



‘Red en Defensa del Maíz’
Sowing Maize is Political: Transforming the
Spheres of the Political through Collective Action

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List of Acronyms

IPE	International Political Economy
IR	International Relations
SSK	Sociology of Scientific Knowledge
STS	Science and Technology Studies
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
WTO	World Trade Organisation
CPB	Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation
LMOs	Living Modified Organisms
GMOs	Genetically Modified Organisms
RDM	Red en Defensa del Maíz (Network In Defense of Maize)
EZLN	National Liberation Zapatista Army
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PAN	National Action Party
PRD	Democratic Revolution Party
MORENA	National Regeneration Movement Party
CNI	National Indigenous Congress
INE	Mexico's National Institute of Ecology
CONABIO	Mexico's National Commission for the Use and Conservation of Biodiversity
SEMARNAT	Mexican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources

Abstract

This paper inquires on how the plural understandings of native maize advanced by the RDM contribute to alternative meanings and practices of the political. This paper refers to the discursive practices and organisational articulations of the social struggle advanced by the RDM as the units of analysis. And follows a case study and semi-structured interviews methodology. This research focuses on how their discursive practices and organisational articulations challenge the normative understandings of political formations and political engagement in Mexico. This work departs from having certain general ideas on the conflict of maize contamination mainly anchored in IPE, IR and SSK perspectives. But its theoretical framework is re-drawn once interviews are held with the activists of the RDM. Then Post-development and Social Movements theory is used to better facilitate the translation, to the academic language posed herein, of the RDM's main practices and meaning-makings. The theories used, together with the practices and meaning-makings of the RDM aim to elucidate the manner in which the latter destabilise the normative understanding of 'the political' in Mexico (e.g., by entailing political participation that transcends electoral politics) while being inherently grounded in the defense of native maizes in Mexico.

Relevance to Development Studies

The fact that there is a countless typical, almost definitive of our times, amount of conflicts arising from peasant and indigenous oppositions to state and corporate-led developmental initiatives involving technoscientific products, in this case transgenic maizes, makes this case study an interesting and relevant issue to study. Furthermore, these conflicts are often portrayed as 'lay' knowledges opposing 'rational' technoscientific knowledge, yet these are not just epistemic conflicts between ways of knowing, but contentious encounters of different ways of being, of practising and relating in the social, political, cultural and ecological (Leach et al. 2013:4).

For IPED, it is relevant to explore how the global authoritative discourses that regulate LMO's (the WTO, the Codex, the CPB, to cite a few) are being challenged by a social struggle that entails locally-based and culturally-embodied alternative discourses and practices.

Keywords

RDM, native maize, people of maize, autonomy, integrality, culture, knowledge, commons, community, communality, shared commons, network, networking logics, politics of resistance, counter-power, humility.

Chapter 1

This chapter introduces the background and context of the conflict of transgenic contamination of native maizes in Mexico. And the questions and methodology posed in this paper.

1.1 Maize

Mexico is the epicentre of origin and diversification of maize in the world (Gibson and Benson 2002; Matsuoka et al. 2002; Renare et al. 2009). When it comes to maize, even the varieties found in remote areas of Mexico nowadays are not the same as the maize found in the same location hundreds of years ago. More than 60 native varieties of maize can be found in Mexico, with red, yellow, white, blue, black or *pinto* (mixed) kernels. Mexican maize varieties are, what is called *regional ecotypes*: varieties that are locally adapted and present unusual natural adaptation to droughts, high temperatures, high altitudes or strong winds tolerance (Gurian-Sherman 2009). Also, maize is an open-pollinating specie which promptly exchanges genes (units of maize's DNA) with other maize varieties growing nearby. The residents of ancient Mesoamerica¹ recognised and used this natural property as a strategic method to adapt their varieties to their own needs. This tactic continued throughout generations of peasant and indigenous breeding, and agricultural practices in Mexico. On this basis, the (genetic) diversity of native maize in Mexico is not an accident. But the result of the interaction between humans and nature throughout more than 9,000 years of domestication and adaptation of what at first was *teocintle*, a wild grass, into a vast pool of maize varieties.

In the current panorama, the rich genetic diversity of maizes in Mexico, the heritage of centuries of nonhuman and human work to bring maize 'to be', is at stake if native maizes are exposed and cross-pollinate² with transgenic maizes. Despite the risks posed by contamination are not completely understood, nor accounted for, the degree of genetic contamination of maize in Mexico, its centre of origin and diversification, will be a major determinant of the evolutionary history of maize and the agro-ecosystems in Mexico, this poses serious risks to the bio-security of one of the main crops in the world.

¹The Mesoamerican region comprised what today is Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica.

²Cross-pollination is the natural exchange of pollen between non genetically identical crops growing nearby to each other (Abrol 2011:38-39).

Transgenic maize is a genetically modified crop for commercial production. It was first legally introduced in Mexico after the implementation of NAFTA, solely for food processing and as feed for cattle, under the assumption that the risks of transgene flow³ were contained. The risk of contamination of native maizes through cross-pollination with transgenic varieties was already a concern before the ratification of NAFTA in 1994. In late 1988, these concerns led to the implementation of a de facto moratorium on the cultivation of transgenic maize in Mexican territory, set by a group of national and international organisations of advisory experts on bio-security: the International Centre for the Improvement of Maize and Wheat (CIMMYT), the National Institute for Agricultural and Livestock Research and Promotion (INIFAP), and the National Committee on Agricultural Biosecurity (CNBA). In late 2009, this moratoria was lifted by the Mexican federal government.

1.2 The Conflict and Defense of Maize

In spite of the established precautionary measures to contain cross-pollination of the transgenic varieties imported after NAFTA's ratification, in early 2001 two UC Berkeley-based scientists, David Quist and Ignacio Chapela⁴, discovered transgenic traits in the native maize varieties from the northern highlands of the Mexican State of Oaxaca (Chapela and Quist 2001:541-543). To find transgenic contamination in Oaxaca was unexpected and alarming, primarily because, the highlands of Oaxaca are a remote and mountainous region in southern Mexico, known for its vast peasant indigenous population, which practices small-scale, subsistence cultivation of maize and exchanges seeds amongst them (*Red en Defensa del Maíz* 2003; De Ita 2012).

After Quist and Chapela's discovery of transgenic contamination, the Mexican government was alerted and it conducted its own tests in the region. Their findings, announced in early 2002 in a press release by the Semarnat, reported transgenic contamination in 3 out of 10 of the native maize varieties tested in the northern highlands of Oaxaca. They also reported contamination in other 15 out of 20 indigenous

³Pollen-mediated transgene flow refers to the transfer of transgenic maize genes into native varieties through pollen dispersal from distance. This can happen in several circumstances: risk mismanagement of transgenic crops and seeds, bee pollination and wind dispersal of transgenic crop's pollen (Abrol, 2011: 40-42).

⁴When their research was conducted, Quist and Chapela were working in resource management indigenous-run and community-based projects in Oaxaca. The idea of testing native maizes for transgenic DNA arose after the indigenous groups working with Quist and Chapela brought concerns of contamination to the discussions in the workshops (GRAIN, 2003).

peasant communities, where samples were taken, in the neighbouring state of Puebla (Balbuena 2002). The tests carried out by INE and CONABIO⁵, confirmed and widened the scope of contamination initially reported by Quist and Chapela.

After, a series of events trickled. The contamination of Mexican maize became a scandal in public and international opinion. Outside Mexico, several biotech proponent groups sought to trivialise and discredit Quist and Chapela's findings of transgenic contamination in Mexico. Eventually, *Nature*, the scientific journal that published Quist and Chapela's work, retrieved its publication.⁶ The controversy in national and international public opinion exponentially increased the uncertainty for the Mexican population, specially for the peasant and indigenous communities settled in Southwest Mexico, the region flagged with transgenic contamination in the first results presented by INE and CONABIO (*Red en Defensa del Maíz* 2012a).

In between the turmoil, the peasant-indigenous communities and organisations that recognise themselves within the CNI raised their concerns in another forum, the National Forum in Defense of Traditional Medicine carried out in late 2002. In this forum the communities declared a de facto moratorium to transgenic maize in their lands, and demanded the Mexican state to extend the moratorium to all Mexican territory (*La Jornada* 2002). They also demanded respect to indigenous territories, to natural resources, to biodiversity and to the ancestral and modern knowledge of indigenous peoples; They refused to the validation of their traditional medical practices by Mexican health authorities; And vindicated their autonomy and their own governments (*Red en Defensa del Maíz* 2012b). At the side of these occurrences, the peasant and indigenous movements were at one of their most forceful moments with the Mexican state.⁷

In 2001, one year before the maize controversy, the EZLN, the CNI and 100,000 supporters rallied in an unprecedented march from

⁵Both the INE and the CONABIO are bodies of Semarnat.

⁶Both Quist and Chapela faced difficulties in Berkeley after the publication of the study on native maizes. See more: http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2005/09/01_chapela.shtml and on the conflict of interests of *Nature* journal: <http://www.gmwatch.org/latest-listing/1-test/10959-immoral-maize-definitive-account-of-chapela-affair>.

⁷The San Andres Accords (1996) are the agreements reached in the peaceful dialogues between the EZLN and the Mexican Government. In the negotiations, it was determined that the accords would be stated in the Mexican Constitution. In 2001 the Mexican government refused to legislate in order to recognise the autonomy of indigenous peoples, a fundamental demand in the accords. Instead, the "Indigenous Law" was passed in the Congress, which is recognised by the EZLN as contradictory to the constitutional reform entailed in the accords (*Red en Defensa del Maíz* 2013).

Chiapas to Mexico City (approx. 3,000 Kms) to demand compliance with indigenous rights (*New York Times* 2001).



8



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Is in this context that the initial forum of the RDM was convened in January of 2002. The assembly of communities, organisations and people that accommodated in this forum became the diverse coalition of indigenous communities, non-corporate peasant organisations, small non-governmental organisations, environmental and food sovereignty activists, and scientists that nowadays recognise themselves as the RDM (see Annex 1).

The efforts of the RDM to defend maize accompany the so-called ‘invisible’ battle waged in Mexican maize fields, the everyday struggle of the ‘People of maize’ to defend native maizes against transgenic contamination. The ‘People of maize’ makes reference to the vast array of indigenous and peasant communities and their locally-based organisations that cultivate and protect native maize varieties and seeds in rural Mexico.

After more than fifteen years of accompaniment of this struggle, the RDM became a major reference of the ‘People of maize’ resistance to transgenic maizes. The RDM, identifies itself as “a space of dialogue, and a loosely institutionalised and organic net of social

⁸The EZLN reaches the Zocalo Plaza in Mexico City. Source: semillas Zapatistas.wordpress.com

⁹Protest against Monsanto. Source: Carnaval del Maiz Facebook page.

collectives” (Villa 2016 personal interview).¹⁰ The RDM articulates the struggle waged in rural Mexico to safeguard native maizes beyond the local, to international and national fora. The RDM portrays the resistance of the ‘People of maize’ communities and grassroots organisations as the central axis of their social struggle (Vera 2016 personal interview).¹¹ Apart from the communities and organisations of the ‘People of maize’, several other small locally based, national and international non-governmental, non-profit organisations, and non-institutionalised social collectives recognise themselves within the RDM and assist the struggle to defend native maizes in different places and spaces.

1.3 Socio-Historical and Political Context

It is important to account for the specific historical circumstances threaded into the development of the conflict and the struggle to defend native maizes in Mexico. I am referring to the persisting, complex and lengthy struggles from Mexican peasant and indigenous movements to preserve their communal land, agricultural practices and ways of living. A radical example of these mobilisations is the EZLN, a socio-political militant insurgency that ‘emerges’ from the mountains of southeast Mexico in 1994, in the eve of NAFTA’s ratification. The movement, named after the guerrilla Emiliano Zapata, is initially inspired (yet not exclusively) in the ideals of ‘land and liberty’ of the Mexican Revolution (c.1910-1920). The preservation of their communal territories, *ejidos*, are a fundamental axis of the resistance of the peasant and indigenous movements. Until today, these territories are important sites of native maize cultivation (Cárcamo et al. 2011:28). Since 1982, following the trickling of the ‘third world debt crisis’, spread from Mexico to other economies, neoliberal policies and structural adjustments have progressively hindered Mexican state’s commitment to land redistribution and to local economies (Duménil and Lévy 2005:108; Mendéz Cota 2013:7). The *ejidos* and the peasant and indigenous communities that occupy these territories have been systematically besieged by the neoliberal restructuring of the industrial and agrarian sectors in Mexico (Morton 2003:11).

