... With nuances, with struggles, I think that time will give [the movement] its just place in history and if everything goes well and if the reflexive exercise and critiques are adequate, we may be able to recover something of what we did, as much the good as the bad.³¹⁷

— Javier (UNAM)

What is really relevant is that this is re-appropriated and permeates in the years to come, and not that a discourse of fear or a propaganda narrative around political participation under non-partisan coordinates, as that is what terrifies them and makes them lose control... we left the box, or the idea of an authoritarian Mexico, of this idea of unanimity, of a single country, of a single idea, where diversity is denied.³¹⁸

— Julio (ITESO)

This thesis has placed #YoSoy132 within a longer historical trajectory of democratising struggles in Mexico in order to grasp its meaning and potential for contemporary democratic politics. Higher education was presented as a key paradigm for analysing the social realities that contributed to the complexity of #YoSoy132 and to reconstructing a critical narrative of this heterogeneous and changing movement. Beginning with the essentially divided character of Mexico's public-private university system, I asked: what features of #YoSoy132 provoked or enabled unexpected solidarities across the student body? What were the foundations of the student unity and under what conditions could it endure? What lessons can we draw from the ultimate fragility and contingency of this political unity that have not already been drawn? Finally, given the slogan of an 'authentic democracy', how did #YoSoy132 conceive of

³¹⁷ *El movimiento fue un ejercicio de cómo queremos que sea una vida, no, más que una democracia, un sistema de vida. Y yo creo que uno de los elementos más importantes es la discusión y el debate. Para cualquier sociedad que se pretenda libre... con claro oscuros, con peleas, creo que el tiempo le dará un lugar justo en la historia y todo sale bien y si los ejercicios reflexivos y de críticas son los adecuados, se podrá recuperar algo de lo que hicimos, tanto lo bueno como lo malo.*

³¹⁸ *Lo realmente relevante es que esto sea reapropiado y permee en los años por venir ¿no?, no que se construya un discurso del miedo y una narrativa de propaganda en torno a la participación política bajo coordenadas no partidistas, que esto es lo que les aterra y les saca de control... "nos salimos del huacal" a la idea del México autoritario de esta idea de unanimidad, de un solo país, de una sola idea, donde se niega la diversidad.*

and enact democracy, and how can we interpret its lasting significance for Mexican democratic politics?

Chapter One presented #YoSoy132 as a generation embedded in neoliberal rationales and postmodern sensibilities. Through an examination of larger political, economic and cultural shifts I suggested that an aesthetic turn proved fertile ground for mobilising a new generation disaffected by politics as usual. I also described how the uneven geographies produced by neoliberal processes in Mexico have contributed to a scenario of generalised precariousness and violence, the effects of which have affected the quality of life of the beneficiaries of neoliberalism—the new middles classes and new rich who, feeling the effects of these changes on the erosion of their rights and opportunities, protested for the first time in #YoSoy132. A state of generalised indignation and concern over the impending return of the PRI reflected the decomposition of social life and the concentration of money and power as a result of more than three decades of neoliberal economic policies, and provides the backdrop against which the initial heterogeneousness of #YoSoy132 needs to be understood.

Chapter Two explored the hegemonic development of the post-revolutionary regime based on a limited social contract that sought order and stability through class conciliation, a strong centralised presidential system, and a pervasive nationalist narrative rooted in the legacy of the Mexican Revolution and a unified national identity as *mestizos*. Dismantling and supplanting this strongly nationalist identity would be key to implementing the neoliberal project that would depict Mexico as a modern, global power inching towards its long-awaited place in the so-called First World. While the centralising, homogenising pull of *mestizaje* propped up a presidential system, it also linked the regime to ‘the people’ in ways which have been progressively dismantled under neoliberalism. In a post-transition era, ‘the people’ were cut free along with a protectionist nationalism as the legitimising political narrative of the State and replaced by an ideal of co-responsible citizens symbolised by the proliferation of single-issue NGOs as cooperative bodies or counterweights, but not as adversaries or alternatives to the neoliberal State.

Chapter Three outlined the structural role of higher education in contemporary Mexico as a prism for interpreting the significance of the encounter between the students and the processes that followed the declaration of unity. The pre-emptive proclamation of student unity in a context of generalised *hartazgo* laid the groundwork

for a pragmatic alliance in which distinct interests would be temporarily subsumed for the sake of a perceived larger goal: to prevent the return of the PRI. This nascent alliance was strengthened by a sense of commonality expressed as recognition of the privilege and responsibility of tertiary education, a sentiment that reverberated across divides, stirring emotions and facilitating organisation. A common identity as students was thus a key enabler in the construction of political solidarities.

Chapter Four deepened the enquiry into the effects of the student encounter and the construction of political solidarity in #YoSoy132. By reducing barriers to participation to the lowest common denominator, 'I am', the banner of #YoSoy132 could be appropriated for the purposes of speaking out or intervening in public life. Notwithstanding aspirations to individualised egalitarian freedoms bound up in the notion of self-representation, it was typically those with access to resources and know-how who were best positioned to influence the self-understanding of the movement on the national stage. The new style simultaneously enabled the possibility for critically rethinking cultural aspects of democracy in ways that suggest both the permeation of neoliberal cultural sensibilities in protest, as well as providing the potential means for provoking subjective transformations through an explicitly critical agenda. The new political style thus encompasses a spectrum of political subjectivities that suggests that no straightforward effects are guaranteed, challenging the frequently laid claim to an emancipatory rupture.

Chapter Five described the integration of public university students into the nascent movement as affirming a clearly class-connoted historical rationale for the movement that generated a bifurcation in the movement's collective identity. The formalisation of deliberative, participatory decision-making structures also provided physical spaces for continuing encounters and debates that set in motion the process of constructing a unified student movement. At the same time, the assemblies entrenched the dynamics of the public university tradition of democratic centralism as a mode for articulating and representing the collective will of the students, albeit adapted to the needs of the movement. Beyond a transparent reflection of the assumed values of contemporary protest culture, I analysed the movement's declared principles as a politically expedient demonstration of tolerance for alternative political imaginaries, provided they did not transgress the established limits. In practice, the lax definitions of the principles masked the persistence of variegated and, at times, contradictory claims

that enabled diversity and autonomy, thus temporarily sustaining a frail and deeply contingent political unity.

In Chapter Six it was argued that within the electoral conjuncture, #YoSoy132 revived the ideals of popular sovereignty and liberal democracy in parallel with efforts to rethink protest outside of politics as usual. Through deliberation and critique, students brought to bear distinct ideals of justice, divergent political cultures, and competing democratic imaginaries on the movement's objectives and horizons. Initially, divergent interpretations of key demands coexisted somewhat fruitfully, thanks to an enabling external context and the inability of any one political tendency to hegemonise the assemblies. However, the loss of the electoral conjuncture raised questions as to the political future of the movement, polarising opinions and initiating an internal hegemonic struggle to either contain or radicalise the movement. In this context, class and ideological conflicts resurged giving way to 'deaf ears' and 'false debates'. A strategic student unity prioritised conjunctural interests, which were, in reality, the contingent foundations upon which that political unity was triumphantly announced and then diligently pursued and precariously maintained.

Chapter Seven explored participant lessons and experiences in the formal organisational spaces of the movement as spaces of tension, negotiation, collective construction and learning that helped to politicise a generation. Through striving to reconfigure the image of protest, politics and 'the people', the lasting legacy that is the transformed, politicised citizen and a new-found sense of collective agency is revealed not as a product, but a process. Politicisation arose not out of a self-referential communication style in which each person interpreted the movement according to their own subjective standpoint, but out of dialogue and debate between differentially situated subjects over their collective future. These largely unexplored lessons reveal the ongoing importance of debate in the construction of a collective will in contrast to the promotion of loose organisational forms and self-representation as alternatives for political participation.

Chapter Seven concluded by proposing that the new political style might be seen as contributing two distinct yet interpenetrating possibilities to Mexican democracy, which may in time encompass its lasting significance: Sharing Democracy and Counter-Democracy. These prospects can be seen as simultaneous responses to a series of traumatic national events. The intersections of these two modes of conceiving and

enacting democracy can be seen in the articulation of cultural critiques of the roots of injustice that channel outrage into a growing sense of collective agency, offering alternatives in the spaces of indignation and public debate that are necessary to overcome the dead-end cycle of ineffective demands for transparency and accountability. Hence, as Counter-Democracy functions to denounce specific actors, Sharing Democracy occupies the space of discontent opened up in these reactions and agitates to generate a broad questioning of the legitimacy of the language, cultural norms and social practices that sustain systemic injustice. Sharing Democracy provides an ethical framework for rebuilding public life in a scenario of permanent indignation that is consonant with the values publicly espoused by #YoSoy132 and expresses the sense of collective agency and responsibility that does not rely on pre-existing narratives for support, but actively promotes a re-imagining of democratic politics and agencies.

