

**Rethinking Extractive Industry Conference.Regulation, Dispossession and  
Emerging Claims.  
York University, Toronto, 5-7 March, 2009.**

**Oil's Internal Colonialism: Mexican Petroleum in Tabasco 1973-2008.**  
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**I. From colonialism to neocolonialism.**

Oil industry is a colonialist enterprise by its own nature of opportunistic exploitation of underground deposits in particular economic junctures without any consideration to whatever happens in the surface. Or at least as a business its goal has to be, or has been up to day, the maximization of production in time units, even if that maximization and urge to extract the most in the fastest way means, most of the time, not only a fast decay and subexploitation of the fields, and over all harsh transformation of the landscapes and damages to the ecology and the society of the surface.

In the Paul Gauguin's definition colonialism means "make a territory produce goods that aren't useful for the local people". In a broader sense I would say that we can define it as an extraction of resources without reposition, by destruction, or because the local system, ecology and society are pushed into an unsustainable situation. This distortion of the local production always has the goal of transforming the local resources, goods and societal or cultural conditions in monetary or financial earnings that can or can't come back to local society. As Karl Polany (1994) stresses, maybe we have given to much attention to the direct economic exploitation and forgot that social life is over all, more than just economy and technologies, a web of institutional agreements that make functional specific ways of relating with the environment and making a living. And that colonialism has been not only

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the direct exploitation of resources and people but the destruction of this institutional local webs that founds organized nations, cities, communities or at least wide familiar units, and leaves isolated individuals not any more related to its territories, landscapes and cultural assets. With this broader definition, that also understands the deepening modernization waves, we can have a better look of the processes of internal colonialism faced against this institutional webs that can be understood as lifestyles, that for one side aren't usually defined by participants who live it as a wholistic experience, and for the other are denied by the official and scientific officers who only can see what can be quantified and monetary valued. The clash between natural resources exploitation reduced to economic values and the lifestyles then is solved by nude violence or by political conflicts where the cultural and the very scientific concepts, scopes, explanations and theories are questioned over practical and cultural basis.

In the classical colonial condition earnings don't come back to the region in any way; but in an internal colonialist relation which is not normally based just in nude violence, the extraction and ecological destruction that it always means, is supposed to be compensated by local revenues or socially considered improvements that justify the activity. This colonialism can be expressed, as it usually is, as a most uneven distribution that only benefits the landowners and political or military local leaders. But even if this inequality is democratically palliated, unfortunately, in this regard, even if the earnings return as financial revenues or socially considered improvements; this usually translates in more ecological affectation, or in a justification of pollution impacts and cultural distortions in exchange of socially desirable defined levels of consumption. So the socially defined wellness, its social local representation, or as E.P. Thompson called it, *Moral Economy*, has a most important role in the forms or degree in which local society permits, resists or

support these processes. It is not also a question of terms of interchange, we have to extend the concept to include the levels of environmental affectations, landscape changes and health and social risks and lifestyle destruction that a particular society is prepared to live with. Then, against the will and conceptions of technocrats economic issues are automatically political ones; and when this kind of incomes get into the local economic structure, all the political issues deal with its distribution.

And then we have to discuss it as a question of desirable life quality based in the income distribution. This last concept of life quality gives us the advantage of allowing the discussion of social, health, institutional and ecological conditions beyond the mere desire of better levels of consumption.

This is implicit even in the neoliberal technocratic vision, as when Adrián Lajous, a former PEMEX director, defines it, justifying the lack of industrial security and environmental protection budget of the company in the 1990 decade, saying it was a question of how much money society decides to invest in ecological protection, as the congress didn't push or force the company to settle minimum levels to this budget. Saying this, he showed the classical paradoxical opportunistic face technocrats use in this conflict: for one side they struggle for "business managerial autonomy" for the activities of the company, and then, when they have to yield results or explain damages or accidents, they blame the government or political structure or not assuming responsibilities or decisions.

In the classic colonial situation the citizens face directly the foreign company who doesn't follow local laws or suits them as well as the authorities for their convenience. In the globalization form, we have seen returns to this, also as a political expression we call in latinoamerica fourth worldism. This happens over all when ethnic people or regional identities are involved, it basically means that the national institutions are ignored. It comes