Located in this socio-historical context, the social struggle that arises to oppose transgenic maize might appear as an extension of popular resistance to a further expansion of neoliberal globalisation, in its form of corporate-led biotechnology. It is, after all, no secret that biotechnological products (such as transgenic maize) promote the

¹⁰Personal interview with Veronica Villa, activist of the RDM, 4 August 2016.

¹¹Personal interview with Ramón Vera Herrera, activist of the RDM, 26 October 2016.

expansion of profit-driven agro-industry. This expansion entails a very real threat to the ejidos, and to independent, subsistence-oriented agriculture in Mexico. In this light, it is no surprise that the social struggle to protect native maize is accompanied and permeated by the persisting, complex and lengthy resistances from the Mexican peasant and indigenous movement. The effects of the juxtaposition of these incommensurable —yet hardly disjointed from each other— struggles reflects in resonating rhetorics. The indigenous and peasant organisations opposed to transgenic maize mobilise a discourse that is akin, and elaborates, on the prior and persistent indigenous and peasant struggles' discourses. In instance, as Ramón Vera, a spokesperson of the RDM, acutely points out: “in order to keep alive the resistance of peasants it is essential to defend native maizes, and vice-versa”(2016 personal interview).

Furthermore, these social struggles do not operate in a power void. In the current political model of Mexico, concentration of power manifests both in the political systems and institutionalised practices of the state, explicitly enmeshed with transnationals interests. And in the dominant political culture, the principles and logics through which the state acts. Where patronage, corruption and institutionalised violence are norms rather than exceptions. Where the formal, party-led antagonisms are eventually captured within the long-standing hegemonic dominance of the PRI party in Mexican politics, which has endorsed neoliberal reforms since the 1990s (Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2003:1,15). And where the opposition parties PAN, PRD and Morena have systematically failed to displace PRI's multilateral¹² political apparatus.

This panorama entails serious grievances to broad Mexican civil society, particularly in terms of structural and institutionalised violence. As the RDM puts it: “structural violence characterises the dominant economic and political system, and involves oppression, inequality and discrimination (...) the violence traditionally observed in the police and military forces and the violence of criminals, has amalgamated into a form of social and political mud in which it is impossible to clearly distinguish between the world of crime and the institutions of the state”(*No Toquen Nuestro Maíz!* 2014:251).

In this context, and despite the dominant political culture in Mexico operates to buy or silence votes and consciences, there is an authentic feeling of social tiredness and unrest towards institutionalised violence. This manifests in how the most damaged sectors of civil society have

¹²By multilateral I mean PRI's dominance of the federal, statal and municipal levels of public administration.

self-organised to act upon their needs, and against violence, outside the formal Mexican political arena. The protection from what the EZLN calls the ‘bad government’ has been the logic behind the organisation of the people in rural Mexico in diverse grassroots community-based organisations (Baronnet et al 2011:21-22,43). Proofs of this are the organisation of community police and self-defense groups in Michoacán, of the EZLN itself, and of the autonomous communities and grassroots organisations of the people of maize scattered across rural Mexico.

With all of its underpinnings, the Mexican formal political space is where certain sectors of civil society are engaging their efforts to defend native maizes. For the RDM, the disrupted political context “led to the various sectors of civil society agglutinated within the RDM to scrutinise on the performance of the Mexican state, and to rethink their rights outside of it, in order to seek and understand the parameters of a real and substantial difference” (Vera Herrera 2016:39). In this sense, the relevance and magnitude of the political contribution of the RDM has to be understood from the conjuncture of a long-standing corrupted, immobilised political spectrum in Mexico. And as part of the multiple initiatives in Mexico that are following a pathway of mobilisation outside of the formal Mexican political arena.

1.4 Political Economy of the Conflict

Rubio Blanca argues that a ‘international agricultural order’ has been forming since 1970 and it has established a model of agricultural liberalisation in Latin America (as cited in Quintana 2005:1). In Mexico, “the fundamental features of this model manifest in the structural adjustment policies prompted by the WB and the IMF in 1982, which reached their climax in 1994 with the entry into force of NAFTA” (Quintana 2005:1).

Maize is by far the most important agricultural commodity, both in terms of production and consumption, for Mexico. The RDM asseverates that the ongoing crisis of domestic production of maize came as a result of the imposition of the liberalisation model in rural Mexico (*¡No toquen nuestro Maíz!* 2014:50). The structural change that this model entailed trickled severe economic asymmetries for the Mexican domestic maize market in regard to US maize exports. Which increased dramatically and systematically after NAFTA’s ratification. US maize exports passed from 152 thousand tons in 1993 to 10.2 million tons in 2007, with an annual growth of 216% (De Ita 2012:63) that sustains to date (USDA 2015).

In this context, Mexican maize was, and is still, unable to compete with the production of maize in the US, which produces the equivalent to fourteen times the Mexican production of maize (De Ita 2012:63). Aside, the asymmetries become exponential in light of the countries' extensively disparate proportions of governmental subsidies allocated to maize producers and the factors of production to disposition (Ibid).

After-NAFTA's large inflow of US maize imports to Mexico directly affected peasant and indigenous local economies and small-scale agriculture. What partially protected some of these peasant economies and modes of agriculture was communal land tenure and their spheres of political and economic autonomy. Nevertheless, these leverage points have been diminished by the policies embraced by the Mexican state and prompted by a global model that circumscribes to a liberal form of capitalism. Which have been incorporated to rural Mexico since the constitutional amendment of Article 27 in 1992 that made the *ejido* susceptible to private ownership. Then, followed by the signation of NAFTA, and its subsequent scheduling of liberalisation for all agricultural products. Followed by the arise of national and international legal frameworks that allowed the bio-prospection and private ownership of common native seeds. And now, followed by the initiatives of the modern state and agro-industries to substitute landraces with privately-owned, genetically modified seeds and crops.

1.5 Maize is Otherwise

“Maize is not a thing, (...) it is a set of relationships”
(Vera 2004).

The last phrase is one of the most common pronouncements made by the RDM. Several Mexican anthropologists (see Warman in Bonfil et al., 1982; Bonfil 1982) would agree with this statement. Possibly, they would also argue that: ‘maize is otherwise’. Maize is a wixárika girl.¹³ Maize is knowledge. Maize is an ancient warrior. Maize is genesis; various indigenous narratives correlate the origin of maize to the birth of human beings. A classic Mazatec poem recites maize as “our heart that germinates and grows. The tortilla. The world. Life itself” (Regino, as cited in Esteva and Marielle 2003:9). For an indigenous peasant in Mexico the notion of the *milpa*¹⁴ evokes more than just an intercropping system of corn, beans and squash. Maize evokes plentiful and diverse cultural expressions. But, simultaneously,

¹³Within the cosmovision of the Wixárika people, maize evokes the spirit of a young girl.

¹⁴Milpa translates from Nahuatl language to ‘maize field’. In some rural and urban politically active spaces in Mexico, the phrase ‘hacer milpa’ (to do the milpa) entails ‘cultivating maize as a political action, as resistance’.

maize evokes resistance through subsistence-oriented agriculture, resistance to the neoliberal restructuring of the agrarian sector, to land grabbing, to food dependency. Despite it is portrayed differently throughout the diverse indigenous and peasant communities in Mexico, all of these pluralistic notions of 'maize' share a commonality: their understanding of 'maize' transcends the notions and discourses that represent it as a product, or as genetic 'raw' material, or as a staple food isolated from its social and cultural systems of production, or as a commodity whose value is set by global market prices.

The following section explains the questions and methodology guiding this paper.

1.5 Questions

R. Q. How does the RDM plural understandings of maize contribute to alternative meanings and practices of the political?

Sub questions

1. How does the struggle against maize contamination has been explained and what remains under-analyzed?
2. What is maize for the RDM and why and for what purposes is this understanding socially and politically relevant?
3. How does the RDM organise their collective action (in the given context) to defend maize in Mexico? (ie. through which organisational units and concrete practices)

1.6 Notes on Methodology

This case study sits within a set of diverse social struggles and mobilisations involving peasant and indigenous oppositions to state and corporate-led impositions of transgenic products in their subsistence agriculture, local economies and ecosystems.

The discursive and organisational articulations of the social struggle advanced by the RDM are the unit of analysis of the present work. In this sense, this dissertation is structured to assess how the meaning makings of the RDM address and actively engage in the conflict of transgenic contamination of native maizes in Mexico. This work scrutinises on these discursive practices heavily assisted by the RDM activist's shared non-public information, stories, and documents convened through semi-structured interviews.

This work juxtaposes the discursive expressions of this social struggle in light of a set of elements from different theoretical perspectives. A critical feature of the theoretical framework of this dissertation, and its epistemic position, is that it departs from having certain general ideas (mainly anchored in IPE and IR perspectives) about the conflict of maize. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework was re-drawn once interviews, conversations were held with the activists of the RDM. Where it was determined that several concepts of social movements and post-development literature would be used, that better facilitate the translation of their main practices and meaning-makings into the academic language of this dissertation. Primordially, the contrasts between the practices and meaning-makings of the RDM and the theoretical elements aims to elucidate the manner in which these destabilise the normative understanding of 'the political' in Mexico

(e.g. by entailing political participation that transcends electoral politics) while being inherently grounded in the defense of native maizes in Mexico.

One of the social movements perspectives (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008) that will be introduced urge for methodological approaches¹⁵ that this work was unable to perform entirely. However, within the circumscribed limits of its methodology framework this work compiles discrete glimpses¹⁶ which, without claiming that represent the significance of RDM's struggle, may serve to exemplify several imaginative and dynamic ways in which the RDM attempts to re-define its socio-political realm through its politics of resistance.

At first, I was concerned on how to conduct this research. Due to the geospatial dispersion of the network of organisations and communities that conform the RDM, and my personal economic limitations, I was not able to actively (physically) engage¹⁷ on the social struggle of the RDM. Neither of pursuing a network ethnography, as suggested by Escobar (as cited in Juris 2008:297) to “relate place-based, yet transnationalised struggles to transnational networks (...) and investigate the ways in which actors relate to both places and spaces, as they ‘travel’ back and forth”(Ibid).

In this light, the research questions posed in this work are addressed by virtue of three distinct sources of evidence: statements and information shared in semi-structured interviews by the activists of the RDM. The official public statements and publications¹⁸ of the RDM and of several of the organisations and communities that recognise themselves within the RDM. And several unpublished internal documents of the RDM, also shared by the activists.

¹⁵Casas-Cortés et al. (2008) assert that the study of social movements as creators and practitioners of knowledge entail the need to employ more ethnographic approaches to study with and within these social struggles.

¹⁶That being, several critical understandings, ideas, narratives, and ‘know-hows’ shared by the activists of the RDM in personal interviews.

¹⁷The use of critical ethnography could have been convenient. Madison (2011) emphasise the use of this methodology when the researcher is inherently related and indivisible from the context of study. I am Mexican, and inherently related to the people opposing transgenic maize in my hometown's region.

¹⁸This includes the statements, reports and publications made directly by the RDM in the media and in their website (<http://redendefensadelmaiz.net/>). And the book *El Maíz No Es Una Cosa* published by the RDM in 2012. The book's co-editor Silvia Ribeiro argued that the book is the written work of more than 250 persons from the communities and organisations within the RDM (*Silvia Ribeiro: LIBRO: El maíz no es una cosa, es un centro de origen* 2012). Also a second book is used: *¡No toquen nuestro Maíz!* (2014).

I do not use discourse analysis in any of the aforementioned textual sources of evidence. Primordially, because this research is not concerned with a semiotical perspective of the discourse of the RDM. Rather, it is concerned with the manner in which its rhetoric is strategically formulated within a complex conflict with incommensurable notions of the cultural, scientific, social and natural.

The activists that were ‘subject’ of the semi-structured interviews were those who are more actively engaged in the formation of the public discourse of the RDM, that being: spokespersons, book and publications editors and writers, and other collaborators and activists that have spoken actively in national and international media and fora regarding the RDM. Semi-structured interviews and informal discussions were carried out with seven of these actors of the RDM (see Annex 2 for more detail on the interviews). Similarly, the sources of evidence from several of the organisations and communities that recognise themselves within the RDM are from those that engage more actively in the formation of the public discourse of the RDM.

1.7 What is this research about?

After researching the questions posed herein, this work elucidates how the social struggle of the RDM, through its discursive practices and meaning makings, is an actor of political transformation, in the sense of configuring the normative notions of the ‘political’ (e.g., by entailing political participation outside of the formal institutions of the Mexican state) through its active engagement in the conflict of maize contamination.

1.8 Structure

Structure of the present work is as follows.

