

## The Zapatistas' *CompArte por la Humanidad*

«Art that is neither seen nor heard»

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### Resumen

This document seeks to give an account on the significance of the event called *CompArte por la humanidad* ('*CompArte* for Humanity'), as organised by the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (the EZLN, i.e. the Zapatista Army of National Liberation) in 2016 (and extended to 2018). The event *CompArte* entailed, as its name suggests, the sharing of creative practices, inviting "artists" to transform the world by means of doing. Thus, the Zapatistas took it upon themselves to conceive and make artworks that were mostly collective, between the mountain and the jungle, to take part in this international event. One of the main objectives was based on the direct opposition between creation and destruction, to show that a different world and different kinds of social relationships, among the actors of history, are possible.

The words of Subcomandante Moisés, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016, in the statement titled "*El arte que no se ve ni se escucha*" ('Art that is neither seen nor heard'), speak of the art made by the Zapatistas, in the creation of indigenous cultures and in the act of doing from below. Where the ability to create can transform us as people and collectivities and where the act of making art is no longer a commodity, but rather a materiality with body and soul, with a voice that is painted, embroidered, sung and danced, becoming thus the boundary-crossing voice of those "without a voice", those who are neither seen nor heard.

### Palabras clave

Art; collective creation; autonomy; other knowledge; Chiapas.

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### Introduction

Since the uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (the EZLN), on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1994, they have not ceased to come up with creative forms and initiatives to allow space for the "flower of the word which came from the depth of history"<sup>1</sup>, and for a struggle that is vastly different to the traditional Latin American *guerrilla* warfare of the 1970s, in which the EZLN itself has its roots<sup>2</sup>.

The reasons for the emergence of the EZLN can be attributed to various different motives, but most significantly it was due to the modification of Article 27 of the Constitution of Mexico, regarding Agrarian Reform, which was a devastating blow to the collective ownership of the land: the shared, common land, which had been gained in the Mexican Revolution. The coming into force, in 1994, of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with the United States and Canada, meant that the Mexican *campesinos*<sup>3</sup> could not compete on price with the corn produced in North America, destroying thus the country's autonomy in terms of food.

As well as calling for the resignation of the then-President of Mexico, Carlos Salinas, who was considered an impostor and a dictator, they set out their eleven initial demands regarding issues of education, health, housing, land rights, work, food, freedom, democracy, justice, peace and independence.

Viewing the "poor natives" with disdain and paternalism, a stance which can be seen in museums and on tourist postcards, underwent a drastic shift at this moment. This about-turn of history resulted in the 'rebellious' natives being seen as defending their rights and fighting for the word which came from the depth of history, in "a war against forgetting, and a fight for memory"<sup>4</sup>.

Following twelve years of free-for-all combat, the federal government, after multiple protests in different areas of the country, unilaterally declares a ceasefire, which the Zapatistas accept. They become aware of the strength of the movement which is spurring on Mexican society, and they commit to a politically-focussed combat, rather than an armed one<sup>5</sup>.

According to different statements released by the EZLN in their near-25 years of existence, contact with the indigenous communities, and with the practice of native peoples as well as day-to-day coexistence therewith, brought about the transformation of a *guerrilla* that was initially Marxist-Leninist (Baschet, Jérôme, 2017).

### **The first *CompArte por la Humanidad***

In 2016, the Zapatistas convene two events that would deal with themes that, in the past, had been almost myths, sidelined as they were in the Zapatista vocabulary: the *arts* and the *sciences*. There is a reconsideration of what these two fields can bring about, considering:

- 1: That the serious crisis that shakes the entire world, and that will only worsen, puts the survival of the planet and the entire population, including human beings, at risk.

- 2: That politics from above is not only incapable of coming up with and constructing solutions, but is also among those directly responsible for the catastrophe already underway.
- 3: That the sciences and the arts salvage the best that humanity has to offer.
- 4: That the sciences and the arts now represent the only serious opportunity for the construction of a more just and rational world.
- 5: That the indigenous cultures and those who live, resist, and struggle in darkness, all over the world, do possess, among other things, a fundamental wisdom: that of how to survive in adverse conditions.
- 6: That Zapatismo is still committed, in life and death, to Humanity<sup>6</sup>.

