

## Panel

### ***A Brief History of the Future: Utopian and Experimental Communities in Mexico and Their Influence on Cultural Practices***

**Sofía Olascoaga**— Moderator

**Gabriel Cámara**— Present and Futures of a Libertarian Past:  
The Influence of Iván Illich's CIDOC

The Centro Intercultural de Documentación (Intercultural Documentation Center, CIDOC), in Cuernavaca, was the forum where Iván Illich elaborated and communicated his message of liberation. Initial financing for the CIDOC, founded in 1959, came from the American Catholic hierarchy, for the acculturation of numerous priests, monks, friars and nuns who, during the Cold War, prepared to bolster the Christian religion in Latin America and keep people away from the communist threat. It was the Catholic Church's contribution to the Alianza para el Progreso (Progress Alliance), promoted by postwar political strategists.

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Iván Illich was a man of the church. He had been a parish priest for Puerto Ricans in New York, Vice Rector of the Universidad Católica de Ponce, in Puerto Rico, and he held the title of Monsignor. Chosen by New York's Cardinal Spellman and Boston's Cardinal Cushing to train missionaries for Latin America, he was brilliant, free-thinking and controversial. Paradoxically, Illich chose to found the CIDOC in Mexico because of its anti-clergy legislation —unique in Latin America— and the diocese of Cuernavaca, which was led by a progressive bishop, Sergio Méndez Arceo. In addition to its language school, activities at the Centro consisted of promoting discussion seminars and publications about the educational task of both the state and the Church. Renowned thinkers like Paulo Freire, Paul Goodman, John Holt, Michael Maccoby, Erick Fromm, Everett Reimers, Jonathan Kozol and many others gave talks and elaborated, with Iván, the critique of educational systems from a libertarian perspective.

This background helps understand Iván Illich's varied work, translated into many languages, as a whole. Essentially, it deals with the struggle against the oppression that powerful institutions wield over individuals. Nation-states, churches, social service bureaucracies and especially education are viewed from this perspective, not as means of helping individuals but as subtle instruments of oppression and conformism. Private and state-run educational systems are heirs of the institutional Church, which, with its veneer of salvation, controls individual and group thought. In the 1960s, when

liberation theology in Latin America took up class struggle again and pushed Christians to political action, Iván Illich kept his distance, because he saw in both the socialisms and the capitalisms the same aim of a central power limiting people's autonomy.

Illich radicalized his way of thinking and discourse to the point of directly confronting the American ecclesiastic hierarchy that was sponsoring him. In 1967, during the annual meeting of the Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program, in Boston, he shocked the clergy with his famous speech, "The Seamy Side of Charity", in which he denounced the imposed paternalism of outside help, be it denominational or state-based. This was followed by publications that shook up ecclesiastic, as well as civil, public opinion, especially *Deschooling Society* and *Medical Nemesis*. The scandal reached Rome, and Illich faced an ecclesiastic trial. The way in which he did so is a key to understanding Iván not only as a prophet who announced changes in consciousness, but also the artistic, creative side with which he moved his listeners. Before he could be condemned by an ecclesiastic tribunal, Illich resigned from his priestly service, although he announced with a great deal of hype that he would remain celibate and continue his daily readings from the *Roman Breviary*—a simplification of the canonical hours that were chanted in the convents and which were mandatory for priests.

Especially erudite and brilliant, Iván Illich also liked to fascinate and surprise. He could not avoid being the center of attention at meetings, as he confessed to Méndez Arceo. He always praised conviviality, friendship and charity, but more than once, he offended his friends, as when he unilaterally decided to close the CIDOC. According to Betsy Hollands, a young woman Iván had invited to join him in his efforts to force the Catholic schools out, she consulted Fordham University professor Joseph Fitzpatrick, who knew Iván Illich well. His advice was that if she accepted, she should always keep her bags packed. Hollands declined the invitation.

Referring to his vocation as a prophet, Iván called himself a "traveling salesman", but his discourse was good news, a true gospel; he foresaw and conceptually guided struggles for liberation that are now undeniable. The Arab Spring, numerous demonstrations in Europe and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States are all incarnations of prophecies Iván made 40 years ago. The intellectual task of unveiling the deceits of power can be seen in the discussions organized by Jorge Manzano, from the ITESO in Guadalajara, to: "Reflect, together with the public, on liberation from everything that oppresses people [...] It is a matter of becoming conscious of the chains of all kinds that bind society, discovering the apparently beautiful or necessary veils that hide the chains and trying to find roads to liberation."<sup>1</sup> Discovering once more the powerful simplicity of affection, enjoying solidarity, talking about love and honesty in politics are all embodiments of Illich's ideal. Justice, which had focused on the socioeconomic angle, now returns to its deep meaning of charity and human love.

The personal freedom that scandalizes good consciences and makes power uncomfortable is not a desire for lasciviousness but rather an encounter with ourselves and with the surroundings through which existence flows. It is the possibility of developing a life plan, to be creation itself, making the most of personal talents and accepting the limitations inherent to every human being in each particular circumstance. Freedom is defended against the interior dismantling attempted by political and bureaucratic totalitarianisms in order to experience the gift of existence fully and responsibly. If anyone understands the paradox of maximum freedom amidst insurmountable limits, it is artists. Without limits and without creative freedom there is no virtue, beauty or truth.

