CHAPTER 2

Indigeneity, Insurgency and Resistance: *El violín* (2006) and *Corazón del tiempo* (2009)

Hay muchas realidades que no están tocadas en nuestro cine y merecen ser retratadas y reflejadas … A mí me interesaba el tema campesino, el indígena, el México rural que no se ve en el cine. (Carrasco Araizaga *2007, 42)*
There are many realities that are not touched upon in our cinema and they deserve to be reflected and represented. I was interested in the subject of the indigenous land-worker [and] a rural Mexico that is not seen in film. (Francisco Vargas, *filmmaker)*

The mid-1990s, leading up to the new millennium, saw dramatic changes to the nation's political landscape. The consolidation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), alongside the implementation of neoliberal economic policies spearheaded by the often-termed technocratic presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, formed the catalyst for a declaration of war made by an insurgency, which, although localized in its initial stages, went on to become an international phenomenon aligned with alter-globalization and anti-neoliberal movements across continents.

On the January 1, 1994, a date that secured a dramatic shift in the nation's political consciousness, a masked group of insurgents took the towns of Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Oxchuc, Huixtán, Chanal and San Cristóbal de las Casas, located in the region of Chiapas. That same day at 7.30 pm, a spokesperson, who would become known as

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Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, addressed members of the national press from the steps of the Palacio Nacional in San Cristóbal. Wearing ski masks, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) burst onto the world stage to proclaim its demands, and ensured its position over the ensuing months as the focal point of national and international media speculation. Both public and press opinions oscillated between enthrallment and caution, and the interest in the EZLN's motives continued to grow throughout that same and subsequent years. The visual allure of the movement's apparent uniformity in the form of ski masks, and, most of all, the romantic assertions of a revolutionary figure who reached out to the masses through the use of the spoken and written word, fed the public's desire for an alternative political voice, within a system that was seen to have become cynical in its maneuverings and was perceived as outdated. The EZLN and its spokesperson turned to the national and international media as a platform for courting public opinion, thus securing the movement's political and ideological demands (among these the right to indigenous autonomy and self-governorship) as central to mainstream debate. During the months following the uprising of January 1994, images of Subcomandante Marcos would find their way onto various domains, from the traditional photographic depictions in the press, to replicas on miscellaneous surfaces such as postcards, t-shirts, posters, cards, fabricated dolls, pins and other such duplicated items of remembrance. The consumption of Marcos' image on a vast scale during the early years of the EZLN's relationship with the media points toward the rise in supply and demand in terms of visual replicas of rebellion experienced toward the end of the twentieth century. Despite the increasingly produced and rapidly consumed photographic images of the rebels, coupled with a growing interest on the subject matter by documentary filmmakers, fiction films, however, took more than a decade after the uprising to represent the mid-1990s indigenous insurgency in Mexico. Initially, these observations were made tentatively, using allegory as a marker of context, whereby rebel and military conflict was set in an undefined rural locality, as seen, for example, in Francisco Vargas' *El violín* (*The Violin*) released in 2006. Several years later, Mexican cinema finally tackled the mimetic interpretation of the 1994 indigenous resistance movement in Alberto Cortés' *Corazón del tiempo* (*Heart of Time*) (2009). Although subtle references to the presence of a guerrilla insurgency existed in the Mexican filmmaking of the early 2000s, seen, for example, in María Novaro's *Sin dejar huella* (*Without Limits*) (2000), which dedicates a tongue-in-cheek final scene to showing

the character of Ana posing next to her "ideal man": a life-sized cardboard copy of Subcomandante Marcos. And later Alfonso Cuarón's perceptive lens in *Y tu mamá también* (*And Your Mother Too*) (2001) engages in discreet observations on the increased presence of military personnel in Mexico's rural areas through his representation of military checkpoints en route to the destination of *la boca del cielo* (Heaven's Mouth). In addition to these observations, Cuarón introduces the subject of indigenous rebellion to the narrative in an early reference to the protagonist Julio's sister, Manuela, a student activist who is momentarily shown at a rally in Mexico City in aid of the indigenous resistance movement in Chiapas. These instances of recognition, moreover, act as asides to the overall narrative contents, merely serving as filmic pauses to reflect on the condition of the nation, without fully engaging with or analyzing the cultural context. The indigenous uprisings, it seems, remain on the fringes of consideration for these films. It was not until the making of *El violín*, and later *Corazón del tiempo*, however, that this thematic taboo was finally challenged and, eventually, broken.

