La scienza è una curiosità

Scritti in onore di Umberto Cerroni

a cura di Cosimo Perrotta
Postfazione di Umberto Cerroni
STUDI
Collana a cura di
Anna Grazia D'Oria, Giovanni Invitto, Marcello Strazzeri
“La scienza è una curiosità”
Scritti in onore di Umberto Cerroni

a cura di Cosimo Perrotta
con la collaborazione di Mariarosa Greco

Postfazione di Umberto Cerroni
Questo volume è stato pubblicato con il contributo dell’Università degli Studi di Lecce, erogato tramite il Dipartimento di Filosofia e Scienze Sociali.
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The Construction of Collective Identity in the EZLN Discourse

by Aquiles Chihu Amparan

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to describe and analyze the EZLN discourse. In order to attain such an aim this work has focused on two questions: How do political actors build their identities? What is the role played by discourse and political communication in the impact of the EZLN’s national and international resonance? The importance of a discourse analysis lies in the fact that the discourse universe is a privileged arena for the analysis of identities; since it is in this field that actors define themselves and their enemies, talk about their problems, the goals set to solve such problems and address an audience. Thus, one of the objectives of this paper is to analyze the discourse strategies of actors in the construction process of political identities. As a representative sample for the analysis of the EZLN discourse strategies we have selected the five declarations of the Lacandon Jungle, the texts and communiqués released during the “March of the Color of Earth”. The reason being the representative character of such texts in time and space. They were made in the years 1994, 95, 96 and 98, at crucial times. The Zapatist Caravan of 2001 and the EZLN speech in the Congress of the Union precinct focus on the problem of indigenous rights and culture.

The methodology for this work is frame analysis. The concept of collective action frame provides a basis for understanding the process by which collective action is inspired and legitimated (Snow, Benford 1992, p. 152). The conscious strategic efforts made by a certain group of actors aimed at legitimizing the actions of a social movement and at encouraging the audience to take collective action are called framing process. Our units of study are the texts prepared by political actors and are considered as the concrete manifestation of discourse. These are “language acts” (a speech or written discourse) that have easily identifiable beginnings and ends, e.g., books, articles, brochures, discourses, interviews, radio and TV comments (Donati 1992). In such texts, certain aspects of reality are selected in order to promote a definition of the protagonist, the antagonist, the problem and an interpretation in order to propose options to resolve the problem. According to Hunt, Benford and Snow (1994) the framing process of every social movement is an identity-building process. During framing processes, the members of the social movement organizations build definitions of relevant actors in the context of collective action. Such statements refer to the situation of actors in time and space and to their features or traits. Diagnose frames are the common field for the construction of the antagonist’s and protagonist’s identities. It is within these frames that the movement blames specific actors for a certain problematic situation. It is
through blaming that the movement activists implicitly make statements about their
own organizations.

According to Hunt, Benford and Snow (1994) there are three main groups of iden-
tities or identity fields resulting from framing processes. Individuals and collectivities
are defined as protagonists either because they are sympathetic to the movement’s val-
ues, beliefs, objectives and practices or because they obtain a benefit from it. The pro-
tagonist identity fields are the constellations of identity attributions to individuals or
collectivities considered as supporters of the movement’s causes. Such attributions
include the personification of the most positive features of the movement in specific
individuals (heroes and heroines) as well as the use of collective identity markers that
define the traits of the population sector represented by the social movement.

People or collectivities opposing the movement’s values, beliefs, goals and practices
or those who might be affected by the movement’s actions are defined as antagonists.
The antagonist identity fields are the constellations of identity attributions to individu-
als or collectivities considered as opponents to the social movement. Among the actors
considered as movement antagonists are countermovements; hostile institutions, public
enemies. The most obvious way for activists of social movements to produce antago-
nist identities is by identifying and defining individuals, collectivities, beliefs, values
and practices as opposed to the causes and identities of protagonists. As with pro-
tagonists, the attributions include making judgments about the conscience and moral con-
duct of antagonists.

The audience’s identity fields are the constellations of identity attributions to indi-
viduals or collectivities considered as neutral observers or not committed in the col-
etive action field but that might react positively to the social movement’s activities and
discourse. The framing of the audience is particularly important for the activists of the
social movement, for through it they are able to identify the types of frames that can be
more “resounding” to those social groups that, without being part of the movement
itself, might join it as potential allies.