as a company policy when, for example, they only accept the competence of their local judiciary system, so, for example, equatorian xuars have to defend themselves in New York law courts; when the international institutions as the world bank promote locally based policies and tries to “empower” local communities to follow their institutional goals no matter the local institutions and governments own policies, for example the mesoamerican ecological corridor; it happens when regional planning decides to impose segregated policies to different ethnic communities without considering the decisions of the same communities as part of the political institutional integration, as the Plan Puebla Panamá supposes; and finally it happens too often when from the alternative political academy sectors or non governmental organizations focuses in local communities or ethnic groups as absolute different or basically confronted with the regional or national political institutions, overlooking that in many cases this groups are trying to participate in the nation building process, being most of the times the source of the democratization processes. This last thing happens too much in the mexican situation when not even the chiapanecan zapatists are trying to get apart of the country, and not the antiPEMEX social mobilizations are trying to destroy o stop the company. On the other hand both had tried to change forms of participation and representation in the institutional processes of the nation. In the case of Tabasco, this even get to the conversion of the movement to have the democracy as it main goal. Other thing is that it was defeated and over all mediated or corrupted. But what its very important is not to overlook the real local and regional process on going has its own goals, and for example in the ethnic question, usually foreigners think that they can tell for sure the limits of ethnic groups and fail to follow every conflict because they forget the deep and permanent mestizaje or ethnic combination. Usually they try to see us with the analytical localization efforts such as the ones of Arturo Warman (2000), who wants to

settle ethnic differential communities; when the real condition is much more like a process of political identification and cultural transitions and attitudes as Guillermo Bonfil describes in his book *México Profundo* (Deep México). And in the end it is a conflict over life styles as the antineoliberal social movements of zapatistas in Chiapas and antiPEMEX in neighbouring Tabasco defend. The best and to now most successful example of this popular and ethnic mobilizations as source of a new democratic national alternative that denies all this forms of fourth worldism are the Bolivian Cocaleros and popular El Alto movements that started over resources and lifestyles conflict of Coca production and water exploitation.

## **II. National oil industry and regional mexican inner colonialism.**

The twentieth century Mexican experience is marked by the anticolonialist reaction against the original angloamerican oil enterprises in the thirties, and then, over all from 1970, when oil revenues became the base of the country economy, a self regional colonialist exploitation in the sense that the financial exigencies and goals of the federal government became paramount criteria over any local social or ecological consideration. In the external relation the federal government became subject to its heavy external debt and budget deficit; and then oil revenues were used to sustain this situation. Even though, in the eighties there were enough resources to build infrastructure and provide social services in a way noticeable for all the national population. Then, after the neoliberal changes the burden is not in the external but the internal debt, over all of a more or less 20% of the total budget dedicated to the bank rescue from 1994 up to day. And from 1988 only more or less of 0.2% of the budget has been used in infrastructure and there has been a fast decay of social services to its almost inexistence.

This key importance of the oil activity was settled and put down to territorial daily relations between the state and the citizens in the legal changes of 1977 –done directly in reference to Tabasco situation- saying that “oil activity had preference over any other activity in the land surface” and that the oil enterprise (understanding that is only one and federal) can freely intrude to explore or settle installations with the only obligation of paying an indemnification by the federal patrimonial (CABIN) office calculations. But then also, as this oil has been found mainly in tropical coastal states, previously officially defined as colonial development spaces with explicit colonization policies that promoted swamp and jungle destruction for agrarian and cattle raising activities, from 1940 to 1970. So this oil process came to overlap over a previously internal colonial officially defined condition.

Even local authorities from the then ruling single party, the PRI, were aware of this. And from that times they complained of how oil company intervention and development has always translated in a progressive lost of local formal and informal authorities control and decision. In 1964 governor Carlos Madrazo stated that he didn't considered oil industry activity as part of the economic regional activities because it was controlled and gave information and earnings only to federal authorities, that even didn't respected the proportion of the oil taxes that the old oil law ordered to give to local authorities. This also was most clearly stated when in the most fast oil development state government period, governor Leandro Rovirosa complained in his first annual inform that the cattle activity was controlling all the economy and affecting the peasant status, the ecology and the work offer; and then in his last speech, six years later, in 1981, he was the first to qualify openly the oil industry activity as colonialism but, on the other hand of Madrazo's complaints, he defined the situation of the state as petrolized.

It is that just from then that the local economical and social system began to be petrodependant, since the return of revenues by the new law of oil participation from the oil taxes, the employment demand, the demographic and urban grow produced by this and the infrastructure building, the local economic demands from the industry and its donatives to state, municipal authorities and particular citizens, became the most important, and almost only support of local economy. This happens in such a way that all the scientific studies about its impacts, the ecological initiatives and even the social opposition movements when they reach the non governmental or the political level, depend, even today, directly or indirectly of this revenues. In the mexican ideology, moral economic and the mexican postrevolutionary system, this is not a contradiction because it is understood that the oil industry role is to support the country and its citizens. So the struggle, different from the Oil Watch political perspective, for example, is for a better development of the oil activities, a democratic reconstruction of local and national political institutions and a better and deeper socialization of the revenues. This ideology and frame of the conflict doesn't help to face or cope with petrodependance and settles a particular context for the social political struggles inside the company, and explains why extremist political promotion from left or from the regional segregation fourthworldism finds no responses. But it also had a perverse effect when the distribution of the revenues was concentrated in urban infrastructure, spaces and activities, it generated a class effect that confronted urban people as privileged, against pauperized peasants and rural settlers, and explains why educated people with high consume objectives overlook peasants and ecological troubles. Peasant people says of them, politics and urban people: *"they all cover with the same sheets"*. The truth is that they all live from the same budget.