One cannot expect the prophet to carry out his own prophecy: in Illich's case, to transform schools or state bureaucracies. When he attempted specific projects, they suffered from their naïveté. He wanted to substitute formal math instruction with games that children would undertake freely on the streets, for which he sought help from experts on the subject. The project did not move forward, but the fundamental idea remained: to concentrate formal teaching within the domain of basic skills, in order to coexist in the contemporary culture. Command of literacy, knowing how to dialogue with authors, would suffice to take advantage of any source of knowledge, to communicate with others, to exercise our autonomy in the social surroundings. In the 70s, one of his disciples in Evanston, Illinois attempted to put into practice Iván's idea of establishing volunteer supply-and-demand apprenticeship networks separately from schools, but the experiment did not last long. Nowadays in Mexico, alternatives to formal education are being sought in Illich-style experiments such as the Universidad de la Tierra (Earth University). The best-known site is in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas and also in Oaxaca, directed by Gustavo Esteva, a close companion of Iván. Even more notorious has been the presence of Iván Illich in the figure of another of his disciples, the poet Javier Sicilia, editor of his work and a regular contributor to the magazine *Proceso*, where he spreads his message. Upon losing his son, victim of former president Calderón's absurd war, Javier Sicilia undertook a national and even international crusade to strip off the mask of service worn by power and reveal the true face of those who disregard life.

The lesson we take from the past for the present and the futures is that as powerful as the visions of the artist-prophet Iván are, they need to mellow with time and be embodied in reality, not as the visionary dreamed them but rather as they are assimilated into the work of those who accept and tenaciously cultivate them.

Personally, my educational inspiration owes a lot to my relationship with Iván. His discourse resonated with previous experiences in school, and the work of many years allows me the great satisfaction of seeing an embodiment of his ideas that he would

surely approve. At the heart of an educational change in thousands of public schools, in very poor areas of Mexico, are tutorial relationships that are the foundation for learning to learn,<sup>2</sup> the free encounter of those who have a particular skill and those who want to learn it with freedom and autonomously. The learning communities that expand through the conviction and enthusiasm of teachers, students, and parents embody Iván Illich's ideal of displacing bureaucratic interference to establish relationships of affection between teachers and students, "a type of friendship that cannot be previously fixed, that makes a gift or offers a service to a friend.' [...] inevitably an act of love and kindness."<sup>3</sup>

There is one aspect in which Iván did succeed in seeing his message embodied: he himself. He rejected conventional medicine and preferred to endure cancer on his face, exercising his freedom to experience pain and death autonomously and without bureaucratic interference. Then and now, Iván is a permanent presence among us. He will be even more so for the next generation, which is conscious of its need to be liberated.

### **Alberto González Pozo—** The Future from the Vantage Point of the Past: Reflections on Architectural Utopias between 1950 and 1975

Despite the catastrophes that occurred during the 20th century (colonial and world wars, extreme dictatorships and gradual environmental deterioration), the third quarter of the last century seems to me to be especially interesting if we focus on the quantity and quality of advances, achievements and dreams that were realized in very different areas of economy, politics and culture. With regards to the latter, and to the arts in particular, I believe the interval between 1950 and 1975 was particularly rich in projects, some of them carried out while others remained utopias. I will refer especially to architecture, which is the field I know best, since I experienced or witnessed events that seem to me to be relevant to the theme of this symposium.

I'd like to start off by mentioning the works of two distinguished architects from Guadalajara, Enrique de la Mora y Palomar and his nephew, Friar Gabriel Chávez de la Mora. They both revolutionized the principles that guided architecture and religious art, striving always to ally themselves with the efforts being made in the heart of the Church itself to renew its ancient practices, seeking an *aggiornamento*, a process of updating that seemed at the time to be possible and which was only partially accomplished.

The first, Enrique de la Mora, had begun before. His plans for La Purísima Church in Monterrey (1939-1946) created a reality. Its floor plan was traditional but with very simple geometric bodies, following Le Corbusier's definition: "Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of volumes brought together under light."

That work was accompanied by sculptures and paintings by Herbert Hofmann, Jorge González Camarena, Federico Cantú and Jesús Guerrero Galván. It was a watershed in religious architecture and soon endured biting criticism from the Monterrey bourgeoisie. The mildest of their comments was that it looked like a gas station. Fortunately, critics like Paul Westheim and cultured individuals like Alfonso Reyes produced an avalanche of positive commentary that ended up fully justifying the work.

As early as the 1950s, de la Mora moved toward a superb solution in El Altillo Chapel (1956-60), which went along with the efforts of the Misioneros del Espíritu Santo (Missionaries of the Holy Spirit) to bring back to their liturgical practices some of the simplicity and communitarian spirit of the early stages of Christianity. They had a weekly program on the AM radio station XELA at the time, on which they broadcast Gregorian chants from their ceremonies and which all music lovers, believers or not, listened to purely for the musical pleasure.

The rhomboid chapel at El Altillo, where the missionaries chanted, marked the beginning of a series of collaborations between Enrique de la Mora and Félix Candela, another great architect, who first calculated and constructed everything that came to mind with the technique of reinforced concrete shells of which he was a consummate master. The final piece in that series was Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Sanctuary, in Madrid, completed in the late 1960s.

Before continuing with the theme of religious architecture, I'd like to mention two other visionary contributions, both from the 1950s. The first (though it no longer exists) was the house that Juan O'Gorman built next to Ciudad Universitaria (UNAM's University City), in which he renounced the principles of the Modern Movement he had erstwhile followed faithfully, even in his university library. To begin his abode, he started with a cave that he found in the Pedregal's mantle of lava, preparing it as a living room.