While this open question depends on further analysis of ongoing protest mobilisations, for the moment I suggest—along with Bizberg and Zapata (2010)—that #YoSoy132 reinforced elements of a Counter-Democratic culture through its use of social media for the purpose of denunciation in ways that heighten citizen awareness and discontent but are ineffective in attaining justice ‘from above’. Counter-Democracy exposes the limits of democracy under neoliberalism and portends continuing volatility in the short term that will likely induce apathy and disaffection in the long run if it is not combined with other kinds of protest and political organisation. Perhaps if a culture of Sharing Democracy that encourages alternative narratives based on cultural and structural critique can be nourished within the spaces of indignation and collective reactions, then the potential of #YoSoy132 might be realised. Transforming unity as a negative moment based on rejection and indignation into a plural politics in which the contested and unstable nature of ‘the people’ permits, and even obliges, ongoing dialogue and debate over ‘who the people are and what they want’, seems a necessary condition for invoking democracy for and by the people.

This research has tried to fill various lacunas in our understanding of #YoSoy132 as a complex and contested phenomenon, and to do so in a way that sheds light on under-examined problems and potentials. My hope has been to bridge the gap between militant evaluations concerned with the shortcomings of #YoSoy132 in organisational terms, and the interpretative literature that celebrates its novelty as a

cultural and communicative contribution to democracy. The purpose has been to complicate the narrative of the movement, giving pause to think through some of the thornier issues related to this new political style and the movement's critical potential for reimagining democracy against the perceived failures of existing protest options. A dialogical reading of these two streams of the literature helps to ground my analysis in an exploration of the idealisations underpinning much of the literature on #YoSoy132. This fraught dialogue also suggests the need for continuing reflection on the meaning of the movement for a Mexican democratic politics that does not fall short of addressing structural barriers to exercising citizenship and attaining social justice, or ignore the causes of the oppositional vacuum that #YoSoy132 evidently filled for a new generation of active citizens. Along these lines, I have offered an additional viewpoint from which to continue exploring these issues in depth.

In contrast to both militant and rupturing approaches, I propose an interpretation of #YoSoy132 in which tensions and contestations are central to both the experience and understanding of democracy in the movement, and to the democratising potential it contained. From this perspective, neither unequivocal rupture nor an unreflective revival of 'the people' is possible or desirable. While the old style of politics is under suspicion from those who hail #YoSoy132 as a novel phenomenon, it is leftist militants who offer a critical perspective on the novelty of #YoSoy132. Critiques focused on the shortcomings in the organisational and strategic capacity of the students reveal a situation that is more akin to the colonisation of the public sphere by a cacophony of private concerns, than a totalitarian imposition of a singular people, of the kind described by Bauman (2013). In other words, the problem is a postmodern one. While theorists of rupture insist upon the movement's ultimate hegemonisation by the usual suspects, they largely omit to critically engage with a whole new series of problems that are significant to the experience of #YoSoy132. On these issues, Counter-Democratic tendencies and the reactivity and ephemerality of viral politics against a backdrop of permanent indignation represent fresh challenges and suggest important areas for future exploration and reflection. I have offered a very brief and schematic reflection on this prospect, as an open question regarding the state of protest in the aftermath of the movement. Further research may be able to shed light on the relationship between viral politics and democracy in a context in which scandals are ongoing, impunity is high and legitimacy is low.

While the new style seems better equipped than previous movements to expose and denounce the kinds of collusions, impositions and consensuses that are under way in the current moment in Mexico—specifically the spectacle of mass media and its impact on electoral politics in particular and public life more generally—the deep significance of such problems was only fully fleshed out through debates in the course of constructing a movement. As a vehicle for transforming Mexico, the new political style of #YoSoy132 emphasised conflict-free visions of individuality and plurality that risk disengaging subjectivity from structural causes of the failures of democracy in Mexico. Although well suited to a critique of authoritarianism, on its own this new political style does not offer a collective alternative to neoliberal economics, nor does it pretend to. Ultimately, neither an individualised participation free from any overarching commitments nor a singular homogeneous and unified people satisfy the push to rethink politics that is opened up by #YoSoy132.

Where the promise and potential of #YoSoy132 is usually attributed to its freshness, I propose that in fact the real contribution of the movement is to be found in an unexpected dimension of the story of #YoSoy132. It is by examining the turmoil concerning its own meaning and significance that we can find its unforeseen potential. The highly contested character of #YoSoy132 offers a hint of a political culture in which debate and contestation about the character of the public good and public interests—the people and the subjects, objectives and practices of democracy—is liberated as an image of a genuine democratic culture. While the unique political style of #YoSoy132 helped to liberate this critical political imaginary, it also proved to be unable, on its own, to provide the critical instrument necessary to begin to bring about the material conditions that are required for the grounding of this rupturing political future. Instead, it is through collective efforts to define the material conditions that could ground visions of democracy within a context adverse to equal access or public ownership that the students could begin to envision, and start to articulate, an alternative to neoliberalism.

What was initially a partially empty signifier in which each person defined their interpretation became a crucial site for the reconstruction, experimentation and adaptation of democratic practices for the contemporary context. As a result of the interplay of internal debates and competing democratic imaginaries in which subjectivity would not be ceded in the finding of common ground, #YoSoy132

presented a unique opportunity for the construction of a genuinely democratic culture. Rather than “hybrid spaces for rethinking the public”³¹⁹ (Reguillo, 2016), #YoSoy132 is characterised by contested spaces and competing representations. The perspective of the encounter between the students therefore offers a fruitful prism for capturing both the tensions at play in the process of forging political solidarities. Here, #YoSoy132 could not simply assume a *tabula rasa* for a postmodern brand of politics; nor could the movement avoid the historical tensions that subsist beneath modern democratic imaginaries and that are infused in the institutional identities and histories of Mexico’s tertiary education system. The constitutive tensions that arose during movement formation are thus themselves viewed as a contribution to the revival of contestations about Mexican democratic aspirations.

Through the tense combination of styles, #YoSoy132 brought to the fore much more than a faulty representational system or the formidable problem of the de facto powers that pull the strings of Mexican politics behind closed doors. It also revealed more than just the immense vacuum left by institutional politics and a divided and stigmatised Left, neither of which has successfully reached a generation with legitimate concerns but lacking collective, political identification. #YoSoy132 also makes explicit the need for experimentation in gaining sympathy and political clout, and the paradoxical problem of the limits of ideology—and by the same token, the difficulties of politics exorcised of all ideology. The exhaustion of the legitimacy of revolutionary ideals on a mass scale—without the full and lasting realisation of those ideals in practice—reveals the need to fill the vacuum of a critical collective politics, something which Zapatismo evidenced over two decades ago. #YoSoy132 ultimately reveals the thus-far-unmet need to reclaim a vision of democracy rooted in a striving for material equality and to marry this with an appreciation for the need for differentiated yet egalitarian cultural and political forms. Innovations will need to be able to mobilise support and generate organisation without resurrecting the martyrdom and sectarianism of the past, or negating the economic causes of public problems in a bet for cultural and political change.

³¹⁹ *Espacios híbridos para repensar lo público.*

In sum, it is the dynamic combination of styles and modes of doing politics that gave #YoSoy132 its potency. On the one hand, its appeal to participate, organise and act for the future of Mexico in fun and attractive ways helped to spread enthusiasm and a sense of agency without the requirement of formal participation. On the other hand, these mobilisations were bolstered by the mass participation and organisation of the students, without which it is unlikely that the movement would have achieved the scope and duration that it did. This emotive and aesthetic appeal served the purpose of communication and the stimulation of imagination and affect, but it was through organisation, negotiation and debate—albeit contentiously—that the movement adopted the very principles that were to be the sole prerequisite for participating as #132. In effect, these competing political logics are inextricably intertwined in the formation of the movement and contribute to its complexity and uniqueness.

Understanding the cumulative effects of democratising struggles in Mexico requires sustained, critical analysis and #YoSoy132 is not an exception. Ongoing reflection will therefore be a necessary task if we are to grasp the intricacies of the emerging subjectivities associated with #YoSoy132 and subsequent protest movements and their potential as an agent of change within Mexico's increasingly complex and critical situation. Any analysis must be conscious of the deep-rooted problems facing Mexican democracy and the particular difficulties in constructing a just future of the kind illustrated by #YoSoy132.

In contradistinction to the predominant posture that unequivocally welcomes rupture and relegates all signs of militant, ideological and class narratives to the dustbins of history, this thesis examines the reproduction and re-signification of historical ideals, practices and identities within #YoSoy132 as essential to the self-constitution of the student movement. Through the implementation of grassroots, dialogical and directly democratic organisational forms, the students gave content and meaning to the partially empty signifier of #YoSoy132, thus rooting desires for authenticity, democracy and justice in a long history of struggles for self-organisation and the right to participate in public life. These developments not only strengthened the numbers, organisation and presence of the students on the streets, but deepened and widened the critique of politics, connecting old problems to new contexts and isolated issues to broader, structural causes.

In the end, #YoSoy132 connected a yearning for personal meaning in a world where promises of freedom and authenticity are everywhere falling short with an insistence that a renewed vision of democracy requires rethinking the collective subject, reviving historical memory and spreading fresh hopes. Notwithstanding its multiple challenges and limitations, #YoSoy132 achieved this in a culturally diverse, socially fragmented and politically divided landscape. This, I believe, has been its unique contribution to contemporary democratic politics in Mexico.