On the other hand, in the perspective of foreign intervention, we can identify three periods in Mexican oil industry: from late XIX century to 1938 the direct exploitation by external companies in the classic enclave way, from 1938 to 1992 exploitation by a single federal enterprise with formally Mexican concessionary companies; and from 1992 a exploitation with the separation of the federal enterprise in 4 different companies under a corporation. This companies expressed the separation of the oil processes: extraction and exploration, refining and gas and conduction and sales. Each company has to sale their products to the other at international prices in conditions losing all the advantages of an integral process company. The role of coordination of the so called “PEMEX Corporative”, has been designed to prepare the reduction of the State activity to a mere regulator of activities in prevision of a planned and progressive privatization such as President Calderon tried to push forward with his proposed and partially rejected law and constitutional changes of march of 2008.

There has been also a progressive and aggressive outsourcing process that in the calculations of an oil analyst, David Shields, was giving in the 2000, 40% of the total revenues of PEMEX to foreign companies. Not only that Fluor, Bechtel, Shlumberger Halliburton, etc. are building installations, developing oil rigs and off shore drilling platforms, but that they also, since then, are doing the activities, operating the processes and doing the programming and planning, in a way where the strategic information of reserves and extraction rhythms are decided, and its logical to suppose, controlled by them. More than this, from 2000 president Vicente Fox gave the general direction of the enterprise to a multinational CEO, who established private company administration rules. What has happened with this is that they have placed the national discussion in an squizophrenic situation where the government defend the “healthy enterprise business objectives”, and the

social forces, under the nationalist label, defend the constitutional defined role of the company of support of the state and citizens. And all over the period since the 1970's there is always the discussion frame settled by the opposition leader Heberto Castillo, about if its better a fast exploitation and exportation of crude oil, or if it is better to keep it underground until it can be processed and consumed by the national industry. And constitutionally we all mexicans are entitled to participate in it. 30 years later from Castillo's proposals, president Fox expanded the production from the historic 1 and a half million daily barrels with a exportation of 1 million, to a top of 3 million barrels exporting half of them at the highest historical price levels. Paradoxically in his government term the country had also the minimum historical economic growth.

This political determination and discussion of the activities of the industry has been very important –as we will see- in determining the political activities of resistance to the regional impacts of the industry, and now it is very important to underline that in the broad 2008 national discussion the territorial impacts were absolutely ignored in contraposition of what happened in 1976 and 1995 when the social reaction set them in the middle of the social and political issues. In 2008 the president proposed to give up to private owners in an absolute way the crude oil and gas pipelines including the property of all the land that they might need. Pipelines, most of them all over the country of 50 or 40 years old had been the principal source of many important accidents nation wide, but specially in Tabasco and Veracruz. And in most of this pipelines, at its sides, in the still today, federal property declared territories, there are popular settlements, some of them preceding the pipeline installation as it happens in the important pumping station of the little now road village and once agricultural paradise of Platano y Cacao, Tabasco.

Though nobody mentioned the importance of the consequences in the surface of this privatization, it was not finally accepted in the approved changes. But the silence over the surface consequences tell us that we are in a time of high possibilities of ecological and social affectations due to the weak position of the social movements and the low social and political visibility of the matter, and the shown political intention of federal government of leaving to private companies all the activities and decisions.

Though I'm focusing my exposition on the history of the matter in the State of Tabasco, oil activities with all its implications including social responses and organization reach a region that covers almost all the internal Gulf of Mexico coastal plains from Tamaulipas to Campeche. This area can be divided in two zones that coincidentally are the same that divided prehispanic huastecos from historic olmecs and mayas, it is, the north of Veracruz and south of Tamaulipas now called "Las Huastecas", which were severally exploited over all during the first world war by English companies, and whose taxes were of radical importance for the first revolutionary Mexican governments; and the south of Veracruz, north of Chiapas, almost whole Tabasco and the west part and Campeche, and its neighbouring sea, known as "Sonda de Campeche". This south zone is characterized by its important mezozoic oil fields with has sustained the Mexican economy for the last 40 years. And at least from 1973 to 1994 most of the oil and was came, with a top of 60% of the national total and 90% of the exported, came from the Tabasco and north of Chiapas zone until because of their relative exhaustion the Cantarell offshore giant field take their place.

This region, as Judith Teichman (1988) made evident, became also the place of what the first rural rebellion against the Mexican Revolution single party regime, which was supposed to be based in the peasant support. It was also the first in the country to have

ecological basis. Though rural movements were a constant all over the 20 century, they usually were based on agrarian basis, they asked for the land they were entitled by the 1917 constitution. But this movement didn't asked for land, it encompassed al rural classes from big landowners usually cattle raisers to the poorest fishermen, and over all small property and ejidatarios peasants who defended in their words their lifestyle and in their deeds the particular swampy ecology of their territory.