From there, he kept raising wavy walls (like the undulating lava fields he had seen from the air), while at ground level, the house offered visitors a façade replete with anthropomorphisms and other "sharp" elements (as he claimed that rocky landscape looked from the ground).

This was a break with the prevailing current in bourgeois residences at the time, as was another memorable house by Carlos Lazo, in Las Lomas de Chapultepec neighborhood, which was developed as a donut around a circular central courtyard and partially underground, several decades ahead of the ecological and semi-underground housing that Javier Senosiain has been putting up more recently, with increasing success.

Returning to the 1950s and religious architecture, I underscore the role played by Friar Gabriel Chávez de la Mora in Cuernavaca around that time. In 1955, he entered the recently founded School of Architecture at the University of Guadalajara.

Then, soon after graduating as an architect, he entered a Benedictine monastery directed by Gregorio Lemercier, and in 1957 he went to work on projects of interest for his order and for the Diocese of Cuernavaca, then led by Sergio Méndez Arceo. Thus, at the same time Friar Gabriel was working on the rehabilitation of that ancient 16th-century cathedral nave, adapting it to be used in accordance with the new liturgical tendencies that the bishop impressed on his prelatore, he proposed the complete project to expand and complete the Benedictine convent near Santa María Ahuacatitlán.

To be sure, both projects were inspired not only by the peculiar seal given them by Lemercier and Méndez Arceo, respectively, but by a group spirit that embraced many priests and laypeople of the Diocese and all the brothers and novitiates of the convent, without forgetting in the latter, of course, the work of the handicraft workshop overseen by brothers and laypeople, which produced many high-quality pieces that the Benedictines sold to keep it operating.

The importance of Friar Gabriel's chapel for the monastery lay in its circular layout and central altar, preceding (as his uncle Enrique had already done at El Altillo) the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council by almost a decade. The consequences of these innovations on art and architecture were not lost, although the same was not true of the *esprit de corps* behind them. The dissolution of the Benedictine community in Ahuacatitlán and the abandonment of the monastery and its chapel in the second half of the 1960s have been narrated by many, including author Vicente Leñero.

I should add that in the following decade a number of us tried to follow this same path and made advances in other ways, no longer in convent architecture but rather neighborhood churches in southern Mexico City that I worked on. The four main ones show a gradual evolution from basilica-style to a central floor plan, and an advantageous use of concrete shell technology (with an adviser other than Candela) and singular insistence on incorporating works of art (stained glass windows, ceramics, medallions, paintings) into the architecture. To get good results in all those fields, though, we had to wait several decades (two and a half, at least), adapting to communities' scarce resources.

To be sure, at that now distant time, architecture was done looking confidently to the future. That confidence was based on the conviction that the country had all the necessary materials and an expert workforce, which were necessary to respond to the challenges posed by architects and artists, who, of course, were many more than those I have recalled here.

Not everything that was done had followers, which is why I must mention another important work by Enrique de la Mora, one in which I was fortunate to have participated: the Edificio Monterrey (1962), at the corner of Presidente Masaryk and Mariano Escobedo. It was the first structure of its kind in the Americas, followed only by the Edificio Celanese (now Semarnat) on Revolución Avenue, by the late Ricardo

Legorreta. In both examples, the structural order used until then (constructing from the bottom up) was reversed, and another principle was adopted: to raise one or two large concrete support tubes, take them up to the roof, and from there support the rest of the floors of the building, literally hanging them by means of steel tensors.

It was an apparently unnecessary complication, but it worked stupendously with a more economical foundation and quite remarkable behavior in several earthquakes, since neither of those two examples has suffered even one broken window since their ribbons were cut.

But amidst the achievements there were also utopias: projects that were never built, for various reasons, but which were potentially feasible. One that I always remember is a project from the late 1960s by architect Ernesto Gómez Gallardo for the competition for the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

The project was among the ten finalists but ultimately received none of the awards. It will be said that the winning work by Piano and Rogers is peerless, but looking at the evolution of architecture in the final quarter of the 20th century, it seems to me that the proposal by Gómez Gallardo (who passed away not long ago) was ahead of everyone else's, since it posited a sort of Möbius strip for that cultural storehouse. It had nothing to envy in Frank Gehry's boldest achievements 30 years later.

Thus, I believe that when it comes to looking toward the future, it would be a good idea to recall these past episodes from the evolution of Mexican architecture, since valid principles can still be gleaned from them for the future that so concerns us.

### **Ph D. Alejandro Chao Barona (†)**— Chain of Utopias: An Experience

In my view, our perception of the future originates in the set of collective imageries that we form by bunching together filaments from the webs of memory and projecting desires into bubbles that grow out of scarcities.

I understand the future as the sum of individual and collective hopes (of being, having, knowing, and being able) projected on the personal, existential void, as well as that of civilizations that have no more sense than the ideological imageries imposed by power systems —family, school, political parties, global and nation states— or than the significant desires of those who represent our identity, which we fervently endeavor to fulfill.

I understand the existential void as the shared and assumed ignorance of the “why, how, and wherefore” of the cosmic order, social organization, and personal consciousness. It is an epistemic vacuum, scarcely dissimulated by the belief in origin myths, philosophical or scientific speculations, and the hope for a destiny that would not be as inevitable and absurd as the deaths of people and civilizations.