El violín

Although the subject of a number of recent documentaries, the representation of indigenous resistance movements in Mexico has received little attention within the realms of fiction films until the making of *El violín*. Vargas' *opera prima* broke with previous cinematic taboos by addressing the thorny issue of governmental oppression of indigenous communities, while placing its narrative in an undisclosed spatial location, set amid an undetermined moment in history. Notwithstanding, Vargas' camera lens remains sharply focused on issues of military repression, indigenous displacement and the unerring spirit of resistance at the core of the film's main characters. The focus of investigation in this chapter will address the significance of this seminal piece of contemporary cinema, alongside an analysis of *Corazón del tiempo* later on, taking into consideration their observations on the discourses of resistance, amid the socially evolving, yet paradoxically consistent, world of the indigenous subject. *El violín*'s narrative speaks of contemporary Mexico's fragile sense of national identity, which is selective in its recognition of national subjects, wherein mainstream political representation (and therefore visibility) is determined by notions of race and class, alongside an imaginary sense of indigeneity. In these narratives, we find filmic explorations of oral traditions as agencies of

image of a gullible Plutarco signing a blank piece of paper, discussed earlier by Bellinghausen. Plutarco in this case is encouraged to sign over his lands as he is watched by a smiley Patrón, who is reassuring him of his trustworthiness and good business intentions. This scene also acts as an indicator of Lucio's future rebellion since the child is not entirely convinced by the Patrón, nor his words of assurance, and is witness to the loss of his inherited lands. The boy's observation of the loss of his inheritance provides the audience with a clue as to Lucio's future insurgency, confirming his father's earlier comments that he will eventually become "más cabrón que tú y yo" (braver than you or I). Encapsulated in the image of this little boy exists the hope of a better future for the campesino subject after decades of struggle, of possible future indigenous dissidence and of perhaps a better way of life lived with dignity and in peace.

Corazón del tiempo (2009)

It is with this same aspiration that the 1994 Zapatista declarations were made and one that drives the ideological framework for the narrative of Alberto Cortés' *Corazón del tiempo.* Although predominantly a love story between a young campesina living in an autonomous community overseen by the Junta del Buen Gobierno (Good Government Junta) and an EZLN rebel, who is living in the Lacandon jungle, Cortés' film narrates the everyday lives of the villagers, their constant threat of military aggression and their striving for a better and self-governing form of existence. *Corazón del tiempo* is an important and interesting film within the trajectory of filmic representations of indigenous insurgency in Mexico. Firstly, a portion of its source of funding and the initial film treatment speak of a project that works in alignment with the context of its narrative, drawing from the expertise of the campesinos themselves, the Junta del Buen Gobierno and the EZLN as consultative agencies that shape the production. This approach to filmmaking in turn mimics the nature of mutual accord and collective input that characterizes the social fabric of the *caracoles* from the autonomous regions of Chiapas.[5] Filmed on a number of locations pertaining to autonomous municipals such as La Realidad, San José del Río, Guadalupe Tepeyac, Vicente Barrios and others, *Corazón del tiempo* from the outset aims to represent the indigenous plight and their daily lifestyles as close to a perceivable reality as fictional representation would allow. Performed by amateur actors, taking on roles akin to their own in the community, the protagonists of *Corazón*, who are members from the

caracoles themselves, interpret the roles in a manner that is both improvised and collective in its execution. Thus, the novelty value of this film lies not only in its narrative but also in the background to its production. When Cortés and his team set out to make a film about the Zapatistas, he did so in strict consultation and dialogue with the comandancia and the campesinos themselves. What Cortés found during the early stages, however, despite his script receiving the approval sought from the Junta, was that many members of the community lacked any cinematic experience which included that of spectatorship. In response, Cortés set about creating a film club, and took the element of cinema into the jungle, projecting screenings of a variety of films from Mexican cinema history such as *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, contemporary outputs, *La ley de Herodes*, to Hollywood blockbusters such as Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski's *The Matrix* (1999). Being part of the viewing process, according to Cortés, allowed for a collective participation in the cinematic experience, from where an understanding of the production of a film could be reached.