Chapter 2 presents some strands of IPE and IR theoretical perspectives that are used as entry points to elucidate how the ‘conflict of maize’ is portrayed. Chapter 2 also presents alternative theoretical elements that can better approximate, to an academic language, the political and active engagement of the RDM, as understood by the people that recognise themselves within it. And which are then used to illustrate the research questions posed herein.

Chapter 3 locates two fundamental ways (principles) in which the discursive practices of the people of maize, as expressed through the discourse of the RDM, are challenging the normative understanding of the political in Mexico. Through a careful and close engagement with the textual expressions of the RDM.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the organisational expressions (units and logics of collective action) of the RDM. Particularly, it's 'emerging network politics' (Juris, 2008) and how the specific logics of the political conveyed by the people of maize articulate in the RDM's organisational expressions.

Finally, chapter 6 presents the conclusions and the aspects that could be further explored.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Means of Inquiry

Escobar (1995:216) submits that ‘discourse’ is not merely a rhetorical form or an expression of thought; a ‘discourse’ *is* a practice, and it comprises specific conditions, rules and historical contexts. Escobar further asserts that modifying the dominant order of discourse is a political challenge which necessarily involves “the collective practice of social actors and the restructuring of existing regimes of truth” (Ibid., 217). ‘Regimes of truth’ are “historically produced discourses which society make function as true” (Rabinow 1984:241). In this sense, dominant discursive formations can also be appraised as regimes of representation; that is, images of the ‘other’, power/knowledge constructions that foster specific forms of subjectivity, casted upon the subject of its interpretations, and prefigurations (Hall 1996:444). Regimes of representation are common sites for the contentious discursive practices of social struggles that aim to configurate them, e.g. social struggles challenging gender, ethnicities or citizenship dominant representations.

Similarly, ‘framing’ theory entails that social movements are ‘signifying agents’ which are actively engaged in the ‘politics of signification’, that being, “the dynamic and evolving process of meaning-construction” (Benford and Snow 2000:613-615). Thus, a ‘collective action frame’ entails a broad ‘action-oriented’ scheme of interpretation used by social movements as guideline of their ‘politics of signification’. Frame amplification is a framing process that intensifies or highlights the importance of particular meanings, beliefs, symbols and issues (Ibid.,623). Other discursive processes which do not take for granted that the key goal of social struggles is mobilisation are conceptually useful for this work; these are diagnostic framing and the notion of master frame.¹⁹

Both, ‘framing’ and ‘discourse as practice’ serve as tools to inquire on the articulations of the social struggle of the RDM. This work focuses on discursive practices and uses ‘framing’ as complementary.

2.2 IPE and IR Perspectives: The Conflict of Maize

This section exposes the literature from IPE and IR perspectives that facilitates starting points, insights regarding the dominant portrayal of biotechnology and maize contamination in Mexico.

¹⁹‘Diagnostic framing’ refers to the scheme of reference to the conflict and its attributes. ‘Master frame’ alludes to a broad frame in terms of scope of interpretation, it characterises by its flexibility, inclusivity and capacity to bring together several more specific framings (Snow and Benford 2000).

From an IR perspective, McAfee (2003) postulates that there are two reductionist (economic *and* genetic) discourses present in the dominant representations of biotechnology products, —like transgenic maize. First, McAfee maps and dissects the mainstream discourse of ‘scientist-entrepreneurs’ (to cite her expression for transgenics proponents), whose amplified predictions of transgenics agricultural and economical benefits depend heavily on particular assumptions of genetic engineering (field of science that manipulates genetics). These assumptions present the ‘gene’ as a “stable, re-programmable functional unit of life organisms”(Ibid.,205), when actually:

“What we call ‘genes’ have different functions in different contexts. The effects produced by genes are the result of dynamic, continuing processes of interactions among different sites on the genome, (...) and between complexes of organisms and their geophysical environments, as well as the interactions between natural environments and their social co-determinants(...) A critically important corollary *is* that organisms (...) genetically altered or not, will develop and behave differently in different places or under different conditions” (Loc.cit).

The discourses of transgenics proponents have a lot to learn from context-specifics. A plurality of ecologies, cultural practices of agriculture and science, and power relations exist within the place-specific ecosystems where the use of transgenic products is persistently promoted.

McAfee (2003:213-214) points out a second and complementary discourse: ‘economic reductionism’ articulates landraces as genetic *resources*, as raw materials (inputs) that become more valuable after these are ‘enhanced’ by genetical engineering. Subsequently, when landraces become expressly regulated by the principles, policies, and dynamics of global free markets, their value is equated, hence reduced, to their commodity prices in global markets.

The double, economic *and* genetic, discursive manoeuvre offsets non-market risks and values attached to landraces at their place-specific socio-political and ecological systems. Furthermore, it supplies the ideational support to political efforts that seek to incorporate both landraces and transgenics into a unified global trade regime (McAfee 2003:209), and into modern state’s developmental initiatives. Thus, this regime of representation is “advanced by the neoliberal paradigm governing trade, and then strengthened in multilateral policy” (Loc.cit). And crystallises in the discourses of several government institutions,

transnational agro-industry, the WTO, the CBD and regulatory bodies like the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Winickoff 2010).

Within IPE, the literature that relies on a Gramscian analysis depict the resistance to transgenic maize as a counter-hegemonic struggle and put its onus on the class-based politics of the ‘People of maize’ (Morton 2002). In turn, Wainwright and Mercer (2009) work turns to Gramsci’s notes on science to describe how the conflict of maize contamination engenders new questions on “the nature on the boundary between political and scientific disputes”(346). They emphasise that the popular desire to decontaminate Mexican native maizes (after Quist and Chapela’s findings) transcends both ‘science’ and ‘politics’, because decontamination physically exceeds²⁰ the capacities of scientists and politicians (Ibid). Additionally, decontamination and further containment of contamination of maize landraces confronts inertia in a ‘formal’ political spectrum, where Mexican state’s perspectives of rural development are enmeshed with corporate biotechnology interests (Vera, 2004:14).

Beyond this argument, Wainwright and Mercer (2009) assert that the particular ‘conflict of maize’ in Mexico illustrates the override of science *by* politics. In their words, the conflict exposes “the fluid and porous dynamics at the boundaries between what remains as science, and what as politics” (Ibid). I stress Wainwright and Mercer’s work because they are trying to rethink the political around the ‘maize conflict’ ~by asserting the overflow of science by the political.

2.3 STS and SSK Perspectives: Science and Politics

In a similar vein, other perspectives from STS and SSK have effectively exposed the ‘fluid and porous’ dynamics between science and politics. In their survey of these perspectives, Leach, Scoones and Wynne (2005:4-6) concretely discard the assumption that “science is independent of society and politics” and urge the recognition of the “unacknowledged cultural contingencies of scientific knowledge”(Ibid). As Jasanoff puts it, “science and technology, in short, operate as *political* agents” (2004:27). Furthermore, Jasanoff and Mortello (2004:97-99) emphasise that the norms and practices of both politics and science frequently interact to generate the “hybrid regimes of knowledge and power” of modernity.

From a SSK perspective, the ‘idiom of co-production’ is useful to elucidate the manner in which scientific knowledge and legal authority co-construct each other into regimes of knowledge-power (Jasanoff

²⁰None can control pollen mediated (by wind, bee pollination or else) dispersal of transgenic traits.

and Mortello 2004). Winickoff (2010) uses ‘co-production’ to analyse the emergence of the ‘global administrative space’ of transgenics produced by the WTO and the Codex²¹. Co-production happens when the WTO summons ‘sound’ science through the introduction of the Codex, a ‘preexisting source of expertise’, into its regulatory body (Ibid.,360). Simultaneously, this introduction vested the current epistemic authority of the Codex in global governance (Loc.cit). This process gave rise to an authoritative discourse, a legally binding epistemology which appointed scientific-based ‘risk’ analysis as the global standard for the assessment of transgenics safety (Winickoff 2010:374). Which is authoritative in the sense that WTO’s member states are legally bound to circumscribe their regulatory choices to the understandings of ‘risk’ therein. The WTO-Codex authoritative discourse embodies particular ‘scientific’ notions of ‘risk’ and value choices while it obscures and delegitimises other sources of value and risk for the assessment of transgenics safeness. And casts universalising standards that ignore the “unequal distribution of the benefits and burdens of biotechnology” (McAfee 2003:216). This approach elucidates how mobilising a specific *episteme* (kind of knowledge) generates concrete sources of authority. And how this authoritative discourse, a legally binding epistemology, subjugates other knowledges that do not share it's underpinning values.

The subsequent and final sections of this chapter expose several theoretical elements that better resonate with the experiences, ideas and understandings shared in conversations with activists of the RDM.

²¹The Codex is an international body that promulgates standards, guidelines, and codes of practice regarding food safety. It was established by the FAO and the WHO in 1963. The Codex “became an ‘international knowledge institution’ until 1994 when the WTO elevated its legal status within the trade regime (Winickoff 2010: 357).

2.4 Theories Otherwise

How do we understand a social struggle that resists against the imposition of the aforementioned authoritative ‘regime of knowledge and power’, against the ‘scientific’ and ‘economic’ certainties of modernity, and against the very real risks posed by the products of biological technoscientific power to their knowledges, cultures, local economies, ecosystems, to their immediate reality?

Furthermore, how do we academically ‘understand’ these struggles without systematically reducing their significance to the former notions and categories?

First, this work makes use of ‘otherwise’, as expressed by Escobar (2014), to refer to the imaginaries and concrete practices of the political, cultural, ecological, and economic that, in their differences, aim to build projects of world transformation outside of Eurocentric or dominant lines (Ibid.,198).

Furthermore, this work refers to a segment of social movements literature that attempts to rethink the treatment of culture, knowledge and collective agency within social movements (e.g., Casas-Cortés et al. 2008; Icaza and Vazquez 2013; Escobar 1998, 2007; Esteva 2010). Icaza and Vazquez (2013) emphasise social struggles as epistemic struggles, as bearers of culturally and socio-historically embodied — rather than universalised— knowledges. Notably, these struggles “assert themselves as political fights for visibility, for enacting the light of the public” (Ibid.,16) and not solely as counter-actions to the global regimes of power and knowledge.²²

In turn, Casas-Cortés et al. (2008) emphasise social movements as ‘pioneers’, creators of knowledge²³ resulting from their “work of analysing, envisioning and elaborating new ways of knowing and being in the world” (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008:28) which are put in practice in their constant challenging of the very definitions of what constitutes their contemporary reality. Their “creations, modifications and diverse enactments” of the political are referred to as ‘knowledge-

²²In contrast, in IPE and IR perspectives the struggles of the People are understood as counter-actions to the global regimes of power-knowledge, or as counter-hegemonic to neoliberalism (McAfee, 2008:157; Wainwright and Mercer, 2008). Hence these are depicted as subsequent to the dynamics, and circumscribed at the outskirts, of an ‘all-encompassing’ neoliberalism. Or solely as subaltern or as counter-actions to the global systems of oppression.

²³Casas-Cortés et al. use of ‘knowledges’ is, in their words, rather expansive, it refers to the “experiences, stories, ideologies, and claims to various forms of expertise that define how social actors come to know and inhabit the world”(2008:27).

practices'(Ibid.,21). In this context, I stress one of the knowledge-practices that Casas-Córtés locates in her work, that of autonomy (2009:6). Where "autonomy refers to a political vision and modus operandi defined by key words such as direct democracy, pre-figurative politics, horizontality, self-organization, within and against, antagonism, direct action, self-representation and counter-power"(Ibid).

Furthermore, I stress the articulation of social struggles as knowledge-practitioners because it comprises recognising and valorising their re-imagining of what constitutes their social and the political realms in their own terms of struggle, and not simply as campaigners or subjects of our inquiry (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008:51). This is why the use of 'framing' theory in this work becomes solely complementary. Casas-Córtés notes that "framing is almost always premised on the assumption that the key goal of any social movement is mobilisation (...) furthermore, what it means 'to mobilise' is always culturally and historically specific, these specificities exceed the parameters of 'framing' approaches"(Ibid.,25).

Lastly, inspired by the understanding of social movements of Álvarez (2009), I depart from her premise that "social movements are discursively articulated, [furthermore, these] constitute in themselves political formations where citizenship is built and exercised, where rights are imagined, where identities and needs are forged, and where power and principles are contested and negotiated" (Ibid.,31).

2.4.1 Idiom for the Grassroots

Beyond their eloquent illustration of the perplexities of the modern self to imagine social transformation, Esteva and Prakash (1998) work creates its own idiom to express its insights on the grassroots initiatives opposing neoliberal globalisation. Their interpretations of the 'people', of modern 'certainties' as myths, of 'grassroots epic' and their notion of 'humility' will be of use in this work.