They didn't know, as the politicians did, that in fact they were rebelling also against a global and national antipeasants politic turn, that starting in the middle 70s will eventually in 40 years destroy their sustainability as a way of depriving them of their lands as part of the globalization regional reshaping, as the 1992, constitutional reforms of Carlos Salinas made explicit and as Mike Davies' book *Planet of Slums* has shown. The role of rural México was changing from being initially place of the population reserve for the urban-industrial development, then the place of the cheap food production as the original colonial great dam projects looked for, and then just dwelling places for urban job daily commuters, and finally from the 90's up to day just refugee of excluded economic excluded population being forced to follow international migration or starve.

This diversity of strategies, dynamics and politics that impacted their lifestyle has been used always against them in all the confrontations and negotiations because in their global siege it's hard to demonstrate specific causes to specific actions or deeds. And because in fact all studies demonstrate that local peasant economy was in crisis before the oil boom and that there was a very important rural unemployment crisis by the time it began. This studies also conclude that oil exploration and the building boom that came with it helped giving salaries to daily or weekly commuters that sustained the possibility of maintaining rural activities and habitation of the traditional cooperating extensive family

unities, though the corn crop productivity fall around a 50% and the fruit production and fishing activities were heavily affected as well (See Baños, 1984; Zapata, 1987; Canudas, 1985; Uribe, 1999 and 2003). What happened is that after suffering a deep economic and psychological depression in the 70s and beginning of the eighties, they gave up traditional activities and with state subventions from oil revenues they switched to less time needing activities like cattle raising in small scale (See Thompson, 1988 and Uribe, 2003). Livestock was defined by them as the only way of saving. In the long run this didn't worked either but it was because of the free market and financial policies that took down the cattle prices and charged excessive rates to the original buying loans (See Uribe, 2003). So to understand the complicated rural people situation we have to see that they were caught between the possibility of earning urban service and low industrial wages and the progressive economic and ecologic disappearance of conditions of their old full rural swampy lifestyle, mostly selfsufficient and even autharkic.

In this complex logic of multivariate dynamics, always the authorities response has been to discharge the oil industry of responsibility, for example of the low fishing existences or of the progressive fall of the crop's productivity of traditional products. They loved the sociological resource to Charles Tilly's relative privation theory and to the economic heterogeinity to explain social unrest (See Allub, 1983). So then there wasn't a trouble of pollution or ecological impacts but just that the parallel existence of high earnings jobs with low income activities as the peasant ones, made people jealous. Then everything was a mere question of revenues distribution which could be solved in the political negotiation between federal and state governments, and between state and municipios and between the official and opposition parties. And that's the way they have pushed to reduce all the problematic. This vision, in a 30 years struggle. has had an

important role in a progressive conversion or resignation of political leaders and even directly the peasant people to reduce everything to a financial and social services application.

They also loved when biologists found out a parasite that attacked the oysters because they could explain the fall of their coastal lagoons colonies because of it, and our fellow scientists just didn't widened the explanation to tell that the attack was possible because of the weakening of the oysters by the pollution. And the publicity of the situation focused on the oyster levels of existence and then could put aside the fact of their pollution with heavy metals like Cadmium or Vanadium.

Oil authorities in their most intelligent version, as was the mentioned Adrián Lajous, stated that peasants wanted to blame PEMEX of all social problems and made it responsible of all the solutions. Then asked to research to find out which depended of the oil industry and what was only a social belief imputation. In a way he was right, but then again, when all the local economy and state activities and revenues were petrolized from 1976 to 2000 at least, PEMEX responsibilities might be bigger than just the one of a economical funds source. So the discussion has always been over the direct local impacts of the industry activities and the company response to the individuals and communities, and over the politically mediated distribution and use of the revenues that the federation grounded in the state. But only in the first times in the seventies and eighties there was a strong resistance in compelling the company to really stop affecting the environment. Then, in part for the violent repression, the tiredness of the movements and the political mediations that built a national movement and obtained many economic and social advantages, from the nineties, such as infrastructure and welfare services, it was not seen anymore as an unnegotiable goal. And though official politicians and their academic voices

say that the continuity of the mobilizations is politically supported by the new PRD party leaders interests, and because people prefers to demand indemnifications that work in an attitude they named the “the complaint industry”, the truth is that from 20 years of field work we find always in the small Rancherías, far from the newspapers or the political leaders, ways closed and trucks hijacked by peasants, faced by oil people who are not ashamed to show a 99 year permission el The Eagle company to use the peasants land or something like that, and we are shown black leafs and tree trunks of cacaos and mangos, or fruit or corn that matures in liliputian sizes, and we hear of more and more cases of leukemia in rural locations. Just from two weeks ago coastal peasants of the municipio of Cárdenas closed a road in Benito Juárez complaining for unpaid pollution damages. Just this past friday labour union truck drivers of the Federación de Trabajadores Obreros de Tabasco (FTOT) working for PEMEX were sent to open the road by violence. After the quarrel 42 peasants were jailed.