Within the context of this open call, the first *CompArte por la Humanidad* took place<sup>7</sup>. In the words of Subcomandante Galeano (previously Marcos), the arts delve into the very depths of the human being, and bring out their essence:

[...] as if the world continued to be the same, but that through art we could find the human possibility among so many gears, screws, and springs, miserably grinding away. Unlike politics, art doesn't try to readjust or repair the machine. Rather, it does something more subversive and disconcerting: it shows the possibility of another world<sup>8</sup>.

The preparations for *CompArte* 2016 took place over four months, according to the participants who came together from the month of April in the Caracol<sup>9</sup> II de Oventik, in the mountains of Chiapas. They came from the five *caracoles* to present and select the works, of all artistic genres, that would be included in the event:

The art that we are showing you, our *compañeras* and *compañeros*, had a crude birth, it emerged from the heads of those women and men who themselves decided how to present it to you, [it is] about how they have worked as Zapatistas and autonomous people, with their resistance and their rebellious ways. The entire process was a chain of art —from the thinking about what they would present, whether it would be a dance number, song, poetry, sculpture, theater, or pottery, to the words, the ideas about how they would get from place to place, then where they were going to get the money for their rehearsal and performances, because they are collectives from the community, the region, the municipalities and the zone. There were three rounds of selection. For the first round, the people got together in their regions; then the regions met as autonomous municipalities for the second selection; and the municipalities met in zones for the final round. Their preparations took months. For the communities of thousands of

Zapatista men and women, it was another iteration of what we are, but in a different form, it didn't happen through conversation or blah blah blah, but through the technique of Art, and everyone participated— children, teenagers, fathers, mothers, and grandparents<sup>10</sup>.

The Zapatistas are generally *campesinos*, and do not consider themselves to be "artists". They were surprised by the awakening of their own creative potential, answering the call of creation, as opposed to the destruction of the world, in an unprecedented event at the Oventik *caracol*. The open call for "artists of the world" to come and present their works at the Universidad de la Tierra was set from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July 2016<sup>11</sup>. Hundreds of artists from around the world were able to share their work with the Zapatistas. On the last day of *CompArte*, at the Universidad de la Tierra, huge swathes of people came to visit the exhibitions, hear the concerts, watch the videos and see the different creative works on display there, a place that the Zapatistas consider their University. Subsequently, the artists from around the world and the attendees of *CompArte* were invited to admire the Zapatista works. One day in each of the five existing *caracoles*<sup>12</sup>.

### The Travelling *CompArte* Exhibition (2016)

These events left their testimony, mostly in the form of physical works that were initially kept in the Oventik *caracol*. Later, the Zapatistas decide not to "keep" all of these objects, paintings and embroideries, made by the collectives in the villages, and instead they put together an exhibition that would go beyond the mountains, so that it can travel and show the world how these people, in rebellion, live their life and their struggle. Therefore, for the first time since the birth of Zapatismo, there is an unprecedented exhibition of Zapatista art, conceived and made by the Zapatistas themselves —by both the support bases and insurgents. The exhibition is inaugurated in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, in December 2016. It is the first exhibition of the Zapatista *CompArte*.

The forms of art on display there, which speak of the daily life in the cornfields, of effective projects, of autonomous education, of autonomous health, and of free communication, were the starting point that mark the construction of the self-determination of the peoples who are still fighting. Far from being a utopia, this was revealed in specific actions that take up their history again, looking back in time, though ever being renewed. The richness of the themes taken on by the different participating collectives and their relation with the peoples who cried "never again a Mexico without us", made apparent in those canvases and embroideries on display —using all their know-how— that indigenous knowledge is not defunct heritage, but rather living history, with great value and indisputable cultural worth that shows their capacity for resistance in the face of great adversity.

The works created by those who made *CompArte* possible, still living through a “low-intensity” war, instead of showing us the horrors of war, they make us see another world and other possible lives. Here, “construction” is a weapon against destruction, and ART, as well as being the expression of freedom, is a powerful creative force that allows for the reconstitution of the people, of the collectivities who are involved in this creation and that of the *osil balamil*, that is, the “universe” in Maya languages, where each being who lives therein has a place and reason for being and existing. The painted canvases and cloths, the tools forged, the wooden sculptures, the embroideries exhibited, were and are thoughts and experiences materialised, the people’s expression of their power and their “other kinds of knowledge”.