First, Esteva and Prakash critique the use of the 'certainties' of 'global thinking', 'individual self', 'economic rationality' and the universalisation of human rights in how we approach and engage in socio-political struggles. They elaborate on how articulating social struggles in light of these certainties, which they also call 'myths', ends up reinforcing certain aspects of neoliberal globalisation and modernity (Esteva and Prakash 1998:9-11). After carefully de-linking

their conceptual use of civil society from its Hobbesian²⁴ understanding, Esteva and Prakash describe ‘the People’ as “the autonomous, democratic civil society, (...) expressed in organisations independent of the state or corporative structures”(Ibid.,13). And contemporary ‘grassroots initiatives’ as those:

“autonomously organised by ‘the people’ themselves, for their own survival, flourishing and enduring; both independent from and antagonistic to the state and its formal and corporative structures; (...) mainly expressed in reclaimed or regenerated commons, and clearly concerned with the common good, both natural and social” (Esteva and Prakash 1998:13).

Esteva and Prakash’s approach to the ‘discourse’ of grassroots initiatives portrays it as narratives which are part of an unfolding epic, but also as “modes of dialogue where the multiple, culturally differentiated, locally based views and modes of being of the People can be properly expressed” (Ibid., 191). This notion of discourse is pioneering in itself but —Esteva and Prakash emphasise— the stories, narratives and imaginaries expressed therein are more ‘typical rather than unique’, as they emerge from the People’s local experiences and from the ‘re-rooting’ and ‘re-remembering’ of their ancient traditions (Ibid., 12, 26). Esteva and Prakash use ‘re-rooting’ to refer to “the returning of the ‘people’ to their ancient traditions, knowledges and practices, while consciously engaging with their contemporary and locally-based socio-political realities” (1998:41,197).

Also, I stress Esteva and Prakash’s treatment of ‘culture’ as incommensurable *and* irreducible (1998:137), which is also central in post-development debates (Escobar 2000, 2015; Parfitt 2002). Esteva and Prakash argue that “each culture has its own common background, its own horizon of intelligibility. (...) It cannot be reduced to any other culture’s ways of seeing and living reality” (1998:128).²⁵

²⁴This particular account on civil society, derives from Hobbes’ theory of State and war. From this perspective, Hobbesian civil society must be based strictly on personal benefit, and is not strictly independent of the State. To speak of civil society in Hobbesian terms strictly reinforces the liberal premise of the ‘individual self’, hence contradicts the intentions of Esteva and Prakash (1998) of articulating outside of the circumscription of this premise of modernity.

²⁵Underlying their argument is their estrangement towards modernity’s treatment of the incommensurability of cultures as plurality of cultures. Which portrays cultures as desirable only *if* their differences and diverse expressions are coherent, rationally limited and secondary to the ‘universal’ modern cultural framework (Blaser 2013:548-550). Thus, the ‘universal’ modern cultural framework recognises other ‘cultures’ as incommensurable, but not as irreducible.

Finally, their notion of ‘humility’ is a powerful and useful concept to deal with the perplexities of cultural relativism: the idea that culture (beliefs and practices) can be experienced, articulated and judged only by those belonging therein. Asserting that cultures are incommensurable *and* irreducible to each other does not “entail assimilating oneself [one’s culture] to the realities [cultures] of others; or accepting these without reservations(...) It demands hospitality; the openness to be hospitable to the otherness of the other” (Panikkar as cited in Esteva and Prakash 1998:128). In their words, “being hospitable to the cultures of the others, to dare audaciously to recognise them in their radical difference and therefore to respect them, demands profound humility” (Esteva and Prakash 1998:129). Through ‘humility’ each culture can affirm its own centrality (its incommensurability *and* irreducibility) without discarding its own openness to respectful dialogues with other cultures (Panikkar in Esteva and Prakash 1998:200). Similarly, their notion of ‘epistemological humility’ does not imply relativising all knowledge, it implies “recognising and accepting the limits of one’s knowledge, of ‘science’, and of any other established knowledge” (Esteva and Prakash 1998:202).

2.4.3 Zapatismo’s (rhetorical) Resonance

Khasnabish (2007; Khasnabish and Haiven 2014) writes on the resonance of EZLN’s rhetoric in other contemporary social struggles. He contends that Zapatista’s ‘radically imaginative and insurgent’ narratives echoed in multiple other struggles, in its domestic [Mexico] and transnational context, due to its “explicit and fundamental recognition of, both, the interconnectedness of these struggles and their [singular] irreducible significance” (Ibid.,520). To recognise the interconnectedness of struggles and expose the radical plurality of the subjectivities within a social struggle are two of the central aspects of Zapatismo’s resonance (Ibid.,521). In this sense, if Zapatismo is echoing in other context-specific social struggles it is in their political meaning-making processes and their languages for new landscapes of socio-political alterity that resonance will be reflected (Ibid.,519).

2.4.2 Natural and Social Commons

The notion of the commons has been recurrently associated to ‘resources’ or ‘common-pooled resources’ in development economics (Ostrom in Esteva 2014:148). In late 80’s, the notion of social commons was retrieved by several scholars from the latter associations and became one of the central conceptual frameworks versed in the literature of post-development theory (Sachs 1992; Ferguson 1990;

Escobar 2011).²⁶ Several scholars that resonate with post-development theory (Esteva 2014; Rai and Boyle 2005; Vercelli and Thomas 2008) coincide in an understanding of ‘the commons’ as spaces of social existence that are beyond the threshold of the private but that are not defined as part of the modern state.

Social commons are diverse. Contextualised in contemporary Mexico, these spaces “bear traditional and community-based rules of access” (Esteva 2010:66), in this sense, the ‘commons’ is that which is produced, is inherited or transmitted in a situation of *comunidad* (community). These are also reclaimed or regenerated ‘autonomous units of *comunalidad* (communality)’, ‘ways of life and governance’ which are mainly indigenous (Esteva 2014:55). When these social and natural spaces are endangered, meaning “when its protection is required for the survival of the human groups that occupy and give continuity to the commons (...) these become what Esteva calls *shared commons*”(Loc.cit). Commons become *shared* and *networked*, in order to regenerate their traditional rules of access and reinforce them in a networked basis (Loc.cit).

2.4.3 Networking Logics

Juris (2008, 2009) works the idea of the ‘network’ and interconnectedness in the political imaginary of current social movements. He contends that, in the informational society of late capitalism, social struggles are increasingly portraying ‘networking logics’(Ibid). Juris casts the network as “a widespread cultural idea” and “a model for new forms of radical, directly democratic politics” (2008:11).

He calls the set of network-based principles guiding contemporary social struggles the ‘cultural logic of networking’, these imply: (1) larger horizontal coordination among diverse and autonomous actors, (2) open circulation of information, (3) collective action through decentralised coordination and consensual decision-making, and (4) autonomous ‘self-directed networking’ (Juris 2009:213-223).

Emerging networking politics enact ‘dual politics’ (Cohen and Arato as cited in Juris 2008:290) which, are both ‘instrumental *and* prefigurative’. This notion of politics is ‘self-restrictive’. In the sense that, ultimately, it seeks to influence and operate concomitant to ‘formal democratic institutions’ (Ibid). This conceptual framework

²⁶One example of this centrality is how the ‘new commons’ are outlined at the end of the book *The Development Dictionary*, the first compilation of post-development literature as a general theory, as the emergent alternative to development (Sachs 1992:216-217).

does not fit contemporary struggles for social transformation with autonomous underpinnings, that articulate the political outside of state's structures, like Zapatismo.

The notion of 'counter-power' (Negri 2001; Hardt and Negri 2004) takes a dissimilar turn to 'dual politics'. Building 'counter-power' entails "the construction of alternative spaces to the dominant institutional structures, until these new social forms create a cumulative effect that ultimately shifts the prevailing institutional equilibrium" (Benasayag as cited in Juris 2008:346). 'Counter-power' better approximates the strategies of social struggles where formal institutions are unresponsive or uncompromising towards their purpose of existence. In turn, Juris re-casts 'counter-power' as an essential attribute of long-term 'strategic networking' politics (2008:10,26,282-83).

Maize

by **Guillermo Bonfil Batalla**

Over the millennia, the history of maize and of human beings run parallel in these lands. More than parallel: they are inextricably linked. Maize is a human plant, cultural in the deepest sense of the term, it does not exist without the intelligent and timely intervention of the hand, it is not able to reproduce by itself. More than domesticated, the plant of maize was created by human work.

By cultivating maize the people of maize also cultivated themselves. The great civilizations of the past and millions of Mexicans today, maintain the generous maize as their root and basis. It has been a fundamental axis for their cultural creativity for hundreds of generations. It required the development and continuous improvement of countless techniques to cultivate, store and transform it.

It led to the emergence of a cosmogony, religious beliefs and practices that made maize a sacred plant. It allowed the development of a culinary art of surprising richness. It set the sense of time and ordered space according to its own rhythms and requirements. It gave a motif for the most varied forms of aesthetic expression. And it became the reference to understand forms of social organization, ways of thinking, ways of knowing, and ways of living of the broader popular layers of Mexico. So, indeed, maize is the foundation of Mexican popular culture.

There is, for all the above, what might be called —a popular project in relation to maize. This plant, with all its complex web of economic, social and symbolic relationships that recognise it as central, acquires a deep meaning for the Mexican people. It is a fundamental economic good and an irreplaceable food, but it is much more than that.

Ahead of the popular project, and openly opposed to it, rises another way of conceiving maize. Another project. Its aim is to decouple maize of its historical and cultural context to handle it exclusively in terms of merchandise and in function of interests that are not those of the popular sectors. Which sees maize as replaceable, interchangeable and dispensable. Precisely because it excludes the opinion and the interests of the popular sectors, which created maize and have been created by it.

²⁷Translation is my own.

Chapter 3 Identifying the Political

This chapter locates two of the fundamental discursive practices —the political logics of autonomy and integrality— of the people of maize, as expressed through the discourse of the RDM. These discursive practices, logics or frames of collective action are challenging our normative understanding of the political. In the sense that these political expressions do not circumscribe or direct their efforts towards the formal political system of the modern nation-state or the dominant regime of national and transnational public policy. To contrast, the last section of this chapter locates two fundamental ways in which the discursive practices of the RDM do not portray their political engagement in the struggle to defend native maize.



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3.1 The People of Maize: Sowing Maize is Political

“Maize is the heritage of mankind (...) and not of transnational corporations. Transgenic contamination of native maize is a loss of genetic memory of traditional Mexican agriculture, and it may be irreparable. Agricultural and trade policies undermine national maize production, which is the core of the peasant economy and organisation, as well of food sovereignty. Hence, maize growing becomes the heart of community resistance. Because it represents centuries of culture and it is the legacy of Mexican indigenous and peasant peoples” (Ribeiro, 2003:7).

Silvia Ribeiro (2003), activist of the RDM and researcher of ETC group, cites the previous excerpt from the conclusions of the first forum of the RDM. Ribeiro describes the relation between indigenous peasant peoples and maize as one of ‘mutual care’ (2003:5). She further states that:

“From the outset, it was clear that (the conflict of maize) was more than an isolated event of contaminated maize, an environmental or a health problem, or even just a ‘genetic engineering’ issue. It was part

²⁸Women of maize, maize and maize planting. Source: RDM facebook page.

of a broader phenomenon, which we understood as an ‘attack on maize people’ in the second forum” (Ibid.,7-8).

As argued before, the ‘People of maize’ makes reference to the indigenous and peasant communities that recognise themselves within the RDM that protect native seeds and cultivate maize landraces in rural Mexico. There is an innumerable amount of peasants and indigenous communities that cultivate maize for self-subsistence in Mexico. In contrast, the People of maize are those indigenous and peasant communities that, even before the conflict of maize contamination, *self-organised in locally-based and autonomous* community organisations in order to protect their lands, their milpa, and the communities themselves from neoliberal reconstructing of rural Mexico. The manner in which the people of maize organises resonates profoundly with Esteva and Prakash’s (1998) understanding of the ‘people’, and of ‘grassroots initiatives’ as “expressed in reclaimed or regenerated commons, (...) concerned with both their natural and social commons” (Ibid.,13).

As previously mentioned, the peasant and indigenous movements in Mexico have a prolonged trajectory of their own in front of corporate and state-led policies that attempt to advance their segregation. The RDM is in a critical extent the crystallisation of the efforts and the teachings of the persistent resistances of these movements (Vera 2016, personal interview) against the segregation, oblivion and discrimination that neoliberal socio-economic policies entail for peasant and indigenous communities.