### **III. Tabasco tropical swampy traditional lifestyle in the middle twentieth century.**

The territory of the state of Tabasco happens to coincide with the delta of the biggest and the third biggest rivers of the country with a huge basin of 84 000 square kilometres of Guatemala, Chiapas and Tabasco that annually drains 116 500 of cubic meters being the 28% of total Mexican territory sweet water. Most of it is an alluvial plain with very little inclination, so 60% of it is floodable and 30% are permanent water bodies from the big Laguna de Términos and the coastals of the Mecocacán, Carmen, Machona system to milliards in the middle of swamps and wetlands. But the most relevant feature is that all this works as a dynamic system with cycles of ten years of heavy rains and catastrophic floodings like the one of 2007, assumedly related to solar spots, and an annual

cycle of low level normal floodings, where in winter most of the plains are covered by a water sheet from rains in Chiapas and Guatemala produced by cold fronts or “nortes”, and in spring, salt marine water gets as far as 60 kilometers inland through the rivers in the dry season. In the swamps there’s also the daily cycle of marine tides. This changes of salinity and levels of water are an essential part of an ecologic system of a very high productivity of fishes, molluscs, reptiles, over all of it birds that live in mangroves and diverse combinations of swampy ecosystems locally named as tulares, popales, sibales, etc.

In this swampy conditions the maya-yokotanob indians who were forced to live in the swamps by the spanish conquerors and colonizers, developed since the sixteen century a particular way of adapting their way of life, taking advantages of the high yields of the annually fertilized wetlands and of the high fishing productivity, all this organized by a ritual and political organization. That included established forms of ritual and production cooperation between individuals, wide families and communities (see Uribe, 1999, 2003 and 2005). This form of living, was adopted by the mestizo families that formed the main part of peasants, locally called “chocos” (see Incháustegui, 1987 and Mariaca, 1991), and its extension was always in conflict with that of cattle raising, sugar cane, cacao and banana plantations, and in general with the big properties. So from 1940 to 1970 it expanded together with the ejidos as an autosubsistence system. It was then affected by the change of the levels, times and forms of the floods because of the dam system that controlled the Grijalva river, and because the international organizations and government politics which promoted cattle rising and grain production and plantation monoproduction for the national market, even with huge rationalizations of the landscapes and spaces as was the Plan Chontalpa.

#### **IV. Particularities of the Tabasco oil boom.**

So, though in Tabasco oil exploration and exploitation is an old activity, something happened in the 70s that rural people first didn't understand. And when they understood it started an unending conflict that comes from the individual reclamation to the social politically mediated response, but that has never stop the ecological destruction. And when a local community or all the whole political movement surged of this context stands up against the company and the state and federal government, usually comes violence and then negotiation on the low basis, indirect compensations never detention or real restoration of lifestyle conditions.

Tabasco was the first place where an oil source was commercially denounced and a company formed in the 1860s. It was a natural still existing surface seep in the chontal Indian community of San Carlos, Macuspana, denounced by the local priest but it was the governor who formed a company and then even associated it with the famous Pearson's company The Eagle. But they didn't start a serious exploitation, due that the richness and easiness of the Huasteca fields and the hurry of the needs of the british movilization for the first world war, concentrated in that region all their efforts. Later, when the oil taxes paid by angloamerican companies were very important for maintenance of the federal government, and at the same time having even an important role in the 1920s rebellions, in the 20s and 30s, the companies only bought as most land as they were interested in Tabasco, without extracting oil, because the local cacique of that time established a local state oil tax of 25% of the total revenues.

Real exploration and exploitation of Tabasco began in the 1950 decade when even two basic petrochemical plants were built as well as its own cities: La Venta and Ciudad PEMEX. And more fields began to be found between this decade and 1970. Most of this

time fields were in the east center part of the state and the wells weren't deeper than 3 thousand meters. Then in 1973 with the Arabian countries oil boycott, it became profitable to drill lower than 3 thousand meters and they were found the big fields of east center Tabasco, called la Chontalpa in the municipios of Cárdenas, Huimanguillo, Comalcalco, Villahermosa and Cunduacán, and the neighbouring municipios of Juárez, Reforma and Pichucalco of Chiapas. These wells gave the finest oil, the so called "maya", with the best international market price. And then in 1976 the federal government found itself in a deep budget crisis that forces it to ask help to the International Monetary Fund and the following agreement is based over the new oil fields. Almost the same will happen in 1982, when the letter of agreement will establish the obligation of preferential low prices sales to the American oil reserve, and in 1995, with another crisis, the new American loan will be conditioned, between other things, to the deposit of all the Mexican oil exportation profits in the National Reserve in New York. So, since 1976, as the financial Mexican situation depends directly on oil revenues, oil exploitation rhythms depend from these conditions. So if the progressive advance of oil industry in the 50s and 60s in the seventies this changed. Between 1976 and 1980 PEMEX investments changed from 11 million pesos to almost 70, and federal investments with the same goal went from 588 millions to 17 302 millions. Until Tabasco reached a top daily production of 1 million barrels and 1 thousand million cubic feet of gas. Finally, during the boom period, from 1973 to 1992 there was an average production of 600 thousand daily barrels, extracting a total of more than 4 thousand million barrels, from 60 to 80% of the national production, with an income of more than 130 million dollars.