Therefore, they made us look, listen, re-adjust or perhaps dis-adjust our thoughts in order to transform them and transform ourselves into something else, with them<sup>13</sup>.

At the conclusion of this exhibition, they decide on a new selection of works so that *CompArte* 2016 may embark on a further journey. Eleven pieces are thus chosen, including paintings and large-format embroideries, and a comprehensive catalogue of the artworks is put together, which was sent to distinct collectives around the world who were interested in supporting Zapatismo and *CompArte*, to see, depending on their organisational capacities, how the exhibition could be held in their countries. The Sixth Commission of the EZLN decided that said exhibition would travel as part of the global campaign “The Walls Above, The Cracks Below”, which is what the Zapatistas called the support offered, in 2017, to the migrants of the world. The way of organising themselves to resist the detention, persecution and expulsion of those who have been forced to leave behind their places of origin in order to find better living conditions in other places<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, the Zapatistas’ *CompArte por la Humanidad* turned into a kind of multiplicity of embodied presences, of those who cannot travel to different places, but who travel by means of their painted and embroidered words. They carry their thoughts and their souls to join new encounters and discussions, other creative activities and exchanges in the various different countries and cities that this exhibition reaches.

To date, the exhibition has travelled to different cities and spaces of resistance, mainly in Europe: France, Italy, Greece, the Spanish state, Belgium. In these places, the collectives who fight from their own geography and in their own way, have joined forces with Zapatismo as part of the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, or with other collectives, and they have organised the reception of the works, the exhibitions and the

connected activities. As well as the aim of bringing together and accompanying the struggles of migrants, the painted and embroidered scenes in each one of these canvases (which contextualise the history and the construction of the autonomous territories, the collective projects, the bases of this autonomy: education, health, agroecology and the ways in which the government goes on the offensive in order to destroy them), have acted as triggers for reflecting on struggles in different places, and an inspiration to never give up, even in truly difficult times. One significant example of this was the ZAD (Zone à Défendre), Notre Dame des Landes, in France<sup>15</sup>, which is still fighting intensely for the defence of the Territory and the possibility to construct other forms of inhabiting the world. The forms observed in the different compositions allow the new world to be seen, a world made of “many worlds”, and they bring back knowledge from the domestic work traditions of the indigenous peoples, while still creating new forms. The methodology of the works, i.e. their collective conception, leaves spectators truly impacted when they see the scale of the format and the different hands who take part in the general composition<sup>16</sup>.

By analysing some of the works that comprise this exhibition, it is possible to observe modes and forms in which the Zapatistas place their experiential knowledge, and they share with the world, simply and generously, their modes of being and doing.



*Autonomía* ('Autonomy'), vinyl paint on cloth. Caracol IV Morella (5m x 1.7m)  
Photo: Élie Kongs.

This is a painted cloth in landscape format, divided into three scenes. The first one marks the beginning on the far left, and it shows an indigenous family walking: a mother, a father and a child walking, the latter of whom is waving the Zapatista flag, and a baby carried by the mother on her back. Their clothes allow us to discern that it is a Tsotsil family, in the present time. These characters seem to have come out from a pyramid in the background of the composition, in the distance (in time and space). Above the pyramid there is a moon with a red (Zapatista) neckerchief, with its face

covered up, just like the characters of the family who at the same time are bearing a torch which seems to have illuminated the road of the dead behind them, from the pyramid, where some skeletons and crosses are depicted along the route, until arriving at the present. The scene is set at night.

