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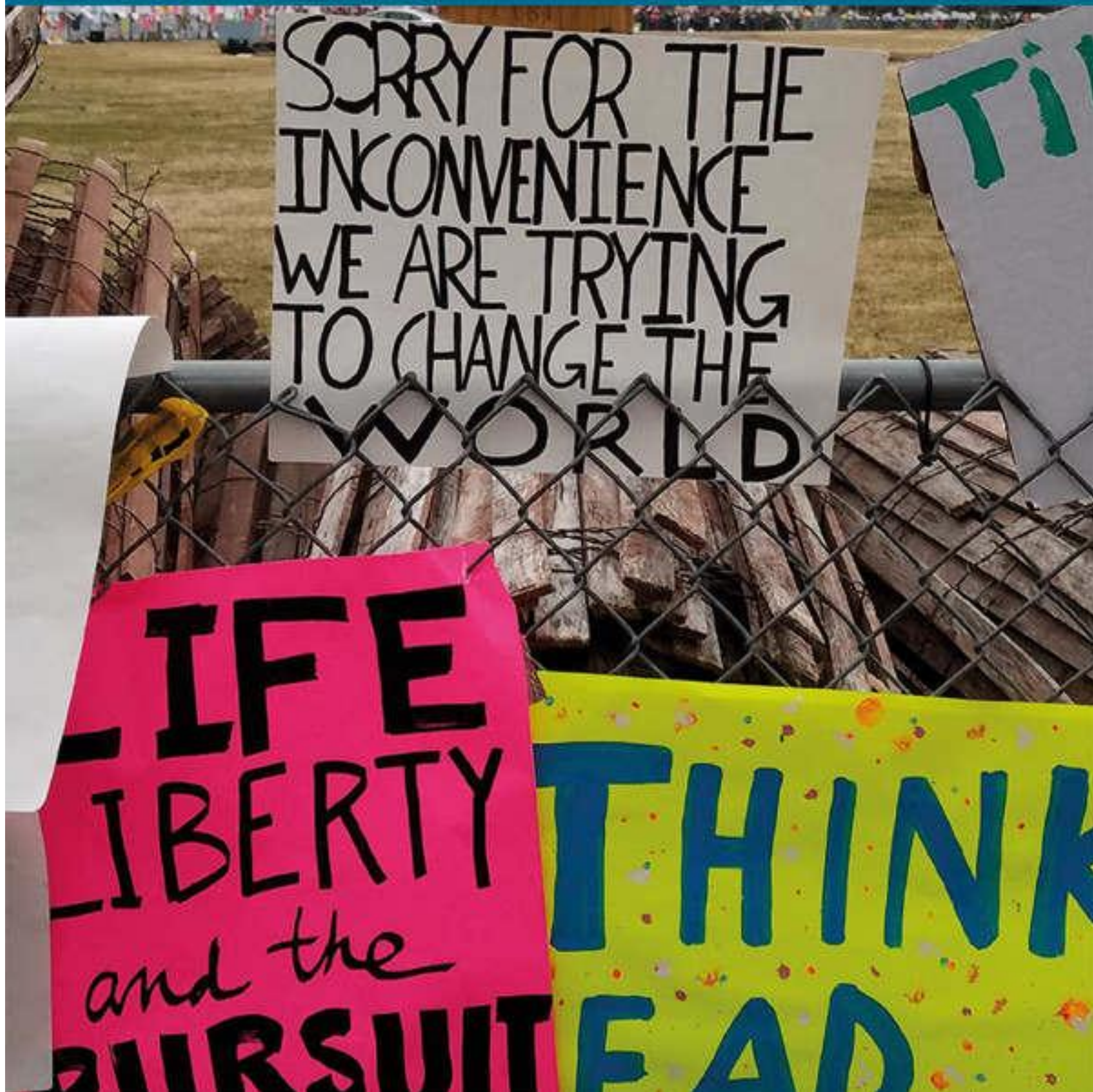
CHARLES TILLY, ERNESTO CASTAÑEDA, AND LESLEY J. WOOD



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Social Movements in Contemporary Mexico

Ernesto Castañeda, Luis Rúben Díaz Cepeda, and Kara Andrade[1]

In 2012, Enrique Peña Nieto was on a campaign tour. He was a young politician who had been groomed to become President of Mexico by political elites and Televisa, the largest TV network. He was running as the presidential candidate of the PRI, the party had been in power from 1929 to 2000 and was planning a comeback in 2012.