References

- #YoSoy132 festeja 133 aniversario del natalicio de Zapata [#YoSoy132 celebrates the 133d anniversary of the birth of Zapata]. (2012, August 8). *Proceso*. Retrieved from <http://www.proceso.com.mx/316504/yosoy132-festeja-133-aniversario-del-natalicio-de-zapata>
- #Yosoy132 presentará “Contrainforme” el 1 de septiembre [#YoSoy132 will present their “Counter-report” on 1 September] [Editorial]. (2012, August 20). *Aristegui Noticias*. Retrieved from <https://aristeginoticias.com/2008/lomasdestacado/yosoy132-presentara-contrainforme-el-1-de-septiembre>
- #YoSoyTelevisa: Attolini se integra a Foro TV [#YoSoyTelevisa: Attolini joins Foro TV] [Editorial]. (2012, October 24). *Aristegui Noticias*. Retrieved from <http://aristeginoticias.com/2410/mexico/yosoytelevisa-atolini-se-integra-a-foro-tv>
- Acosta Silva, A. (2012). ¿Tiempos líquidos? Democracia, universidad y desarrollo en México [Liquid times? Democracy, university and development in Mexico]. *Cuestiones de Sociología*, (8), 1–21.
- Acuerda Convención de Atenco protestas “contra imposición” [Agreement on Atenco Convention to protest against the imposition] [Editorial]. (2012, July 15). *Aristegui Noticias*. Retrieved from <https://aristeginoticias.com/1507/lomasdestacado/acuerda-convencion-de-atenco-movilizaciones-contra-imposicion/>
- Adame, M. A. (2013, January 23). Pacto por México... el paradigma del sí. Retrieved from <http://pactopormexico.org/pacto-por-mexico-el-paradigma-del-si>
- Aguiló, A. (2015). Las revueltas de indignación y las nuevas luchas por la democracia [Revolts of indignation and new struggles for democracy]. In B. de Sousa Santos (Ed.), *Revueltas de indignación y otras conversas* (pp. 60–73). Bolivia: Stigma.
- Ahmed, A. (2017, June 19). Using texts as lures, government spyware targets Mexican journalists and their families. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/19/world/americas/mexico-spyware-anticrime.html>

Alcántara, A., Llomovatte, S., & Romão, J. E. (2013). Resisting neoliberal common sense in higher education: Experiences from Latin America. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 23(2), 127–151.

Alcántara Santuario, A., & Jiménez Nájera, Y. (2013). Políticas de educación superior y producción de conocimiento en México (1980–2011) [Politics of higher education and knowledge production in Mexico (1980–2011)]. *Revista Inter Ação*, 38(2), 363–382.

Alín, P. (2014, October 23). Manifestantes toman e incendian el palacio municipal de Iguala [Protestors take and burn the municipal palace of Iguala]. *Animal Politico*. Retrieved from <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2014/10/manifestantes-toman-e-incendian-el-palacio-municipal-de-iguala-en-guerrero/>

Allier Montaño, E. (2009). Presentes-pasados del 68 mexicano. Una historización de las memorias públicas del movimiento estudiantil, 1968–2007 [Presents-past of Mexican 68. A historicisation of public memories of the student movement, 1968–2007]. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 71(2), 287–317.

Alonso, J. (2013). Cómo escapar de la cárcel de lo electoral: El movimiento #YoSoy132 [How to escape from the prison of elections: The #YoSoy132 movement]. *Desacatos*, (42), 17–40.

Amnistía Internacional. (2015, September 23). México: La desaparición forzada de los estudiantes de Ayotzinapa [Mexico: The forced disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students]. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2015/09/mexico-ayotzinapa-student-s-enforced-disappearance-timeline/>

Aragón, P., & Monterde, A. (2016). YoSoy132, un movimiento-red: Autocomunicación, redes policéntricas y conexiones globales [YoSoy132, a network-movement: Self-communication, polycentric networks and global connections]. In R. D. Rivera Hernández (Ed.), *Del internet a las calles:*

#YoSoy132 una alternativa para hacer política (pp. 69–88). Raleigh, NC: A Contracorriente.

Arditi, B. (2012). Insurgencies don't have a plan—they are the plan: Political performatives and vanishing mediators in 2011. *JOMEC Journal*, 1, 1–19.

Arditi, B. (2015). The people as re-presentation and event. In C. de la Torre (Ed.), *The promise and perils of populism: Global perspectives* (pp. 91–112). Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.

Aroch-Fugellie, P. (2013). Leverage: Artistic interventions of the Mexican student movement. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 22(4), 353–373.

Arteaga Botello, N., & Arzuaga Magnoni, J. (2014). Derivas de un performance político: Emergencia y fuerza de los movimientos 131 y YoSoy132 [Drifts from a political performance: Emergence and strength of 131 and Iam132]. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 76(1), 115–144.

Ávalos, J. M. (2014). Disidencias juveniles y medios digitales en México: ¿Una coyuntura con elementos de futuro para la participación política? [Youth dissidence and digital media in Mexico: A conjuncture with elements for future participation?]. *Argumentos*, 27(75), 147–170.

Babb, S. (2002). *Managing Mexico: Economists from nationalism to neoliberalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bauman, Z. (2013). *Liquid modernity*. Oxford, England: Polity Press.

BBC. (2013, February 28). Romero Deschamps, el otro poderoso mexicano en la mira [Romero Deschamps, the powerful Mexican in sight]. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2013/02/130228_mexico_sindicalista_gordillo_romero_deschamps_jcps

Barajas Durán, R. (2013). *Cómo la hacen de PEMEX la nueva guerra del petróleo* (2 ed.). DF, México: El Chamuco-Regeneración.

Beck, U. (1997). *The reinvention of politics: Rethinking modernity in the global social order*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

- Benski, T., & Langman, L. (2013). The effects of affects: The place of emotions in the mobilizations of 2011. *Current Sociology*, 61(4 Current Sociology Monograph), 525–540.
- Benumea Gómez, I. (2016). Trascendiendo la coyuntura electoral: Consensos y tensiones al interior de #YoSoy132 [Transcending the electoral conjuncture: Consensuses and tensions in the interior of #YoSoy132]. In R. D. Rivera Hernández (Ed.), *Del internet a las calles: #YoSoy132, una opción alternativa de hacer política* (pp. 207–220). Raleigh, NC: A Contracorriente.
- Bizberg, I. (2010). Una democracia vacía. Sociedad civil, movimientos sociales y democracia [An empty democracy. Civil society social movements and democracy]. In I. Bizberg & F. Zapata (Eds.), *Los grandes problemas de México* (Vol. VI, pp. 21–60), DF, México: Colegio de México.
- Bizberg, I., & Zapata, F. (2010). Introducción general [General introduction]. In I. Bizberg & F. Zapata (Eds.), *Los grandes problemas de México* (Vol. VI, pp. 11–20), DF, México: Colegio de México.
- Blee, K. M., & Taylor, V. (2002). Semi-structured interviewing in social movement research. In B. Klandermans & S. Staggenborg (Eds.), *Methods of social movement research* (pp. 92–117). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Boltanski, L., & Chiapello, E. (2005). *The new spirit of capitalism* (G. Elliot, Trans. Vol. 18). London, England: Verso.
- Bonal, X. (2002). Globalización y política educativa: Un análisis crítico de la agenda del Banco Mundial para América Latina [Globalisation and educational politics: A critical analysis of the agenda of the World Bank for Latin America]. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 64(3) (July–September), 3–35.
- Brachet-Marquez, V. (1992). Explaining sociopolitical change in Latin America: The case of Mexico. *Latin American Research Review*, 27(3), 91–122.
- Bray, M. (2013). *Translating anarchy. The anarchism of Occupy Wall Street*. Winchester, UK: Zero Books.

- Brito, C. (2015, 12 June). Lo fugitivo permanece: #Yosoy132 a tres años [The fugitive remains: #YoSoy132 three years on]. Retrieved from <https://horizontal.mx/lo-fugitivo-permanece-yosoy132-tres-anos>
- Brodie, J. (2007). Reforming social justice in neoliberal times. *Studies in Social Justice*, 1(2), 93–107.
- Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Zone Books.
- Buscaglia, E. (2014). *Vacíos de poder en México: Cómo combatir la delincuencia organizada*. [Power vacuums in Mexico: How to combat organised crime]. DF, México: Debate.
- Calderón, A. (2017, August 4). Observatorio del Femicidio reconstruye la muerte de Lesvy para refutar versión de suicidio [Femicide Observatory reconstructs the death of Lesvy to refute the version of suicide]. *Animal Politico*. Retrieved from <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2017/08/femicidio-lesvy-version-suicidio>
- Camp, R. A. (2013). *Politics in Mexico: Democratic consolidation or decline?* (6th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Camp, R. A., & Cetto, B. (1981). La educación de la élite política mexicana [The education of the Mexican political elite]. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 421–454.
- Candón-Mena, J. I. (2013). Movimientos por la democratización de la comunicación: Los casos del 15M y #YOSOY132 [Movements for the democratisation of communication: The cases of 15M and #YOSOY132]. *Razón y Palabra*, 82(marzo–mayo).
- Carr, B. (1992). *Marxism and communism in twentieth century Mexico*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Carrillo Garnica, O. (2014). Del #yosoy132 a la reforma en telecomunicaciones: Recuperando la agenda de la democratización de los medios en México [From #YoSoy132 to the telecommunications reform: Recovering the agenda of the