In the centre, there is a working scene in the countryside, where a woman in the foreground, and a man just behind her, are labouring in the cornfields, with their worktools (a hoe and a machete). The plot of land has been painted in detail, and we can observe that they are growing corn, beans and pumpkins, the triad of traditional Mesoamerican crops that allow for the nutritional sustainability of the indigenous peoples. Behind them there are other vegetable plots. Towards the back of the field some wooden houses can be made out, with signs saying "education" and "health centre", situated to one side of the panel that indicates the "Zapatista rebel territory". Here, we can see children playing on a football pitch, and other people carrying sacks on their backs. To the right of this same scene there is a coffee plantation, one of the products that the communities sell to the exterior through cooperatives, who are part of the collective projects that support the Zapatista resistance. In the middle of this coffee plantation there is a young girl who is harvesting coffee beans. In the background of the scene there is a dense forest where, among the branches, the Zapatista insurgents appear discreetly, as guardians of the activities that permit Zapatista autonomy. At the top of the composition, further in the background, there is a military helicopter which in some way could be seen to be flying over the place where the Zapatistas live, something which happens regularly. It might also be the part of the composition that shows opposition to their autonomy. There are houses with red roofs, which recall the "aid" given to the *campesinos* by the government in the form of red sheet iron, as well as different lorries painted with "sin hambre" ('no more hunger'), one of the relief aid campaigns of Peña Nieto (the then-President of Mexico), to co-opt the poorest sectors of Mexican society and to attack the rebels. This same landscape is completed with tall buildings, with an emphasis on their verticality, there in the city. Some of them are supposedly factories, because of the smoke they are giving off. It would appear that the creators of this painting wanted to make explicit the existence of two territories: the rebel territory, in opposition to government territory.

The third scene, on the far right of the painted cloth, continues the same landscape, with a tree that recalls the ceiba, the sacred tree of the Maya people. Here, they depict the imagery of the three levels of the world, which is seen within a cubic figure with three levels: the branches, the place of the conscience (above, or *sba balamil*); the trunk, the place where life is possible because the sun exists (*O'lol*), and the roots, below the Earth, the

place of history, where the souls of the dead reside: the ancestors (*totilme'il*), a place called *Katinbak* (Guiteras Holmes, 1996 and Martínez González, 2013, Volume I.). It is interesting how this tree's roots are embedded into the whole planet, even when it lets us see the surface of the American continent where Mexico is depicted wearing a balaclava. The trunk is marked with large letters, showing the word "Autonomía" ('autonomy'), and growing like fruit from the branches are various different little heads, wearing Zapatista balaclavas, which hang from the branches that show the names of the eleven Zapatista demands from the origins of their uprising<sup>17</sup>.

The whole composition of this work summarises that which, for the Zapatistas, means autonomy, anchored to the Earth (to the whole world) and to "simple", everyday activities, not unconnected to the permanent attacks by the government that the Zapatistas have learnt not to accept and instead "turn on their head", in order to carry on with a struggle embarked upon by their ancestors, who "have given the strength to the people to keep fighting"<sup>18</sup>.



*Hidra 1* ('Hydra 1'), Cloth embroidered by EZLN insurgents. (1.87m x 1.7m). Photo: Élie Kongs.

This is an embroidered cloth, made in the *Caracol* II at Oventik, in the Highlands of Chiapas. The embroidery was done by the insurgents of the EZLN, between the months of April and July, as indicated in the lower left corner of the work. It can thus be seen how the regular troops of the EZLN



(the soldiers) become, paradoxically, embroiderers, that over four months they took on the task of creating this piece and other compositions.

The uniqueness of this embroidery resides in its collective conception and creation (by men and women), to give shape to the “capitalist Hydra” that was the theme of the seminar of “Critical Thinking against the Capitalist Hydra” in 2015. The form that the Hydra takes, despite the fact that it comes from Greek mythology, is, oddly, a human figure with chicken feet, a “kaxlan”, the term also used for people of mixed Tsotsil and Tselal heritage, ever since the Spanish brought hens to Mesoamerican lands<sup>19</sup>. *Kaxlan* is also used to describe somebody who has “come from outside”, who could be considered as an adversary or an ally, depending on the type of relationship established with them. Among indigenous people, the relationship with the *kaxlan* has long been one of distrust, due to the latter’s excesses and abusive behaviour towards the native people, in colonial times and later in the times of the landowners, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>20</sup>.