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Out of that existential angst at the meaninglessness of the universe and of our consciousness of consciousness emerge the need for a reason that would make explicit and explain and, for an utopia that would yearn and imagine; duality of the vigil that keeps watch over the surroundings and of the dream that protects us when we sleep; duality of the consciousness of matter and energy, in four dimensions, under the causal order and the order of logical categories, and of the altered state of unconsciousness in which that which is known is blurred and bizarre, storybook characters appear.

To speak of the future is to speak of utopia, a place and time of the never-ever that is, nonetheless, always present. Utopia implies the human application, in a slow time, of an action that constantly moves away, but in the concrete space where continuous effort, necessary interaction, permanent critique, obstinate resistance and everyday praxis are realized in the immediate, in the necessary, in the known.

Utopia is the visibility of the whole from the lower marginality, from the invisible proximity that undermines the dominant ideology. It is an acceptance of heterogeneity and an indignant rejection of the leveling rod that attempts to homogenize humans, their life circumstances and cultures, because equality before the law does not imply cultural, economic, political or social homogeneity but rather responsibility in the face of that which is hoped for, that which is sought and that which is found.

Moving toward utopia demands consciously relinquishing what is present and amassing hope. It is a matter of re-enchanting the world but avoiding naive optimism through ruthless critique. It is a matter of going from the ideologically conditioned *Homo sapiens* to *Homo demens*, the human being liberated individually and collectively from the oppressive conformity to the system imposed by the powers that be. The utopian quest implies questioning, with new ethics, a new reading and new hermeneutics, any of the authoritarian, imposed and closed systems.

In utopia, people try to destroy the illusion of the society of consumption, comfort and waste, performance and banal entertainment, of passing time out of boredom. It has to do with soaking up the spirit of indignation, accepting the loss of a past that has rotted and acquiring a vision of the future with an intercultural dialogue of multi-faceted forms of knowledge.

Utopia is standing on the edge of the precipice to deal with the attempt of what must happen. It is listening to the community's waiting. It is contemplating the horizon, where daybreak announces the end of the night. It is working with the precarious reason that gives meaning to the small action but is rejected by the milieu and disdained by the elite.

In sharing the exploration of that utopian future, it is an honor to share in this panel where new utopias are woven into the warp of "restarting the long count", reprising that distressing metaphor from the Maya, who applied it to measuring and



understanding the unstoppable movement of time and the invariable return of solar, lunar and Venusian cycles, cycles of rain and drought, life and death those who sowed and consumed ears of corn but were certain they would return to the dust of the Earth where corn is reborn.

In all myths, to speak of the future implies birth, death and resurrection, in other words, regaining memory to project desire. In this memorial of a chain of utopias, I will review the experiences that originated with my participation in the publicized Benedictine monastery of Santa María de la Resurrección, in Cuernavaca, Morelos, where the Catholic religion in its most profound manifestation, monastic life, converged with the science of psychoanalysis, in its technical, revolutionary modality of group analysis.

That convergence attempted to link a religion that wants to give answers concerning creation, redemption and judgment of the human species in the linear time of a sacred history, through an act of faith, to a science that aims to demonstrate the precariousness of reason and will—exalted by theology and philosophy— by understanding the dual aspect of subjectivity: an I, a conscious subject, and a Not I, more its own but at the same time alien and subject to unconscious instincts that are dependent on the forces of sexuality and of death, psychic energy prefigured in universal archetypes or collective imageries of socioeconomic systems and power, or the signifiers of language, depending on how different theories of psychoanalysis are studied, from Freud to the present.

It was a matter of seeking out the analogy of ascetic practice based on the *ora et labora* (prayer and work) of the Benedictine rule, which attempts to foster the contemplative possibility of mystical experience with psychotherapeutic practice that would liberate language from the censure of the unseemly, ridiculous or unreflective. It opens itself to the understanding of transference and leads to symptoms, dreams, joking and art as forms of certainty for the self-knowledge of subjectivity.

The first utopia in the chain of utopias began, precisely, upon entering the monastery. The religious explanation for why and how one enters the monastery is a divine calling, divine grace, vocation. Psychoanalysis explains that it is simply a matter of acting out the narcissistic fantasy of the adolescent who abandons the painful reality of everyday life in favor of the pretension of obtaining immortality for the imaginary soul.

In other words, the young man is not content with the family into which he was born and raised and deposits his fantasy of an ideal family in the monastery. The monastic sanctuary becomes the fantastical matrix, the alchemistic crucible, the new mother that, through prayer, divine reading and work, will give birth to a new being, transforming a failed humanity into the virtue of a saint. The abbot would be the ideal father to whom to entrust one's will through obedience and one's intelligence through confession of

the truth. He is the figure who mediates between the monk and divinity, the fantastic figure to whom the power of orienting thought, conduct and emotion is delegated. And finally comes the monastic brotherhood with whom one lives in the modesty of chastity, silence, respect and mutual aid.

Nevertheless, to speak of family, as Greek tragedy expresses it, is to talk about the mother who swallows her children to recuperate the sensation of plenitude, or who hurls them into the abyss to avoid responsibility. It is to speak of the abuse of a paternal authority—as discussed in *Theogony* and by Freud himself in *Totem and Taboo*—who becomes cannibalistic in order to eliminate the competitor and who abuses the exercise of the law to satisfy his compulsive surveillance, control and domination. Family also implies the fraternal complex where voraciousness, jealousy and envy prevail, although this could thereby generate its own destruction.