But, it is much more important to note, the struggles of the People of maize are more than reactions to these systems of oppression. It is hope and is their ‘re-rooting’ and ‘re-membering’, to use Esteva and Prakash’s (1998) expressions, towards their own irreducible values, knowledges and traditions that guides their struggles.

Yet, in this sense, the struggles of the People are not closed realms, enclosed in their social, cultural and political regeneration. But the opposite, these struggles are political fights for the visibility of the public (Icaza and Vazquez 2013:16). The RDM contextualises the public as the common goods (like seeds and water) and spaces (like the land, the ejido) (*¡No Toquen Nuestro Maíz!* 2014:86). Ultimately, the public is the space that the RDM and the people of maize are persistently protecting and re-imagining through their politics of resistance.

3.2 The Logic of Autonomy

“Autonomy (...) can only be maintained to the extent that is exercised” (*¡No Toquen Nuestro Maíz!* 2014:33)

To sow maize for self-sustenance allows the people of maize to maintain their limited and contested spaces of autonomy. These spaces of autonomy are the territorial control of their natural and social commons, their socio-political systems of self-governance, and the food autonomy of the people of maize. By engaging in a social struggle that articulates its defense of maizes as the protection and further development of these spaces of autonomy, the efforts of the people of maize, broadened and reinforced within the RDM, circumscribe to notions that are otherwise (Escobar 2014) to the normative understanding of the political in Mexico.

In this sense, the RDM's political as ‘otherwise to the normative understanding’ means that their efforts do not circumscribe their political engagement towards enhancing the democratisation of the formal institutions of the Mexican state. But towards the democratisation and regeneration of the People of maize's instances of self-governance and autonomy —their organisations, assemblies and communal authorities (*¡No Toquen Nuestro Maíz!* 2014:105; *El Maíz No es Una Cosa* 2012:44,55,122).

Then, what is the connection of autonomy with native maize? Vera Herrera, activist of the RDM, argues: “maize has everything to do with autonomy, I mean that besides resolving your needs by your own peasant and indigenous means, and in community, and with peasant and indigenous traditional and contemporary knowledges...autonomy is also a way to approach and decide what you eat, your own comida²⁹, meaning in a manner that is much healthier and sustainable than processed food...In this sense, food autonomy is the basis that allows the people of maize to continue more extensive processes of autonomy” (personal interview 2016).

In this context, the RDM and the people of maize identify the introduction of transgenic maize as part of a broader and systematic (state and corporate-led) attack that aims to disable small-scale production of maize and the autonomous spaces of peasant and indigenous communities (Ibid). It is in this context that, both in their textual and organisational expressions, the politics of resistance of the RDM engage with a particular logic, that of *autonomy*.

²⁹Esteva and Prakash (1998:55) refer to ‘comida’ (spanish for food) as culturally and community relevant food.

The genealogy of the notion of *autonomy* is not western nor can it be referred to in terms of ‘separatism’ or ‘fundamentalism’, as understood in an Eurocentric politico-historical context (Esteva and Prakash 1999:36). Rather, as Subcomandante Marcos puts it: “indigenous autonomy (...) constitutes a challenge to the neoliberal state not because of the alleged risk of ‘separatism’, but for providing symbolic *and* material alternatives to neoliberal dominance”(2011:161).

In this sense, the RDM is conducive to enhance, through its politics of resistance, the elements that are understood as autonomy by Casas-Córtés: “direct democracy, pre-figurative politics, horizontality, self-organization, within and against, antagonism, direct action, self-representation and counter-power”(2009:6). Yet, to understand autonomy as one of the logics guiding the political engagement of the RDM is not enough to list its conceptual attributes.

Rather, these attributes have to be understood as concrete socio-political meanings and practices that are being regenerated throughout the struggle to defend maize. In example, the RDM points to “the assemblies, the systems of collective work, the festivals, the communities’ notions and systems of justice, the forms of local organisation, bartering and the forms of mutual aid”(¡No Toquen Nuestro Maíz! 2014:105) as meanings and practices of autonomy. The RDM contends that the socio-political meanings and practices of autonomy of the people of maize are part of the web of social relationships that sustains native maizes. And that native maize sustains. And which in their comprehensive whole represent real ‘alternatives to neoliberal dominance’. In this sense is that the logic of *autonomy* is well rooted in the struggles of the people of maize and of the RDM.



³⁰“The defense of maize in Mexico necessarily involves respect to the autonomy of our People”. Source: RDM facebook page.

3.2.1 Regenerated Autonomy

In conversation with Ramón Vera Herrera, activist of the RDM, we discussed about self-subsistence, autonomy and political participation as understood within the RDM.

First, we spoke about ‘disablement’ or the ‘erosion of autonomous capabilities’ of the people of maize. He argued that disablement happens throughout the implementation of neoliberal structural reforms that, in turn, are expressed in concrete social and economic policies that disable, prevent people from resolving by their own means what matters the most for them (Vera Herrera 2016 personal interview). Vera Herrera points out, both, the Green Revolution and the introduction of commercial transgenic maize in Mexico as examples of processes of disablement, where:

“You [indigenous peasant]
are ripped from your land,
from what we call,
our ‘environment of subsistence’,
because everything is there, in the territory...
Then, you are slighted, prohibited, questioned...
Here there is an implicit ‘you do not know’, a ‘what you do does not work’, a ‘you know what, what you are producing is too little’, because you produce for your family or your community and not for the market... then, that is called ‘the laziness of the peasant’. Even the ‘means of subsistence’ were criminalised, that being, your strategies, traditional and contemporary knowledges that allowed you to resolve by your own means what matters for you the most. In this case, to produce food, maize...but many other things too: your notions of health, of education, of justice, and everything that is your relationship with nature and others...This is the mechanism that has been moving forward, toward us” (Ibid).

To give more clarity to the notion of disablement, Vera Herrera argues elsewhere that disablement, lugged through state’s social and economic policies and corporate-led initiatives, “breaks or erodes the constellation of knowledges that were *and* are relevant, and which have historical cohesion (...) [Disablement] seeks that we lose our territory-situated techniques (it breaks our relationship with land) and begins at the most striking point (...) which is to prevent, belittle or disrupt [autonomous] food production” (Vera Herrera, forthcoming).

By breaking all the relationships of the People with their means and environments of self-subsistence, disablement fundamentally entails an increasing dependency for the people of maize towards those who oppress and exploit them. In the case of food dependency, while in 1980 Mexico's dependence on food imports was 15 per cent in 2011 it increased to almost 50 per cent, food dependency rests primarily on two products: maize and beans (Bartra as cited in Aragonés and Salgado 2015:290). Likewise, Vera Herrera argues that peasant migration to the US³¹, internal displacement of people from rural to urban areas³², and persistent and rampant violence³³ in specific areas of rural Mexico are some of the clearest symptoms of disablement (2016 personal interview).

In contrast, *autonomy* is diametrically opposed to disablement. The process of autonomy starts by asserting oneself as capable, "to reaffirm that you can solve what competes you through your own means and terms, always in community"(Ibid). Then, autonomy slowly unfolds to reverse all the processes of disablement: "to start a process of reconstitution of your own abilities, your traditional and contemporary knowledges, your strategies, your ways of understanding the world, and your way to approach food itself"(Ibid). Autonomy as a political project can begin from its most central dimension, food autonomy. But can be exercised, extended to any sphere of the political: self-governance at the local, regional and even national level. As a central logic of their politics of resistance, the RDM emphasises that to break up with the disablement imposed to the people, autonomy has to be reconstituted in several dimensions: the self, the community and the broader ensemble of communities of the people of maize (Ibid).

In this sense, the meaning-makings and socio-political practices with autonomous underpinnings of the people of maize, broadened and strengthened within the RDM, reinforce and regenerate their 'environment and means of self-subsistence'. To which maize and the milpa are fundamental (Ibid). Accordingly, the RDM also functions as a space for dialogue amongst the communities and organisations of

³¹There is an average of 11.7 million immigrants from Mexico residing in the US (Migration Policy Institute, 2016).

³²According to the office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2011 only, 160,000 people were displaced internally in Mexico (as cited in Vera Herrera, forthcoming).

³³In 2015, Mexico was declared in humans rights crisis by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), "on the grounds of extreme insecurity and violence; gross human rights violations, forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture, critical levels of impunity, and inadequate and insufficient attention to victims" (Organisation of American States, 2015).

the people of maize where the multiple locally based and culturally differentiated experiences of autonomy are shared (Ibid).

3.3 The Logic of Integrality

“The problem that afflicts us is integral.
We require integral solutions”
(*El Maíz No es Una Cosa* 2012:57)

This section introduces the notion of ‘integrality’ of the people of maize as a logic of the RDM’s political engagement. To speak of ‘integrality’, as noted by the people of maize, is to understand maize as the constituent of a web of —economic, social and symbolic— relationships that locate maize at its epicentre.

“Maize is not just another crop, it is not only a grain, it is a complex web of relationships...a civilisational project at least 10 thousand years old, and it is still alive! And which in Mexico has an extremely vast social force” (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:14).

In this sense, understanding ‘maize as a web of relationships’ casts the politics of resistance of the people of maize over a much broader *and* interrelated scope that, in turn, the RDM is advancing as the primordial objective of struggle:

“[T]he integral vision (of resistance) prompted by the RDM since its inception is that we can only defend maize if it continues to be sowed. If the full life of the communities that have taken care of maize is respected. If we defend the territories where the people of maize, the communities, and peasant groups continue boosting care and reciprocity with maize, with the environment and among each other...[Our] view struggles to tie the knots and build the necessary bridges: the attacks against self-sustenance and the creative capacities of [this] vast segments of the population are intentional. It is the attempt to create economic needs that foster dependency and control. To break the defense of territories. To eradicate the strategic thinking and practicality of the people of maize. We cannot allow this attack” (*¡No Toquen Nuestro Maíz!* 2014:10).

Thus, the RDM embraces the integral vision, the integrality, of how maize is represented, enacted and embodied by the people of maize as the foremost objective of its social struggle. In order to further illustrate the notion of ‘integrality’, I refer to the reflections of the Wixárika people, one of largest peasant indigenous communities from the Sierra Madre Occidental, actively engaged within the ‘Red’:

- Ok, we have to defend maize
- Then, to defend it we have to heal the soil
- Which means returning to sowing without chemicals...
- ...and making sure there are no mudslides.
- That means we have to rebalance the water.
- Which means taking care of the forest...
- And hold back erosion, bring rain...and refresh the air.
- To do that, we have to defend our territory
- ...and our rights to land and as peoples.
- That means our representatives must really obey the community's mandate...
- ...and we must strengthen the community assemblies.
- Then we need to have maize so that people do not migrate and can keep their roots in the land (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:42-43).

In the understanding of the Wixárika people, the elements of the world are inherently interrelated in a sort of 'magic circle': a proposal of integrality where all the elements that entail the environmental and socio-political reality cannot be unlinked (Loc.cit). The framing of the RDM mobilises the radically different imaginaries of socio-political reality of the people of maize to arrive at the conclusion that "to defend maize is to defend the ways of life and the peasant-indigenous cosmovision, *and vice-versa*"(Ibid.,44).

"It is only us (the people of maize) that can do something. The solution to the problem of the contamination of maize can only be solved in the long term. And it's only through the 'togetherness' of peasants and indigenous peoples [world-views] that we can accomplish it" (Ibid.,38).

The proposal of integrality presents itself through different expressions of the people of maize. Another crucial expression that can aid our understanding of the political logic of integrality, is the notion of 'togetherness' of the Tojolabal people. In the same vein as the notion of autonomy, the genealogy of 'togetherness' is not rooted in western thought. Nor is it related to the 'myth' of the individual self (Esteva and Prakash 1998). In turn, Lekersdorf (2002) locates two basic aspects of the tojolabal notion of 'togetherness'. First, togetherness has an internal structure that places each of its members in the community context, and requires of them their individual contribution. And second, togetherness is not born of the will of any individual authority (Ibid.,15). It is a community, polyphonic and symphonic, which expresses the voice of the together. As the RDM puts it:

“Only in our own maize,
native (and not its distorted transgenic version)
planted to feed the community
depending the least possible,
is that we can live the spheres of the 'togetherness'
our collective work,
our self-determined justice,
our self-government,
our assembly,
a life *a contrapelo* [other way around] of the global systems”
(*El Maíz No es Una Cosa*, 2012:48)

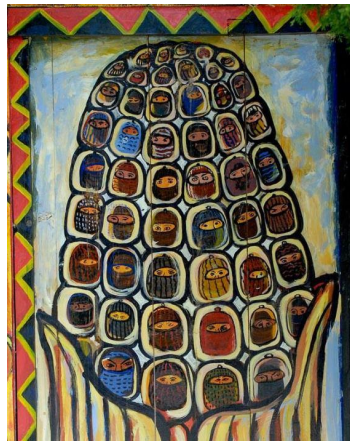
As exemplified in the thought of the Wixáritari and the Tojolabal, the second logic that this work emphasises as a core characteristic of how the RDM articulates and enacts ‘the political’ is that of *integrality*. By recognising, advocating and enacting the struggle to defend native maizes in the complexity and interconnectedness of the natural and socio-political processes that brought and still bring native maizes to be. Thus, the RDM frames its social struggle as one “about the integral reconstruction of communities, community organisation (...) with the cultivation of maize as the heart of the resistance and of the possibility of autonomy, fully exercising its territoriality at all levels: from the geographical [material] to the sacred [symbolic], in the richness of the human and non-human relationships” (Loc.cit).