To do so, from the south of Veracruz, north of Chiapas, and west of Campeche, Tabasco became an integrated industrial system. There were the off shore platforms in

front of the oil port services of Ciudad del Carmen Campeche, that have the highest production since 1994 up to day, connected by pipelines to the petrochemical plant of Ciudad PEMEX in the border of the Biosphere Reserve of Centla's Swamps, and then from Ciudad PEMEX new pipelines go to the north of Chiapas to the petrochemicals of Nuevo PEMEX and Cactus, and to La Venta in east Tabasco and from there to the Tabasquian new port of Dos Bocas and to the port, refinery and petrochemical plants of Coatzacoalcos and Minatitlán in South Veracruz. In the middle, also connected by pipelines are 926 wells, 46 separation batteries, 24 compression plants. In total there are 2 thousand 830 kms. of pipelines. And since 2000 there is a Nitrogen plant in Atasta between Tabasco and Campeche and in nearby the capital city, Villahermosa, 5 plants of drilling disposals burning. Not to mention the new highways and the urban explosion of Comalcalco, Cárdenas and over all Villahermosa.

The main characteristic between 1973 and 1984 was the hurry, and this translated, as José Eduardo Beltrán (1985) showed, in a bad exploitation of fields that left important quantities of oil irrecoverable, burnt in the air most of the gas and produced a high amount of avoidable pollution and environmental impacts. By 1994 the extraction boom moved to the off shore Campeche platforms because the fast exhaustion of this fields. So the speed was the excuse in the seventies and eighties, but in the nineties and 2000, when based on the nitrogen pumping, the gas recovering and new deeper or offshore fields, there was a extraction comeback, the same level of damages persists but the excuse has been the lack of money because the crisis, no matter the high oil prices of the first part of the actual decade.

The 1999 Batelle-UNAM regional report quantified the atmospheric daily pollution from oil facilities in the region in one thousand of tons. They also detected high corrosion levels in exposed metals around the petrochemical plants, important damages including

presence of heavy metals in the coastal and internal lagoons and important presence of vanadium, chromium and nickel in the ground of extensive surfaces over all near the petrochemicals and the separation batteries. And in their technocratic way they concluded that, as the acidification of the grounds was so advanced it was better to look out for new more appropriate vegetal species, for example in the case of cattle grasslands, that accepted the new conditions due to the fall of sulphuric acid for 30 or 40 years. As other important impacts they listed the loss of 22 vegetal species, and most of the animals, including 70% of the reptiles and amphibians. They also stated that the extensive and hurried road building, pipeline installations, new channel opening, acid rain, and oil leaks in the lagoon, mangrove and swamp area affected heavily the quality of the water of all the system. In another report, for example, Sánchez and Barajas found that in the Biosphere Reserve of Centla's Swamps, the inner lagoons had lost most of their underwater vegetation because of the acid rain. This is important since the Reserve was established to protect the nesting of migratory birds that come from North America for the fish abundance.

#### **V. Social movements and mobilizations. From the individual to the politic and back.**

The surface oil regional conflict has been fought from case to case even if there was a national political force building. Though it has been massive in participation in several junctures, its continuity has rested in very few individuals as leaders and organizers, and over all, in the ecological perspective, the surveillance and information interpretation has been from the seventies up to this days sustained by no more of 50 people. A noticeable characteristic has been that most of them are not born in the region, and the lack of compromise and responsibility of most of the academic and scientific people. So another characteristic of this conflict is the lack of a global panorama, history or reflections because

most of us are too busy answering to emergency situations, looking for help or for divulgation of the situations or trying to make a living expelled or from the state or from the official and private institutions. So, we usually have to explain that in the previous cattle raiser and plantation economic tabasqueña society that there wasn't place to develop a civic society. And then, with the oil boom and urban expansion, though some incomers became the ecological defenders, the almost absolute majority came with economic profit goals and decided to work with the flow of the official governmental institutions, and so have done almost 99% of scientists. Even if we have to accept that the local university and institutions are absolutely closed to ecological defenders, so we understand that they try to keep their job. But it also in many cases has turned out that they hire in the new ecological business as the biosphere reserves or the recycling and garbage or waste depositions. Then this conditions kept the ecological social regional movements as a peasant class movement with almost no technical or urban classes involvement, except in the semipassive electoral participation. And the scarce technical participation has always been a weakness in the diagnostic part of the negotiations, but also because it has been easy for the state to identify, threat, buy or even suppress the leaders and advisers.