Social activists were concerned about the possibility of having the PRI back in the presidency, because this would mean repression of the opposite SMOs, maintaining a neoliberal agenda and more influence from the factual powers. Despite their desire to stop PRI's presidential candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto (EPN), he seemed to be on a paved road to the presidency as mainstream media constantly portrayed him as the sure winner of the election, leftist organizations had been discredited and students were not organized. People were acquiescent with the election of EPN. No one predicted a social movement against his candidacy. (Díaz-Cepeda 2015:46).

Yet, on May 11, 2012, at Universidad Iberoamericana, a Jesuit private university, whose student body he assumed would be friendly, a spontaneous protest against Enrique Peña Nieto occurred. Students started the protest after Peña Nieto was questioned about and admitted that he had ordered the violent repression of protesters at San Andres Atenco, Estado de México in May 2006 (Kuri Pineda 2010). Over 200 protesters were incarcerated, including 47 women. Women participants reported having been sexually attacked by policemen (World Organisation against Torture 2006).

After accepting his responsibility for Atenco, students booed him off the stage and out of the university. The next day, the campaign denied that the protesters were actual university students. Mainstream media downplayed the event and discredited the hecklers.

To defend themselves from the accusations, despite fear of repression, students spontaneously started to tweet: "I am

[1] Monica Villacorta, Araseli Lara, and Maura Fennelly helped preparing this case study.

> an Ibero student," "Nobody trained me," "I'm proud of my classmates." Also, in response to the accusations, a group of students created the Facebook event "Video for the truth," asking other students to send them a short video in which they identified themselves as UIA students and participants of the protest. Due to time limitations this group edited the final video and uploaded it to YouTube with only 131 students, but they received up to 230 videos as the days went by. The video became a world-trending topic in a matter of hours. After the video went viral, people and students from other universities and nonaffiliated people from civil society identified with the UIA students' demands and proclaimed themselves to be the 132nd protester, hence the name #YoSoy 132 (Díaz-Cepeda 2015:47).

After this social media campaign, the students called for a meeting on May 16, 2012. On May 18 over a thousand students, mainly from private universities, marched to the headquarters of the most influential TV network to protest pro-Peña coverage and demanded their right to information and freedom of speech (Díaz-Cepeda 2015:48).

More than 15,000 people attended a march on May 23, 2012. On May 26, a meeting with groups from public universities was organized in the historical Plaza de Tlatelolco. The group issued a statement declaring themselves "as a social, political, but not associated to any political party, pacifist, autonomous, independent, democratic [and] anti-neoliberal social movement that is looking for the transformation of the country through dialogue and social mobilization" (Muñoz Ramírez 2011). Over 100,000 people marched in an anti-EPN march on June 7. At their peak,

> they were able to call for a twenty-four-hour national college strike, a concert in the Zocalo with the attendance of over 50,000 people, and, in an unprecedented act, a call for a debate organized by them and not by the IFE, the body state office in charge of organizing federal elections. This debate was attended by all presidential candidates but EPN and was broadcast on a YouTube channel. The platform was not enough to support the immense number of people trying to watch the debate. (Díaz-Cepeda 2015:51)

Nonetheless, EPM was declared the winner of the elections on July

1, 2012. After the election, #YoSoy participated in marches and other contentious events against EPN. Nevertheless, state repression increased, resignation set in, and the movement soon dwindled.

Repercussions of #YoSoy132

A small-scale, barely organized protest by a few students during a campus visit, grew into a national movement that challenged México's political system and brought together groups demanding better democratic conditions.

> A large part of its success was due to their ability to use social networks to bring together students from private and public universities. This was unprecedented; in México private university students do not usually protest, much less alongside students from the public universities. Also, even though #Yo Soy 132 primarily remained a student movement, it worked together with other workers' and farmers' social organizations to achieve their common goal. At their peak, #Yo Soy 132 was capable of organizing marches of more than 100,000 people. However, a year after their birth, and a few months after the presidential election, they lost considerable membership, which diminished their political power. (Díaz-Cepeda 2015)

Many have focused on the role that media played in this movement. Today the use of social media may be necessary, but not sufficient for a social movement to be successful (Castells 2015, Díaz-Cepeda 2015).