In this sense, the political logic of integrality poses a challenge to the liberal model of civil society, where political engagement (civic participation) emanates from the summation of individual action into initiatives (social capital) that builds up social capital that seek to balance the power of the state (Fukuyama 2001:11-18). In contrast, in the logics of integrality, political engagement emanates from the communal self, from and for the community, and not from the will of any individual authority. Furthermore, it seeks to build up, reinforce or regenerate autonomous alternatives to the formal political system of the modern nation-state.

To synthesise the argument made in the previous sections, both logics of *autonomy* and *integrality* are the particular understanding of the political of the people of maize. And the master ‘action-oriented’ scheme, the meaning-making of the political mobilised by the RDM as a guideline for its politics of resistance. Meaning that the politics of resistance of the RDM are conducive to regenerate and reinforce the integral instances of collective agency around maize ie. the territorial and food autonomy of the communities and organisations of the people of maize.

3.4 Framing and Discursive Resonances

In the previous chapter, we have discussed the manner in which Zapatismo's rhetoric is resonating in other present social struggles (Khasnabish 2007). The discursive articulations of the RDM is a powerful example of a social struggle's resonance with Zapatismo's 'language and imagination of radical socio-political change' (Ibid). For the RDM this implies deviating from embracing a possibly homogenic and constraining discourse that builds on prior social struggles in rural Mexico. Similarly to Zapatismo, the discursive practices of the RDM are inspired, but not solely mediated, by the ideals and previous discourses of the peasant and indigenous movements in Mexico. So, the RDM incorporates into its 'rhetorical body' some critical elements and concepts from Zapatismo, like the aforementioned notion of autonomy, which is subsequently mobilised as an underlying logic.



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A central discursive process of the rhetorical formulations of the RDM is its amplification of the experiences and pronouncements of the people of maize in regard to maize contamination. These are plentiful, culturally differentiated and locally-based interpretations and action-oriented schemes in regard to the contingent contamination of native maizes.

In turn, the discursive articulations of the RDM, particularly its early 'diagnostic framing' accounts for a multiplicity of critical perspectives—from social sciences, anthropology, economy, from the analysis of technologies, and from life sciences— of the civil organisations, researchers, academics and activists that also conform the RDM.

Both processes, the amplification of the various narratives and pronouncements of the people of maize and a subsequent 'diagnostic

³⁴“Maize is community, kernels made of Zapatistas”. Source: RDM facebook page.

³⁵“Maize is not a thing”. Cover page of the book *El Maíz No es Una Cosa* (2012), published by the RDM.

framing' from the multiple perspectives of its circumscribing organisations and collectives, are central in the discursive formulations of the RDM. This character of its textual expressions also speaks to the organisational structure of the RDM, as it aims for a plural and interdisciplinary dialogue. A dialogue mediated by the logics of autonomy and integrality that guide their political engagement.

Thus, instead of using a constrained or homogenous framing, the discursive expressions of the RDM frame the conflict of maize contamination in a pluralistic manner. As Veronica Villa, activist of the RDM, clarified:

“One thing that helps to avoid the misconceptions of the RDM, is that we cannot speak of the RDM as a subject...we (the people within the RDM) are so different! In example, we've never had to present a unified speech, which does not mean it is scattered...the discourse of the RDM, as you called it, is really being formed by those who verbalise it” (2016 personal interview).

In this sense, the textual expressions and discursive processes of the RDM resonate with Esteva and Prakash's notion of discourse as modes of dialogue, “where the multiple, culturally differentiated, locally-based views and modes of being of the people can be properly expressed” (1999:191). First, in how the discourse of the RDM amplifies the people of maize' framing of maize as “the backbone of many facets of their community life that has to do not only with agriculture and with environmental care, but with the milpa, a way of life, a civilising proposal” (Álvarez-Buylla 2016 personal interview). Secondly, in how the latter expressions are complemented by the “listening, accompanying, learning, and resonating from the formality of the research of the other several participants of the RDM” (Ibid).

3.5 What the political is NOT about

To contrast with the previous sections, this section locates two fundamental ways in which the discursive practices of the RDM do not portray their political engagement in the struggle to defend native maize.

3.5.1 Modern Culture

In the dialogues hold with the activists from the RDM it became very clear that there is a rejection to portray their social struggle in terms of a 'culturalist' resistance. In conversation with Veronica Villa, activist of the RDM, she pose it in this terms:

“I emphasise, we do not even restrict or circumscribe the struggle to the cultural, that, for our epistemic reflection and for the case of maize seems to us very important. Because we have been accused of being ‘culturalists’, then we argue that the struggle is not that, it does not even go by the Meso-American, Mexican, or campesinista (peasant) cultural specificity, it is a civilising proposal. What maize made possible in Mesoamerica was and is a civilising proposal...Then, to plant maize, as Aldo Gonzalez [Zapotec activist] said, is a political act” (Villa 2016 personal interview).

Esteva (2010) contends that there is a new approach to ‘culture’ in contemporary grassroots movements that implies the “abandonment of conventional universalism without falling into cultural relativism”(67). This becomes very clear in the case of the RDM, when Veronica Villa and other activists strongly assert that the RDM is not culturalist they are also avoiding to circumscribe the struggle within the conception of culture of the dominant civilisatory model:

“The communitarian nature of maize is what has kept its richness. Genetic diversity and cultural diversity are developed and feed off each other. As to all culture and knowledge, the collective self is what gives the basis to one of the most ancient traits of the people of maize. This brings many people to refer to indigenous culture in order to defend maize. But to continue the preservation of indigenous culture to defend maize, frequently, makes us fall into a culturalist trap: to think that maize is just a cultural trait which has to be ‘understood’ and ‘tolerated’ for the sake of being politically correct at a time of ‘multiculturalism’”(El Maíz No es una Cosa 2012:115-116).

Thus, the RDM directly rejects a framing of the struggle to defend maize in a modern notion of ‘culture’. Which in its so-called multiculturalism, accepts cultures as desirable only if their differences and diverse expressions are coherent, rationally limited and secondary to the ‘universal’ modern cultural framework (Blaser 2013:548-550). Instead, the RDM reframes the understanding of ‘culture’ to the terms of the people of maize:

“[W]e have to rethink collectively that culture is a political force. Then, it is also economic, social and ecological. And it builds on our peasant ways, sowing what is ours, together with the community, whose heart is the assembly” (El Maíz No es una Cosa 2012:38).

In this sense, the RDM is articulating the cultural as the entirety of the socio-political systems that exist around maize, in doing so, it seeks to avoid the reductionist ‘cultural’ treatment of modernity. While simultaneously demanding ‘hospitality’ and ‘humility’ to the centrality of the people of maize’ cultures (their own incommensurability *and* irreducibility).



3.5.2 Static or Folkloric Knowledge

“I would say that the knowledges that the RDM protects, those which we want to give permanence and continuity, are the ones which are there, and have always been there but their permanence (rather resistance) has been systematically attacked since industrial thinking looks for a hoarding of the all” (Villa 2016 personal interview).

Certainly, the loss of indigenous and peasant knowledge is directly linked to the loss of native maizes, and vice-versa. But, the displacement of native maize by its transgenic version implies other equally important losses:

“The loss of our languages is directly related with the loss of our maize. Because we loose the rituals and traditions inherently related to its sowing. We loose the knowledge of the cycles of the moon (...) but then, the programs of the government like *Oportunidades*³⁷, promotes the division of the communities, or with *Diconsa*³⁸ which replaces our production with seeds that can be transgenic. Then, *Procampo*³⁹ facilitates the abandonment of

³⁶“Today sowing our seeds, is a political and necessary act. It is an act of sovereignty”. Source: RDM facebook page.

³⁷Oportunidades is a cash transfer program of the Mexican government targeted to low income producers.

³⁸Diconsa is a rural supply program of the Mexican government. According to studies conducted after maize contamination was discovered, “the concentration of transgenic material was more abundant in samples from the seeds supplied by Diconsa (*El maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:53).

³⁹Procampo is a subsidy program of the Mexican government where payments are allocated on a per hectare basis primarily to *male* landholders (Fox and Haight, 2010:14).

our ways of work (...), and it is an incentive to enter into monetary dependence” (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:126).

The RDM does recognise knowledge as central to its politics of resistance, but articulates it as non-static and much more extensive, in other words, as lived and embodied knowledge, as knowledge-practices (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008). The notion of knowledge-practices allows us to understand that the knowledge of the people of maize is not static or folklorist, but practices of being, in the political, in the personal and in the communitarian. An initiative for “a life *a contrapelo* (other way around) of the global systems” (Villa 2016 personal interview) that simultaneously and inherently is cultural, political, social and ecological. In this sense, the RDM points to the loss of the concrete knowledge-practices of the people of maize as a core grievance of the imposition of transgenics:

“[the displacement of native maize entails] the destruction of the organisational tissue of the communities, of the assemblies, of the charge systems and of the ways of collective work (...) which are the articulating nucleus of our collective construction of knowledge and our general understanding of the world and routine tasks” (*¡No toquen nuestro Maíz!* 2014:71)

Thus, the RDM articulates knowledge as inseparable from the entirety of the practices, socio-political systems and ecosystems that collectively enact the knowledges around maize (Vera 2016 personal interview). Then, the politics of resistance of the RDM, among other things, recognise and put at the frontline of its process of struggle the forms of knowledge and the construction of knowledges that the people of maize have developed and continue developing (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:34).

Chapter 4 Network Politics

“Now in time, the only possible way to resist is organising. We have to organise, communally. And persist in the organisation” (Barreda and Villa, forthcoming).⁴⁰

This chapter is concerned with the organisational expressions of the RDM. Particularly, how these speak to the logics of autonomy and integrality emphasised in the previous chapter. The first section of this chapter briefly narrates how the RDM came to be a ‘Red’ (a network), in order to emphasise the organisational elements that differentiates the RDM from other points of reference of collective action defending native maizes in Mexico. The second section elaborates on the commons, the communities as units of organisation and the logic of communality of the people of maize. The last section is concerned with the ‘network’ as the organisational form of the RDM and on the ‘cultural logic of networking’ as the overall principle of organisation of the RDM.

4.1 How the Network Came to Be

Today, its over fifth-teen years since the initial transgenic contamination of native maize was discovered in the highlands of Northern Oaxaca, state of Mexico.

In January 2002, more than 300 indigenous, peasant, civil society, academia and religious representatives met in Mexico City at the First Forum In Defense of Maize. The meeting’s conclusions included a declaration, policy demands and proposals, strategies for action and an analysis of the context for understanding the contamination (Vera Herrera, 2004). In terms of organisation, one of the most important conclusions is pointed out by Silvia Ribeiro, activist of the RDM and member of ETC group:

“one key realisation at the first forum was that we did not need a campaign (against contamination) as such, but a process. This process would neither be linear nor short-term, but would be defined through a broad, diverse, collective and horizontal effort. Its objectives, methodologies and norms would change continuously, as a result of the self-managed and culturally diverse nature of the process”(Ribeiro 2004:7).

The first forum emerges in a context of urgency to assess the scope of maize contamination, and was initially intended solely as a space for

⁴⁰This is an excerpt of the unpublished memorandum of the last meeting of the RDM.

dialogue. Nevertheless, in the context of the wider contamination presented in the studies released by INE and CONABIO; and the inertia of the relevant national and international governmental agencies to take coherent steps to assess or ameliorate the contamination, there was an urgent need to build strategies to contain further contamination of native maizes (Ibid.,6-7).

Moreover, the large assembly convened in the initial forum was faced with the appraisal of the conflict from the diverse perspectives and the plurality of subjectivities gathered therein. In a critical extent, the appraisal of the conflict from multiple perspectives implied the need to account for the specific logics of autonomy and of integrality that permeate the understanding of maize in the terms of the people of maize.

