

## **Decision Making in Mexico Today**

### **Directions:**

#### **Part 1:**

Together with your group mates read through the scenario you have been assigned. Once you have read the scenario and analyzed the accompanying image(s), create a chart below to identify some of the most relevant arguments in favor of one decision or another. Then debate with your group what might be the most efficient, ethical and reasonable solution to your scenario.

#### **Part 2:**

Your group may or may not come to a consensus, however the outcome, prepare a brief 3-5 minute presentation of your scenario and the critical pieces of information that led you to your decision. Likely, you will also have some questions; you should write those down and share them with the class as well.

#### **Part 3:**

You can complete the next part with your assigned scenario or choose a scenario that was presented by another group. Then write a letter from the point of view of the protagonist in the scenario explaining your decision to someone of importance to that person (your choice). You will need to do extra research and include 2-3 pieces of evidence to help justify your decision to your loved one. Your evidence can be incorporated as quotes or as paraphrasing.

## SCENARIO #1 – Immigration

Your family has lived off of farming for generations. Growing the *three sisters*: corn, beans and squash has sustained you, but now family farms are no longer profitable and you cannot find work that pays enough money to meet your family's basic needs that includes shelter, clothes, health care, and education. Your parents are getting older, and you yourself have two children of your own to look after. You have heard about opportunities to work in the US where some of your friends have family. You hear that you can earn more in a month in the States than you can in a year in Oaxaca. You also have contacts that can help you make the trip. You are thinking of maybe taking your oldest son with you. What are the advantages and disadvantages of making this move? Is it worthwhile to leave your home in the hopes of an unknown? What will you be leaving behind if you move?



*La Tierra Es De Quien La Trabaja OPPIA*

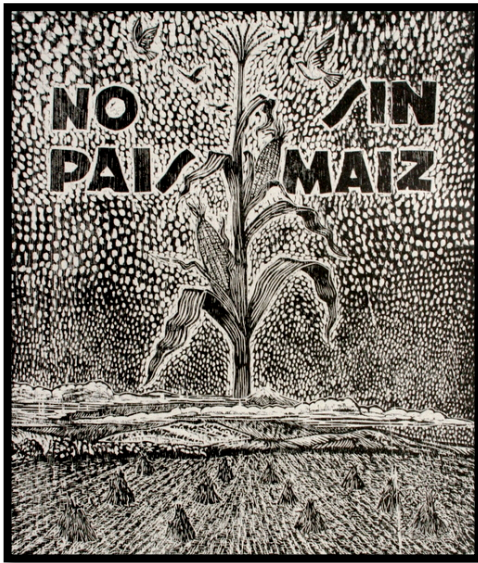
“The earth belongs to those who work it.” (reverse type:APPO)

(source:

<http://commonsense2.com/2007/12/art-culture/the-art-of-revolution-social-resistance-in-oaxaca-mexico/>

## SCENARIO #2 – Farming

You and your family have been working as corn farmers for generations. The government has offered you subsidies (money) for fertilizer. If you accept the fertilizer you will also have to start growing transgenic corn. Your neighbor refuses to be dependent on the government for seeds and turns down the government's offer. If there is little rain in the coming year, your neighbor will have very little yield come harvest time, but if you take the fertilizer and transgenic corn you have a much higher chance of guaranteeing that you will have a decent harvest. Since this harvest is your livelihood, if you don't have a good harvest of corn you might not be able to put food on the table. What are some of the other advantages and disadvantages of accepting the government's subsidized fertilizer and transgenic corn?



*No Pais Sin Maiz,*  
“No Country Without Corn”  
ASARO Woodblock 2007

Source:  
<http://commonsense2.com/2008/08/art-culture/asaro-images-of-oaxaca/>



Photo, ASARO Collective

Source: <http://blogs.uoregon.edu/mesoinstitute/about/curriculum-unit-development/stem/ethnobiology/maizecorn/>