2. The declarations of the Lacandon Jungle

The first declaration of the Lacandon Jungle was made in the context of a social
drama that started with the disturbance of peace in January 1, 1994. Just after midnight,
more than a thousand uniformed individuals in dark-green trousers, brown shirts, some
wearing pasamontañas and others paliacates, armed with rifles and machetes, seized
the municipality council of San Cristóbal de las Casas and the cities of Las Margaritas,
Altamirano and Ocosingo. In that document, the EZLN declares war on the Mexican
Federal Army which it refers to as the «main pillar of the dictatorship we undergo,
monopolized by the ruling party, led by the Federal Executive branch and headed by its
maximum and illegitimate leader: Carlos Salinas de Gortari». This declaration demands
from «the other branches of the nation to devote themselves to the restoration of legali-
ty and stability in the nation by depriving the dictator of office». In the definition of the protagonist field the EZLN defines itself from the standpoint of a classical guerrilla group of the 70’s. The Zapatista army refers to itself as an armed vanguard trying to gather the masses around itself to fight a common foe, at that time defined as the PRI regime with its spurious representative, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. This text is a war declaration in which the foe is president Salinas de Gortari and the military strategy established is the advance on Mexico City. Regardless of the last points mentioned, the Zapatists do not refer to themselves as rebels or guerilla, but as “insurgent soldiers” wearing red and black uniforms, the symbol of working people on strike. The Zapatist army prefers to be called insurgent army in memory of the success of their insurgent precursors, the heroes of the revolution for National Independence. At that moment, the EZLN defines the antagonist field as “a dictatorship of over 70 years led by a bunch of traitors that represent the most conservative groups and the ones who sold out the country. They are the same ones that opposed Hidalgo and Morelos, the ones who betrayed Vicente Guerrero, the ones who sold more than one half of our territory to the foreign invader, the ones that had a European prince come to rule us, the ones that constituted the Porfirian scientists dictatorship, the ones that opposed the Oil Expropriation, the ones that slaughtered the railroad workers in 1958 and the students in 1968”. The demands raised in the declaration are: Work, land, housing, food, healthcare, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice and peace. Commander Marcos stated that the EZLN decided to rise up in arms in response to the coming into force of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), “since it represents a death certificate for indigenous ethnicities in Mexico.” He also underlined that the members of this group “have received political education and this is an ethnic movement.”

On June 10, 1994, in the second declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, the EZLN refers to itself as the “men of maize”. It defines the antagonist as «the eternal ruling party that exercises power to benefit from the fruits of the work of all Mexicans...the ones who protect, by corrupting justice, drug traffickers and killers, the ones who resort to political killing and to electoral fraud to dominate». Among the goals that the EZLN listed in the document is having a government in political transition to democracy. The lack of justice, liberty and democracy in Mexican territory favors the existence of the cacique systems, the omnipotent power of cattle raisers and traders and the spread of drug trafficking. The Zapatist army calls for the celebration of a national, democratic, sovereign and revolutionary convention to make proposals for a transition government and a new national law, a new Constitution that grants the legal fulfillment of the people’s will.

On January 1, 1995 in the third declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, the Zapatista army defines as its antagonist the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the «political arm of organized crime and drug trafficking». The plebes include the indigenous peoples’ issue. The only way of incorporating the indigenous people into the nation with justice and dignity is through the recognition of the characteristics of their social, cultural and political organization. Autonomy does not mean break-down; it is the integration of the most humiliated and neglected minorities in today’s Mexico. While in the
first declaration the EZLN called to arms and in the second to a civic and pacific struggle, in the third it calls on all social and political forces in the country, it urges the honest Mexican citizens to start a movement for national liberation that would strive for the establishment of a transition government, a new Magna Charta and the destruction of the State-party system. The EZLN calls on Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to lead the movement for national liberation, as a broad opposition front. In accordance with the tone of the third declaration, the EZLN states that the federal government is no longer responsible for guarding the nation. The Mexican flag, the nation’s supreme law, the Mexican anthem and the national emblem will now be guarded by the rebel forces until legality, legitimacy and sovereignty are restored in all of the national territory. The original Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico, enacted on February 5, 1917, is declared in force with the addition of the Revolutionary Acts of 1993 and the Statutes on inclusive autonomy for indigenous regions. It calls to the establishment of a transition government to democracy, the Movement for National Liberation that would have among its goals to dismantle the State-party system, to truly separate the government from the PRI, amend the electoral law, call for the elaboration of a new constitution, recognize the particular characteristics of indigenous groups, recognize their right to autonomy and citizenship.

