Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Mexico has become a laboratory of social struggle. The trajectory has followed a galloping pace of multiple struggles, rebellions and protests that look as if they cross paths with similar movements elsewhere in the world. From the student movements in Chile against privatization, the Indignados in Spain, Occupy Wall Street and the resistance of teachers in the United States, the Arab Spring in the Middle East, young people for public space in Turkey, the struggles of workers in South Korea, and the spread of anarchist communes; all seem to cross nations, cultures and similar experiences. With a highly schematic story I would like to show the way the space of Mexican movements has developed, and introduce some Mexican authors who have witnessed these struggles.

Protest in Mexico during the first decade of the current century has been a battle for citizenship and a dispute over the future of the nation (Tamayo, 2010). It has been a cycle in response to the systematic application of unpopular neoliberal policies that have been embedded in society, through critical structural reforms, especially in labor, education and energy (Modonesi, Oliver, Munguía, López de la Vega, 2011; Zermeño, 2009).

Mexican social movements can be classified by the way they relate to state policies. The National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) was aimed at both electoral goals and an anti-neoliberal court, but it is not radically opposed to capitalism. MORENA, which imagines development through a nationalist and popular strategy, has passed from being a social movement to a political movement-party (Combes, 2015).

In contrast, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the Other Campaign promotes an explicitly anti-capitalist project. During this period, the EZLN has lost social support, engaged with the ever-present threat of military aggression, and consolidated a regional project in indigenous communities (Lutz y Chávez, 2014).

In addition there are the movement of the working class. There are heteronomous unions such as the UNT (telephone workers), SME (electrician workers), OPT (political workers party) and CNTE (a democratic faction of the teacher’s union). The trade union movement is nevertheless fragmented by unceasing governmental repression strategies. Unions deeply disagree about regional, organizational, mobilization and political strategies. Within union cultures, an older class-consciousness has been replaced by business-oriented and individualistic values that limit the prospects of social change (Bizberg, 2010).

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In addition there are regional movements like the APPO in Oaxaca, which allies the teachers union with indigenous and popular communities to influence local governance (Bolos y Estrada, 2013). Also, protests against mining in Wirikuta and the Parota dam have sparked an ethno-environmentalism, which has combined community and regional visions to build integrating schemes of social citizenship, as well as a practical and theoretical sense of autonomy, against penetration by transnational companies. They have connected the defense of territory with religious values, based on traditional customs and practices, which sometimes contradict a universalist vision of citizenship (Landázuri y López Levi, 2011; y Lutz y Chávez, 2014).

A new cycle of protest opened with the federal elections of 2012, as youth mobilized across the country. The movement #YoSoy132 (#Iamthe132) was for democracy and against the imposition of large media networks. It still resonates with social activists in several regions (González Villarreal, 2013). The Ayotzinapa movement emerged in 2014 in the state of Guerrero, one of the poorest and most violent states in the country, after the incursion of drug trafficking violence. Despite ups and downs, this movement continues to demand the live presentation of 43 disappeared students from the Rural Normal School, affecting the legitimacy of judicial institutions, the military and political representation, under the claim: “The crime was by the State.” In association with this social conflict, the movement of community policing appears in several regions of the country that replace the deficient state’s role in public security, combating violence against women and drug trafficking (Albertani y Aguilar Mora, 2015).
The resistance has irritated the system, but the social response is not enough to crack it. To achieve an institutional impact, movements call for unity in action, a difficult goal to achieve. The EZLN has shrunk in its liberated territories. MORENA, now becoming an institutionalized party, is unable to sustain protest. Unions defend stability rather than the interests of members. And communities that built compact ethnic identities have reinforced them with speeches of exclusion, losing their appeal to a wider audience.

Elections, on the other hand, have become an opportunity for political contestation. Some groups have been able to use the electoral process to articulate and promote movements that may have a decisive impact on politics (Aguilar, 2009; Cadena-Roa y López Leyva, 2013). These groups view the elections as appropriate targets of protest and disqualification. They lead toward more and more active abstentionism, collective actions, boycotts of elections, and de-legitimization of the political elite.

As can be seen, the Mexican protest has reemerged, mainly due to the deepening of structural reforms, which have disrupted the lives of millions of human beings. From the countryside to the city; from frightened groups of middle class and workers; from perished community identities, women and radical students and young people; the looming common struggle is the defense of public space. This project is one of citizenship. It seeks to balance the defense of universal human rights with cultural diversity. A theoretical perspective can explain this paradox by attempting to reach a synthesis between macro structures of opportunity and cultural processes of life experiences.

Bibliography


This article was originally posted in the blog of the Collective Behavior and Social Movements (CBSM) ASA Section.

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