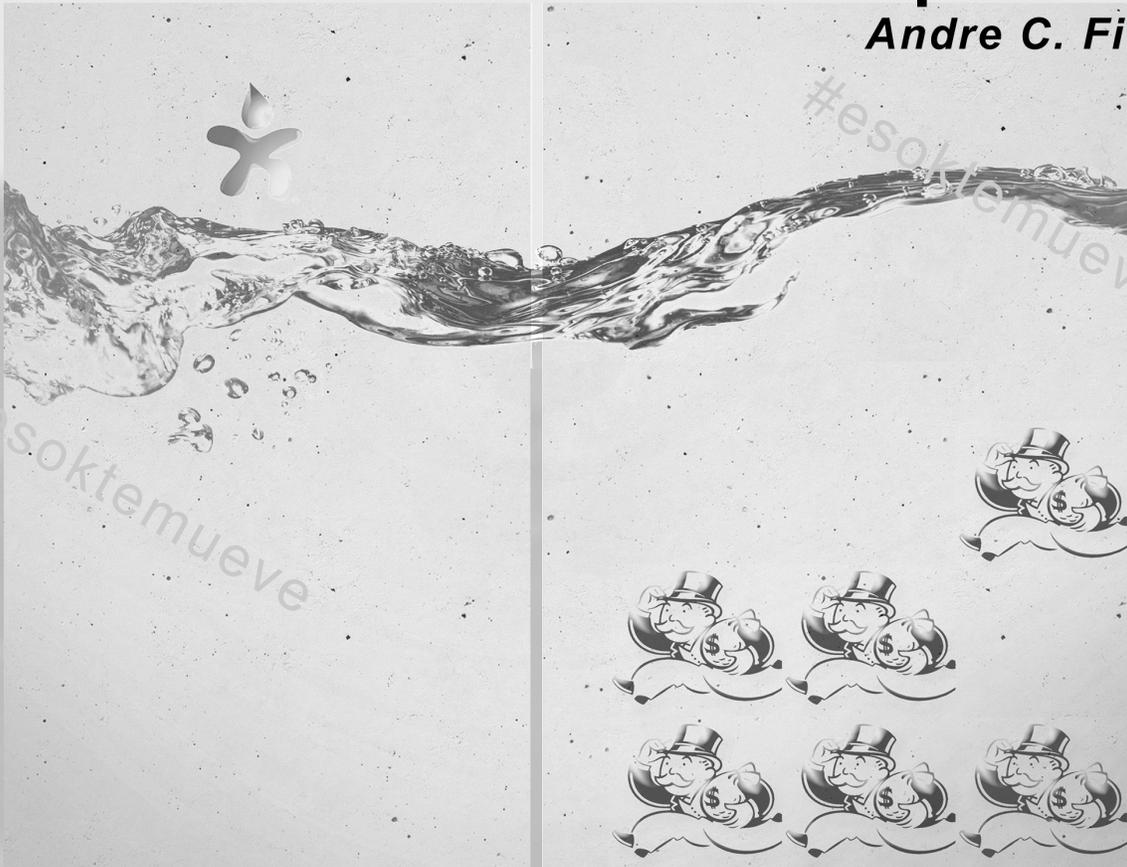


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WET CEILING | USMX

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For the sake of international negotiations, it can be agreed upon that the contemporary global commodity market has all but assimilated its cast of players into an exchange culture predicated on the values of western modernity. We could also say that the economy of geographically specific goods has allowed the market to self-regulate in terms of the hierarchy between national entities active in the global capitalist network.

However, this hierarchy finds itself not only regulated by nationally oriented economic strength and variation of demanded goods, but by power dynamics embedded into national entities on either side of colonial history.

Since the launch of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement in 1991, we can observe the politics of trading entities in North America as decidedly power-oriented, particularly when we look closely at the relationship specific to the United States-Mexico border. The geographical distinction created by the vast desert at the border is the image of the disparity between the neighboring nations as they search for common histories in developmentally distinct origins.





Coca-Cola Company's international water distributor, Ciel, in the last five years, has begun to involve itself in a series of humanitarian initiatives as a means of promoting its products in Mexico. This plan services the establishment of a platform whose purpose is to support the market-share overtake of its primary competitor, French corporation Danone. Danone's subsidiary, Bonafont, controls 39.4% of Mexico's water consumption, while Ciel's market share comes in second to Bonafont's at only 25.4%. Despite the stiff competition, Ciel is poised to overtake the market majority during the next half decade. Here, I will assert that the motivation behind this new marketing model is not principally in service of overtaking the Mexican market share to surpass Danone, though this is desirable in terms of continued global visibility and relevance, but rather to assert a continued stronghold over the Mexican polity. This assertion is made possible through a personalization of the Ciel brand to the Mexico's market; A market whose relationship with water, both in its fundamental and recent history, is strained by a mistrust of domestic municipal systems, and their incapacity to promote access and prevent contamination. By choosing to follow the trend of green marketing, Ciel is able to utilize this

pre-existing platform to emphasize purity, safety, and sustainability in their product – an ethos, which strikes a positive chord with the Mexican public.