The land utilization first for exploration, then for drilling and pipeline building, the occupation and affectations were done with violent manners and all the authoritarian style of a government agency. The landowners began individual processes of legal demands for private indemnification. But then the cattle raisers, the owners of cacao crops, the rice and corn producers as well as the oysters fishers of la Chontalpa found out that even if they were not directly affected by an installation were losing their products grass, and there was a harsh fall in the oyster existences. What they found is that the oil leaks affected all the water bodies and their communications, but over all that there was an acidification process

produced by the intrusion of marine water in the superficial and underground water courses reaching even the water wells 60 kms. inland. In 1976 they organized themselves in the so called “Pacto Ribereño” (which is properly translated as the pact of the little towns at the river sides), with the participation of big landowners, all class of ejidatarios, small landholders, fishermen and with the assistance of local lawyers, protestant clergymen, liberation theology catholic priests and even from the official peasant organization, the Peasant National Confederation (CNC). They closed roads and hijacked installations. Then the federal government qualified them of traitors and robbers, sent the army to move them and at the same time started negotiations. Finally the government promised to pay really supported indemnifications, the federal government decided to establish a 9% of local oil production tax as a state government revenue, and the state government start a wide politic of welfare services and social infrastructure building. The capital Villahermosa was rebuilt as modern city, a new airport, the first commercial mall, a planetarium, new museums, etc. But anyway, most of the resources went to face the infrastructure demanded by the same oil industry as wider and more highways, urbanization and housing. And last but not least the government changed the constitutional laws to legalize the right of PEMEX of intrude in any property and just then, a posteriori, start the indemnification process or even the notification of the owner. It established that “oil activity has priority over any other surface activity”.

In the indemnification process there was a fundamental policy that marked the following conflicts: most of the indemnifications were declared null, and most of them were never totally paid as the Humans Rights National Committee found out in 1992. But the big landowners and the members of the politic local elite received complete and in time its payments. It started what PEMEX will call “The Reclamation Industry”, accusing this

people of ceasing their productive activities and make a living of the PEMEX payments. In fact any petitioner was automatically accused of being part of this industry, but PEMEX and the government pay to this big landowners, and then declared that they have paid to the whole town or community. With the years it developed in a way were this big landowners closed roads or hijacked pickups with their employees to settle down a fake indemnification process before the real collective movement started. So when the community came to demand, they were shown documents where the money had been paid, at the same time they made it public in the media to exhibit the petitioners.

Very soon people found out that PEMEX and the government weren't disposed to pay, and over all, even those who get some paid also found out that the damages continued and deepened. So in 1983, the same people came back to mobilizations asking restoration and indemnification, and were repelled with the same violence, but then the government decided that individual indemnification didn't solve anything, so they decided that the PEMEX money will be used in promotion of microrregional development projects. So they created an agency that received and qualified the reclamations and organized the projects: "The Oil Zone Development Committee" (CODEZPET).

In the following years changes of the circulation of water courses, retention of the flows of the water turning seasonal floods in permanent, the fall of crop productivity, the corrosion of wire fences, the breaking of walls of houses because of the exploratory explosions, the fall of fisheries and changes of colours and taste of the water everywhere: "black water", they called it, generated now separated communitarian responses all over the central part of the state, specially in the yokot'anob indian zone. Their argumentation was that they never needed the state for make a living, but that they couldn't produce as much as they used, and in Nacajuca, Tamulté, Caparroso, Vernet, Vicente Guerrero and San

Carlos, they initially asked for restoration not indemnification. So, when the state and academics tried to explain the social response by the external economic pressures, the indian peasants directly stressed that their traditional ways of food producing were destroyed by the ecological impacts. Without the force, size, economic support and legal and political assistance of the Pacto Ribereño, they have been fighting local struggles since then to our days. This position was sustained even in february of 1989, when all the indian communities of Nacajuca closed the then strategic Zen Field, and in the big mobilizations of 1993.

This local struggles raised and fell depending of the rhythms and intrusions of PEMEX. In the nineties this movements were more intense since after the 1988 state government election the federal government retired the oil tax budget participation to the state taking advantage of the weakness of the new governor due to the evident fraud done and the big political mobilizations against it. In this decade local struggles reached climax moments but in a combination of the new political party social movement that was a the same time proposing to build a different regional relation with PEMEX, struggling for the effective election processes for political representation at local, regional and national levels, and was questioning the global neoliberal new orientation of the federal government and the changes inside PEMEX and the whole oil related politic. People was guided by the understanding that they only would get justice changing the government. Only then the mobilizations included urban popular citizens and also the expelled oil workers of the company reshape processes of 1988 and 1992. But the rise of the political level of goals undermined the determination on the demand of ecological restoration and cease of damages.