Thus, out of common sense, the monastery needed to resort to the psychoanalysis that, in its popular version, attempts to cure human maladies, especially violence and promiscuous incestuous sexuality, which, by definition, necessarily requires a family, real or fantasized.

Here, two ingenious figures arise—as already indicated by the books and libels published on the monastic and psychoanalytic experience in Cuernavaca—geniuses who, perhaps because of this, distanced themselves from expected behavior in the exercise of their profession, as such books have tried to demonstrate: José Lemercier, the abbot, and Gustavo Quevedo, the psychoanalyst.

An abbot who confronted Vatican authorities in his attempt, first to modify the liturgy—by putting it in vernacular language understandable to parishioners—and then by renovating monastic life—introducing psychoanalysis and strengthening monastic secularization to avoid segregating brothers and priests—and finally by trying to reshape Catholic community life with daily Bible reading and the elimination of popular devotion that was making it difficult to distinguish the redeeming figure of Christ resurrected among so many saints.

The second utopia was initiated by a psychoanalyst who gave up the classic individual couch for group analysis and who dared to question the “scientific” dogmas of international societies that unlawfully presumed to hold the knowledge and practice of psychoanalysis within privileged circles. This made it part of the medicalization of power rather than fulfilling the Delphic mandate to “know thyself” and to “care for thyself”, broadened to the dimension of unconscious contents.

Others have already spoken of both figures, for and against. The only balance that I can find is to accede to my own experience of profound gratitude for their capacity to expand my thinking and be able to demystify the discourse that justifies the power of any institution and of orienting my life toward the quest for new utopias.

My experience of the monastery began from a protracted suspicion based on a sort of heterodox theism in the search for spirituality beyond conventional doctrine and ecclesiastic authority.

This utopia culminated in my departure from the monastery and my personal quest for a spirituality more affirmed in negative theology than in any dogma; linked more to local rituals than to the pretense of Catholic universality; understood more as a limit state of human possibility that breaks with ideological framings predetermined by the microphysics of power; closer to an altered state of consciousness that feels around in the obscurity of the unexplored.

With regard to the psychoanalytic experience, first shared in sessions with a group of monks and subsequently carried out in more personal work, it began with a recognition of the need for transference, firstly toward the abbot and later toward the psychoanalyst. Thanks to this, I ventured to journey through the circles of my inferno, break with the paradigms that had been imposed upon me and arrive at a certain freedom of pleasure and work shared with my wife, my children and now with my grandchildren.

Psychoanalysis understood as the recognition of the inappropriateness of pretending to fully grasp one's subjectivity yet knowing—in a Delphic, Socratic or Buddhist sense—how ignorance becomes desire, how desire becomes manic or depressive acting out, addiction or narcissism. But this utopia culminated with the death of Dr. Quevedo, when I turned into the “wild psychoanalyst”, as Groddeck would say, which means someone who works in, researches and teaches about psychoanalysis but regards it as contradictory or inappropriate to belong to any kind of association.

That ignorance and that knowledge, with the errors and trip-ups committed by anyone who tracks nothingness through the desert, have been translated into the following links in the chain of utopias, that is, my plan for life and professional work. It is a matter of insertion in the educational experiences of Kairós and Innamiqui; in active participation to achieve collective wellbeing by working with marginal communities from the Unidad Central para el Desarrollo Social (Central Unit for Social Development, UNICEDES) at the Universidad Autónoma de Morelos; in the formation of the Red de Cooperación Interinstitucional (Inter-Institutional Cooperation Network, RCI) with other universities and non-governmental organizations; and finally, with the linking together of the institutions of higher education in the RCI with sectors of middle and elementary public education, with the aim of reaching the Metas del Milenio (Millennial Goals) and the objectives of the Education for All program, conceived as human rights, and as a crucial means of avoiding violence and bringing peace back to the country.

The third utopia, after the monastery and psychoanalysis, was the founding and the work carried out first at Kairós, in Mexico City, and subsequently at Innamiqui,

in Cuernavaca. Both active schools arose out of the theoretical concern derived from work in child psychoanalysis, from the diverse aspects of conceiving of child development—the subject of my undergraduate thesis in psychology—and finally, of the problem raised by Foucault and others, resented by many from my generation, of the authoritarianism of the instructor in educational practice and of its relationship with the formation of the child's superego; school considered as an instrument for embodying the discourse of power in children's bodies.

Furthermore, at the time it was important to create schools that were open to various kinds of disabilities—especially for children with neurological problems, neuroses or psychoses—and to create a school for parents that would make them more conscious of their role as jointly responsible for scholastic education and attentive to the violence implicit in intra-familial cohabitation, which is reflected in their children's behavior.

Kairós began with a group of people who attended group psychoanalysis and were interested in participating, together with their children, in a different way of conceiving of scholastic teaching and learning. On the other hand, Innamiqui was planned for five years, but lasted 15, even though it had little chance of surviving due to its economic instability, since in operational terms it charged less than it cost, as it worked according to each child's capacities.

In terms of emotional attention, aggression was respected and confronted. The manifestations of infantile sexuality were clarified. Activities outside of school and the classroom were developed. Art workshops and handicrafts were promoted, and ecological activities provided close contact with nature.