Corazón del tiempo begins with Miguel (Leonardo Rodríguez) and his father's arrival at the village, where they have come to formally ask for Sonia's (Rocío Barrios) hand in marriage. The two men bring with them a cow as her dowry, and the head of the families gather around and exchange positive comments about their offspring. The women are excluded from this conversation but show their approval through smiles and congratulatory embraces, once the agreement has been made. At first, Sonia appears receptive to the idea of marrying Miguel, although a little perturbed by what she perceives to have been an exchange of goods being made involving herself and the aforementioned animal. This first observation, although apparently insignificant, proves to be the seed of resistance that will grow in Sonia, as will her rebellion against the arranged marriage. Equally, the animal exchanged as her dowry will reveal itself to be a nuisance to the family and the community, never quite settling into the village and causing more chaos than it is worth. Furthermore, from the very beginning of the narrative the cow acts as a recurring visual motif, reappearing during instances in the film to provide comic interludes and moments of reflection. In this sense the cow is aligned mostly with the character of Sonia and her rebellious persona, often presenting itself in situations and places where it should not be. The cow at times breaks free from its reins and satisfies its hunger by feasting on the greens harvested by the community for their own consumption. The connections between the cow and Sonia are consistent in the film, wherein the animal both

symbolizes the young woman's social and moral ties to her betrothal and acts as a reminder of Sonia's eventual rejection of the arranged marriage in favor of her own chosen partner. The story of rebellion and forbidden love, however, is trans-generational as doña Aurelia tells her granddaughter, Alicia, how she herself acted against her own father's wishes and choice of husband in favor of the man she loved, with whom she escaped into the mountains and, along with others, began to establish a new community. Sonia's rebellion, therefore, is not exclusive to the current day; rather, it is more the context of her romance with Julio (Francisco Jiménez P.), and the issues that it raises, which is of interest to the audience, and in turn reflects the changing nature of indigenous communities set within the social system of the *caracoles*.

Dissidence and Discourse

Sonia first meets Julio in a chance encounter when returning home after a day working the *milpas*. They are instantly attracted to one another, and their growing regard unsettles the harmony existent among their family and comrades, and calls for negotiations between the EZLN and the community members toward the end of the narrative. However, when the community and the EZLN members finally meet to discuss the future of the lovers, once they have sworn their loyalties to one another, the discourses that take place illustrate the changing nature of not only indigenous thought, but also the reexamination of the position of women in society. Sonia and Julio represent the future, and constitute the second generation of resistance, given their young ages during the 1994 uprising. Thus, their lives have been shaped by the struggle and its aims, witnessing conflict and solidarity along the way. They are accustomed to the insurgent cause and to the military presence in their lives which they have adapted to. Julio and Sonia's generation is one that is used to rebellion, both having been raised in the autonomous and ideology-inspired environment of the Zapatista community. After Sonia and Julio's first conversation together, the mise-en-scène shows the cow having broken loose and eating the prohibited greens. The cow's upset stomach later in the narrative, as a consequence of eating forbidden greens from the allotment, acts as a metaphor for Sonia's own lovesickness due to her passion for an insurgent, who is off limits for a number of reasons. Firstly, this is because Sonia's engagement to Miguel makes her unavailable, and, secondly, without permission granted, Zapatista rules of conduct prohibit an insurgent's

romantic involvement with local community members. Sonia's partaking in the fulfillment of her own desires and falling in love with an insurgent make her appear to be stricken by an illness, as Alicia later observes.

The call to a meeting for all parties involved, including Julio's EZLN superior, Capitán Elena, alongside family and community members, is an interesting episode and one which provides the forum for the discussion on the progress made in the community and also acts as a means for questioning the existence of gender equality, and its application to their everyday lives. During the meeting after both sets of fathers have had their say, Capitán Elena addresses the assembly and reinforces the guidelines which stipulate that when a relationship occurs between a community member and an insurgent, the norm is for the civilian to join the armed struggle in the jungle. Sonia's questioning of the aformentioned rule, and indeed of her lack of a voice in this decision-making process, brings to the fore the pertinent issue of women's rights in the context of marriage. In this framework, Sonia defends her right to a freedom of choice. Indeed, her speech highlights the shift in attitude toward female equality within the context of the Zapatistas. There is an acknowledgment at the meeting that times are changing; a more conscious-minded younger generation, aware of its own rights, are demanding the liberty to make decisions out of their own free will, especially in relation to actions which will affect their lives forever. Sonia's speech not only proves indicative of this social advancement, but also points toward the changes in sexual politics brought about through the movement's raising of awareness of gender equality. Embedded within the First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle made in January 1994 is the Zapatista Revolutionary Women's Law, which, among others, specified women's rights to choose their own partners, and the right not to be forced into an arranged marriage (Speed et al. 2006). This aspect of the new Zapatista movement is one that fascinated Cortés when making his film, as he points out:

> Desde que aparecieron los Zapatistas tenían una ley de mujeres. Es algo de lo que va cambiando dentro de la comunidad zapatista: el lugar que se da a la mujer en la sociedad, y también el que le han dado en los puestos de gobierno y mando, en el caso del EZLN, y de mando, en el caso de las juntas del buen gobierno. (Pérez 2009, 34)
>
> Since the Zapatistas appeared they have maintained a Women's Law. It shows that the Zapatista community is changing in the space that it offers its

> women in society, and in the governmental positions and power obtained, both in the EZLN and in the Good Government Juntas.

Significantly, half of the comandancia and one-third of the insurgency in the EZLN is female (Stephen 1997, 14). This marks a significant shift in both perceptions and implementations of egalitarian systems of power in relation to gender roles, and their place within and outside of the movement. As Lynn Stephen (1997) acknowledges:

> The Zapatista Revolutionary Women's Law was widely discussed in Mexico outside of Chiapas and served as a way to bring indigenous women together with working class, middle class and urban intellectual women in new ways. Several well-known and charismatic women of the EZLN, such as Comandante Ramona, also provided revolutionary role models for women throughout Mexico. (14)

However, despite the initial enthusiasm for the new Revolutionary Women's Law, early optimism has been met by caution, and in some quarters criticism, for the perceived slow nature of progress made, witnessed in the challenges indigenous women continue to encounter due to centuries-old traditions within the communities, and the grievances due to the military presence near their homes. As Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo (2001) observes: "[c]reating a community where Zapatista men share power within the family is a challenge that the Zapatista women have to face, along with the militarization of their region, the scarcity of food, and other difficulties of daily life" (125). The conflict between tradition and modernity, between the duty to one's family and a sense of duty to the cause is one that is played out in *Corazón del tiempo*, and personified through Sonia's own inner turmoil. Throughout the narrative we are shown images of women and men working the land, tending to their crops, making tortillas and caring for the animals. And despite the very apparent progress made in relation to gender equality, witnessed in the female insurgents and the high-profile Capitán Elena, within the civilian community, however, gender roles remain clearly defined. We see this through the everyday mundane nature of chores, divided according to female-designated tasks, which mainly revolve around the domestic realm and consist of cooking, sewing and looking after the children. And those which are considered male-designated tasks such as manual labor, the erection of electricity poles, tending to the animals and traveling outside

of the village on assignments for the benefit of the community's progress. These roles within the villages are clear and gender specific. The only place in the film where both genders merge in their labor is seen in their resistance to military presence and in the jungle with the EZLN members. So the scene set during the community assembly, where these issues of equality and freedom of choice are raised, are significant because they highlight the long journey traveled by the indigenous autonomous communities and the striving for a better way of life that continues to take place, alongside the implementation of the Women's Revolutionary Law. However, despite Sonia's initial protestations, her main concern is to ensure the continuation of the struggle, which, as she acknowledges, is of primary importance surpassing that of her own wishes and desires to be with Julio. As she points out to her friend while discussing her future options, that Julio should leave the EZLN is out of the question because "estamos para ayudar la lucha, no para perjudicarla" (we are here to help the cause, not to hinder it). Sonia, therefore, relinquishes her dreams of remaining in the community and of becoming a teacher and instead follows her man into the jungle to become a fighter herself, as the film's concluding scenes demonstrate. Here Sonia is framed in military uniform, with Julio in the background, reading a book on guerrilla resistance in the jungle, having joined the armed struggle. The film concludes on a positive note, having resolved the dispute between the main parties involved, and ensuring that the cause continues with the young lovers "luchando en la guerra para acabar la guerra" (fighting the war to end the war).