Many have focused on the role that social networks played on this movement. However, we argue that in fact, it shows that the use of social media is necessary, but not sufficient for a social movement to be successful (Castells 2015, Díaz-Cepeda 2015). We argue this based on evidence that the movement escalated after students from the private universities - Mexico Institute Technologic (*Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México*, ITAM) and Iberoamerican University (*Universidad Iberoamericana*) - first met face to face in Parque México with students from public universities such as Mexico National University (*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, UNAM) (Muñoz Ramírez, 2011)The agreements reached provided the movement with the organizational structures and visibility of public universities that facilitated people without regular Internet access to learn about the movement. Assemblies hold in Ciudad Universitaria (UNAM main campus) were physically attended by delegates from universities from all over México, allowing them to create and reinforce solidarity networks.

The Mobilization around the 43 Ayotzinapa Missing Students

On September 26, 2014, around one hundred freshman students from the Ayotzinapa teachers' college Escuela Normal Rural Raul Isidro Burgos headed to the city of Iguala in the Mexican state of Guerrero (Gibler 2017). As in previous years, their goal was to raise funds and means of transportation for a trip to Mexico City to participate in demonstrations commemorating the Tlatelolco massacre of Mexican university students at the hands of the military on October 2, 1968 (Trevizo 2011).

The tragedy began when students seized five buses, a common practice that is often tolerated and that had never been repressed so swiftly and violently. However, in this instance, eighty miles south of Iguala, local police officers and unidentified shooters opened fire on the five buses transporting the students. Six people —three by-passers and three students— were shot and killed, more than twenty students were wounded, and forty-three were taken. The next morning, the body of student Julio Cesar Mondragon was found in a road. Social movement organizations interpreted this as an intimidation technique.

Local government immediately downplayed this event. Later, it was presented by the federal government as an exception that did not reflect the overall situation in Mexico, where violence was supposedly on the decline. However, social movement organizations (SMOs) successfully challenged this discourse by claiming that the attack on the Ayotzinapa students, as well as the way the government conducted the investigations, were, in fact, exemplary of how corrupt the state had become. This can be seen in the chanting that emerge a few weeks after the begging of the movement: It was the State! And, Out with Peña! A chanting that was adopted not only by the usual suspects – opposing SMOs- but by regular people too, as the *Cariolla* or Stroller contingent made up by average mothers with their babies, carrying flags and banners saying: "No, not the students, no, not our children!" Also, civil society grandmothers would shout "Another 68 No More!" (Pérez, 2015, personal interview).

The attack and the slow institutional response started a wave of mobilization that grew to the point where a large number of people blamed the federal government, demanded the resignation of President Enrique Peña Nieto (EPN), and called for a new social contract.

Since that night, other students from the teachers' college Raul Isidro Burgos and their allies pressured local and state governments to bring the students back alive and started a cycle of

mobilization. The location of the disappeared students is still unknown.

A bloody night

Most sources agree on these basic facts: On the night of September 26, 2014, a group was attacked by policemen while in the city of Iguala, Guerrero. These were *normalistas*, the name given to college students attending the *normal rural* (a college for rural teachers) Raul Isidro Burgos in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, in south-western Mexico. Three individuals passing by and three students were killed, and 43 other students, ranging in ages from 19 to 23 years old, were taken by the local police and then disappeared.

It is still not clear what happened to the missing students. According to the account given on November 7, 2014, by then-Attorney General Murillo Karam, on the night of September 26, 2014, a group of *normalistas* from Ayotzinapa boarded two buses at the school and headed to the city of Iguala where they planned on commandeering three buses. They would drive these buses to México City to join the march to commemorate the 1968 anniversary of the army shooting and kidnapping of students who were protesting peacefully in the Tlatelolco plaza before the 1968 Olympics (Soldatenko, 2005). The *normalistas* arrived at Iguala at the time that María de los Ángeles Pineda, wife of Iguala's mayor José Luis Abarca Velázquez, was celebrating an official reception. Afraid that the Ayotzinapa students would disturb the official event, Abarca ordered the local police to confront them. That night, Iguala police officers chased and shot the Ayotzinapa students; many students were hurt, and three were killed. In addition to them, a bus driver, a taxi driver and his female passenger were killed during the attack. Also, 43 students were kidnapped by the Iguala police and were allegedly given to the *Guerreros Unidos*, a criminal group. Major newspapers indicated that the mayor and his wife were part of this criminal organization.