In the quest to diminish the authoritarianism of the school system, we tried to share decision-making about which activities to do each week at assemblies, where students and teachers participated on the same level. Time spent at school was distributed according to those decisions, even though time was given to complying with Secretaría de Educación Pública (Public Education Ministry) requirements.

It was a suggestive experience but one that was problematic in terms of obtaining the desired results of increased parental commitment, increased teacher flexibility and increased student responsibility. Most of the students came from dysfunctional families, the teachers had been trained more at a university level than as schoolteachers and some students had been considered problematic at other schools.

Secondly, the youngest children's need for free expression contrasted with the demand for limits required by the teens. The separations and discriminations of the social environment were reflected in the school for parents, and the attempt to build a cohesive community of teachers was unsuccessful. Innamiqui came to be regarded as a school for crazy children rather than as a school open to the problem of affective formation and the interactions between command and obedience in

childhood development, and the problem posed to society by the marginalization of and discrimination against children with different abilities.

Nevertheless, at recent meetings with former Kairós and Ilnamiqui students, it was striking that the majority have solid academic careers or are dedicated to the arts with some renown. Like many others, however, they surely had adaptive problems due to problems in nuclear families and collective and competitive desires for success and comfort, though perhaps with more awareness of their futility.

The fourth utopia in the chain, once the experience of the active schools had ended, began with work through the UNICEDES at the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, which became the Dirección de Desarrollo Comunitario (Community Development Office) years later. It was focused on opening up the university, which was generally immersed in its own glass bead games, to local problems of poverty and marginalization, the idea being to learn about urban and peasant marginal populations and contribute to finding alternative ways to respond to the needs of these vulnerable groups.

At first, work was done in community development programs with the University of Calgary, following participatory action research methodology. Later, we came to the conclusion that there was a need to modify some of the university's very premises in order to be able to regionalize university education by means of outlying venues located in marginal communities where some formal degree programs could be offered along with university extension programs to provide a greater number of young people opportunities for higher education and to participate in university cultural life.

In addition, work was done to provide training to those population groups who did not have the formal education required to pursue a degree. People's councils were formed with non-governmental organizations, to teach subjects neglected by the university and recognize the training received in areas such as traditional and alternative medicine; psychotherapeutic tools for dealing with community problems; social work methodologies aimed at improving local life; human rights protection and attention provided by responsible citizens; attention to problems resulting from the demographic growth of the senior citizen population and of young people with no opportunities to work or study, and solving problems caused by gender or ethnic discrimination.

At present, the following people's councils exist: the Traditional Medicine Council, which deals with knowledge of what is objective; the Alternative Psychology Council, which deals with knowledge of what is subjective; the Senior Citizens' Council, which recovers and applies knowledge from lived experience; the Gender Council, which seeks knowledge of unity in difference; and the Council of Learned Persons, which gathers traditional forms of knowledge.

Years later, the fifth link in the chain of utopias was initiated with the formation of the RCI, which brought together universities and non-governmental organizations interested in working with informal education, popular education, or ongoing education, in order to solve the problems of an equitable and inclusive collective wellbeing, open to the specific needs of different localities.

This network was recognized by the UNESCO-affiliated International Association of Universities and has worked on a certificate program in knowledge-sharing dialogue for students and community members, allowing them to use methodologies for working with the community by implementing projects proposed by the community itself. It also works on a participative research project that links three autonomous state universities in the Ajusco-Volcán region and carries out joint activities to recover traditional forms of knowledge, such as in the first encounter of shamans and traditional medicine held in Tepoztlán, with the next one to be held this year at the Universidad Intercultural del Estado de México.

We have arrived, finally, at the sixth utopia, which consists of the joint work of the organizations and universities comprising the RCI with the subsystems of the SEP, the private sector and organized community groups, aimed at achieving the goals of the Education for All program proposed by United Nations over 20 years ago and signed by Mexico.

It is not just a matter of fulfilling the program's six objectives—which are summarized as comprehensive early childhood care and education, universal basic education, meeting the learning needs of youth, adult literacy for those in need, achieving gender parity and improving the quality of schools—but also of establishing links among higher education institutions so that they can collaborate on resolving the region's most pressing educational problems.

The following objectives were proposed at the First Forum held in Cuernavaca:

**1** To collaborate on mitigating violence in the region by linking middle- and high-school-level educational institutions with the labor sector, so that the educational process may be sustained and sustainable, not only through scholarships and loans but also through the creation of strategic alliances that would enable students to enter the labor sector as wage earners; the creation of businesses within educational institutions to supply products or services to the public and industrial sectors; and the coordination and articulation of academic and training programs suited to the labor reality.

**2** To utilize institutions of higher education to create academic support programs for instructors at the various levels of education so that they may contribute to raising educational quality by updating and strengthening learning-teaching

strategies, as well as skills workshops that would enable the appropriate use and effective, efficient handling of the institution's curricular contents, tools and technologies.

**3** To strengthen the role of education and of educational institutions as vehicles for promoting human development, with participatory community programs that establish links between educational institutions and their social contexts, while at the same time internally increasing academic matriculation and preventing attrition, with the aim of constricting the lines of informal employment and/or employment related to criminal or delinquent activities.