The fourth declaration was released on January 1, 1996 and the protagonist was defined as «the rebellion that has a dark face and an indigenous language». For the Zapatists the rebellion was not born in 1994 in the Lacandon Jungle. In many other mountains and in many other stories, has rebellion risen against injustice. It has spoken several languages. «Rebellion is not a matter of language, but a matter of dignity and of being humans». The antagonist is the project that implies the complete destruction of the Mexican nation, forced to give up national sovereignty. Treason and crime are its supreme values. This project finds in the PRI its criminal face and in the PAN its democratic masquerade. On the other hand, the project of transition to democracy is the project for the reconstruction of the country and the defense of national sovereignty with the truth and the rule of law as the guiding light; dialogue, tolerance and inclusion as a new form of making politics. The political force born from this declaration is the Zapatista Front for National Liberation. A new political force whose members do not aspire to hold popular elected offices or any positions in the government. A political force that does not aspire to seize power. A force that is not a political party. A political force that is capable of outlining solutions for collective problems even without the participation of political parties and the government. A political force with a local, state and regional organization that stems from the base, from its social strength. A political force born from civic dialogue committees. A political force called Zapatista because it is born with the indigenous hope and heart that, together with the EZLN, came down from the Mexican mountains. A political force that is called of national liberation because it struggles for the liberty of all Mexicans and in all the country. The slogan voiced is: «The world we want is one where many worlds can fit. The country we build is one where there is room for all peoples and their languages».
The fifth declaration on July 19, 1998 demands justice for the indigenous people of Mexico. It recognizes that the San Andrés Accords were not the fruit of the single will of the EZLN, but of that of the representatives of all indigenous peoples of Mexico: «As then, today we continue walking together with all indigenous peoples in the struggle for the recognition of their rights. Not as vanguard or direction, just as a part». In this declaration it is stated that a constitutional amendment in the matter of indigenous rights and culture must not be unilateral, but must incorporate the San Andrés Accords and thus, recognize the crucial aspects of the indigenous peoples’ pleas: autonomy, territoriality, regulating systems. In the Accords, the right to indigenous autonomy and territory are recognized, as established in ILO Convention n.169, signed by the Senate of the Republic: «The Zapatists do not forget what we struggle for and what our main banner is in the struggle for democracy, liberty and justice in Mexico: the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples».

3. The Zapatist Caravan

Utilizing the reference frames that define identity fields, the EZLN selected a metaphor to refer to the Zapatist Caravan: “March for the Color of Earth”. That means: the recognition of different identities (the color of Earth is one more color among all the colors of the world); and that the indigenous people are the original inhabitants of this land that is now known as Mexico, thus the closeness of the indigenous people to Earth.

The “March for the Color of Earth” started in San Cristóbal de las Casas, on February 24, 2001, to traverse over three thousand kilometers of the Mexican Republic. This march, for the color of Earth, consisted of a main core of 24 EZLN delegates and was escorted by men and women from several ethnic groups (tzotzil, tzeltal, chol, tojolabal, zoque, chinanteco, mixe, zapoteco, mazateco, huichol, yaqui, tarahumara, seri) as well as by figures like Nobel Prize writer José Saramago, Alain Touraine and a group of members from the European Parliament.

At that moment, the Zapatist army projects the image of a protagonist that takes pride in being indigenous. The use of “we... the indigenous people” is crucial in the EZLN speeches delivered during different acts of the Caravan: «We are the direct descendants of those who populated these Mexican lands and yet our indigenous rights have not been recognized, nor have we been taken into account along the past 500 years».

In the first Lacandon Jungle war declaration the need to meet 11 demands is voiced: house, land, work, food, health, education, independence, liberty, justice, democracy and peace. During the Zapatist Caravan of 2001 the demand about indigenous rights was brought back once again:

For over 500 years we have been deprived from the right to live with liberty. Today, indigenous peoples do not have the right to life, health, education, food, land, nor to a
dignified house; we do not have the right to decide about our own life not to mention the right to rule ourselves as peoples. This is the reason why we invite and ask you to support us and join us in this march for dignity, so that we all together demand the constitutional recognition of indigenous rights, so that one day, our peoples, our children, our young and elderly can live with dignity and justice and with all of the rights they deserve as peoples.

4. Ethnicity Strategies

In the EZLN discourse analysis I do consider ethnicity as the set of disputes arisen in a political arena that involve the participation of the majority of the members in an ethnic group. Therefore, the EZLN discourse is part of the ethnicity strategies repertoire of the group. The use of the term *ethnicity strategies* is considered as an analysis tool that contributes to the development of a mind set that considers culture as a series of identity construction processes in which lower classes are faced with the hegemony of dominant classes. The ethnicity strategies categories describe the emergence of unheard of social-cultural phenomena as well as the constitution of new identity in a world of radical changes brought about by violent changes imposed by modern States in their way towards progress. In my opinion, ethnicity strategies are the result of the cultural and political struggles of peoples, as well as the result of the historical awareness about such conflicts. According to Michel Baud, the accentuation of ethnicity might be a strategy; stated otherwise, it might represent the result of a conscious selection of groups of people and be aimed at reaching certain social goals (Baud 1996, p. 7).