As can be seen in this embroidery, the techniques employed to give form to the hydra’s multiple heads, to its body and legs, are the same ones used to make the traditional blouses of the *k’uil* women (in Tsotsil), where the Maya universe is recreated in their designs. The character’s face is embroidered with black lamb’s wool to show its hair, eyebrows and nose. Its body is embroidered with purple woollen yarn, marking serrated zigzag lines (a technique used in Tsotsil designs) to define necks and sleeves, called “the way of the serpent” (*sbe chon*), contrasted in a darker tone all over the body, which goes all the way up to a tail that comes out between the two heads at the top of the hydra. To the right, a head devours the planet; to the left, another one devours a serpent. It is worth mentioning that the serpent, among Mesoamerican people, is linked to lightning (when represented vertically), and it is a natural force that summons the rain. The ceremonial staffs used by the heads of the indigenous communities evoke the serpent, which also implies the Earth (when represented horizontally)<sup>21</sup>. The hydra’s head that is seen devouring a person (on the far left), recreates, with different-coloured threads, a kind of plumage that runs the whole length of the monster’s neck. Below this, there is another head devouring a cow. On the other side of the hydra there are three more heads being devoured, made of the Earth’s natural elements: minerals, water, petrol, gas (as can be read in the letters embroidered in blue); the other two heads of the monster devour trees, seas and the stars in the sky. Each head is composed of a different texture and colour, making the whole composition a collage of colours and textures that depict the so-called “capitalist hydra” as a predatory being, ready to devour everything that exists in the universe. This recalls the so-named “madre tierra” (‘mother earth’) of the Maya peoples, container of the universe to which all living

beings belong, and who, when she has been exploited and destroyed, having not been thanked for all of the goodness she gives to humans and other living beings, turns into a subjectivity that is capable of causing catastrophe and destruction<sup>22</sup>.



*Trabajos colectivos* ('Collective Work'), vinyl paint on cloth. Caracol IV de Morelia (2.8m x 1.9m). Photo: Élie Kongs.

This painting develops the theme of "collective work", which is one of the ways in which the Zapatista people bolster their autonomy<sup>23</sup>:

One of the activities of the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* ('Council of Good Government')<sup>24</sup> is to promote and plan the collective tasks of the region and the municipalities, to make sure that the autonomous municipalities develop at a similar rate... to draw up the development projects and to check the serious problems that the municipality cannot solve...

Such tasks are depicted on this cloth, which is divided by a river running through the centre of the composition. On the far left, there is a cattle ranch that takes care of raising cattle, mainly to sell and to have the resources to meet the requirements of the autonomous municipalities. The large cattle pens are built by the same people from the project, who can be seen on their horses, wearing hats and with ropes around their waist, just like cowboys. On the far right are the projects of the cornfield ('milpa'), vegetable plots ('hortaliza') and poultry ('aves de corral'), as well as a shop ('tienda') and a bakery ('panadería'), which form part of the projects in

which the collectives work for the benefit of the community. From here, important support is given to their education and health systems (which exist in the five *caracoles*), and which are manifested in this painting in the health clinic ('clínica') and the school ('escuela'). It should be mentioned that many of the lands in the *caracol* of Morelia are lands that have been regained since 1994, as a recovery of the lands stolen from the indigenous people by the iconographic landowners and the State, in particular throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These lands are used and enjoyed by the different collectives of the Morelia *caracol*, but sometimes also by other collectives from other *caracoles*, such as that of Oventik, in those cases of fellow Zapatistas who do not have any land to work on. In the case of the people displaced from the municipality of Polhó after 1998, some of the families were able to work on these fertile lands, far from their places of origin, where their houses, cornfields and animals were all destroyed.

### Final Thoughts

As can be seen in descriptions of the works shown above, the Zapatistas are the forgotten actors of official history, who, by expressing themselves in their own way, narrate their constructive processes for the self-determination of the people, where the ability to create makes action and transformation possible, both of individuals and collectivities.

The Zapatista *CompArte* was held for a second time in 2017. This led to a second exhibition, which was sent to Mexico City, to the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC-UNAM), where, for the first time in a cultural space in Mexico, visitors lent their ears and eyes to an art "that is neither seen nor heard"<sup>25</sup>.

En 2018, the third edition of *CompArte*, in the *caracol* of Morelia, presented a series of painted cloths displayed on the central platform of the *Caracol IV*, each one with a caption that the collectives of creators place at the foot of the work. One such piece is the painted cloth named "Libertad" ('Freedom'), where each iconographic element is described in detail via the voices of the Zapatistas who create what they live, and they do it just as they think it. In this regard, it is impossible to not recall the words of Jean Cocteau when he refers to an ethical art: "where there no longer exists a separation between what is done (and thought); the perfect union between the potential of life and thought, without omitting the special function of the heart in the carrying out of this process" (Espinoza 1998, p.53).