This led the forum to conclude that “the problem with maize goes beyond transgenic contamination, and since the situation is complex, its resolution requires a holistic approach” (Vera 2004:5-6). Thus, the initial organisational format of the RDM soon passed from forum to network. In conversation with Veronica Villa, she explained:

“In the beginning it was just a forum, but there was so much need to follow-up and of making a construction of knowledge around the problem...then the forum changed into a network... maybe it is a process similar to how the National Indigenous Forum became the CNI...in some way, and this is a very interesting matter in social sciences, there is a period where resistance benefits from a particular ‘institutionalisation’...this happened to the Forum in Defense of Maize in its transition into a network” (Villa 2016 personal interview).

The RDM was the out-turned network, a “loosely institutionalised and organic net of social collectives” (Ibid.) that is conducive to generate horizontal, interdisciplinary, and plural dialogue and coordinated action among its members: peasants (indigenous and non-indigenous), academics, activists, locally and nationally based civil society organisations (Vera 2016, personal interview).

After more than fifteen years of accompaniment in the struggles of the people of maize, the RDM became a major reference of the self-organised, locally-based and autonomous resistances of the people of maize to safeguard native maizes in rural and urban Mexico. I contend that this is particularly so because, both, the organisational and discursive expressions of the RDM convey the particular logics of political engagement that permeate the struggles of the people of

maize. This last argument will be further developed in the next sections of this chapter.

In contrast to the RDM, another point of reference of collective action against maize contamination in Mexico is the campaign ‘Sin Maíz No Hay País’ (No Country Without Maize) launched in 2007. The campaign is driven by several peasant, indigenous, environmental, human rights and consumer organisations and leaded by Greenpeace, a global environmental organisation, that “plays a self-described ‘bridging role’ between peasant and environmental organisations”(Kinchy 2012:59).

The campaign ‘Sin Maíz No Hay País’ differs from the appraisal of the RDM towards the conflict of maize in several fundamental ways: its discourse frames maize and land as environmental resources instead of commons and its conducive to frame the conflict in terms of human rights violations; it engages in campaigning (short term focus); there is no explicit or consistent engagement of the peasant and indigenous communities; and it mobilises lobbying instead of building counter-power (Ibid., Álvarez-Buylla 2016 personal interview).

This contrast also helps to elucidate the manner in which the discursive and organisational expressions of the RDM challenge a normative understanding of civil society’s political engagement. In conversation with Elena Álvarez-Buylla, activist within the RDM and research director of UCCS⁴¹, she commented on this contrast that:

“The virtue of the RDM is that without trying to generate a new NGO that comes to solve the world's problems, rather it is given to the task of building a network of commonalities, a network of knowledges, a network of ways to defend and struggle for maize, a network that articulates collective efforts that have been there for years, working for the benefit of all without asking anything in return”(Álvarez-Buylla 2016, personal interview).

Then, the RDM directly differs in its political engagement from ‘Sin Maíz No Hay País’ in several fundamental ways: its discourse frames maize and land as webs of relationships, as natural and social commons; so far it has avoided to pursue legal actions on a human rights violations basis, though it has not been directly discarded as a strategy; its diagnostic framing of the conflict is pluralistic in terms of epistemic perspectives; it engages in a process of building counter-power in the terms of the people of maize (autonomy and integrity),

⁴¹ UCCS, spanish for Union of Concerned Scientists. The UCCS is a non-profit scientific advocacy organisation that collaborates within both ‘Sin Maíz No Hay País’ and the RDM.

meaning that their efforts have a long term focus and are not directed to state institutions; and there is an explicit and consistent engagement of the peasant and indigenous communities within the RDM (Villa 2016 personal interview, Vera Herrera 2016 personal interview, *El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012).

4.2 The Commons

Articulating the connection of the ‘commons’ to the model of ‘community’ is not an easy thing to do. Specially because the notion of ‘commons’ is in itself puzzling. First, ‘commons’ is an anglo-saxon category, cannot be directly translated to spanish —thus, the people of maize do not articulate directly by using this notion. It also carries a Eurocentric historic-political meaning, and it has been recurrently associated to ‘resources’ or ‘common-pooled resources’ in development economics (Ostrom in Esteva 2014:148). Which is not the association that is hinged in the discursive and organisational expressions of the communities and organisations of the people of maize.

Nevertheless, the understanding of the ‘commons’ in post-development theory its suitable to express the community-controlled food systems of the people of maize, based on biodiversity which grow, harvest, and preserve the extensive variety of their native maizes and seeds (Esteva 2010; Rai and Boyle 2007; Vercelli and Thomas 2008). As the RDM puts it: “the richness and diversity of maize does not stop at its number of varieties. Each person, family or community through which a variety of maize passes adds or transforms something” (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:32). The protection of these commons has been the logic behind the formulation of the people of maize’ grassroots community-based organisations (Baronnet et al 2011:21-22,43). That being, the self-organised, locally-based and autonomous peasant and indigenous organisations, that are at the nucleus of the organisational structure of the RDM.



⁴²“Communitarian organisation and assemblies”. Source: RDM facebook page.

4.3 The Community

Maldonado Alvarado (2010:39) argues that the community has to be understood as both the local commonly-owned space and as the social sphere enacted, shared and inhabited by the groups of families that identify themselves as members of that community and culture. In turn, ‘community’ is one of the most recurrent words, perhaps only seconded by ‘maize’, used in the discursive expressions and different framings of the conflict of maize by the grassroots organisations and communities that conform the RDM, e.g.:

“Our native maize seeds are being contaminated by transgenic maizes, which endangers not only the diversity of native seeds, but the very life of our communities and their organisation which is as ancient as the cultivation of maize” (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:44).

“If we maintain our native maize, we maintain our families, then we can maintain our communities, then we maintain Mexico” (Ibid.,54).

Moreover, the reiterative assessment of political engagement concerning the transgenic contamination of maize as one that strictly passes through the ‘community’ is, both, a point reference to the elementary unit of organisation and a logic of organisation of the peasant and indigenous organisations and communities that conform RDM:

“Only we, the peasants, can do something. The solution to the problem of contamination by transgenic maize can only be solved in the long term, and it is only us, the peasant and indigenous peoples that we can accomplish it, in community [unit of organisation], communally [logic of organisation]” (Ibid.,38).

The last statement of the RDM portrays the community as the elementary unit of organisation of the people of maize, and expresses a need to do it ‘communally’, a particular logic for their organised expression. In turn, Aldo González, representative of UNOSJO, a Zapotec indigenous organisation within the RDM, states:

“We have to do the mobilisation there in our communities, this is something that will not be visualised...we do not have to rally in the streets to protest, nor to scream, nor to claim. To act against this globalisation. That which we do not want. We have to do it in our communities, only from there” (González 2012).

UNOSJO's pronouncement explicitly portrays the 'comunidad' (community) as the only site of political engagement of resistance to transgenic contamination. This portrayal extends to the pronouncements of resistance of the other peasant and indigenous communities and organisations within the RDM. E.g. the pronouncement of the peasant-indigenous community of Xochicuautla, from the Lerma Valley in the state of Mexico, states:

"Faced with this emergency (...) we call upon our brothers in the Lerma Valley, and to all of its regions. We call upon you to continue the defense of the communal lands and ejidos, and not to sell them. We call to reinforce the assemblies and the community-based work, to look after our representatives and authorities not to sell or betray the community, to maintain alive the sovereign agriculture of the people, to not divide and overcome divisions, to protect our maizes, forests, and water (...) and finally, maintain our culture and autonomy" (*Declaración de la comunidad indígena de Xochicuautla* 2013).

4.4 The Principle of 'Comunalidad'

The notion of 'the commons' as that which is produced, is inherited or transmitted in a situation of comunidad (community), also serves as a point of reference to approximate to the logic of 'comunalidad'. Comunalidad is "a term coined by two indigenous intellectuals⁴³ in Oaxaca, Mexico, to share with others their way of being and thinking, as an active we, a communal subject defining the first layer of personal identity" (Esteva 2010:152). In other words, comunalidad is a logic of *being* within community that differs from the normative understanding of 'we' as the summation or addition of individual selves (Esteva and Prakash 1998:54). Rather, comunalidad is characterised by the 'active we', the 'communal subject' (Esteva 2010:155). Where the being in community is first a 'communal subject' and subsequently an 'individual subject'. In this sense, the logic of 'comunalidad' resonates with the Tojolabal people understanding of 'togetherness' (Lekersdorf 2002:15).

"The vital impulse that exists between the milpa (which is also a community) and the human community, has an inexhaustible political and social essence" (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:37).

Maldonado Alvarado (2010:225) contends that the logic of 'comunalidad' is more than just an isolated aspect of community,

⁴³ Esteva does not specify who these intellectuals are.

‘communality’ is lived, that is its distinctive feature. Thus, communality is also a form of understanding the political engagement, the lived politics of resistance of the people of maize to defend and liberate their social and natural commons in community. Then, ‘comunalidad’, the logic of being within community, is expressed in concrete socio-political activities of the community. Rendón (as cited in Maldonado Alvarado 2010:52) locates four fundamental and distinctive elements of the expression of ‘comunalidad’: communal authority, communal work, communal celebration and communal land. In this sense, these expressions of comunalidad are the social commons: the social and political spheres, the systems of socio-political organisation that surround the natural commons of the people of maize. The RDM locates the expressions of ‘comunalidad’ as contentious practices of resistance:

“[F]rom our communities and organisations we continue to strengthen communality, namely, the tequios⁴⁴, the assemblies, the systems of charges⁴⁵, the festivals, the community justice, the forms of local organisation, bartering and the forms of mutual aid”(*¡No Toquen Nuestro Maíz!* 2014:105).

Thus, as exemplified before, there is a reiterative framing of political engagement concerning the transgenic contamination of maize as one that strictly passes through the community. And a framing of the politics of resistance of the communities and community-based organisations that sit at the core of the RDM through the logic of ‘comunalidad’. Portraying the community as, both, the elementary unit of organisation for collective action (community organisations) and a principle for collective action (comunalidad).



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⁴⁴Tequios are an ancient Prehispanic custom, it is the collective work every resident of a community must provide for their community.

⁴⁵Translation can be better understood as systems of individual responsibilities towards the community.

⁴⁶Tequio in a Raramuri community. Photo: David Lauer.

4.5 The Network

The previous sections elaborated on the understanding (logics) of political engagement and the role of the communities and systems of social organisation of the people of maize, whom are at the epicentre of the struggle to defend native maizes in rural Mexico. This section elaborates on the organisational units and principles of the RDM as a collective whole.

4.5.1 Shared and Networked Commons

The ‘commons’, the model of community and the logic of ‘comunalidad’, of the people of maize become *shared, networked* commons (Esteva 2014:154-155), in order to protect them, within the social struggle of the RDM. The work of the RDM as the collective space where the commons of the people of maize become shared and networked is to make visible, to accompany, to recover and reinforce these commons. From different fora, places and spaces, and through the integral vision —that of the communities and community-based organisations— of defense, and importance, of maize (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:58).



4.5.2 Network as organisational form of the RDM

The network, the RDM, has an horizontal and organic structure of organisation, conformed by autonomous actors, organisations and communities that interact and create strategies for collective action through decentralised and consensual decision making. In conversation with Veronica Villa, activist of the RDM, she argued:

⁴⁷“Local biodiversity, without monocultures nor plantations”. Source: RDM facebook page.

⁴⁸ “Millenary improvement of peasant seeds as heritage of humanity”. Source: RDM facebook page.

“Strictly speaking, no person works in the network. From its beginnings in 2002 it was agreed that it would be flexible, where anyone can be a ‘member’ or not. The network is self-financed. So because it does not receive funding, each organisation and community contributes according to the needs at the moment. In example if we need money for workshops or to bring someone from far to come and give her testimony. The network is completely decentralised, both logistically and economically. There is no place where you can find the principles of the network. Nor the conditions to have a membership (we do not do that). The organisational structure of the network is loose, self-governing and horizontal...this format sometimes seems like it's not going to work...but it is funny...from the strong initial inertia of our cohesion in these years, a general, even widespread awareness of the conflict of maize contamination has grown, which has diffused very quickly” (Villa 2016 personal interview).

The interactions of the autonomous actors of the RDM happen in different encounters, mainly through gradual meetings to co-ordinate informative campaigns, workshops and forums; also through the public forums where representatives of the diverse organisations and communities of the RDM present and dialogue the current strategies, initiatives and experiences of the struggle to defend maizes. The public forums of the RDM are important sites for extensive interdisciplinary and inter-communitary dialogue. And important sites of knowledge creation as well.