Fredrik Barth (1978) states that an ethnic group is a community that shares a set of cultural traditions and interacts with other groups through a dynamic identity-building process. This is a significant approach since it allows for the observation of the ethnicity phenomenon in terms of interaction and process as it allows us to capture both the structural and symbolic aspects of such a phenomenon. Barth opposed the widely accepted idea that ethnicity was a set of particular features only attributed to groups that remained isolated and totally protected from alien influence. This author’s concept of ethnicity was that of a phenomenon that occurs in the social borderline zones where the interests of groups are more threatened and where they are more exposed to extraneous influence. Therefore, it was in those areas where it was crucial to define clear border lines by means of ethnical identity lines and in which ethnicity would be born as the ideology that shapes ethnical differences.

Which are the strategies used by ethnic groups for maintaining their border lines? According to Anthony Smith (1981) the process for ethnicity revitalization that occurs in ethnic communities can be developed through different strategies:

1. *Isolation.* This strategy led to the constitution of shelter regions and in the past it was the most widely used powerful resource by small communities to isolate themselves from society.
2. *Adaptation.* Involves the participation of community members who also get involved in the political and social life of the country in an active way.

3. *Community.* Through this strategy, considered by Smith as a more active and dynamic adaptation variant, the community pursues, as a target, to have control and make decisions about community matters in an autonomous way within geographical areas of a larger entity such a community might belong to.

4. *Autonomy.* In the cultural arena autonomy implies a total control by community representatives of what is related to cultural life, education, press, mass media and the Courts. In the political arena, the autonomy-supporting movements seek to establish a balance between their demands and the benefits of being part of the state structure.

5. *Separatism.* This is an ethnic-national, self-determination strategy whose objective is that a particular ethnic group manages to consolidate itself as a sovereign state.

6. *Irredentism.* This tactic seeks either to recover lost territories or the reunification of an ethnic group that is scattered and fragmented.

From Smith’s standpoint, today ethnic revitalization processes have been moving from defensive positions to more dynamic and aggressive positions. Whereas in the past the isolation-type and adaptation-type strategies would prevail, today, ethnic revitalization movements tend to adopt community and autonomy-supportive strategies as is the case of the Zapatists.

5. *Indigenous rights and culture*

In the analysis of social movements the political, organizational and structural aspects have been privileged, whereas cultural or meaning reproduction aspects are being neglected. Such meaning production is performed through public discourse and persuasive communication. Apart from the meaning production, the culture of a movement reflects its social environment, that is to say, the social groups it involves and geographical spaces it deploys its action in. Thus, a social movement reflects the culture of the social groups and location it arises in. The EZLN is a representative case of this statement. Snow and Benford (1992) have approached the problem through the concept of the frames’ cultural resonance. Snow and Benford believe that the social movement leaders must perform a cultural appropriation process in order to facilitate the emergence of collective action. Such an appropriation process consists of the formulation of frames that must match the frames of a society’s culture as a whole or the subculture of a particular social group which is intended to be activated.

The EZLN was born as an armed movement and it paradoxically has had more victories in the arena of political discourse than on the battle field. Why does it have such a national and international impact? To answer this question it must be said that its impact can be attributed to the resonance of the frames used in the movement. It
is the master frame* that dignifies the indigenous peoples’ human and civil rights and those of minorities as well. Its call has been echoed in the whole word.

Embraced within the overall topic of human rights are cultural rights, closely related to individual rights and fundamental freedoms. Nowadays cultural rights are inscribed within the framework of cultural relativism and point to a definition of collective human rights. This gives rise to demands by cultural groups for their right to preserve and develop their own culture. On the other hand, in contemporary Nation-States a creation process of a national culture imposed on the various ethnic groups settled within their borders, as well as the adoption of values of such dominant groups, can be observed. Such is the process undergone by indigenous peoples in Latin America where indigenous-driven policies foster the assimilation, by such indigenous communities, of the culture of mestizo groups considered descendants of the original colonizers.

Unlike cultural diversity in individuals from the same society, in terms of subcultures with different cultural practices among groups, cultural pluralism refers to the presence of different peoples in the heart of a single society. In Latin America peoples exist as groups with a cultural heritage (territory, resources, social organization, symbols, history, traditions) based on which they build up a collective identity. In Latin America, Nation-States are considered plural societies since they hold different peoples together. However, such indigenous peoples have continued to exist after five centuries of colonial domination, keeping a different cultural identity than that of western civilization. Therefore, the “indian” category denotes both the condition of the colonized ones and refers to the colonial link.

How have indians been defined?