- democratisation of the media in Mexico]. *Temas de Comunicación*, 28(enero–junio), 112–132.
- Castells, M. (2013). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age*. Newark, NJ: Wiley.
- Chomsky, N., & Dieterich, H. (1999). *Latin America: From colonization to globalization*. Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press.
- Chua Torres, S., Frère Affanni, L., & Zapata, O. (2015). Ayotzinapa, ruptura colectiva frente al Estado [Ayotzinapa, collective rupture with the State]. *Observatorio Latinoamericano*, 15(México urgente: entre el dolor y la esperanza), 20–31.
- Cockcroft, J. D. (2010). *Mexico's revolution then and now*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Connell, R., & Dados, N. (2014). Where in the world does neoliberalism come from? *Theory and Society*, 43(2), 117–138.
- Cordero, R., & Tello, C. (1981). *México: La disputa por la nación, perspectivas y opciones en desarrollo* [Mexico: The dispute for the nation, perspectives and options in development]. DF, México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores.
- Córdova, A. (2012). *La formación del poder político en México* (32 ed.). DF, México: Ediciones Era.
- Córdova Rojas, A. C. (2016). #RevueltasEstéticas: Del #yosoy132 a #Ayotzinapa [#AestheticRevolts: From #Iam132 to #Ayotzinapa]. *Laocoonte. Revista de Estética y Teoría de las Artes*, 3(3), 206–219.
- Corduneanu, V. I. (2014). *Agencia, representación y subjetividad en las nuevas formas de movilizaciones sociales de los jóvenes universitarios* [Agency, representation and subjectivity of new forms of social mobilisation of university youth]. Paper presented at La investigación de la comunicación ante el nuevo marco regulatorio de las telecomunicaciones y la radiodifusión en México, UASLP y AMIC, San Luis Potosí.

- Cosío Villegas, D. (1972). *El sistema político Mexicano* [The Mexican political system]. (1st ed.). DF, México: Joaquín Mortíz.
- Craig, A. L. (1990). Institutional context and popular struggles. In J. Foweraker & A. L. Craig (Eds.), *Popular movements and political change in Mexico* (pp. 271–284). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Dagnino, E. (2006). Meanings of citizenship in Latin America. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 31(62), 15–51.
- Dagnino, E., Olvera, A. J., & Panfichi, A. (Eds.) (2006). *La disputa por la construcción democrática en América Latina* [The dispute for the construction of democracy in Latin America] (1st ed.). DF, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Day, R. J. F., & Montgomery, N. (2014). Letter to a Greek anarchist: On multitudes, peoples and new empires. In A. Kioupkiolis & G. Katsambekis (Eds.), *Radical democracy and collective movements today: The biopolitics of the multitude versus the hegemony of the people* (pp. 45–71). Surrey, England: Ashgate.
- de la Torre Gamboa, M. (2004). *Del humanismo a la competitividad: El discurso educativo neoliberal* [From humanism to competition: The discourse of neoliberal education]. Colección Posgrado (Vol. 27). DF, Mexico: UNAM.
- de Mauleón, H. (2012, September 1). #YoSoy132 y el uso político de las redes sociales. [#YoSoy132 and the political use of social networks]. *Nexos*. Retrieved from <https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=14967>
- de Palma, A. (1993, October 27). Going private—A special report; Mexico sells off state companies, reaping trouble as well as profit. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/27/world/going-private-special-report-mexico-sells-off-state-companies-reaping-trouble.html?pagewanted=all>
- de Sousa Santos, B. (2003). *The World Social Forum: Towards a counter-hegemonic globalisation (part one)*. Paper presented at the XXIV International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Dallas, TX.

- de Sousa Santos, B. (2004). *Reinventar la democracia: Reinventar el Estado* [Reinvent democracy: Reinvent the State] (2nd ed.). Quito, Ecuador: Abya Yala.
- de Sousa Santos, B., & Avritzer, L. (2002). Para ampliar el canon democrático [To amplify the democratic canon]. In B. de Sousa Santos (Ed.), *Democratizar la democracia. Los caminos de la democracia participativa* (pp. 33–69). DF, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- de Vries, W., & Navarro, Y. (2011). ¿Profesionistas del futuro o futuros taxistas? Los egresados universitarios y el mercado laboral en México [Future professionals or future taxi drivers? University graduates and the labour market in Mexico]. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación Superior*, 2, 3–27.
- Debord, G. (1994). *The society of the spectacle* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). New York, NY: Zone Books.
- Della Porta, D. M., & Mattoni, A. (2014). Patterns of diffusion and the transnational dimension of protest in the movements of the crisis: An introduction. In D. M. Della Porta & A. Mattoni (Eds.), *Spreading protest: Social movements in times of crisis* (pp. 1–18). ECPR Press.
- Dresser, D. (2012, August 13). #YoSoy132: Tres riesgos [#YoSoy132: Three risks]. *Proceso*. Retrieved from <http://www.proceso.com.mx/316927/316927-yosoy132-tres-riesgos>
- Durán Matute, I. (2015). Los comuneros de Mezcala en confrontación con las redes institucionales de poder [The Mezcala *comuneros* in confrontation with the institutional networks of power]. *Espiral*, 22(62), 205–232.
- Emmelhainz, I. (2016). *La tiranía del sentido común: La reconversión neoliberal en México* [The tyranny of common sense: The neoliberal reconversion in Mexico]. DF, México: Paradiso.
- Escalante Gonzalbo, F. (2010). El escándalo interminable. Apuntes sobre el sistema de opinión pública [The interminable scandal. Notes on the political opinion system]. In S. Loaeza & J-F. Prudhomme (Eds.), *Los grandes problemas de México* (Vol. XVI, pp. 332–354). DF, México: Colegio de México.

- Esquivel Hernández, G. (n.d.). *Desigualdad extrema en México: Concentración del poder económico y político*. [Extreme inequality in Mexico: Concentration of economic and political power]. *Oxfam*. Retrieved from https://www.oxfam.mx/sites/default/files/desigualdadextrema_informe.pdf
- Estevez, D. (2016, November 14). Mexican tycoon Carlos Slim, world's biggest billionaire loser after Donald Trump's win. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/doliaestevez/2016/11/14/mexican-tycoon-carlos-slim-worlds-biggest-billionaire-loser-after-donald-trumps-win/#56475ded31e4>
- Estrada Saavedra, M. (2014). Sistema de protesta: Política, medios y el #YoSoy132 [Protest system: Politics, media and #YoSoy132]. *Sociológica*, 82(29), 83–123.
- Estrello, L., & Modonesi, M. (2012). El #YoSoy132 y las elecciones en México: Instantáneas de una imposición anunciada y del movimiento que la desafió [#YoSoy132 and the Mexican elections: Snapshots of an announced imposition and the movement that challenged it]. *OSAL*, XIII(32), 219–242.
- Favela, M. (2010). Sistema político y protesta social: Del autoritarismo a la pluralidad [Political system and social protest: From authoritarianism to plurality]. In I. Bizberg & Zapata, F. (Eds.), *Los grandes problemas de México* (Vol. VI, pp. 101–146). DF, México: Colegio de México.
- Favela, M. (2014). En el tiempo de las jacarandas [In the time of jacarandas]. In M. Márgara (Ed.), *Más allá del feminismo: caminos por andar* (pp. 229–245). DF, México: Red de Feminismos Descoloniales/Pez en el Agua.
- Favela, M. (2015a). La diversidad como horizonte de organización política [Diversity as a horizon for political organisation]. In R. Romero & O. Solís (Eds.), *Resistencias locales, utopías globales* (Vol. 102, pp. 155–167). DF, México: STUNAM.
- Favela, M. (2015b). Redrawing power: #YoSoy132 and overflowing insurgencies. *Social Justice*, 42(3/4), 222–236.

- Fazio, C. (2013). *Terrorismo mediático: La contrucción social del miedo en México* [Media terrorism: The social construction of fear in Mexico]. DF, México: Random House Mondadori.
- Feixa, C., Fernández-Planells, A., & Figueras-Maz, M. (2016). Generación Hashtag. Los movimientos juveniles en la era de la web social [Generation Hashtag: Youth movements in the era of social networks]. *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud*, 14(1), 107–120.
- Fenton, N., & Barassi, V. (2011). Alternative media and social networking sites: The politics of individuation and political participation. *The Communication Review*, 14(3), 179–196.
- Ferguson, M. (2012). *Sharing democracy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fernández Poncela, A. M. (2013). Cuando las emociones y la tecnología nos alcancen: #YoSoy132 [When emotions and technology catch up to us: #YoSoy132]. *Revista Tramas*, (40), 177–213.
- Fernández Poncela, A. M. (2014). De la Red a las calles ¿y de las calles a las conciencias? El movimiento estudiantil #YoSoy132. [From the networks to the streets, and from the streets to the consciences? The student movement #YoSoy132]. *Argumentos*, 27(76), 127–146.
- Figueiras Tapia, L. (2012). El movimiento estudiantil en el proceso electoral 2012 [The student movement in the electoral process of 2012]. In L. Figueiras Tapia (Ed.), *Del 131 al #YoSoy132: Elección 2012* (pp. 25–88). DF, México: Comunicación y Política Editores.
- Flesher Fominaya, C. (2015). Autonomous social movements and the paradox of anti-identitarian collective identity. In A. McGarry, and Jasper, J. M., (Ed.), *The identity dilemma* (pp. 65-84). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Flesher Fominaya, C., & Gillan, K. (2017). Navigating the technology-media-movements complex. *Social Movement Studies*, 16(4), 383–402.
- Flores-Macías, G. (2012). Mexico's 2012 elections: The return of the PRI. *Journal of Democracy*, 24(1), 128–141.