In 1992 the communities members of the original Pacto Ribereño decided to explore a new legal way: they demanded on the basis of Human Rights affectations. The National Human Rights Committee found in its inquiry that PEMEX hasn't paid what it agreed and that the official budget for it was misused, that there hadn't been any kind of restoration and the damages had been on going for all the period of time since the first negotiation, and that the leaders had suffered repression and prosecution. Then it commanded several federal agencies, PEMEX and the state government to pay and restore ecological conditions, not only of the original petitioners but of the rest of municipios were the company was working. So a special committee was formed to accomplish this task, the so called CIAR100. But the governor named a former electoral agent of the official party who decided to make a new register of petitioners and adjust the quantities in a different way that was commanded according to the damages, and then it was too clear for people that he was using the committee to buy votes for the 1994 state government election. People reacted with fury closing 400 hundred PEMEX installations and was violently submitted.

In the 1993 Zen field mobilization PEMEX agreed to pay if people quantified the total crop loses and accepted welfare infrastructure and services. Fortunately we had done an enquire that gave us a 50% of loses from 4 tons to 2 in corn crops, and 30% in fisheries, so PEMEX passed over the local government and directly give the first pay to the affected communities in a new politic designed to get rid of local non related problems and Reclamation Industry pays. As always PEMEX didn't pay the full quantity agreed forcing people to sign last full payment documents with the first and only pay, but anyway that negotiation made a difference for the political elites and opposition parties. They both get scared that negotiations could get to understanding ends without them.

So, when there were negotiations in Vicente Guerrero over the Santa Anita and Juliva lagoons, the local official party president and government office precandidate, got involved. The Environmental federal Office made a diagnostic that declared both lagoons dead for the deep damages of oil spills and eutrofication caused by several industrial interventions. The PRI state president then promised that the fishermen would get a salary from the government until the lagoon was restored. But two days later he had to back off when nor PEMEX or the federal government accepted the compromise of restoring the lagoons life.

Then, when, as expected, after a very documented and proved electoral fraud this individual, Roberto Madrazo, became governor, the first thing he did was to establish a new relation with PEMEX, in which PEMEX gave a negotiated budget to a new state office, and didn't get anymore in negotiations with individuals. This new office, the Interinstitutional Committee for the Environment and Social Development (CIMADES), would be in charge of al reclamations, ecological restorations, infrastructure and development budget. But 13 years after, a citizen research found out that there wasn't real control of the budget and PEMEX kept the accountability of the money as simple donations to specific offices or municipal governments (see Arias e Ireta, 2007). CIMADES then acted more like the particular governor's cash fund and, as the Vernet case showed, a repressive agency.

The resistance to the new electoral fraud sustained for along a month an occupation of the Plaza de Armas de Villahermosa, but passing over the federal conduced negotiations, the local PRI commanded by exgovernor Mario Trujillo and Roberto Madrazo hijacked the city for two days closing the bridges and using labour unions personal and liberated people from jails, violently expelled resistants. But resistance was reorganized linking for the only time all the oil struggles of the state and in february of 1996 they stopped all PEMEX

activities. Again there was the mix of violence and negotiations, 60 people were jailed and agreements of new consideration of indemnifications were made. Later, again, most of the cases would be denied and payments were incomplete, as always. All along the Madrazo government random violence appeared in the smallest villages and kept a terror weather with eventual arrests and strange murderers of known and respected people as happened in Montegrande and San Carlos.

In 1997 PEMEX showed nude its colonialist face when after the resistance of the community of Vernet to let a private company work because they have started to damage houses with the exploratory explosions, after offering very low indemnifications CIMADES broke negotiations and sent the local swat unit to take over the community with an army style operation and hijacking 12 citizens for several months, finally forced the acceptance of the intrusion.

In 2001 Pemex closed the sea after the New York Towers attack, the company declared a broad exclusion security area from any platform or pipeline that eventually made traditional sea fishing impossible.

Since then every now and then there are explosions and accidents that at least had injured or killed 200 peasants since the 80s, and local community resistant actions but not articulated although the permanent unconformity persisted trough the two Madrazo dominated terms (including the Manuel Andrade government). In 2006, the new state government closed CIMADES and created a Environmental Secretary, and named for it one of the most experimented ecologist resistants of the state. And then she proposed a new way of negotiation of PEMEX intrusions that worked with micro local committees where PEMEX explained and modulated their intervention and agree the restoration or indemnification before acting, as I had sketched in a 2003 book. Then all the local media

and politicians get over her and boycotted the system. The governor make her withdraw the proposal. We didn't pay attention to a detail: it left outside of negotiations and money distribution local congress representatives and municipal presidents.

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