*Libertad* ('Freedom'), vinyl paint. Caracol IV of Morelia (1.5m x 1.5m).  
Photo: Vincent Baschet.

This is reiterated by the words of Subcomandante Moisés, who, two years beforehand, referred to art practice as something no longer considered a commodity, but rather a combination of creative forces that are able to reconstitute reality:

Art, brothers and sisters, *compañeras* and *compañeros*, is very important, because it is what provides us with an illustration of something new in life, something that illustrates something very different in real life—it doesn't lie.

Art is so powerful because it is already real life in the communities where the people command and the government obeys, thanks to the art of the imagination and the knowledge of how to create a new society, how to create a life in common. Our art shows that it is possible to create another form of governing, one that is totally different, that it is possible to create another life working in common to benefit the community itself<sup>26</sup>.

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Sanchez Barraza, Raymundo (interview, July 2018), "Una universidad sin zapatos..."  
[https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cideci-unitierra/259357130913581?hc\\_ref=ARRqRoPtG3CO\\_zD1-X8sihcHSUxXifAOXMld2tOOaQqpcj64KcOI6SUC6XSartOXtMo&fref=tag&\\_tn\\_ =kC-R](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cideci-unitierra/259357130913581?hc_ref=ARRqRoPtG3CO_zD1-X8sihcHSUxXifAOXMld2tOOaQqpcj64KcOI6SUC6XSartOXtMo&fref=tag&_tn_ =kC-R)

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See EZLN, *Cuarta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona* ('Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle'), in EZLN, 2010. "Our word, our song and our cry, is so that the dead will not die again. So that they may live, we fight; so that they may live, we sing. Long live the word. Long live Enough is Enough! Long live the night that becomes the morning."

<sup>2</sup> Baschet, Jérôme, 2005 and 2012.

<sup>3</sup> The term *campesino* refers to rural workers of the land, usually with connotations of hardship. The English term 'peasant', i.e. the usual translation of this word, is perhaps too strongly pejorative. The term *campesino* shall thus appear in the original Spanish throughout this text. (Translator's Note)

<sup>4</sup> Mayor, Ana María. Opening speech at the *Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo* ('International Summit for Humanity and against Neoliberalism'), (27th June 1996), reproduced in EZLN 2010, pp. 260-262.

<sup>5</sup> The EZLN has thus taken steps, on numerous occasions, to try and create spaces for dialogue with civil society in Mexico. In the summer of 1994, they convened the Democratic National Convention, followed by the Indigenous National Forum which led to the creation of the Indigenous National Congress (CNI), which is still active today. In July and August 1996, they organised the International Summit for Humanity and against Neoliberalism. Society's capacity for mobilisation, on a national and international level, was surprising in the early years of the Zapatista uprising, including the most recent initiatives of 2016-18. See the EZLN "archives": <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx> [many of the pages also have an English translation available].

<sup>6</sup> Subcomandante Galeano. For the original Spanish, see: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/02/29/convocatoria-zapatista-a-actividades-2016/> The translation offered in the present text has been adapted from the following translation: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/03/01/zapatista-convocation-for-2016-activities/>

<sup>7</sup> In May 2015, the Zapatistas had convened the seminar called "Critical Thinking against the Capitalist Hydra. Participation of the Sixth Commission of the EZLN". For this seminar, a surprising degree of importance is afforded to the exhibition called *Signos y señales* ('Signs and Signals'), which brings together different contemporary artists from Mexico to carry out an in-depth analysis of the reality, the myths and the history of the indigenous and non-indigenous people, amid a dramatic backdrop as marked by the devastation of the so-called "Capitalist Hydra", but also by their creative ways for conserving life. By 2016, the Zapatistas' critical thinking continued its critical reflection from other languages and their unusual ways of doing politics, where the art of the people, using their own voice, takes an unprecedented place, no longer being "local craftwork", but rather going to the dimensions of Art in to be shared with Humanity, where the presence of women takes an important place. See the Sixth Commission of the ELZN, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2015/05/20/political-economy-from-the-zapatista-communities-ii/> [English version] and the book *Critical Thinking against the Capitalist Hydra. Participation of the Sixth Commission of the EZLN*.

<sup>8</sup> Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, in a letter to Juan Villoro, son of the late Don Luis. <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/03/04/the-arts-the-sciences-the-originary-peoples-and-the-basements-of-the-world/> [English version; the translation offered in the present text has been adapted from this translated page].