Despite the predominant story of the love between Sonia and Julio, there exists a couple of interesting subplots within the film that are aimed at providing an insight into the conflicts and challenges faced by the autonomous communities of Chiapas. The first of these is the story that narrates the events and progress made in the lead up to the installment of a new generator and an electricity pole in the village. Crucial to this is the role that Miguel holds, as the head of the workers' union and a trained electrician himself. He leads the task of transporting the equipment necessary for the construction of the pole and the installment of the generator, and lends his skills to the project that aims to provide the village with improved energy supply. Miguel's role in the love triangle involving himself, Julio and Sonia could appear to jeopardize the assignment, as Capitán Elena fears, but Miguel's dedication to the cause is consistent and without fail; he places his own wounded pride to one side for the benefit of the community. Financed by the EZLN and labored by the community

members, the electricity assignment is a symbol of the small but steady steps of advancement taking place within the infrastructure of the established *caracoles*. The difficulties the villagers face in the development of the project are exacerbated by the presence of the military, which threatens to bring to a halt any progress made, creating logistical obstacles seen in the various imposed roadside checkpoints. These are met by Miguel and his companions with verbal affirmations of indigenous rights to autonomy, and to conduct their own business without governmental interference. The electricity project, therefore, is present in the film to demonstrate the organized and collegial nature of the community members who are striving toward self-improvement and progress for their communities.

The military checkpoints that Miguel and his comrades encounter when transporting equipment for the benefit of the electricity project is an example of a much larger problematic of military presence in rural Chiapas. The conflict that arises from the imposed militarization of the jungle is one that has accompanied the EZLN movement since its initial stages, and forms an important subplot within the film that is worthy of mentioning. Cortés first encountered the Zapatistas and the communities supporting the movement during a trip made to Chiapas to film his documentary *20 y 10: El fuego y la palabra* (*20 and 10: Fire and Words*) (2003). It was during his trip to the autonomous community of La Realidad in 2000, where Cortés was able to witness firsthand the everyday hardships and the sense of hope found in the communities in their strive toward self-governing and peace. In this context, the threat of military aggression was constant; however, this reality was offset by a strong sense of political optimism brought about through the implementation of the EZLN's ideological underpinnings. As a result, *20 y 10* captured moments of anguish, such as those felt by the community of Acteal, which witnessed indiscriminate scenes of mass murder at the hands of the paramilitaries in December 1997, and the daily grievances and confrontations with the encroaching military camps, alongside moments of hope and peace, experienced by the diverse ethnic communities living in and around the Lacandon jungle. In the documentary, there are borrowed insights provided by subcomandante Marcos, as well as an explanation of his thoughts on the history of the movement, offering textual references to the book of the same name written by Gloria Muñoz Ramírez. What is interesting to note here is that *Corazón* relies upon representations found in *20 y 10* as a means of legitimating the observations made in the fictional narrative. The moments of interaction in the film between the military and the campesinos, for

example, demonstrate a dialogic interplay between Cortes' documentary *20 y 10* and *Corazón del tiempo*. Scenes taken from the footage found in *20 y 10* are reinterpreted in *Corazón*, shaping the text within the framework of neorealism. There are precise interludes in the fictional film that reflect specific representations found in *20 y 10*. For example, in the documentary *20 y 10* we are informed that in the village of Nuevo Momón the paramilitaries attempted to seize campesino-owned lands, a fact that is reflected in the story of the community named 24 de Diciembre in *Corazón del tiempo*. In the film, Roberto (Compá Moisés) is a comunicador Zapatista, and dedicates his time to recording these and other events of conflict with his camera, aiming to make a documentary. The footage he compiles provides the viewer with a context for reading the social tensions experienced by the inhabitants of 24, and also acts as an informing device for the continuous provocation suffered by the campesinos at the hands of the military and paramilitary units. What we also encounter is the presence of a film within a film, a self-conscious metanarrative technique that reminds the viewer of the element of mimicry and self-reflexivity at play within the discourses of the film's narrative ethos. Furthermore, in *Corazón* we witness a form of camera face-off, of competing and challenging lenses pertaining to the patrolling soldiers recording whatever they encounter on their journey, and the aggrieved campesinos and Roberto, who in return film the passing squadron and paramilitaries. Both parties stand face to face filming one another, their cameras here, to use Susan Sontag's observations, very much taking on the role of weapons. The mise-en-scène then swaps between images of low-intensity warfare and the potential military aggression, to calm ripples on the surface of a stream where the character of Alicia has gone to seek refuge. Once again, the image of the runaway cow disturbs the scene, and the animal is framed blocking the way of the military vehicles, causing commotion and forcing a group of young women, which include Sonia, to tend to the animal's rescue and move it out of harm's way.