On January 27, 2015, the official version changed slightly. Attorney General Murillo Karam said in a press conference that further investigations by the Attorney General's Office (PGR) had concluded that the *normalistas* were killed because they were mistaken for *Los Rojos,* a rival group of the *Guerreros Unidos*. In this version, the Iguala local police was infiltrated by members of the former, and when one of the leaders mistakenly thought that *Los Rojos* were attacking Iguala, he ordered for them to be shot, incinerated in a garbage dump, and their ashes thrown into the San Juan River. The PGR had human remains and a few testimonies to support this claim, but the remains were too damaged to conduct DNA identity tests. Even though the details had changed, the public

transcript was the same: it was an unfortunate event caused by corruption at the local police level.

However, Ayotzinapa students and many others contested this narrative. Journalists Anabel Hernández and Steve Fisher (2014) challenged the PGRs version based on several testimonies of surviving students, videos, and official documents. They argued that there were, in fact, three attacks; the first shots were fired around 10:00 p.m. when several police officers attempted to arrest the students when they were looking for a way out of Iguala. The *normalistas* resisted the arrest by throwing stones at the police cars and continued on their way. Moments later, a second attack happened. Several police officers, who used their police cars as a barricade and shot at the buses full of students. The police escalated the confrontation. During this attack, one of the students, Aldo Gutierrez was fatally shot in the head. The cops stopped shooting and took the 43 students into custody, while other students ran to hide or were left behind. The third attack happened an hour later when an armed group shot at other students that had come to help the first student group and improvised a press conference. Daniel Solis, Yosivani Guerrero, and Julio Cesar Mondragon were killed in this attack. Mondragon was scalped and his facial skin cut by his assassins. His body was left where random walkers could easily see it, and a photograph was uploaded to the internet for anyone to see. Some journalists and activists interpreted this act as aiming to intimidate other students to leave and be quiet.

A later story was advanced by an international group of experts assigned by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. In this version, one of the buses taken by the students contained a hidden drug cargo, this was unknown by the students, but this is what caused the high levels of violence against the students. A research team has reconstructed a timeline of events from different sources (Gallagher, Ruiz-Segovia and Martínez-Gutiérrez 2017). The full truth is still unknown, but the disappearance of the student ignited a social movement in Mexico.

The Ayotzinapa Context

For many decades, Guerrero has been Mexico's most violent state with a long tradition of *cacicazgo,* where a few families have ruled the state as their personal ground, attacking activists that resist them.

Lucio Cabañas' – a former student of the Raul Isidro Burgos teacher school– lead guerrillas in the mountains of Guerrero. The army killed Cabañas and three other members of the guerrilla in 1974 while rescuing kidnaped senator and future governor Rubén Figueroa Figueroa.

A decade later, Rubén Figueroa Alcocer – son of the former governor– was elected governor in 1993. However, in 1996 he was forced to resign after being held responsible for the tragedy of Aguas Blancas in 1995, where police officers killed seventeen and injured twenty-three peasants protesting. Figueroa Alcocer was substituted by Ángel Aguirre Rivero as interim governor. Aguirre Rivero was again the governor at the time of the forced disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students. On October 23, 2014, Aguirre resigned under pressure from the Ayotzinapa movement. Guerrero is also a center of marijuana and heroin production, much of which is exported to the United States. Organized drug cartels found the ideal conditions for business in Guerrero's lawlessness. There have been growing clashes and conflicts of interest between public officials and drug trafficking organizations.

Guerrero has a history of poverty and repression, but also of resistance, where the students and teachers of Ayotzinapa have been in the forefront. The Ayotzinapa movement draws on the history of the teachers' colleges, which have existed in the state since the 1920s. These colleges were founded by Minister of Public Education José Vasconcelos, with the goal of educating peasants living in Mexico’s countryside (Padilla 2009). Since their founding, these schools have had a socialist and activist approach and have been active in the peasants’ struggles for land distribution. However, they have lost much of their funding from the federal government since the switch over to a neoliberal economic model in the 1980s. Students from these schools (*normalistas*) across the country are part of organizations such as the Mexican Federation of Socialist Peasant Students.

The teachers´ college Raul Isidro Burgos is a male-only school with around 500 students, who have a reputation for using highly disruptive tactics to make their demands met. Confrontations between these schools and the State have increased in recent times because, like the majority of the rural schools, they are fighting for their very existence against the state’s clear intention to close these teachers’ colleges. Ayotzinapa *normalistas* have been on the frontline of the defense of these institutions, and they have faced attacks and repression, including two students shot to death by federal police during a protest in 2011 (McGahan 2014).