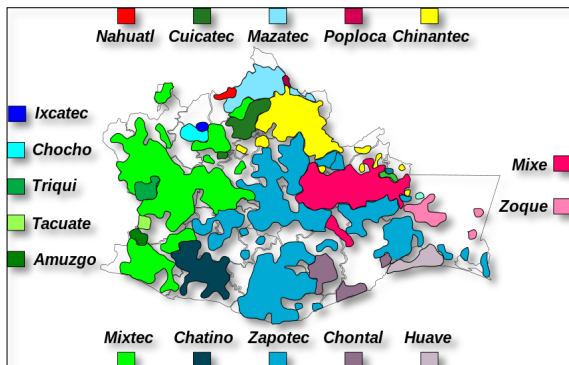


### SCENARIO #3 – Education

You are a teacher in Oaxaca, Mexico. Being a teacher in Oaxaca means sometimes having to travel for an entire day to reach your school in a tiny community, teach for three days — to children of all grades — and travel back home for the weekend. It means having to deal with children who speak more than 20 different dialects. A fundamental part of the recent education reform package is new tests assessing the performance of teachers. Can all schools be held to the same testing standard, considering the challenges, lack of resources and language differences? If you don't cooperate, you could be fired? If you were fired, who would replace you? Would protesting or organizing a strike be productive?

#### Sources:

[http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/09/the-oaxaca-teachers-union/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/09/the-oaxaca-teachers-union/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0)



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous\\_people\\_of\\_Oaxaca#mediaviewer/File:Oaxaca\\_indigenous\\_people.s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_people_of_Oaxaca#mediaviewer/File:Oaxaca_indigenous_people.s)



*La Comuna de Oaxaca 2006*  
“The Community of Oaxaca 2006”

Source:

<https://zapateando.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/la-comuna-de-oaxaca.jpg>



## SCENARIO #4 – Street Art

You are an artist, you are frustrated by the way people in your community are being treated, in particular you are angry by the methods used by the government and police to crackdown on the recent teacher strike. A friend tells you that a group of artists have formed a collective called ASARO (*Asamblea De Artistas Revolucionarios De Oaxaca/Assembly Of Revolutionary Artists Of Oaxaca*) to help articulate the struggles and issues of the day through art. You would like to join, but you need to find a job so that you can support your daughter. Joining would put you at greater risk of being arrested or “disappearing” seeing as the leadership in Mexico is working to keep the people calm and looking to get rid of any agitators. There are stories that police beat graffiti artists on sight. In fact the collective is so dangerous that the studio’s location is secret. Moreover, you are a single dad, and if something were to happen to you, your daughter would be left alone. What reasons are there for joining the collective and producing political art? Why would you not join?



### Sources:

<http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/asamblea>

<https://wayback.archive-it.org/1701/20131009181329/http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-NaeC2U1RLqA/UjU7rAizBgI/AAAAAAAABZs/toN7ZGIrfD8/s1600/eduasaro.jpg>

## SCENARIO #5 – Fishing

You are a member of the Ikoots, a fishing society in Oaxaca that has inhabited the Isthmus of Tehuantepec for more than 3000 years. You and your family depend on the ocean for your livelihood. Multinational corporations want to build wind turbines in the water along the coast, in the very ocean that has supported your way of life for centuries. The proposed Parque Eolico San Dionisio (San Dionisio Wind Park), is a wind farm that is proposing construction in the ocean along the coast, and would consist of 102 wind turbines in the water. It would take up 27 kilometers of coastline. With the construction of the wind turbines there is a threat to the aquatic and bird life in the area. Developers offer you 8 US dollars per square meter of your land, and your family has claim to about 10 hectares of (1 hectare = 10,000 sq.ft.). Your family has never had an opportunity to make such a fortune. What are the disadvantages of allowing these developers to have access to your land? What are the potential benefits?



### Resources:

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/06/rural-mexican-communities-protest-wind-farms/>

<http://upside-down-world.org/main/mexico-archives-79/3952-indigenous-communities-in-mexico-fight-corporate-wind-farms>

<http://newint.org/blog/2014/04/04/mexico-wind-farm/>



## SCENARIO #6 – Oil

You are a government official who needs to make a critical decision about the oil industry in Mexico. Seventy-five years ago the oil industry was nationalized (was transferred from private ownership to state ownership), and has been run by Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX). Pemex is one of the most profitable companies in the world. Yet, the company's profits have fallen 25% since 2004 because of corruption and inefficiency. Oil has been a great source of income for Mexico and has been used to help fund the development of infrastructure in Mexico as well as support social welfare. However, business has been slow, since the recent introduction of a new bill that allows private companies to compete with PEMEX. The president recommends that that the company “modernizes” and accepts private investment to help boost the company. Is progress and modernization necessary? If so, in order to modernize, do you have to abandon the idea that Mexican oil belongs to Mexicans?