From the outset of the narrative, the soldiers in *Corazón del tiempo* are shown as menacing reminders of possible dangers, and we see this specifically in the scenes involving Alicia. During one episode, where Alicia is by the river and joined by her sister Sonia, the two girls remain hidden by the water, away from the sight of a passing military patrol. The soldiers during this scene are shown walking through the mists of the jungle, and, in the next scene, treading on the campesino's harvested corn. Once more, this image constitutes a direct replica of a similar scene found in *20 y 10*, which

contains footage of soldiers destroying campesino crops as they march through the *milpas* during one of their operations. Equally, there are a group of protesting Tojolabal women in *20 y 10* who are framed turning their backs on a number of passing tanks behind them, an action which is replicated by Sonia and Alicia in *Corazón* during an instance of passing military tanks on the road. Such moments of filmic interaction provide *Corazón* with a multilayered structure, constituting a palimpsest of visual narratives that are linked intergenerically and intertextually. Voices are borrowed from real testimonies given in *20 y 10* and are incorporated into the oral histories of the characters in *Corazón*. Witness accounts of displacement, violence and rebellion are recorded by Cortés' camera in his documentary and then find representative space within the fictional domain of his *Corazón del tiempo*. Together they form a visualized construction of a reality that predominates today not only in Chiapas, but is consistent with the theme of rebellion in a number of rural areas of Mexico and continues to dominate public debate and shape the indigenous plight for autonomy.

Although both films examined in this chapter prevail in terms of their respective portrayals of a common theme, such as those concerned with indigenous displacement and exploitation shown in *El violín*, or the rebellion and establishment of autonomy as witnessed in *Corazón del tiempo*, there remains a significant need for further filmic explorations of this important episode in recent Mexican history. That such a representative vacuum exists, in terms of a lack of screenings of pertinent sociopolitical narratives, throws into question the meaning and role of cinema in a modern context in Mexico. Both Vargas and Cortés have highlighted the need for a debate and filmic dialogue regarding the last thirty years of resistance in Mexico, taking into account the cases of Guerrero and Chiapas as symbolic of such a need for change. That such few fiction films exist which address the indigenous struggle for autonomy highlights the problematic of an industry still hesitant to address these important issues. As the next chapter will explore, the road toward political representation or the representation of politics on the screen began a little earlier than those exploring the theme of insurgency on the screen. In a similar vein however, the trajectory of political representation on the screen has been a lengthy one and it has also been littered with obstacles. The resulting effect, following a decade of novelty and taboo-breaking films, is that contemporary directors in Mexico are slowly reaping the rewards. What we have now is the gradual emergence of a politically engaged and critically active cinema in Mexico, ready to take risks and venture onto previously unchartered filmic territory.

Notes

1. See, for example, Gerardo Tort's *Lucio Cabañas: La Guerrilla y la Esperanza* (2006).
2. At the time of writing this chapter, Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* (2018) had yet to be released. In his third Spanish-speaking film, Cuarón's observation on the presence and training of the *halcones* in Mexico during the early 1970s forms an important part of the film's reflection on the political climate of the nation following the Tlatelolco massacre.
3. A *jacal* is a common form of housing in Mexican rural communities, and consists of a hut with a thatched roof and walls made of upright poles or sticks covered and chinked with mud or clay.
4. An *ejido* is an area of communally owned land which is used for agricultural purposes. The community members or *ejidatarios* individually farm designated parcels and collectively maintain the communal holdings.
5. The *caracoles* (conch shells) came into effect in 2003 and consist of autonomous communities served by the Juntas de Buen Gobierno (Good Government Juntas), constituting the pragmatic interplay between Zapatista political discourse and regional administration. The formation of the *caracoles* was a landmark within the trajectory of self-governorship in Chiapas, of which initial discussions began during the *Acuerdos de San Andrés* (San Andrés Accords) in 1996. These, however, although signed as part of a peace agreement, remained unimplemented due to a collapse in the negotiations process, and a discontinued commitment on behalf of Ernesto Zedillo's government. In 2000, dialogues between the Mexican government and the EZLN resumed after the *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN) took over the reins of power following a historic election defeat of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), which brought an end to the party's seventy-one-year rule, paving the way for a number of historic developments in the EZLN's recent history.

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