The Movement in Support of the Ayotzinapa students

Initially, the events in Iguala did not gain national, much less international, attention. To understand this lack of awareness, it is important to remember that since 2006 when former President Felipe Calderon Hinojosa launched a war on drugs and took the army to the streets to perform patrolling functions, over 100,000

people have been killed, and over 30,000 people have gone missing (Campbell 2009, Gibler 2011, Muehlmann 2013). This strategy was discreetly continued by Peña Nieto, with the same effects (Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano 2017). Under this context, the killing of three students, and the disappearance of another 43 may not have been so newsworthy. Presumably, then, this case could have been another one in the long list of non-investigated crimes. However, the Ayotzinapa students were part of a vast network of SMOs, which spread the news of the attack, and brought public attention to the tragedy.

The parents of the kidnapped students got involved in the social movement right away after the killings and kidnappings. However, the first organized reaction came from the Ayotzinapa students and their activists' networks. The Ayotzinapa students were quite skilled at reacting when attacked given their experience organizing social movement and communication campaigns. They quickly organized a press conference, communicated the news to their allies, and through social networks. They compiled a list of demands, which allowed them to give some direction to the mobilization. The day after the killings, the student body and staff of the Ayotzinapa School demanded: 1) the impeachment of Mayor Abarca and Governor Aguirre for the six murders, and 2) the return of the missing students (Hernández and Fisher 2014).

The attack against the Ayotzinapa students on September 26, 2014, was not the first case of violent disappearances. Nevertheless, people across the country became aware of the situation, empathized with them, and acted in solidarity. The growing popular support was due to *normalistas* and Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) changing the official framing of the events. Enrique Pineda, a well-known social activist and founding member of the Ayotzinapa Solidarity Committee, told Luis Díaz-Cepeda that, "the attack on the Ayotzinapa students, as well as the way the government has conducted the investigations are not local nor isolated events — these acts are exemplary of how corrupt the state is." Active social organizers latched onto these events and brought them to national and then international attention as examples of the everyday violence against citizens and migrants exercised with impunity by both government armed forces and organized crime (Correa-Cabrera 2017).

Allied SMOs organized in three different groups. The first one is the National Popular Assembly (*Asamblea Nacional Popular*, ANP) based in Ayotzinapa and made up by local and national leftist organizations – such as Education Workers State Organization (*Coordinadora Estatal de Trabajadores de la Educación*, CETEG) and humans rights organizations like Tlachinolla Mountain Human Rights Centre (*Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña*

Tlachinollan). In Mexico City, collectives and civil society organizations concerned by the events have organized the Ayotzinapa Solidarity Committee (*Mesa de Solidaridad*). In addition, college students from both private and public universities showed massive support all around the country for the 43 kidnapped students.

Figure 11.1 Justice for Ayotzinapa. October 21, 2014, Global Action Day. Mexico City. Source: Luiz Diaz-Cepeda © 2014.

Figure 11.2 ‘I think, then they disappear me. Responsible: the three levels of government.’ Graffiti on November 5, 2014, Global Action Day. Source: Luiz Diaz-Cepeda © 2014.

With all the discontent accumulated, the November 5 Global Action Day was one of the most attended marches in Mexico’s recent history with the presence of over 500,000 protesters in Mexico City. The parents of the victims led this march, as in all the previous demonstrations. College students, union workers, multiple social organizations, and non-affiliated people attended the march in large numbers. There were coordinated protests in twenty-two states on that day. Also, students at over eighty universities called for strikes. Some of them went on a twenty-four-hour strike, while others did it for seventy-two hours. In Guerrero, the ANP continued with their plan of using highly disruptive tactics to bring the state government down.

During this day of protest, the chants of “It was the State!” and “Peña Out!” were no longer coming from isolated voices, but they were almost unanimous. It was clear then that people no longer accepted the official storyline that this tragedy was a local exception, but instead was a symbol of the corruption of the whole government. The high spirits of that night made some people think that the scenario for a massive revolt capable of bringing the formal political system down was possible. However, experienced social activists were not so sure.

From the beginning of the movement, the solidarity committee, in coordination with the parents and the ANP, decided to organize global action days. They saw the most significant turnout on November 20, 2014, when over 100,000 people took the streets of Mexico City to protest the students' disappearance. Many of these demonstrations honored the missing *normalistas*, the thousands of people who disappeared in Mexico in the last decade, and the need to overhaul the entire Mexican political system. The demands reached as far as Europe and Asia (Dorfsman-Hopkins and Gómez Unamuno 2015). In Latin America, almost all countries

joined this Global Action Day, and for a while, global action days happened every month, keeping the movement alive.