**4** To improve the population's quality of life, promoting collective wellness programs that link educational institutions to non-governmental organizations that work in communities, with the aim of modifying the concept of "neither/nors", those youth who "neither go to school nor go to work", not out of a lack of interest or need but rather because they are given "neither spaces nor support" to study or to work. What is needed is to create community programs, supported by institutions of higher education and the public and industrial sectors, that would involve young people in projects that would benefit the development of their cultural (art, music), athletic, social, community support (health, construction, security) and technological (use and handling of digital technologies) skills, self-employment and business development. Thus, we would no longer be wasting the generational capital that these young people represent for Mexico.

These objectives, plus the experience of work already carried out, were presented in Paris at an international forum convened by UNESCO, as a working model for linking global accords to local needs.

At a second forum, held at the end of last year, the actions carried out were reviewed and the following agreements reached:

**1** To promote regulations and protocols for the social service sector of institutions of higher education that would orient them toward a truly "social" service; in other words, to raise consciousness (giving back to society, social responsibility, the rite of passage from student to active member of society, seeing the other, being trained in actions proper to democracy, etc.) and to train those completing their social service obligations to direct their service to the society that supported them in their training. This social service should be controlled with academic criteria (RCI interdisciplinary social projects) in order to be able to work jointly on related projects carried out by the private sector (in businesses

certified as “socially responsible”), on the public sector’s social programs, in non-governmental organizations or community groups themselves.

**2** To demand that student training include curricular social credits (together with credits in athletics, culture and the management of new technologies and languages) and that, from the beginning of their training, they be oriented toward work with a social vision, so that they overcome the competitive egocentrism of the system and understand cooperation as a we, linking themselves to the Senior Citizens’ Council, to the INEA, or to groups that work on the social well-being promotion.

**3** To open university doors to students from neighboring communities, to carry out ongoing education, athletic and cultural activities (with flexible schedules for working people), with the aim of making them feel part of their community’s patrimony. Additionally, to collaborate on the creation of the Casa de la Universidad — Casa del Maestro and Casa del Pueblo — in each municipality, where orientation is given to young people, training and support to teachers, and where the community is oriented and trained so that it may participate actively in educational processes.

**4** To create an RCI student committee, opening opinion and debate spaces for students and thus be able to respond to their interests and demands.

**5** To interact, across institutions, in the activities carried out by each of the universities and non-governmental organizations and refer students in academic or professional practices, people performing their social service and academic volunteers to the projects.

**6** To collaborate closely with the People’s Councils so that their action in the fields of popular education, ongoing education, and informal education may be more effective and efficient.

**7** To continue with the Certificate in Inter-Knowledge Dialogue and the Health and Identity Fiestas as formative elements of a collective consciousness that would favor the elimination of discrimination, the inclusion of native peoples under equal conditions and respect for traditional forms of knowledge.

I thank all the organizers for the opportunity to participate in this “restarting the long count”, with a memorial that began with a monastic experience and that presently involves a variety of organizations in the work of searching for a collective wellbeing with a more just, inclusive education that would enable us to strengthen the peace and security of our Mexico.

Thank you very much.



### Abraham Cruzvillegas— Time in Mesoamerica

Drawing on the experiences of the Ajusco neighborhood, in Pedregales de Coyoacán, I will give an account of how the community pulled together to become a driving force behind educational exercises based on specific needs, such as the struggles for land ownership, services, against corruption and bureaucratic apathy, and political consciousness raising through popular organizing (mainly of youth and housewives), in both the Ecclesiastic Base Communities and political organizing and activism, up to the present, in independent human rights promotion and defense organisms.

image  
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- Can experiences like those of my neighborhood be called “utopian”?
- Can the formal/physical configuration of these experiences, which are colloquially called “self-building”, be considered “utopian architecture”?
- Is “self-building” (understood as a social and economic system whose causes are anchored in the history of social injustice in Mexico) an ideal mode of life?
- What is the future of “self-building”?
- What would a curricular model of “self-building” look like?
- Would a self-building University be viable?

In Pedregales de Coyoacán—as in nearly the whole country—, a land tenure movement gradually grew, under Emiliano Zapata’s agrarian slogan, carried over into urban space: “The land belongs to those who live on it.” Faced with evictions due to lack of property documents, encampments were set up around and within the lands, where people organized in shifts throughout the day and night—after work or school— or interrupting housework, in vigils that were occasionally filled with music, jokes and heated discussions. One memorable figure on those occasions was Doña Jovita Figueroa, who cooked Zacatecas-style nopales and eggs for everyone. At her home we watched Leobardo López Aretche’s documentary *El grito*, banned at the time. It was about the 1968 student movement and its violent repression by President Gustavo Díaz Ordáz’s government. Together with Doña Jovita, many young people from other contexts participated in the urban struggle at the Ajusco in different ways. Among them were Gloria Tello, Martín Longoria, Leopoldo and Gilberto Ensástiga, while Ignacio Medina and Jorge Alonso did research on the neighborhood, which resulted in an essay they called *Lucha urbana y acumulación de capital* (Urban Struggle and Accumulation of Capital). And filmmaker María Novaro’s undergraduate thesis was a project about women’s participation in those processes in Pedregales de Coyoacán.