<sup>9</sup> The term *caracol*, literally 'snail' (an important symbol of community and resistance in the Zapatista movement), refers to small, specially demarcated areas for multiple Zapatista communities, which

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comprise municipalities. At each level, the maximum authority is the assembly-style meeting, where all decisions are made, and which aim to meet all of the needs of the people. (Translator's Note)

<sup>10</sup> Subcomandante Moisés. <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/08/08/the-art-that-is-neither-seen-nor-heard/>

<sup>11</sup> Cideci-Unitierra is not a conventional university. It is first and foremost an integral training centre whose services are offered to those indigenous and non-indigenous people who are interested in the construction of critical knowledge and of the practices that form the basis of other kinds of knowledge, and other theory from below. This centre has been running for 29 years. In 1994 it was designated as a space to foster the meeting, communication and dialogue between Zapatistas and non-Zapatistas, convinced that "a world where many worlds can fit" is possible. See: "A University without Shoes": [https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cideci-Unitierra/259357130913581?hc\\_ref=ARRgRoPtG3CO\\_zD1-X8sihcHSUxXjfAOXMld2tQOaQgpcj64KcOI6SUC6XSartOxtMo&fref=tag&tn=kC-R](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cideci-Unitierra/259357130913581?hc_ref=ARRgRoPtG3CO_zD1-X8sihcHSUxXjfAOXMld2tQOaQgpcj64KcOI6SUC6XSartOxtMo&fref=tag&tn=kC-R)

<sup>12</sup> Subcomandante Galeano, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/07/27/ezln-confirms-and-extends-its-participation-in-comparte/> [English versión]

<sup>13</sup> Martínez González, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2017/02/16/the-walls-above-the-cracks-below-and-to-the-left/> [English versión]

<sup>15</sup> <https://zad.nadir.org/?lang=en> [English versión]

<sup>16</sup> In the words of those who participated in the creation of the Zapatista works, this process "was determined following several days of collective discussions to work out what we want to say to the world... It's not a case of one person having the idea and then the others paint or embroider it, but rather we all think together about what we want to say, and also how we want to say our word, and so the way of thinking together is also the way of doing together." Personal communication with a participant of *CompArte* (Oventik caracol II, August 2016).

<sup>17</sup> See introduction to this article.

<sup>18</sup> Personal communication with Maestro Tomás, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas.

<sup>19</sup> The Tsotsil and Tzeltal Maya people reside among the mountains of the area called Altos de Chiapas (i.e. the Highlands of Chiapas) and the Selva Lacandona (the Lacandon Jungle). Their ancestral roots can be found among the Ch'ol Maya people, who still inhabit different places in the jungle, and who speak the language that was deciphered using the glyphs of the inscribed stones and monuments that are still located in all of the ancient sites constructed by the Maya people in the classical period, i.e. the years 300 to 900 AD, in our terms. Subsequently, multiple migrations from the jungle to the mountains were verified. See: Proskouriakoff, Tatiana (1994) and Lenkersdorf, Gudrun (2004).

<sup>20</sup> Zapatismo has contributed to the transformation of this relational configuration with the *kaxlan*, who are sometimes considered as "older brother" (*bankilal kaxlan*), due to their being an ally and somebody to rely on and learn from.

<sup>21</sup> See *va'al luk'um* (upright serpent) and *smeltsel luk'um* (resting serpent), in Martínez González (2017b).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. (2017a).

<sup>23</sup> See *Libros de la Escuelita Zapatista*: "La libertad según los zapatistas" ('Freedom according to the Zapatistas');". [www.centrodedioslibres.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ResistenciaAutonoma](http://www.centrodedioslibres.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ResistenciaAutonoma) , p.59.

<sup>24</sup> The *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* ('Council of Good Government') are made up of members from the different autonomous municipalities of the area or *caracol*, where they offer their services. Their responsibilities in the council are assigned to them through the peoples' general assemblies, and they



take on this role for two or three years with no financial gain and with the possibility of their position being revoked if they do not properly meet the demands of the people. See Baschet, Jérôme (2017).

<sup>25</sup> Subcomandante Moisés. <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/08/08/the-art-that-is-neither-seen-nor-heard/> [English version]

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.