The definition for “indian” in terms of biological indicators (linking the concept of indians in racial terms) spells some trouble due to the repeated blends of races among very different populations, which is why in the Americas everyone is a mestizo. The “indian” category is above the ethnic division (Bonfil 1972) which does not denote any specific content about the groups it defines, rather it denotes a particular link between such groups and the other sectors of the social system; i.e., it refers to the colonial relationship. Prehispanic societies represented a complete medley of diversity and contrast. There were no indians in the Continent. The colonial category (indians) was indistinctly applied to all of the native population without considering the differences and identities of the different peoples. Unlike indians, mestizos were a sector, originally colonized but co-opted by the colonial apparatus to become part of the colonizing society with a subordinate position in it. Today indigenous peoples in Latin America struggle for human and individual rights equal to those of the rest of the population. They also demand the recognition of a multicultural citizenship and an egalitarian participation as different collectivities.

As Stavenhagen puts it (2000) the main items in a worldwide agenda on the defense of the rights of indigenous peoples are as follows:

1. The rights to lands and the recognition of their territories. Since indigenous commu-
nities in Latin America are linked to land ownership under the shared (community) proprietorship regime, the current trend towards privatizations threatens indigenous territories and ways to make a living. Thus the issue of the rights of indigenous people to land ownership, control, exploitation and usage of natural resources has become a key demand.

2. The right to their own culture. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights foresees the right of every individual to take part in the cultural life of their communities. In the case of Latin America the mainstream trend is just the opposite; imposing a nationwide culture over the cultures of indigenous peoples. Thus the relevance of the demand of indigenous organizations for their freedom to talk and teach in their own language, practice their own religions, develop their institutions and traditions within the framework of multicultural and multilingual Nation-States.

3. The right to autonomy, self-determination and political representation. The indigenous peoples demand to be recognized as “peoples” and not only as “towns”, since the concept of peoples leads to the right to self-determination (understood as the right to local and regional autonomy and not as the right of secession or separation from the already existing Nation-States).

Nations are collectivities sharing ethnic and cultural affinities within their borders. Peoples are ethnic groups that have not attained a national consciousness that are held together by racial, linguistic and cultural links that set them apart from similar groups and create the consciousness of a shared identity among their members. Oftentimes peoples or ethnic groups sharing the territory of a State with other groups are known as minorities if they are less numerous than other groups or whenever they are in a subordinate economic, political or social position. Today, the peoples in conflict with the Nation-State have two ways of reacting to this situation; either to reject being part of the political society or else to reaffirm their rooting in the Nation-State but claiming the recognition of their rights. The first choice leads to separatism; the second, to autonomy. It is the latter that has been picked out by the different peoples in Latin America. The concept of autonomy is closely linked to the notion of peoples and the right to self-determination. The discussion, thus, focuses on whether indigenous people are indeed peoples and if they are entitled to self-determination.

6. What is the EZLN?

The EZLN is a people’s army showing the features of a guerrilla group\textsuperscript{11}. Like any army, it boasts a hierarchical structure with commands ruled by military standards and regulations. In accordance with its acronym, EZLN is an army whose troops wear uniforms with insignias indicating their military ranks and that are also trained in a warfare discipline. It is known as Zapatista since it was born from the traditional Ejército
Libertador del Sur (Army for the Liberation of the South) led by Emiliano Zapata and was made up by nahuatl soldiers, just like him. It is called of National Liberation because it fights for economic and political emancipation throughout the country, and not only at the regional level. As an army it has declared war on the Federal Mexican Army, in accordance with the regulations set forth in the Geneva Convention. However, the army behaves in the same way as guerrilla groups since it avoids armed confrontations and prefers non-violent means for its warfare operations. Just like traditional guerrilla groups, in order to survive it depends on the local population, hides in the jungle and scatters out at the time of confronting the enemy.

The EZLN has three different infrastructures. The first one is the military wing that boasts two blocks of leaders; one located in the warfare zone in charge of military operations and the other in the rearguard. The second infrastructure has two groups, one directly involved with the direct command capacity along with the commanders in chief and the other one representing the theoretical leadership of the Zapatist movement (Romero 1994). The third infrastructure is the mobilization structure: that is to say, the formal and informal collective channels through which people can mobilize and get involved in collective action, medium-level commands and groups, the organizations and informal networks that make up the baseline of EZLN.