A variety of highly diverse neighborhood groups turned into social organizations, with religious links like the Ecclesiastic Base Communities, permeated by liberation theology, and others with explicit political profiles, like the Unión de Colonias

Populares (Union of Popular Neighborhoods, UCP), nourished by the ideologies of Genaro Vázquez, Che Guevara, Mao Tse Tung and Leon Trotsky, in a sometimes contradictory mixture, hatched from dialogue between neighborhood residents and leftist students, but with specific aims, derived from pressing needs. While the men were part of the work force during the day, women, young people and children marched on the city government offices in the *Zócalo*. There were endless marches, protests and meetings where women in aprons and carrying shopping bags rallied the community. There we would chant: “The people / united / will never be defeated...!”, “Zapata lives / the fight goes on!”, “The people / in uniforms / are also exploited...!”, “We’re not machos / but we are *muchos!*”, “People, unite!”, “The president should earn minimum wage / so he can feel our rage!”, “Let’s get that ox out of the gully!”, “Protest is a right, / repression is a crime!”, “You can see it, you can feel it, Ajusco is present!”, among other slogans borrowed from opposition parties, gay rights organizations, unions and other causes and struggles that were also repressed. In Mexico City, the UCP brought together numerous groups of neighborhood residents with similar needs. On a larger scale, in the midst of a climate of open repression and ignorance on the part of public administrators, the Coordinadora Nacional del Movimiento Urbano Popular (National Coordination of the Popular Urban Movement, CONAMUP) was radical in its demands and scope. One of the most powerful and moving moments of those times, for me, was the massive CONAMUP march toward Mexico City in the early 1980s. It was an endless column of families —peasant and urban alike— demanding recognition of a right of which they had already taken possession.

Rubén Morales, the son of a stonebreaker from Nahuáztén (my father’s hometown), who had studied Education in the Department of Philosophy and Literature at the UNAM, was one of the charismatic young local leaders. Without showing off, having no explicit political affiliation, moneyless, with no grandiloquent speeches or histrionic heroism and with no more support than that of his neighbors, he brought together and managed a good part of the *community* —in the proper sense of the word— to demand and solve issues of everyday neighborhood life. “Maestro Rubén”, as he was known, disappeared prematurely, victim of the consequences of a beating by the police in 1985. In the same way —in other words, prematurely—, leftist political organizations began disappearing, to make coalitions that would hypothetically grow in strength within the rudimentary possibility of a democratic change. Thus, with the transformation of the world and its nomenclatures, in Mexico, too, the left was split into confused and contradictory hybrids, with interchangeable or negotiable ideologies, depending on the possible benefits of participating directly from public funds, and even ceasing to be oppositional, as something extraordinary, as something to be taken advantage of.

Amidst occasionally accelerated social processes, the Ajusco neighborhood was conceived and began to take shape. As precarious buildings went up, they began falling apart from use, simultaneously highlighting the need for designs in which tastes, habits, and needs determined new modes, materials, techniques and finally, aesthetic criteria in the homes, as well as shared spaces, like sidewalks, façades and commercial areas. The ornamental part, colors, plants and spaces for domestic animals are not free of precariousness and improvisation. Aesthetic intention tends to respond to non-material needs that are, at times, translated into unpredictable combinations of forms and materials; my neighborhood is irrefutable proof of this. A pearl in the lava fields: erected among the terrain's original stones are unpainted cement columns, naked brick walls —occasionally simply whitewashed—, into which are fitted —in addition to the creeping vines and local wild plants— ironwork doors and windows with rococo-like flourishes, when they are not decided plagiarisms of churrigueresque exuberance, with hand-painted brass ornaments of vines and bunches of grapes, ceramic suns and half moons from Toluca featuring human faces, finished off with plaster dogs that keep watch over the property. This description is not meant to poke fun at the specific decisions behind the façades or the houses but rather at the manner of translating into —I insist— forms and materials that are, in their combinations, faithful portraits of their denizens. Windowless structures, wooden frames, tile and linoleum flooring, walls finished with smooth plasterwork, plastic moldings and aluminum picture-window frames may be chosen along the way, precisely when visual taste, the urgency of comfort, functional ingenuity and monetary limitations all come together. Thus the absence of planning or apparent stylistic incongruence of many self-build projects is also ideological; it has an economic and political basis, even at the height of frivolity. The formal configuration of the houses is rooted first of all in intuition, in the survival instinct and in the distant referent of what it means to live life in a dignified way; in other words, satisfying all the vital necessities, including the visual record of everyday surroundings, of their objects, ornaments and routine physical relationship with things: ergonomics and proxemics that come from the soul.

In my neighborhood, modes of conviviality have gradually changed as some needs are met or replaced by others. Thus, the link between the original settlers who stayed and the more recent arrivals has, almost imperceptibly, been diluted or complemented. Through an unending flow of goods and attitudes among residents and the floating population, the supply of services and products has steadily increased, especially as the main access routes were opened, such as Aztecas, which diverts traffic toward Pacífico, División del Norte and Insurgentes avenues. Informal commerce invaded almost every corner of the neighborhood (although you could say that it has taken over the contemporary world), mainly in a massive and disjointed *tianguis* (open

air market), where just about anything can be found, and which encircles the Bola Market. The latter is a mandatory point of reference, the epicenter of the area, not just because it was the first shopping area in the neighborhood but also because it is where political demonstrations and popular events take place and it continues to be a place for discussion and exchange of energy around shared problems. It remains a public plaza, and rightly so. Although the market was also originally an irregular settlement, its formal construction, financed by the city government, was spurred by the magnitude of the needs that determined it: the population was constantly growing, and the surrounding areas had no other source of foodstuffs, clothing and other basic necessities. The market became one more of the community's urgent demands.