- Forbes. (2018, February 21). Profile: Carlos Slim Helu and family. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/profile/carlos-slim-helu/>
- Fourcade-Gourinchas, M., & Babb, S. L. (2002). The rebirth of the liberal creed: Paths to neoliberalism in four countries. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(3), 533–579.
- Foweraker, J. (1990). Popular movements and political change in Mexico. In J. Foweraker & A. L. Craig (Eds.), *Popular movements and political change in Mexico* (pp. 3–22). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, 25(26), 56–80
- Fraser, N. (1996). Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, and participation. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values. Stanford University, 30 April–2 May.
- Galindo-Cáceres, J., & González-Acosta, J. I. (2013). #YoSoy132: La primera erupción visible [#YoSoy132: The first visible eruption]. DF, México: Global Talent.
- Gall, O. (2013). Mexican long-living mestizophilia versus a democracy open to diversity. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 8(3), 280–303.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets and the streets: Social media and contemporary activism*. London, England: Pluto Press.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2017). *The mask and the flag: Populism, citizenism and global protest*. London, England: Hurst.
- Gilly, A. (1981). *La revolución interrumpida: México, 1910–1920: Una guerra campesina por la tierra y el poder* [The interrupted revolution: Mexico, 1910–1920: A peasant war for land and power] (16th ed.). DF, Mexico: El Caballito.
- Gómez García, R., & Treré, E., (2014). The #YoSoy132 movement and the struggle for media democratization in Mexico. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 20(4), 496–510.

- González Amador, R. (2011, February 14). El auge de multimillonarios en México, gracias a Salinas [The rise in multimillionaires in Mexico, thanks to Salinas]. Retrieved from <http://wikileaks.jornada.com.mx/notas/multimillonarios-mexicanos-por-privatizacion-de-empresas-publicas>
- González Casanova, P. (1975). *La democracia en México* [Democracy in Mexico]. DF, México: Ediciones Era.
- González Casanova, P. (2013). Democracia, neoliberalismo y la lucha por la emancipación [Democracy, neoliberalism and the struggle for emancipation]. *Desacatos*, 42(mayo–agosto), 203–213.
- González Villarreal, R. (2013). *El acontecimiento, #YoSoy132: Crónicas de la multitud* [The event #YoSoy132: Chronicles of the multitude]. DF, México: Editorial Terracota.
- Guerrero, M. A. (2010). Broadcasting and democracy in Mexico: from corporatist subordination to state capture. *Policy and Society*, 29(23–25), pp. 23–35.
- Guillén, D. (2013). Mexican Spring? #YoSoy132, the emergence of an unexpected collective actor in the national political arena. *Social Movement Studies*, 12(4), 471–476.
- Guillén, D. (2014). ¿Participación versus representación? Viejos debates, nuevas realidades. Apuntes a propósito del #YoSoy132 [Participation or representation? Old debates, new realities. Notes on #YoSoy132]. In D. Guillén, & Alejandro Monsiváis Carrillo (Eds.), *La representación política de cara al futuro: Desafíos para la participación e inclusión democráticas en México* (pp. 451–476). DF, México: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.
- Guillén, D. (2016). ¿Estela de Luz versus horizonte de esperanza? El YoSoy132 y los tatuajes del espacio público [Estela de Luz versus horizon of hope? YoSoy132 and the tatoos of public space]. In R. D. Rivera Hernandez (Ed.), *Del internet a las calles: #YoSoy132, una opción alternativa de hacer política* (pp. 145–166). Raleigh, NC: A Contracorriente.

- Gun Cuninghame, P. (2017). #YoSoy132 and the “Mexican Spring” of 2012: Between electoral engagement and democratisation. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 36(2), 192–205.
- Guzmán Garibay, L. E., (2016). El movimiento social en los tiempos de las redes sociales [The social movement in social network times]. In R. D. Rivera Hernandez (Ed.), *Del internet a las calles: #YoSoy132, una opción alternativa de hacer política* (pp. 89–107). Raleigh, NC: A Contracorriente.
- Harvey, D. (1992). *The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the conditions of cultural change*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Harvey, D. (2004). The “New Imperialism”: Accumulation by dispossession. *Actuel Marx*, (1), 71–90.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Hearn, A. (2012). Brand me “activist”. In R. Mukherjee & S. Banet-Weiser (Eds.), *Commodity activism: Cultural resistance in neoliberal times* (pp. 23–38). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Hernández Lujano, I. (n.d.). Las elecciones de 2012. Antecedentes y perspectivas [The 2012 elections. Antecedents and perspectives]. *Artículos y Ensayos de Sociología Rural*, 24–37.
- Hernández, A. (2016). *La verdadera noche de Iguala: la historia que el gobierno quiso ocultar*. [The real night of Iguala: The story that the government tried to hide]. DF, México: Grijalbo.
- Hernández, J. L. (2012). El regreso del PRI: ¿Ante qué debemos prepararnos? [The return of the PRI: What should we be prepared for?]. *Análisis Plural*, (segundo semestre), 109–126.
- Hirsch, J. (2003). The State’s new clothes: NGOs and the internationalization of States. *Rethinking Marxism*, 15(2), 237–262

- Hodges, D., & Gandy, R. (1983). *Mexico 1910–1982: Reform or revolution?* (2nd ed.). London, England: Zed Press.
- Ibarra Chávez, H. (2012). *Juventud rebelde e insurgencia estudiantil: Las otras voces del movimiento político-social mexicano en los años setenta* [Rebel youth and insurgent students: The other voices of the Mexican socio-political movement in the seventies]. DF, México: Dirección de Publicaciones de la UANL.
- Imágenes en Rebeldía (2012, June 1). *Gran Discurso #YoSoy132. 1er asamblea. Memoria y Consciencia. Mesa 14. Ciudad Universitaria* [Great speech of #YoSoy132. 1st Assembly. Memory and Consciousness. Working table 14] [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9dkSK1pgzA>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (2015). Características educativas de la población, 2015 [Educational characteristics of the population, 2015]. Retrieved from <http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/app/areasgeograficas/#tabMCcollapse-Indicadores>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (2017, septiembre 26). Indicadores de ocupación y empleo: Cifras oportunas durante agosto de 2017 [Occupation and employment indicators: Opportune figures during August 2017] [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/app/areasgeograficas/#tabMCcollapse-Indicadores>
- Islas, O. (2014). El gran rechazo digital en la Primavera Mexicana [The great digital refusal in the Mexican Spring]. *Revista de Estudios para el Desarrollo Social de la Comunicación*, (10), 75–105.
- ITAM (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México). (n.d.). Misión, objetivos, principios y filosofía [Mission, objectives, principles and philosophy]. Retrieved from <https://www.itam.mx/es/misi%C3%B3n-objetivos-principios-y-filosof%C3%ADa>
- ITESM (Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey). (2015, April 29). Servicio social: Misión, visión y objetivos [Social service: Mission, vision and objectives]. Retrieved from

<http://www.itesm.mx/wps/wcm/connect/Campus/GDA/Guadalajara/Vida+estudiantil/Formacion+Social/Mision+Vision+y+objetivos>

- Jackson Albarrán, E. (2014). *Seen and heard in Mexico: Children and revolutionary cultural nationalism*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- JuanioTigrillo. (2017, May 3). *Subcomandante Marcos*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIW9sS7CSAc>
- Juris, J. S. (2009). Anarchism, or the cultural logic of networking. In R. Amster, A. DeLeon, L. A. Fernandez, A. J. Nocella II, & D. Shannon (Eds.), *Contemporary anarchist studies: An introductory anthology of anarchy in the academy* (pp. 213–223). Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Katsambekis, G. (2014). The multitudinous moment(s) of the people: Democratic agency disrupting established binarisms. In A. Kioupkiolis & G. Katsambekis (Eds.), *Radical democracy and collective movements today: The biopolitics of the multitude versus the hegemony of the people* (pp. 169–190). Farnham, England: Ashgate.
- Khasnabish, A., & Haiven, M. (2012). Convoking the radical imagination: Social movement research, dialogic methodologies, and scholarly vocations. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 12(5), 408–421.
- Kioupkiolis, A. & Katsambekis, G. (Eds.) (2014). Radical democracy and collective movements today: Responding to the challenges of *Kairos*. In A. Kioupkiolis & G. Katsambekis (Eds.), *Radical democracy and collective movements today: The biopolitics of the multitude versus the hegemony of the people* (pp. 1–15). Farnham, England: Ashgate.
- Knight, A. (1985). The Mexican Revolution: Bourgeois? Nationalist? Or just a great rebellion? *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 4(2), 1–37.
- Knight, A. (1990). Historical continuities in social movements. In J. Foweraker & A. L. Craig (Eds.), *Popular movements and political change in Mexico* (pp. 78–102). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