*El Petroleo es de Todos.*  
“Petroleum Belongs to All”  
Graffiti art found in Miahuatlan, Oaxaca.  
(Photo by Nitzan Ziv, August 2014)



Man standing in the Zócalo in Oaxaca  
reading signs against privatizing oil in  
Mexico. (Photo by Nitzan Ziv, July 2014)



## SCENARIO #7 – Weaving

You are a weaver from Teotitlan del Valle, a village known for its textiles, especially rugs. You learned at a very early age how to card wool, spin it into yarn, dye it with natural dyes, and finally to weave it into a rug. Much of the wool and rugs today are cheaper to make synthetically, and therefore can be sold for less than your rugs which require a great deal of labor. Your business struggles in the face of this competition. However, business people from the US have come to Teotitlan asking weavers to weave colors and patterns reflective of Navajo and Santa Fe traditions, rather than your proud Zapotec symbols and colors. For US businesses the labor in Teotitlan is much less expensive, and they are offering an opportunity to turn a greater profit if you, as a weaver, are willing to work under their specifications. What do you do? Do you forgo the style of weaving for the sake of making more money? Is it okay for Americans to sell your rugs as southwestern when you live in Oaxaca, Mexico? Is it possible that these business people will have you alter other things about your weaving practice? What if it means the weaving process will be easier and faster? Is it bad to give up your traditions for economic reasons?



Left: Ludivina demonstrating how to make yarn out of hand-carded wool. Right: The dying process. (Teotitlan del Valle, July 2014. Photos by Nitzan Ziv.

### Source:

Stephen, Lynn Zapotec Women: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Globalized Oaxaca

## SCENARIO #8 – Pottery

You are a pottery maker and have been making pottery since you were 10 years old. Pottery making is a critical part of your community and identity. The pottery you make is created out of local materials, mud, water, and sand. You use leather and pieces of gourds to help you shape and decorate your pottery. While you enjoy what you do and make some money off of selling your work, you do not know how to read or write. You have a ten-year-old daughter in school. You debate teaching her how to make pottery the way your mother taught you. Will training her in the craft of pottery take away from her studies? If she finished school and moves on to do other things and does not know how to make pottery the way your ancestor have for generations, how will the tradition stay alive?



San Marcos Tlapazola. July 2014. Photo by Nitzan Ziv

## SCENARIO #9 – Advocacy and Domestic Violence

You are one of few women in your community who have graduated high school and attended university. You graduated with a degree in law and have returned to your community to defend and advocate for women who are suffering from domestic violence. You encounter much resistance from both men, who do not think what you are doing is appropriate for a woman and from women who feel similarly. The husband of one of your clients threatens your life and warns you not to get involved. What do you do? Do you stop working in this community? If you do not work with the women in your own community, who will? What are the advantages and disadvantages?



*Sin título*

Untitled

ASARO, Woodblock print 2013  
Gift of Alice Evans, Gabriela Martínez,  
and Lynn Stephen

Source: <http://jsma.uoregon.edu/ASARO>



## SCENARIO #10 – Drug Trafficking

You are a judge in the federal courts of Oaxaca, Mexico. A woman is brought before you accused of smuggling marijuana in between cities in Mexico. She identifies herself as a Mixtec and says that she works as a peasant farmer, growing mostly corn and beans. She speaks very little Spanish since Mixteca is her primary language, she also does not know how to read or write. She talks about how hard it is difficult to support her family and that she has been pretty desperate for money lately. Yet, she also claims that she did not know that the bag she was given by a cousin had 42kg of marijuana inside. According to Mexican law, this type of drug trafficking calls for 10-15 years in prison. What do you do?



Deshilando condenas. Bordando libertades, 2004  
“Unraveling Condemns. Embroidering freedoms”  
(Source: <http://www.docsd.org/2013/01/deshilando-condenas-bordando-libertades/#sthash.NjOyCa4Z.dpuf>)

Source: Documentary Film: Deshilando condenas. Bordando libertades.  
Video Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqrnRx\\_ck-s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqrnRx_ck-s)