EZLN bears links with the indigenous social movement. First are the indigenous people from communities from the Los Altos area and the Lacandon Jungle. There are also indigenous people leading their own communities, indigenous people from communities such as Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Chamula, Palenque, members of armed self-defense groups against caciques (power bosses). It is a movement with a democratic organization in which power and the decision making process stem from consultations in baseline assemblies. EZLN has supporters in different cities in Mexico; various male or female religious groups form the theology of liberation; the ejido land and peasant organizations of the state; the members of the Catholic Church in the region led by Samuel Ruiz, bishop at San Cristóbal. The Zapatista army has links and sympathizers among the civic society, both national and international. EZLN is different from other traditional warfare movements such as the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR by its acronym in Spanish). It has renounced seizing power and twelve days after having declared war, back in 1994, it agreed on a cease-fire that has lasted to date. In spite of having been made known via a warfare strategy, the movement has preferred position-gaining warfare relying on dialogue with the civic society and on ink and internet warfare as its best weapons. The fact that the Zapatista army is supported by a regional indigenous movement makes it evident why since 1994, when it was born as a traditional guerrilla movement, it started to incorporate and champion the civic society demands and those of indigenous groups.
7. Closing remarks

In the five declarations of the Lacandon Jungle the EZLN public discourse shows a developing pattern in terms of its discourse about indigenous identity. In the definition of itself and in the discourse aiming to legitimize the movement, the protagonist is first defined using class-driven categories such as “the dispossessed”, “the poor” and with the gradually increasing use of words such as “indigenous people” and “indian man or woman” that tend to build the indigenous identity. From general demands that represent the 11 points of the agenda made public in the first declaration on January 1, 1994 the discourse gradually started including individual demands favorable to indigenous rights and culture. In the second declaration dated June 12, 1994 there is a call for the creation of a national democratic convention. One year after the armed conflict had broken out the third declaration from January 1, 1995 was released making reference to the military coup of 1994 carried out by the EZLN to oppose the electoral fraud of 1994 “allowed by the State-party system”. In that declaration it is stated that with the coup of 1994 the EZLN tried to show Mexico and the world their proud indigenous essence. Furthermore, the demand for autonomy is also included and it is stated that the indigenous issue will not be solved until there is a radical change in the national contract. Thus, an appeal was made for holding a Democratic National Convention and for the creation of a national liberation movement with the participation of all opposition parties. In the fourth declaration issued on January 1, 1996, the creation of the Zapatista Front of National Liberation (EZLN) was announced. “A political force that is called Front because it tries to gather together non-party organizational efforts and because it has many organizational forms and several involvement levels as well as plenty of ways to struggle. A political force that is called Zapatist because it was born with the indigenous hope and heart that, together with the EZLN came down once again from the Mexican mountains. A political force that is called of National Liberation because it struggles for the liberty of all Mexicans throughout the country”. The fifth declaration was issued on July 19, 1998 and talks about the San Andrés Accords and it also declares the EZLN is part of the indigenous peoples of the country. In the fifth declaration the recognition of indigenous rights is demanded “As in the past, we continue to walk with all indigenous peoples in their struggle for the recognition of their rights. Not as leaders nor as heads, but just as another part”. It is also stated that the EZLN has reinforced its indigenous character and continues to encourage the struggle for the rights of indigenous peoples. During the Zapatist Caravan of 2001, the discourses abound with indigenous identity issues. The Caravan itself is actually called the march for indigenous dignity and it is referred to with a metaphor: “The March for the Color of the Earth”. The metaphor consists of three main ideas: the recognition of the different identities (the color of the earth is one more color amidst the colors of the world), the indigenous peoples are the original inhabitants of this land today known as Mexico, and indigenous peoples’ closeness to earth.

The question of the EZLN’s indigenous identity is extremely important for this
organization since its legitimacy is dependent on it and because this identity policy has an influence over the government stand: a bargaining, antagonistic or a confronting stance. The EZLN has built a discourse on indigenous identity based on such considerations as it also tries to build partnerships and get indigenous movements involved since they are the ones to grant it legitimacy.