- Knight, A. (1994). Popular culture and the revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910–1940. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 74(3), 393–444.
- La Silla Rota. (2012, May 31). *El Manifiesto #YoSoy132* [The #YoSoy132 manifesto] [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9IF31vxio8>
- Latinobarómetro. (2016). *Informe 2016*. [2016 report]. Retrieved from <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latNewsShow.jsp>
- Leal Martínez, A. (2014). De pueblo a sociedad civil: El discurso político después del sismo de 1985 [From the people to civil society: Political discourse after the earthquake of 1985]. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 76(3), 441–469.
- Lemus, R. (2015, April 14). Editando neoliberalismo: Vuelta en los ochenta [Editing neoliberalism: Return to the eighties]. *Horizontal*. Retrieved from <https://horizontal.mx/editando-neoliberalismo-vuelta-en-los-ochenta-2>
- León Rosabal, B. M. (2015). El espacio de la utopía: Los unamitas y la Revolución Cubana [Utopian space: UNAM students and the Cuban Revolution]. In A. Kozel, F. Grossi & D. Moroni (coords) (Eds.), *El imaginario antiimperialista en América Latina* (pp. 221–234). Buenos Aires, Argentina: CLASCO.
- Lewis-Beck, M., Bryman, A., & Futing Liao, T. (Eds.) (2004). *The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Loaeza, S. (2014). Modernización autoritaria a la sombra de la superpotencia, 1944–1968 [Authoritarian modernisation in the shadow of the superpower, 1944–1968]. In Velásquez García, E. et al. (Eds.), *Nueva historia general de México* (3rd ed., pp. 653–697). DF, México: Colegio de México
- Los 6 puntos del plan político de lucha del #YoSoy132 [The 6 points of the struggle program of #YoSoy132]. (2012, July 27). *Aristegui Noticias*. Retrieved from <https://aristeguinoticias.com/2707/lomasdestacado/los-6-puntos-del-plan-politico-de-lucha-del-yosoy132/>
- Los Brigadistas-UNAM. (2012, June 6). El desarrollo del movimiento estudiantil “#YoSoy132” en México [The development of the student movement

“#YoSoy132” in Mexico]. *Rebelión*. Retrieved from <http://www.rebelion.org/noticias/2012/6/151650.pdf>

Martí i Puig, S. (2015). Movimientos sociales y las convocatorias electorales de 2006 y 2012 en México: Ni revolución de colores ni primavera mesoamericana [Social movement and elections, 2006 and 2012 in Mexico: Not a revolution of colours nor a mesoamerican spring]. In G. Rovira Sancho, M. Zires Roldán, R. Sánchez Estévez & A. López Monjardín (Eds.), *Los movimientos sociales desde la comunicación: Rupturas y genealogías* (pp. 177–198). DF, México: CONACULTA-INAH.

Martínez, P. (2012, July 5). No se aceptará la imposición de Peña Nieto: #YoSoy132 [The imposition of Peña Nieto will not be accepted: #YoSoy132]. *Animal Político*. Retrieved from <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2012/07/no-se-acceptara-la-imposicion-de-pena-nieto-yosoy132>

Martínez, P. (2012, June 12). “Ayúdenos a cambiar la realidad”, pide #YoSoy132 a la ciudadanía [“Help us to change reality”, #YoSoy132 asks the citizen body]. *Animal Político*. Retrieved from <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2012/06/ayudenos-a-cambiar-la-realidad-pide-yosoy132-a-la-ciudadania>

McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 2(January–December).

Medina, J. (2013). *The epistemology of resistance: Gender and racial oppression, epistemic injustice, and resistant imaginations*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Méendez Preciado, J. (2012). El cambio está en los jóvenes [Change is in the youth]. In L. Figueiras Tapia (Ed.), *Del 131 al #YoSoy132. Elección 2012* (pp. 11–22). DF, México: Comunicación y Política.

Méndez Moissen, S. (2014a). Del #YoSoy132 al apoyo a la lucha magisterial [From #YoSoy132 to support for the teacher’s struggle]. In S. Méndez Moissen (Ed.),

- #juventudenlascalles*, 68, 99, *YoSoy132* (pp. 225–244). DF, México: Armas de la Crítica.
- Méndez Moissen, S. (Ed.) (2014b). *#juventudenlascalles*, 68, 99, *YoSoy132* D.F., México: Armas de la Crítica.
- Mexico Solidarity Network. (n.d.). Mexico: A neoliberal experiment. Retrieved from <http://mexicosolidarity.org/programs/alternativeeconomy/neoliberalism>
- Meyer, L. (2013). *Nuestra tragedia persistente: La democracia autoritaria en México* (1st ed.). DF, México: Debate.
- Meyer Rodríguez, J. A., Ríos Calleja, C. I., Sánchez Nuevo, L. A., & Bañuelos Ramírez, R. M. (2013). Significación y efecto de la comunicación mediática en la campaña presidencial de 2012 [Significance and effect of media communication in the presidential campaign of 2012]. *Revista Mexicana de Opinión Pública*, 12(enero–junio), 31–47.
- Miller, T. (2009, May 19). Megaprojects and militarization: A perfect storm in Mexico. *nacla*. Retrieved from <https://nacla.org/news/megaprojects-and-militarization-perfect-storm-mexico>
- Modonesi, M. (2014). Postzapatismo: Identidades y culturas políticas juveniles y universitarias en México [Postzapatism: Identities and youth and student political cultures in Mexico]. *Nueva Sociedad*, 251(mayo–junio), 136–152.
- Moffitt, B., & Tormey, S. (2014). Rethinking populism: Politics, mediatization and political style. *Political Studies*, 62(2), 381–397.
- Monedero, J. C. (2012). ¿Posdemocracia? Frente al pesimismo de la nostalgia, el optimismo de la desobediencia. [Postdemocracy? In the face of the pessimism of nostalgia, the optimism of disobedience]. *Nueva Sociedad*, 240(julio-agosto), 68–86.
- Monroy, N. (2012, septiembre 9). #YoSoy132: Lo que está en juego. [#YoSoy132: What is at stake]. *Rebelión*. Retrieved from <http://www.rebelion.org/noticias/2012/9/155739.pdf>

- Morris, S. D. (2010). Mexico: Corruption and change. In S. D. B. Morris & C. H. Blake (Eds.), *Corruption and politics in Latin America: National and regional dynamics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Morton, A. D. (2003). Structural change and neoliberalism in Mexico: “Passive revolution” in the global political economy. *Third World Quarterly*, 24(4), 631–653.
- Morton, A. D. (2012). Stubbornness and blindness: Understanding Mexico’s neoliberal “transition”. *NACLA report on the Americas*, 45(4), 28–33.
- Motta, S. C. & Cole, M. (2014). *Constructing twenty-first century socialism in Latin America*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mukherjee, R., & Banet-Weiser, S. (2012). *Commodity activism: Cultural resistance in neoliberal times*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Muñoz Ramírez, G. (2003) *EZLN: 20 y 10, el fuego y la palabra* [EZLN: 20 and 10, fire and the word]. México: Revista Rebeldía/La Jornada Libros.
- Muñoz Ramírez, G. (2012). #YoSoy132. Voces del movimiento [#YoSoy132. Voices of the movement]. DF, México: Bola de Cristal.
- Murray, C. (2014, June 3). Mexico manufacturing surge hides low-wage drag on economy. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-economy-analysis/mexico-manufacturing-surge-hides-low-wage-drag-on-economy-idUSKBN0ED20H20140602>
- mxahoraonunca. (2012, June 10). *2do Manifiesto #YoSoy132* [2nd Manifesto #YoSoy132] [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GKzsDuhC-o>
- Naranjo Estrada, G. A. (2016). El día que todos fuimos presos. [The day we were all prisoners]. In R. D. Rivera Hernandez (Ed.), *Del internet a las calles: #YoSoy132, una opción alternativa de hacer política* (pp. 191–206). Raleigh, NC: A Contracorriente.

- Navarro Montaña, E. F. (2016). ¿Cómo contribuyen las redes sociales en el desarrollo de la subjetividad en sociedades autoritarias? El caso de #YoSoy132 en México [How do social networks contribute to the development of subjectivities in authoritarian societies?]. *Observatorio*, 10(Especial), 176–201.
- Noriega Chávez, M. (2010). Sistema educativo mexicano y organismos internacionales: Banco Mundial, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo y Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económico [Mexican education system and international organisations: World Bank, Inter-American Bank for the Development and Organisation of Cooperation and Economic Development]. In A. Arnaut & S. Giorguli (Eds.), *Los grandes problemas de México* (Vol. VII, pp. 659–684). DF, México: Colegio de México.
- Núñez de la Peña, F. J. (2013). El momento mexicano [The Mexican moment]. *Análisis Plural*, (primer semestre), 31–39.
- Ocampo López, J. (2005). José Vasconcelos y la educación mexicana [José Vasconcelos and Mexican education]. *Revista de Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana*, 7, 139–159.
- Occupy Hamburg. (2012, June 11). *SOS Yo Soy 132* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fc7QbFHoJ6Q>
- Olivier Téllez, G. (2007). *Educación superior privada en México. Veinte años de expansión: 1982–2002* [Private higher education in Mexico: Twenty years of expansión: 1982–2002]. DF, México: UPN.
- Olivier Téllez, G., & Tamayo, S. (2015). Tensiones políticas en el proceso de movilización–desmovilización: El movimiento #YoSoy132 [Political tensions in the process of mobilisation–demobilisation: The #YoSoy132 movement]. *Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 79(36), 131–170.
- Olvera, A. J. (2010a). De la sociedad civil política y los límites y posibilidades de la política de la sociedad civil: El caso de Alianza Cívica y la transición democrática en México [Of civil society politics and the limits and possibilities of the politics of civil society: The case of Alianza Cívica and the democratic