4.5.3 Network logics of the RDM

As mentioned, the RDM is a loosely institutionalised network conformed by a diverse set of actors, organisations and communities that recognise themselves within it. Its collective form is a coalition of indigenous and peasant communities, small local, national and international non-governmental organisations, and non-profit scientific organisations. This organisational composition implies two sites of political engagement for concrete activist practices. First, a locally-based and community-oriented space of resistance mediated by the communities and organisations of the people of maize. In the previous section I have argued that in this spaces of political engagement the ‘community’ is the elementary unit of socio-political organisation, and the politics of resistance are conducive to entail the logics of ‘communality’ and ‘integrality’.

Despite the widespread emphasis in the discourses of the diverse actors of the RDM on the importance of the ‘community’ and on logics of ‘communality’ and ‘integrality’ as central for the defense of maize, the concrete practices that these logics entail can only be practiced within the local and the community. In other words, the reinforcement and regeneration of the ‘commons’ and the logic of ‘communality’ can only be done in situ. Some of these community-centred practices involve: to sow only seeds of maize identified as native or not contaminated, strengthen community organisation, strengthen the assemblies, reflection and reinforcement of the community’s knowledge-practices around maize, and return to traditional methods of cultivation (*El Maíz No es una Cosa* 2012:38-41).

The second site of political engagement for concrete activist practices is much more fragmented. This is the space where the diverse small local, national and international non-governmental organisations, and non-profit scientific organisations engage with concrete activist practices for the defense of native maizes in the terms of the people of maize. This means that their diverse concrete activist practices are conducive to:

- Frame the campaigns and diverse modes of circulation of information on the siege on the people of maize and not only in the transgenic contamination.
- Articulate and diffuse the problem of contamination through the lived experiences of the people of maize.
- Transnationalise the diffusion of the problem of contamination through a discourse that amplifies the experiences, and solutions of the people of maize.
- Provide complementary analyses of the conflict through other different critical perspectives: from social sciences, anthropology, economic (Ceccam), from the analysis of technologies (ETC group), and from life sciences (UCCS). Emphasising the communitarian and territorial vision of the people of maize.
- Generate methodologies and knowledges in conjunction with the peasant and indigenous communities and organisations; while maintaining an integrative, systemic and deeply unparcelled vision of peasant and indigenous knowledge (Álvarez-Buylla 2016 personal interview).
- Seek for transnational alliances to defend local and native maizes as heritage of humanity, preventing (and fighting) their patenting (*El Maíz no es una cosa* 2012:100).
- Help build locally-based and community-centred counter-power.

Thus, the expressions of political engagement of the actors of the small local, national and international non-governmental organisations, and non-profit scientific organisations within the RDM are diverse, but these focus on a specific frame (the logics of communality, autonomy and integrality) for their concrete activist actions: to listen, accompany, learn, reinforce and resonate with the locally-based and community-centred autonomous struggles of the people of maize (Álvarez-Buylla 2016 personal interview).

The theoretical implications of, both, the RDM's organisational architecture and the logics permeating its organisation, is an increasing resonance with what Juris (2008:235) calls the 'cultural networking logics of autonomous spaces'. Where autonomous spaces refers to "a multiplicity of horizontally networked spaces", a model of "horizontally coordinated, self-organizing spaces". And where the network emerges as "a widespread cultural ideal, a model of —and for — new forms of radical, directly democratic politics" within the social struggle to defend native maizes.

In this sense, the long-term strategic network of the RDM generates an alternative discourse in regard to the contamination of native maize, and a space for an enactment of the political that is 'otherwise'. Which entails alternative practices of political engagement that seek to build counter-power through a tangible regeneration and reinforcement of the commons of the people of maize.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

This chapter presents a synthesis of the findings to the questions posed in this paper. It also indicates some aspects that can be further explored. And mentions some of my reflections and challenges throughout this research.

5.1 From the milpa you can see (another) world⁴⁹

The plural understandings of the maize conveyed in the social struggle of the RDM contribute to alternative understandings of the political in several important dimensions. Besides challenging the understanding of political engagement in Mexico as one that strictly circumscribes its efforts to democratise the practices and formal institutions of the state, the RDM expands or configures this understanding. This work located two fundamental spaces of the reconfiguration of the political: the discursive practices and the organisational architecture of the RDM.

The first space elucidated how the RDM practices a political engagement permeated by important and interesting notions of autonomy and integrality. The second space correlated the autonomous and integral practices of the people of maize to the organisational architecture of the RDM. Here we found the linkages between the commons, the community and the network. And how the protection of the shared and networked commons of the people of maize constitute the centrality of the organisation of collective action of the various actors that recognise themselves within the RDM.

As argued, the political efforts of the RDM are contentious to the normative understandings and practices of the political because these are not circumscribed towards enhancing the democratisation of the formal institutions of governance, ie. the state's and institutions of global governance's regimes of representation and public policy. Instead of engaging in 'civic' participation, lobbying or campaigning, the struggle to defend native maizes of the RDM proves to articulate and constitute in itself its own political formations. Where citizenship is built and exercised ie. in autonomous assemblies, communities and organisations, extended and reinforced within the organisational space of the RDM. Where rights are imagined and lived ie. through the regeneration of the natural and social commons. Where identities are forged ie. in integrality and togetherness. Where knowledge and practices are vindicated and created ie. through the re-rooting and remembering of ancient and contemporary knowledge-practices. And

⁴⁹By Silvia Ribeiro, activist of the RDM. (Red en Defensa del Maiz, 2014)

where the power and principles of the dominant socio-political reality are contested, while being inherently grounded in their defense of Mexican native maizes.

With this research I try to contribute to social movements studies, in particular to the growing literature that attempts to rethink the treatment of culture, knowledge and collective agency. And which recognises social movements as sites of political engagement and as constituents of alternative political formations.

5.2 My challenges and reflections...

The process of research and writing is in itself challenging, full of bumps in the road, I kept repeating to myself that I was learning. In this sense, the activists of the RDM were my companions. Their lucidity and openness are the core drivers of my words.

Thinking back, to the beginning of this research and how my inquiry began on the alternative meanings of maize...It surprise me, and continues to do so, how maize entails such a vast social and political force in the context given. I believe now, as the activists of the RDM also believe, that maize and the people of maize will prosper and they will continue their livelihood projects...as they always have done, for thousands of years 'hidden' from our blurred sight, far away from our academic ivory towers, from our worned out modern lifestyles and ways of thinking. Until we learn how to see and practice our cultures and knowledges in cultural and epistemological 'humility', and we can join them in a regeneration of ourselves and our social and political realms.

In this sense, this work is also a political action, it is a space of visibility for a concrete way of engaging and transforming a socio-political realm, an initiative that simultaneously is political, social and ecological. An alternative of life, which has not been recognised as such.

5.3 Interesting aspects to be explored

There are manifold aspects of the RDM that remained under-analyzed in the scope of this work's methodology and breadth limitations. One important aspect among these is the creation of the RDM's own knowledge and methods of research, which I was only able to expose briefly. In example, there are interesting and important interactions between the scientific activists groups (UCCS) and the communities and organisations of the people of maize that entail mutual resonances and creation of knowledge. In theory, this has further

implications for what, at the beginning of this paper, we called the ‘overflow of science by the political’ and for epistemic ‘humility’. Another relevant and interesting aspect is the inter-community interactions happening at the encounters in the forums of the RDM, where the experiences of autonomy are shared and nourished from different cultural and epistemological perspectives.

In like manner, in terms of methodology I believe that an actively engaged (militant) and network-oriented ethnography can bring a deeper and more consistent work with the political formations and imaginaries constituted within the RDM. This remains as an alternative for future research.

More stories:

www.voicesofmaiz.org

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Annex 1 - Members of RDM

Organisations and Communities that conform the RDM (2016)

Indigenous Communities:

1. Wixárika people, from the Mexican states of Jalisco, Durango and Zacatecas;
2. Rarámuri people from The Sierra Tarahumara region in the Mexican state of Chihuahua;
3. Nahúa community from Ayotitlán, in the Mexican state of Jalisco;
4. Ñañhú community, from Atlapulco, in the State of Mexico;
5. Totonaca community from the 'Sierra Norte de Puebla' region;
6. Peasant communities from Los Tuxtlas, in Veracruz (Mexican state);
7. Peasant communities from the South of Veracruz;
8. Zapotec communities from the central valleys of Oaxaca (Mexican state);
9. Chontal community from Centla, in Tabasco (Mexican state);
10. Tlapanec community from Tlapa, Guerrero (Mexican state);
11. Mixtec community from San Juan Mixtepec, in Oaxaca (Mexican state);
12. And various representatives of the Quechua people of Peru.

Indigenous Organisations:

13. Organización de Agricultores Biológicos (Organization of Biological Peasant Farmers), in Oaxaca;
14. Centro de Derechos Indígenas Flor y Canto (Center for Indigenous Rights Flower and Chant), in Oaxaca;
15. Grupo Indígena de Protección Ambiental (GIPA, Indigenous Group of Environmental Protection), in Jalisco.

Civil Society Organisations:

16. Centro Nacional de Apoyo a las Misiones Indígenas AC (CENAMI, National Centre of Support to Indigenous Missions);
17. Centro de Estudios para el Cambio en el Campo Mexicano (CECCAM, Center for Studies for Change in the Mexican Countryside);
18. Grupo de Acción sobre Erosión, Tecnología y Concentración (Grupo ETC, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration);

19. Centro de Análisis Social, Información y Formación Popular (CASIFOP, Centre of Social Analysis, Information and Popular Training);
20. Consultoría Técnica Comunitaria (CONTEC, Community Technical Consulting), in Chihuahua;
21. Grupo de Estudios Ambientales (GEA, Group of Environmental Studies),
22. Asociación Jalisciense de Apoyo a Grupos Indígenas (AJAGI, Jalisco Association in Support for Indigenous Groups);
23. Centro Regional para la Educación y la Organización (Regional Centre for Education and Organization);
24. Los Tuxtlas, in Veracruz;
25. Unidad de Apoyo a las Comunidades Indígenas (UACI, Unit in Support for Indigenous Communities) in Guadalajara, Jalisco;
26. Universidad de la Montaña (UNIMON, University of the Mountain), in Chiapas;
27. Desarrollo Integral de los Mexicanos Indígenas (DESMI, Integral Development for Indigenous Mexicans),
28. Terra de Direitos (Land of Rights), in Brasil;
29. GRAIN and
30. Grupo Cultural Nivi Ñuu (Cultural Group Nivi Ñuu).

Annex 2 - Interviews

Elaborated Semi-Structured Interviews		
Name	Organisation	Date of Interview
Veronica Villa	ETC	Several interviews (aside, one structured interview was held with Veronica)
Elena Álvarez-Buylla	UCCS	Several interviews
Alvaro Salgado	CENAMI	1 Aug 16
Maria Teresa Guerrero	CONTEC	5 Aug 16
David Lauer	CONTEC	4 Aug 16
Ramón Vera	GRAIN	23 Oct 16
Aldo Gonzalez	UNOSJO	30 Oct 16

Questions in the First (and only) Structured Interview	
1	What is the nature of your organisation' work within the RDM?
2	Who are the People of Maize?
3	In short, what is at stake if the struggle to defend native maizes in Mexico is lost?
4	In short, why does the RDM considers the struggle to defend native maizes a perpetual struggle?
5	From your perspective, Which knowledges are in tension/oposition to those that the RDM is protecting?
6	In your opinion, Which are the elements of maize that depict maize beyond being a staple food?
7	Do you consider that the defense of native maize specifically entails the protection of peasant and indigenous knowledges and ways of living? Or does another way of protecting native maize exists without accounting for the latter? Why?
8	Which is the role of the scientific groups within the RDM?
9	How does the organisations and communities that recognise themselves within the RDM reach consensual agreements on the strategies to be undertaken?
10	Considering the broad net of knowledges and conceptions of maize from the different perspectives within the RDM, how does the process of construction of public narratives and discourses happens? (ie. in pronouncements, declarations, publications and letters published by the RDM)
11	In your opinion, when the RDM encounters government officials, biotech representatives or other organisations and groups from civil society, does the discussions on maize and milpa entail the terms of the peasant and indigenous organisations?
12	How does the peasant and indigenous knowledges and practices crystallise in those of the RDM?
13	How does the discourse and political strategy of the RDM entail the cultural aspects of maize? and the livelihood projects around maize? are these presented as a cultural difference? why?
14	In your opinion, which conceptions, ways of life, social and natural relationships are embedded in what we understand as transgenic maize?