Note

1 I define identity as a symbolic identification-differentiation building process based on a referential frame (territory, class, ethnicity, culture, gender, age). Collective identity is the tendency of social movements to build a self-image of the group that contribute to form the conscience of the actors.
2 Pasamontañas: Ski mask, generally black. Used by the Zapatists to avoid being identified.
3 Paliacate: Type of handkerchief, generally red or in bright colors, used in the countryside mainly as part of the apparel of men. Used by the original Zapatists to avoid being recognized.
5 The Zapatista army prefers to be called insurgent army in memory of the success of insurgent precursors, the heroes of the revolution for National Independence. In this way, it continues the strategy of legitimizing through which movements bring back the names or deeds of past heroes. It is the use of real, past or present, historical events to frame the protagonist and to clarify the attributes of the main actor.
7 Cacique system: A cacique was the superior in an indian territory with a great influence in government matters.
10 A “master frame” has the same function as a meaning conveying “frame” for collective action, the difference being that said function is performed on a greater scale (Snow, Benford 1992, p. 138). “Master frames” have the same function as “frames” but are related to a set of organizations from various social movements. An example would be the “frame” for individual rights in the United States of America where individual rights have become the target of a variety of movements: the feminist, the environmentalist, the homosexual, the disabled, the elderly, the children’s movements.
11 In 1981 the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) authorized the creation of a work group on indigenous populations at the core of the sub-commission, which reached the following conclusion: «Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those that having a historic continuity with societies ahead of the invasion and with pre-colonial societies that developed in their territories and are considered different than other sectors of societies now scattered in such territories or areas. Today, they are considered as non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transfer their inherited territories and their ethnic identity to future generations as the basis of their ongoing existence as a people, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems».
12 According to statements by subcomandante Marcos, EZLN is a political-military organization based on what political-military organizations used to be in the seventies, when they longed to seize power via armed revolutions and the substitution of capitalism by socialism (by overthrowing the government head, implementing a new transition government and a new brand of State; the proletarian State): all of the ideas behind revolutionary movements in Latin America. Nevertheless, it was stressed that the revolutionary process in Mexico should not, under any circumstances, emulate or import any of the revolutionary prac-
tices from other countries such as Cuba, Socialist Europe, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Calónico 2001, p. 25).

"...the Zapatista movement cannot be defined. We are indefinable, we do not fit in any category: it cannot be said whether we are Marxists, anarchists or both, if we are neither one, if we are indigenous-driven, not even if we are nationalists or internationalists. The movement is indefinable to that extent and it does not match any model. What you witnessed yesterday must have proved it: there were people bearing no links at all among themselves, but the fact that they gathered there, that they clapped their hands together, that they spoke and listened to each other even though they might not have agreed among themselves is precisely due to our undefined character. It is such an open model that it can belong to anyone. At the time the Zapatista movement gets a theoretical body or reaches an organic level, it will disappear or vanish and will end up as one of many doctrines we have seen to vanish from the scenario" (Avilés, Minà 1997, p. 176).

"In their analysis of the Zapatista public discourse development, Alcalde and Llorente (2002) state that in the first declaration the word "indigenous" is not mentioned at all, in the second one the word is mentioned three times, in the third one 13 times, in the fourth one 17 times and in the fifth one 54 times.

"...náhuatl, paipai, kiliwa, cuicapa, cochimi, kumiai, yuma, seri, chontal, chinanteco, pame, chichimeca, otomi, mazahuas, matlazincas, ocuilteco, zapoteco, solteco, chatino, papabuco, mixteco, cuicateco, triqui, amuzgo, maazateco, chocho, izcateco, huave, tlapaneco, totonaca, tepelua, popoluca, mixte, zoque, huasteco, lacandón, maya, chol, tzeltal, tzotzil, tojolabal, mame, teco, ixil, aguacateco, motocintleco, chicomucelteco, kanjobal, jicalteco, quiché, cachiquel, ketchi, pima, tepehuán, tarahu-mara, mayo, yaqui, cahita, ópata, cora, huichol, purépecha y kikapú."

References


Notizie sugli autori


AQUILES CHIHU AMPARÁN, MA, PhD, antropologo sociale, prof. di Scienze politiche, Univ. Autónoma Metropolitana, Iztapalapa (Mexico). È membro del Sistema nazionale di Ricerca. Ha pubblicato: *Gramsci y un nuevo paradigma en la concepción de la política* (UAM, Iztapalapa, 1991); *Sociología de la cultura* (UAM, Iztapalapa, 1995); *Sociologia de la Identidad* (UAM-M. Á. Porrua, Mexico, 2002); “March for the Color of the Earth”, *Araucaria* 8, (Niño y Dávila, Un. of Sevilla, Spain, 2002); “The debates of PRD, PAN and PRI’s presidential candidates in the 2000 elections in Mexico”, in M. Alcántara (ed.), *Política en América Latina* (Un. de Salamanca, Spain, 2002).


FABIO DE NARDIS, ricercatore universitario, è docente di Sociologia politica all’Università di Lecce e di Scienza politica all’Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”. Già
Research Scholar presso l’International Institute della University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), è Presidente del Center for Research in Society and Politics e Direttore de il Dubbio, Rivista transnazionale di analisi politica e sociale. Oltre ai diversi saggi su riviste nazionali e internazionali si ricordano i volumi: La complessa transizione (Milano, 1999); Sport e Vita Buona (Roma, 2000); L’irreversibilità del moderno (Roma, 2001); Logomachia (Roma, 2002); Cittadini Globali (Roma, 2003).