- transition in Mexico]. In I. Bizberg & F. Zapata (Eds.), *Los grandes problemas de México* (Vol. VI, pp. 181–226). México: Colegio de México.
- Olvera, A. J. (2010b). The elusive democracy: Political parties, democratic institutions, and civil society in Mexico. *Latin American Research Review*, 45(4), 78–107.
- Olvera, A. J. (Ed.) (2003). *Sociedad civil, esfera pública y democratización en América Latina* [Civil society, public sphere and democratisation in Latin America]. DF, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Ordorika, I., & Kempner, K. (2003). Valores en disputa e identidad en conflicto en la educación superior en México [Disputed values and identity in conflict in higher education in Mexico]. *Perfiles educativos*, 25(99), 5–27.
- Ortega Erregüerena, J. (2015, octubre 5). Yo Soy 132: entre la red y las asambleas. Una rebelión contra el autoritarismo. [Yo Soy 132: Between the network and the assemblies. A revolt against authoritarianism]. *Pacarina del Sur*. Retrieved from <http://pacarinadelsur.com/dossiers/dossier-7/56-dossiers/dossier-17/1205-yo-soy-132-entre-la-red-y-las-asambleas-una-rebelion-contra-el-autoritarismo>
- Ortega Erregüerena, J. (2017). YoSoy132: ¿Un movimiento de red? [YoSoy132: A networked movement?]. *Revista CoPaLa*, 2(4), 159-172.
- O'Toole, G. (2003). A new nationalism for a new era: The political ideology of Mexican neoliberalism. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 22(3), 269–290.
- Palacios Canudas, A. E. (2013). *#YoSoy132: Desarrollo y permanencia: Perspectivas desde la zona metropolitana* [#YoSoy132: Development and permanence: Perspectives from the metropolitan zone] (Master's thesis). Colegio de México, México.
- Patán, J. (2012, August 2). ¿Yo Soy 132? *Letras Libres*. Retrieved from <http://www.letraslibres.com/mexico/yo-soy-132>
- Pensado, J. (2013). *Rebel Mexico: Student unrest and authoritarian political culture during the long sixties*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Pérez Monroy, N. (2012). *El movimiento estudiantil del CGH (1999–2000): Lucha de tendencias y defensa de la universidad pública* [The student movement of the CGH (1990–2000): Struggle of tendencies and defence of the public university]. (Bachelor's thesis), UNAM, México. Retrieved from <http://132.248.9.195/ptd2013/enero/300105764/300105764.pdf>
- Pérez Monroy, N. (2015). #YoSoy132: Elementos para un balance [#YoSoy132: Elements for an assessment]. In R. Romero & O. Solís (Eds.), *Resistencias locales, utopías globales* (Vol. 102, pp. 139–154). México: STUNAM.
- Pineda, C. E. (2012). De la Ibero al 2 de octubre...“#Yosoy132”: Corte de caja [From Ibero to 2nd of October...“#YoSoy132”: Cash audit]. *Rebelión*. Retrieved from <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=157285>
- Pineda, C. E. (n.d.). Régimen autoritario deformado [Deformed authoritarian regime]. *Memoria*. Retrieved from <https://revistamemoria.mx/?p=993>
- Pino, M. E. (2013). Politics of indignation: Radical democracy and class struggle beyond postmodernity. *Rethinking Marxism*, 25(2), 228–241.
- Pleyers, G. (2017). Los movimientos de las plazas en el decenio 2010: Más allá de los “nuevos movimientos sociales” [The movements of the squares in the decade 2010: Beyond “new social movements”]. *Movimientos*, 1(enero–julio), 80–105.
- Portillo, M. (2014). Mediaciones tecnocomunicativas, movilizaciones globales y disputas por la visibilidad en el espacio público: Análisis del surgimiento del #YoSoy132 [Technocommunicative mediations, global mobilisations and disputes for visibility in the public space: Analysis of the emergence of #YoSoy132.] *Argumentos*, 27, 173–190.
- Portillo, M., Urteaga, M., González, Y., Aguilera, Ó., & Feixa, C. (2012). De la Generación X a la Generación @: Trazos transicionales e identidades juveniles en América Latina [From Generation X to Generation @: Transitional delineations and youth identities in Latin America]. *Última Década*, 20(37), 137–174.

- Prentoulis, M., & Thomassen, L. (2014). Autonomy and hegemony in the squares: The 2011 protests in Greece and Spain. In A. Kioupkiolis & G. Katsambekis (Eds.), *Radical democracy and collective movements today: The biopolitics of the multitude versus the hegemony of the people* (pp. 213–234). Surrey, England: Ashgate.
- Preston, J. & Dillon, S. (2004). *Opening Mexico: The making of a democracy*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- R3CR3O. (2012, May 14). *131 alumnos de la Ibero responden* [131 students from Ibero respond] [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7XbocXsFkI>
- Raby, D. L., & Donís, M. (1989). Ideología y construcción del Estado: La función política de la educación rural en México: 1921–1935 [Ideology and State construction: The political function of rural education in Mexico: 1921–1935]. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 51(2), 305–320.
- Ramón, J. A. (2018, January 9). En su peor nivel de 30 años, el poder adquisitivo de salarios mínimos: UNAM [At its worst level in 30 years, purchasing power of minimum wages: UNAM]. *La Jornada*. Retrieved from <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2018/01/10/politica/013n3pol>
- Read, J. (2009). A genealogy of homo-economicus: Neoliberalism and the production of subjectivity. *Foucault Studies*, 6(February), 25–36.
- Reguillo, R. (2013). Disidencia: Frente al desorden de las cajas abiertas—México, breve y precario mapa de lo imposible [Dissidence: Facing the disorder of the open boxes—Mexico, brief and precarious map of the impossible]. *Disidencia*, 10(2), 1–12.
- Reguillo, R. (2016). *A 4 años del #YoSoy132: “Juventudes y Movimientos Sociales”* [4 years after #YoSoy132: “Youth and social movements”] [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSBZXPH6sY8>

- Reguillo-Cruz, R. (2007). Instituciones desafiadas. Subjetividades juveniles: Territorios en reconfiguración [Challenged institutions. Youth subjectivities: Territories in reconfiguration]. *Análisis Plural*, (primer semestre), 211–230.
- Revueltas, A. (1993). Las reformas del Estado en México: Del Estado benefactor al Estado neoliberal [The reforms of the Mexican State: From the welfare State to neoliberalism]. *Política y Cultura*, invierno, (3), 215–229.
- Rivas Ontiveros, J. R. (2004). *El proceso de politización y formación de liderazgos estudiantiles de izquierda en la UNAM (1958–1972)* [The process of politicisation and formation of student leadership on the Left in UNAM (1958–1972)]. (Doctoral dissertation). Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, UNAM, México.
- Rivera Hernández, R. D. (2016). Carnavalización de la protesta y cine político: Artistas Aliados y el Frente Autónomo Audiovisual #YoSoy132 [Carnivalisation of protest and political cinema: Allied Artists and the Autonomous Audiovisual Front #YoSoy132]. In R. D. Rivera Hernández (Ed.), *Del internet a las calles: #YoSoy132, una opción alternativa de hacer política* (pp. 167–190). Raleigh, NC: A Contracorriente.
- Rodríguez Cano, C. (2012). Climas de opinión, Twitter vs. monopolios mediáticos en las elecciones presidenciales de México en 2012. [Opinion climates, Twitter vs. media monopolies in the Mexican presidential elections of 2012]. In L. Figueiras Tapia (Ed.), *Del 131 al #YoSoy132. Elección 2012* (pp. 105–126).
- Rosanvallon, P. (2008). *Counter-Democracy: Politics in an age of distrust* (A. Goldhammer, Trans.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Roux, R. (2012). México: Despojo universal, desintegración de la república y nuevas rebeldías [Mexico: Universal dispossession, disintegration of the Republic and new rebellions]. *Theomai*, 26(segundo semestre).
- Rovira Sancho, G. (2012). México, #YoSoy132: ¡No había nadie haciendo el movimiento más que nosotros! [Mexico, #YoSoy132: There was no one else making the movement but us!]. *Anuarie del Conflicte Social*, 423–448.