Precedents

If the students' disappearances were the spark for this movement, the movement did not arise in a vacuum. Leading up to the Mexico Summer Olympic Games of 1968, students organized rallies and demonstrations against government authoritarianism and called for more democratic conditions (Trevizo 2011). On the night of October 2, 1968, the protesters were repressed while they were in a peaceful demonstration in Tlatelolco, Mexico City. To this day, the exact number of students killed, injured, and missing is unknown; the estimate goes from one hundred to three hundred people. Since then, October 2 became a symbolic day of resistance.

Four decades later college students organized once again to demand more democracy. In 2012, the student movement #YoSoy132 (#I Am 132), inspired by the 15M and Occupy movements, began when students confronted the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) candidate Enrique Peña Nieto – later to become president of Mexico– regarding his policies as governor and also critiqued the Mexican media's biased coverage of the 2012 general election. They first spread their complaints using video students spread their messages virally through mainly Facebook and Twitter. They gained national and international support. Later, this support translated into massive street demonstrations, where a new generation of politically aware youth rose up.

Just as in #*Yo Soy 132* (Guillén 2013), the use of social networking sites was vital to deliver information to a broader audience. Within days, the case of the Ayotzinapa 43 missing students went beyond local organization networks and gained national and international attention. The traditional protest of 2 October was the perfect scenario for the emerging movement to gain momentum and for possible allies to meet each other. The Tlatelolco commemoration reunites most of the leftist organizations of the country, and in 2014, some SMOs tied their demands with the ones from the parents of the Ayotzinapa students. Protests were not circumscribed to the October 2 march, but they spread through Mexico City and other states in Mexico, the United States, and some countries in Europe.

Research indicates that many of the young students that participated in #YoSoy132 also participated in the Ayotzinapa movement and used their know-how to promote the cause of the 43, giving Ayotzinapa similar characteristics of organizing and use of social media and other online tools to promote their cause. Both movements show a growing trend towards non-party movements

such as the vigilante self-defense and community police movements in Guerrero and Michoacán that arose in 2013 (Andrade 2015a, Andrade 2015b, Andrade, Castañeda and Díaz-Cepeda 2017).

Unlike previous victims, who did not belong to any social organization, Ayotzinapa students were highly politicized, and hence were part of an extended network of SMOs, which supported the efforts of the parents to find their sons. This network acted quickly and organized local protests the very next day after the events. They also reported the attack to other social organizations, as well as national and international news reporters, hence gaining national and, later, worldwide attention. By doing so, they broke the media's self-censoring, which the government relied on to hide inconvenient information. The government tried to frame the events in Iguala as a local issue, with criminal groups to blame. However, thanks their 'know how' and information campaigns, the students and their allies defeated this government framing. On the contrary, by showing that local police officers had participated in the attack and the federal forces, at the very least, had failed to protect the students, they started to point out that the federal government was also responsible.

By breaking the media siege, Ayotzinapa students and their networks reached a broader audience. Within this audience there were a vast number of people that were also discontent with the EPN administration; they later joined the movement. As claimed by Tarrow (2011:166) a larger number of allies encourage people to participate further. With more support, the Ayotzinapa social movement would grow from local to national demands.

Figure 11.3: Photo of a Zapatista poster demanding the location of the 43.

Figure 11.4: Illustration of disappeared student Antonio Tizapa by Claus López. #IlustradoresConAyotzinapa Shared with Creative Commons. http://centroprodh.org.mx/43xayotzinapa/index.php/project/jorge-antonio-tizapa-legideno/

Figure 11.5: Picture of posters of some of the missing students at a presentation of the experts' report at the Wilson Center in Washington, DC in 2016. © Castañeda

Transnationalization

The events in Iguala have troubled not just Mexicans, but other parts of the world, as it can be observed in the numerous books and articles from different disciplines, about the topic (i.e. Gibler, 2017 and Sandoval-Reed, 2016).The forced disappearance of the students and the failure of local authorities and the federal government to

respond to the crime have prompted activism in Mexico and beyond. From staging "die-ins" at many campuses to candlelight vigils and protests in many international cities, including 43 cities in the United States, to crowdsourced projects such as the painted portraits of each student and many Twitter-hashtags like #Ayotzinapa, #AyotzinapaSomos Todos,#EselEstado,#NoSomosUnNúmero, #YaMeCanse, #yanoscansamos, #UStired2, #YaMeCansé, Por Eso Propongo, #IlustradoresConAyotzinapa and others, the initial local campaign grew into a global movement in less than a month. Protests have taken place throughout Mexico, the United States, Europe, and Latin America showing solidarity with the parents, teachers, and students in demanding an end to impunity in Mexico.