MANLIO MAGGI è Primo Tecnologo dell’Agenzia per la protezione dell’ambiente e per i servizi tecnici. Svolge attività di ricerca sugli aspetti sociali delle problematiche ambientali, con particolare riferimento alle interazioni tra sistemi socio-tecnici e sistemi dell’ambiente fisico, alle relazioni tra sviluppo e ambiente e alle dimensioni sociali del rischio tecnologico-industriale; su tali tematiche ha pubblicato numerosi saggi in riviste e volumi collettanei. È docente di discipline sociologico-ambientali alle Università del Molise, della Tuscia e all’Università “La Sapienza” di Roma.

PIERO MANNI (Soletro di Lecce, 1944), laureato in Filosofia con una tesi dal titolo: Sviluppo e sottosviluppo, le due facce del capitalismo discussa con Umberto Cerroni. Ha insegnato nella scuola media inferiore, per un lungo periodo negli istituti carcerari. Ha pubblicato racconti su riviste, in antologie e in volume (Feuilleton, 1990, Salento Salento, 2000).

Cofondatore nel 1984 della casa editrice omonima, della quale è dirigente. È consigliere nazionale della sezione Piccola Editoria dell’AIE.


CESARE PINELLI è professore di diritto costituzionale comparato all’Università di Macerata, membro del Comitato esecutivo dell’International Association of Constitutional Law, e del Comitato scientifico delle riviste Giurisprudenza costituzionale, Diritto pubblico e Italianieuropei. Ha pubblicato fra gli altri i seguenti volumi: Discipline e controlli sulla democrazia interna dei partiti (Cedam, 1984); Costituzione e principio di esclusività. Percorsi scientifici (Giuffrè, 1990); Mercati, amministrazioni e autonomie territoriali (Giappichelli, 1999); Il momento della scrittura. Contributo al dibattito sulla Costituzione europea (il Mulino, 2002).


MICHELE PROSPERO, professore di Filosofia del diritto presso la Facoltà di Scienze della Comunicazione dell’Università “La Sapienza” di Roma. Principali pubblicazioni: La politica postclassica (Lecce, 1987); Nostalgia della grande politica (Chieti, 1990); Politica e vita buona (Roma, 1996); Il pensiero politico della destra (Roma, 1997); Sistemi politici europei (Roma, 1998); Storia delle istituzioni in Italia (Roma, 1999); La politica moderna (Roma, 2001); Politica e società globale (Bari-Roma, 2004).


CELESTINO SPADA (Milano, 1941) è docente a contratto a “La Sapienza” di Roma (Fac. di Sociologia e Fac. di Economia). È stato programmista alla Rai (1968-99), e poi

GHEORGHE LENCAN STOICA, laureato in Filosofia all’Univ. di Bucarest. Dottore in ricerca, prof. ordinario di Storia delle idee politiche, Filosofia italiana, Elites politiche e Scienza politica. Insegna alla Fac. di Scienze Politiche, Univ. di Bucarest. Monografie: Gramsci, cultura e politica (Bucureşti, Editura politică, 1987); Cultură, umanism, pace (Bucureşti, Editura Militară, 1989); Machiavelli, filosof al politicii (Bucureşti, Editura Științifică, 2000); Concepte, idei și analize politice (București, Editura Diogene, 2000); Machiavelli, filosofo della politica (Napoli, Città del Sole, 2003). Oltre 100 articoli e studi.

Nel 1964, esattamente quarant’anni fa, Umberto Cerroni venne a Lecce, dove iniziò il suo insegnamento, e cominciò ad attrarre e a far lavorare gli intelletti più curiosi e più inquieti. Da allora ha continuato così. Ha suscitato curiosità ed energie nuove, avventure e travagli intellettuali e sociali. Questo libro raccoglie i contributi di molti suoi allievi e di alcuni sodali sul piano culturale e scientifico.

Cosimo Perrotta

Il grande problema che spesso mi posero i migliori studenti era una domanda generica e tuttavia struggente: da dove si comincia? Ho sempre dato una risposta in due piccole parole: “da qui”.

...L’importante non è da dove si comincia ma come si comincia: guardandosi attorno, curiosando nel mondo. La scienza è una curiosità...

Umberto Cerroni

Contributi di
Riccardo Caporali, Andrea Cerroni, Aquiles Chihu Amparán, João de Almeida Santos, Fabio de Nardis, Vitantonio Gioia, Manlio Maggi, Piero Manni, Francesco Martelloni, Oreste Massari, Anna Maria Nassisi, Rosalba Nestore, Alessandro Orsini, Cosimo Perrotta, Cesare Pinelli, Graziella Pisanò, Michele Prospero, Cesare Salvi, Alfredo Sensales, Celestino Spada, Gheorghe Lencan Stoica, Egidio Zacheo.