- Rovira Sancho, G. (2014). El #YoSoy132 mexicano: La aparición (inesperada) de una red activista [The Mexican #YoSoy132: The (unexpected) emergence of an activist network]. *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, 105(abril), 47–66.
- Rovira Sancho, G. (2015). Las redes digitales y las multitudes conectadas: #Ayotzinapa, México [Digital networks and connected multitudes: #Ayotzinapa, Mexico]. *Observatorio Latinoamericano* 15(México urgente: entre el dolor y la esperanza), 47–48.
- Rubin, J. W. (1990). Popular mobilization and the myth of state corporatism. In J. Foweraker & A. L. Craig (Eds.), *Popular movements and political change in Mexico* (pp. 247–265). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Rubio, B. (2009). La crisis alimentaria mundial [The world food crisis]. In B. Rubio (Ed.), *El impacto de la crisis alimentaria en las mujeres rurales de bajos ingresos en México 2008–2009* (pp. 8–19). DF, México: Red Nacional de Promotoras y Asesoras Rurales, INDESOL.
- Ruiz Tovar, O., & Salinas Amescua, B. (2013). *Movimientos sociales: Espacios de aprendizaje y ampliación de la democracia. El caso del movimiento estudiantil #YoSoy132* [Social movements: Spaces of learning and amplifying democracy. The case of the student movement #YoSoy132]. Paper presented at the IX Conferencia Regional de América Latina y el Caribe de la Sociedad Internacional de investigación del Tercer Sector (ISTR), Chile.
- Sader, E. (2008). The weakest link? Neoliberalism in Latin America. *New Left Review*, 52(July–August), 5–31.
- Salazar Villava, C. M., & Cabrera Amador, R. E. (2013). Heterogeneidad de una irrupción social: #YoSoy132 [Heterogeneity of the social eruption: #YoSoy132]. *Tramas*, 40, 15–40.
- Saldívar, E. (2014). 'It's not race, it's culture': Untangling racial politics in Mexico. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 9(1), 89–108.
- Santoyo Rosas, P. (2015). Para seguir caminando. Una retrospectiva desde el movimiento #YoSoy132 [To keep walking. A retrospective look since the

#YoSoy132 movement]. In R. Romero & O. Solís (Eds.), *Resistencias locales, utopías globales* (Vol. 102, pp. 169–181). DF, México: STUNAM.

Se globaliza #YoSoy132; cuenta con 52 células en distintas partes del mundo
[#YoSoy132 is globalised; it has 52 cells in different parts of the world]. (2012, August 1). *Proceso*. Retrieved from <http://www.proceso.com.mx/315804/se-globaliza-yosoy132-cuenta-con-52-celulas-en-distintas-partes-del-mundo>

Selee, A. (2011). *Decentralization, democratization and informal power in Mexico*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Sheppard, R. (2011). Nationalism, economic crisis and “realistic revolution” in 1980s Mexico. *Nations and Nationalism*, 17(3), 500–519.

Sierra Caballero, F. (2015). Videoactivismo y nuevas formas de ciudadanía: Una perspectiva crítica de la Comunicación [Videactivism and new forms of citizenship: A critical perspective on communication]. In F. Sierra & D. Montero (Eds.), *Videoactivismo y movimientos sociales, teoría y praxis de las multitudes conectadas*. Barcelona, Spain: Gedisa.

Sillas Casillas, J. C. (2005). Realidades y tendencias en la educación superior privada mexicana [Realities and tendencies in Mexican private higher education]. *Perfiles Educativos*, 27(109/110), 7–37.

Smeke de Zonana, Y. (2000). La resistencia: Forma de vida de las comunidades indígenas [Resistance: Way of life in indigenous communities]. *El Cotidiano*, 16(99, enero–febrero), 92–102.

Smith, P. H. (1996). The political impact of free trade on Mexico. In R. A. Camp (Ed.), *Democracy in Latin America: Patterns and cycles* (Jaguar Books on Latin America, pp. 249–268). Wilmington, DE: SR Books.

Solís, O. (2015a). Autoritarismo y nuevas formas de resistencia social en México [Authoritarianism and new forms of social resistance in Mexico]. In R. Romero & O. Solís (Eds.), *Resistencias locales, utopías globales* (Vol. 102, pp. 123–137). DF, México: STUNAM.

- Solís, O. (2015b). *El fin de la era en la UNAM* [The end of an era at UNAM]. DF, México: STUNAM.
- Sosa Plata, G. & Gómez García, R. (2013). En el país Televisa [In the country of Televisa]. In O. Rincón (Ed.), *Zapping TV: El paisaje de la tele latina* (pp. 83–98). Bogotá, Colombia: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Szolucha, A. (2013). No stable ground: Living real democracy in Occupy. *Interface*, 5(2), 18–38.
- Tamayo, S. (2011). Privatización y universidad pública [Privatisation and the public university]. *Sociológica*, 26(73 mayo–agosto), 267–273.
- Tamayo, S. (2016). El movimiento estudiantil. De la ciudadanía civil a la social contra la privatización de la educación. [The student movement. From civil to social citizenship against the privatisation of education]. In G. Olivier (Ed.), *Educación, política y movimientos sociales* (pp. 83–124). México: UAM, Azcapotzalco.
- Tejerina, B., Perugorría, I., Benski T., & Langman, L. (2013). From indignation to occupation: A new wave of global mobilization. *Current Sociology*, 61(4 Current Sociology Monograph), 377–392.
- Todo Marketing Politico [todomktpolitico]. (2012, June 26). *México: Lanzas spot emocional—Peña Nieto es momento de México* [Mexico: Launch emotional spot—Peña Nieto, Mexico's moment] [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLj5bwCXFDo>
- Todos somos IPN. (2014, septiembre 27). En respuesta a las calumnias de Yoloxochitl TODO EL IPN AL PARO, AG de Representantes 28 sept. 12 hrs. ESIA Zacatenco. [In response to the slander of Yoloxochitl, ALL OF IPN ON STRIKE, General Assembly of representatives, Sept. 28, 12pm]. Retrieved from: <https://todossomospolitecnico.wordpress.com/2014/09/>
- Tormey, S. (2015). *The end of representative politics*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

- Torres Nabel, L. C. (2015). ¿Quién programa las redes sociales en Internet? El caso de Twitter en el movimiento #YoSoy132 en México [Who programs social networks on the Internet? The case of Twitter and the #YoSoy132 movement in Mexico]. *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 73(2), 1–12.
- Treré, E. (2016). The dark side of digital politics: Understanding the algorithmic manufacturing of consent and the hindering of online dissidence. *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*, 47(1).
- Tuirán, R., & Muñoz, C. (2010). La política de educación superior: Trayectoria reciente y escenarios futuros [Politics of higher education: Recent trajectories and future scenarios]. In A. Arnaut & S. Giorguli (Eds.), *Los grandes problemas de México* (Vol. VII, pp. 359–390). DF, México: Colegio de México.
- UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). (n.d.) Lema [Motto]. Retrieved from <https://www.unam.mx/acerca-de-la-unam/identidad-unam/lema>
- van Tienhoven, A. G. (2013, September 9). Momento de México: Ahora o nunca. *Forbes México*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com.mx/momento-de-mexico-ahora-o-nunca>
- Vázquez-Arroyo, A., Y. (2008). Liberal democracy and neoliberalism: A critical juxtaposition. *New Political Science*, 30(2), 127–159.
- Villamil, J. (2012). *Peña Nieto: El gran montaje* [Peña Nieto: The great farce]. DF, México: Random House Mondadori.
- Walker, L., E. (2013). *Waking from the dream: Mexico's middle classes after 1968*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Williamson, E. (2009). *The Penguin history of Latin America*, London: Penguin Group.
- Wolfson, T. (2014). *Digital rebellion: The birth of the cyber Left*. Springfield, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Wood, L. J. (2012). Direct action, deliberation and diffusion: Collective action after the WTO protests at Seattle. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolin, S. S. (1994). Fugitive democracy. *Constellations*, 1(1), 11–25.

World Bank. (2018a). Income share held by highest 20% (Mexico). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.DST.05TH.20?locations=MX>

World Bank. (2018b). Income share held by lowest 10% (Mexico). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.DST.FRST.10?locations=MX&page=1>

World Bank. (2018c). Income share held by second highest 20% (Mexico). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.DST.02ND.20?end=2004&locations=MX&start=1984&view=chart>

Zapata, F. (2010). Movimientos sociales y conflicto laboral en el siglo XX [Social movements and labour conflict in the 20th century]. In I. Bizberg & F. Zapata (Eds.), *Los grandes problemas de México* (pp. 21–60). DF, México: Colegio de México.

Appendix 1: Ethics approval

21 May 2014

Associate Professor Estela Valverde

Department of International Studies

Faculty of Arts

Macquarie University

NSW 2109

Dear Associate Professor Valverde

Re: Conscientisation and praxis in the Mexican student movement #YoSoy132 (Ref: 5201300570)

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response was reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Human Sciences and Humanities) using the online review system.

This research meets the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and your application has been approved.

Details of this approval are as follows:

Reference No: 5201300570

Approval Date: 21 May 2014

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

The following documentation have been reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities):

Documents reviewed	Version no.	Date
Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Application	2.3	July 2013
Correspondence from A/Prof Valverde addressing the HREC's feedback		12 May 2014
Research to be Undertaken Outside Australia Form		
Participant Information (English & Spanish versions)	2.3	July 2013
Interview Participation Advertisement, including sample interview questions (English & Spanish versions)	2.3	July 2013
Interview Questions		
Correspondence from A/Prof Valverde addressing the HREC's security concerns		14 April 2014
Correspondence from Ms Dixon addressing the HREC's feedback		13 April 2014

Please ensure that all documentation has a version number and date in future correspondence with the Committee.

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the *National Statement*, which is available at the following website:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research>

2. Approval is for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval of this protocol.

3. All adverse events must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

4. Proposed changes to the protocol must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.

It is the responsibility of the Chief investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat should you have any questions regarding your ethics application.

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K White', written in a cursive style.

Dr Karolyn White

Director, Research Ethics & Integrity

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (the National Statement) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.