The Ayotzinapa movement is an organic movement with no hierarchical organization, but rather a web of contacts. This structure allows activists, SMOs, and sympathizers to break the media siege and reach potential members from the United States, South America and Europe. For example, grassroots activists like Miguel Ángel Jiménez Blanco filed reports to their international contacts about the events in Iguala (Andrade, Castañeda and Díaz-Cepeda 2017).

Transactional Protest

Right after the killings in Iguala, a group of Mexicans stood in front of the Mexican Consulate in New York to protest the disappearances. Don Antonio Tizapa was part of this protest. Antonio Tizapa looked at the pictures of the students brought by another member of the community, only to see the face of his son painted in of the posters of the disappeared.

Mr. Tizapa has been vocal in events in the United States in support of the return of the 43 disappeared students. He has joined forces with Amado, who has been living in New York for over eight years. Two of Amado's cousins are among the 43 missing Ayotzinapa students. He told Castañeda in an interview that his cousins joined the teacher school because they were very poor, and the school offered them food and housing and the prospects for a stable job afterward. He runs marathons in the United States along with Don Antonio to raise awareness for the 43. Don Antonio conducted a hunger strike in front of the Mexican Consulate in New York on December 24-26, 2016. As of 2018, there is still no news of his son's whereabouts.

Government reaction

The Mexican government downplays the events in Guerrero and framed them as exceptional and not reflective of the overall situation in the country, toting that drug violence was supposedly on the decline. In the first years of his administration, Peña Nieto claimed a decrease from the violence that the country experienced from 2006 to 2012, when 23,000 people disappeared, and approximately 70,000 were killed (Rosen and Zepeda 2016). However, as the Ayotzinapa movement made clear, the killings did not end with President Calderon's administration but continued with EPN. During the first 20 months of the EPN administration, there were over 57,899 homicides; and 2017 has record high 25,339 homicides, according to the Mexican Public Security National System.

The Mexican government tried to close the case by attempting to prove that the students were dead and stated outright that the parents and everyone else should just get over it and move on. In following this strategy, the government changed their version of what happened that night. One such version stated first that Jose Luis Abarca, the mayor of Iguala, had ordered local police to attack the students to prevent them from boycotting his wife's event. Investigative journalists and further investigations have proved this version wrong.

Later, Jesús Murillo Karam, the then-Attorney General, made a public statement on January 27, 2015, to convince grieving parents and a skeptical Mexican public that the case had been solved. A short video account of events that investigators stitched together explaining what happened the night of the crime was shown during a live press conference. According to this government account, on November 8, 2014, gang members were apprehended and confessed to killing the students and to burning their remains for eleven hours in a public municipal dump and then throwing their remains in the river. In January of 2015 Felipe Rodríguez Salgado, a leader of *Guerreros Unidos* gang, was arrested and told investigators that he had been given orders to kill the students because they had connections to rival gang *Los Rojos*. The attorney general stated that by the end of January, 100 people had been arrested, 39 confessions were obtained and thousands of fragments of human remains were recovered. Authorities claimed the condition of the remains made it almost impossible to identify the bodies. Parents did not believe this version and requested the famous and experienced Argentina's international forensics team to help with the identification process. In February, Argentine forensics experts stated there was not enough scientific evidence to conclusively prove Karam's theory and family members of the missing also doubted the official version. According to some UNAM scientists, it was physically impossible to burn the bodies to ashes with the limited fuel the *Guerreros Unidos* would have had

access to, in an informal open-air garbage dump. Furthermore, local weather reports showed that the day that the bodies were supposedly burned it had rained in that area, making such account further improbable.

The parents were suspicious of the PGR, yet they collaborated with the investigation, and also investigated on their own. When the parents had a lead, they would ask the federal police (PFP) to go with them. However, on the occasions when the federal police refused to accompany them, they self-organized and with the support of the Union of Organized People from the State of Guerrero (UPOEG) they looked for their sons (Andrade, Castañeda and Díaz-Cepeda 2017, CNN 2014). In these searches, they found many clandestine graves in places where the federal police had supposedly already searched. This increased people's distrust of the federal investigation.

