

Faculdade de Comunicação Social  
Cásper Líbero, São Paulo, Brazil.

**ALEXANDER MAXIMILIAN  
HILSENBECK FILHO<sup>1</sup>**

## **THE *PASAMONTAÑAS* (HOOD) AS A MIRROR**



---

<sup>1</sup> PhD in Political Science (Unicamp), Master's and Graduation in Social Sciences (Unesp); Professor of Political Science and Brazilian Culture at the Cásper Líbero Social Communication School (FCL); Researcher of the Nucleus of Ideologies and Social Struggles (NEILS); Anti-capitalism and Emerging Sociabilities of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (ACySE-CLACSO); Researcher of the Group of Communication, Politics and Society of the Spectacle of Cásper Líbero. This research was funded by the FCL's Integrated Research Center; Email: a.hilsenbeck@gmail.com































The attractiveness of anonymity, mystery, unknown affiliation, no surname, no precise biographical data.

The faces always covered by the *pasamontañas* or *paliates*.

What is beyond the masks? Why do hoods and handkerchiefs generate so much identification?

How can these same objects, by hiding the Indian faces, “magically” turn what is usually invisible into something visible?

One of the first reasons for the use of *pasamontañas* (besides the attempt to hide from the cold weather) was to avoid the repression of the government forces against the insurgents and their families, thus obtaining the advantage of mimicry, that is, of being able, at any given time, to take on the status of military fighters and, at other times, to be part of the civilian population. They appear and disappear into the haze and shadows of the jungle, into the social indifference that makes them invisible.

The *pasamontañas* and *paliates* became a rebel symbol of the Zapatista uprising.

This symbolism was quickly perceived by the insurgents and used as one of the dramatic innovative resources and performance of insurrection.

The use of *pasamontañas* was linked to multiple meanings by the Zapatistas, such as the nonpersonification of their struggle, in which many become one, without protagonism<sup>2</sup>.

They even subverted ancient indigenous symbols, in which masks served to impute terror. They also gave a different meaning to the hoods, which symbolized the return of the ancestors<sup>3</sup>. Now the *pasamontañas* hides the dead in life, the usual dead, without peace, the one reborn in the struggle to live, finally, a search for life and death with dignity.

One of the most popular metaphors, created by the military chief and main spokesperson of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, Insurgent Subcomandante Marcos, is that the *pasamontañas* serve as

---

2 HILSENBECK FILHO, 2007. Abaixo e à esquerda: uma análise histórico-social da práxis do Exército Zapatista de Libertação Nacional. Dissertação. Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências, Unesp-Marília. Available from: <[http://repositorio.unesp.br/bitstream/handle/11449/88801/hilsenbeckfilho\\_am\\_me\\_mar.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://repositorio.unesp.br/bitstream/handle/11449/88801/hilsenbeckfilho_am_me_mar.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)>.

3 COLOMBRES, Adolfo. Teoría Transcultural del Arte. Hacia un pensamiento visual independiente. México: CONACULTA, 2014.

mirrors, in which the country sees its problems and asks for a solution. In this mirror the nation can see and identify with the insurgents, with the faceless people who had to hide their indigenous faces to make themselves visible.

The pictures from this photographic essay were taken during the First CompArte Festival for Humanity in July 2016, when the Zapatista communities of southeastern Mexico opened, for the first time, their territories to show and share their artistic accomplishments with art workers from other corners of the world.

Sometimes the eyes stare at the ground, sometimes they take the world, send messages, rehearse chords and dances, show unity and solidarity, and most of the time the eyes question the soul and the possibilities open to the construction of another world, one that fits many worlds.

“We Zapatistas, men and women, do not look up above.

We only lift our eyes and ears in front of the sciences and the arts. And it is not fear and obedience that raise our gaze. It is the wonder of knowledge, the marvel of the arts” (...) “... whether in the fleeting moment of a song, the stroke of a painting, a dance step, a photograph, a scripted dialogue, a poem, a whatever, let the hour of the police be defeated and for just a moment, let us breath in the possibility of another world.”<sup>4</sup>

### ALEXANDER MAXIMILIAN HILSENBECK FILHO

Professor of Political Science and Brazilian Culture at the Cásper Líbero Social Communication School (FCL); PhD in Political Science (Unicamp) about some dilemmas of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST); Masters in Social Sciences (Unesp) about praxis of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN); Bachelor in Social Sciences (Unesp); Researcher of the: Nucleus of Ideologies and Social Struggles (NEILS); Anti-capitalism and Emerging Sociabilities of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (ACySE-CLACSO); and of the Group of Communication, Politics and Society of the Spectacle of Cásper Líbero. This research was funded by the FCL's Integrated Research Center.

received  
03.17.2017  
accepted  
08.02.2017



---

<sup>4</sup> EZLN, 2016. Geography? Oventik. The calendar? July 29, 2016.