The changing versions and lack of evidence made people suspicious and served to fuel the growing movement. Then the government used a worn playbook of tactics to discredit and repress SMOs. On the one hand, they accused students of being involved in drug trafficking. However, since "most of the students were still in their teens, in their first semester at the school, and came from impoverished communities that a majority of Mexicans can identify with" (Goldman 2014) the population did not believe them to be criminals. Also, there is video evidence, as confirmed by the federal investigation, that the policemen had taken the students. The footage also proves that the students were not armed and that they did not fire back, as some had argued at one point. At the same time, by the end of 2014, the government started to repress mobilization efforts through targeted and random arrests. Arguably, these arrests were made with the intention of intimidating people and reducing mobilization. Police repressed later protests under the excuse that mobilizations of support and protests were a threat to the stability of the country because at the end of few of the marches in Mexico City anarchists burnt trashcans and crashed businesses' windows.

Results

Despite all the support and political pressure, the most important demand of the parents of the disappeared to have their sons returned alive, has still not been met. Mayor Albarca was accused of kidnapping. Governor Aguirre resigned but was not charged or prosecuted, and the Office of the Attorney General has refused to investigate the army. Perhaps, the most important victory of the parents has been that federal government accepted the Human Rights Inter-American Court (CIDH) to help in the investigation of

the case. The groups of experts appointed by the CIDH had the goal of overseeing Mexico's actions to protect the injured students and to find out what happened to the missing students.

In April 2016, this group issued a 605-page report stating that the government's official version of the students' disappearance was riddled with flaws, and mentioned many instances when the Mexican government created roadblocks in their investigation of the case. Peña's administration responded by ending the collaboration with CIDH on July 2016, as they did previously with Argentine investigators. However, thanks to several demonstrations and a sit-in that took place in front of the U.S. State Department the parents and their allies created enough political pressure on the Mexican federal government to sign a new agreement with this group of experts.

Questions about the Future

The whereabouts of the students – including the events that took place and who was involved – remains a mystery. Similarly, many clandestine graves were located during the search for the disappeared students, and the criminals behind those murders are unknown (CNN 2014). What is certain is that neither the parents nor much of the Mexican population accepted the version presented by former Attorney General Murillo Karam on January 27, 2015. The ultimate goal of the Ayotzinapa movement, to find the students and later demands to have the President resign and draft a new constitution did not occur.

Nonetheless, the visibility of the movement in the international diplomatic circles among foreign leaders, including the Pope and international parliaments, deflated the bubble about the supposed "Mexican moment." A public relations campaign engineered through the international press at the beginning of the Presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto and the return of the PRI to power after eight years of hiatus to a 71-year rule, to frame Mexico as experiencing a renaissance. The case of the Ayotzinapa 43, arguably, played a role in the election defeats that the PRI suffered in 2016 when it lost seven out of twelve state elections for governor, including the states of Durango, Quintana Roo, Veracruz y Tamaulipas where it had ruled since the end of the Revolution. Also, the Popular Citizen Constituent (Asamblea Popular Constituyente, APC) a parallel social movement founded by Bishop Vera, Father Solalinde among others, organized a citizen constitutional assembly on February 2017, the 100th anniversary of the current Mexican constitution.

In conclusion, the resulting movement demanded not only to find the disappeared students but also to create accountability at all

levels of Mexico's governing structures. The power of Ayotzinapa's campaign was the movement's strategic prowess to use the tools available to them to reach the hearts and minds of others who before these tragic events did not even know that Ayotzinapa existed.

The Ayotzinapa movement is one of many movements that directly challenges the Mexican state for its inability to provide security to its citizens. It is part of a larger movement against the nefarious effects of the war on drugs. Philosopher Javier Sicilia and members of the Catholic Church have been visible actors in this movement. Activists in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, have been at the forefront of organizing against the militarization of the war on drugs (Díaz-Cepeda and Castañeda 2018, Staudt and Mendez 2015). Nevertheless, this is an issue that goes beyond local cities, states, and party-affiliation of those in government and, thus, the movement, and indignation that goes with it are likely to continue.

It is important to notice that this indignation is not placed only in the Ayotzinapa social movement, as disappearances have not stopped and over 200,000 people have been killed since 2006 when former President Felipe Calderon Hinojosa started the war on drugs (INEGI, 2018). Yet these are not the only problems that SMOs are protesting in México, as there are around 600 land conflicts in México between transnational companies and indigenous communities,(Navarro Trujillo, 2014) teachers' unions -such as are State Coordinating Committee of Education Workers of Guerrero, or CETEG- are fighting for better working conditions.

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