Together, Ciel and Bonafont hold over 50% of the market share of branded water in Mexico. By creating strategic marketing plans, which work in conjunction the political landscape in Mexico, both companies are responsible for the creation of an updated and contemporary language for potable water. This is true in particular of Ciel, whose ability to market pure bottled water to their pre existing consumer demographic of Coke drinkers in conjunction with Mexico's national health reform in 2004 has rendered them a formidable opponent to Danone, whose approach of taking the the market with a line of flavored waters proved effective in the short-term, but with dwindling long-term appeal. While both corporations continue to entice consumers with flavored waters and similar products, Ciel's recent marketing overhaul focuses wholly on changing the social outlook surrounding negotiations about improving current municipal water infrastructure. Their approach, which emphasizes purity, and utilizes green marketing as a platform, provides an alternative rather than an update to a system of which the Mexican public is generally untrusting. By building consumer bias through strategic

one-upmanship, Danone and Coca Cola are assembling a critical mass of consumers, whose lifestyles are readily impressionable by popular marketing strategies.

The retooling of marketing goals in the Mexican market led by these two corporations, further, clandestinely utilizes residual national trauma from Latin American Cholera outbreak in 1991, as well as Mexico's 2004 national health reform as platform. The shift in priority in terms of commodities-to-be-sold, as a result, is the linchpin of post-NAFTA corporate imperialism in Mexico; A contemporary conception of a border politic that is de-socialized, and is dragged forth by marketing objectives.

While the Cholera epidemic all but quelled hope of an imminent economic renaissance via the NAFTA agreement, and decreased national morale by socially and geopolitically leperizing Mexico and its continental neighbours, it did serve to re-establish a portion of the trust lost for government-sanctioned infrastructure affected by the epidemic in the first place.

Following a rapid overhaul in capitol allocation meant to rapidly reinvigorate the effected public, the nation invested in facilities, research labs, research, public education, and prevention programs to swiftly mitigate the situation, while simultaneously stimulating its domestic economy. This allowed

Mexico to re-open its frozen trade partnerships, and re-enter the market with an expanded industrial, medical, and technological infrastructure, which made the forthcoming agreement with the United States much more exploitable, as it proved Mexico as the image of industriousness that it had been denied in the global market. However, while proving itself as a formidable contender, Mexico had also, in its resilience, invited the possibility of conventional modernization. What occurred during this period was the actualization of a "hole in the fabric" of a self-sustaining Mexico.

Publically, the savior complex manifest by the United States' involvement in the westernization of the Mexican frontier masquerades as the helping hand necessary to assist the nation in moving away from broken systems that cause blunders like their recent suffering at the mercy of pre-industrial disease such as Cholera. While the outbreak did give Mexico the leg up on its own recovery, as well as did its partnership with the United States, the problematics embedded in this masqueraded symbiosis are those that govern the geopolitical inequalities which allow Western nations more freedoms and mobility in the global economy simply by virtue of their history as nations of conquest and colonialism.



A large stone slab emerged in the compacted soil.

Lightning reflected on its surface as silted water cascaded across its surface filling the symbols, which interrupted its face.

A granite countertop flecked with water; Its natural distribution across the frictionless flat. Small lakes erected. Patterns embedded in the land, reflecting interruptions of each another: quartz, onyx, sandstone, terra cotta.

A great expanse is evident in the landscape; A profound dryness between bodies.

An extinct fountain belies the worn path amidst brick, stone, and ash.

The no-mans land: Migrant neutrality zone.

Silt, stone, silicon...a fecund absence of value on the precipice of its actualization interface.

Water becomes water, whether or not it falls from the sky.

While Mexico has proven its ability to be resilient in adverse situations, the national lack of trust for its municipal water systems leaves a hole in the potential fabric of its own international power. It allows the country to remain in conversation with foreign markets in order to sustain its domestic well being, but risks the sustainability of its economy, should the relationships established take an unexpected turn.

Following the he strategies employed by Coca Cola could be extrapolated to render Mexico as an economic entity under oppression-by-trade. We must look at this situation not only from a business standpoint, but from one that is inseparable from a social and cultural politic that is centered about the reverence of heritage.

When the cultural significance of water is examined in context of the of Mexico's dependence on a Western branded source for potable water, it becomes clear that the water market acts as a primary regulator of inequality amongst the United States and Mexico in the case of Coca Cola's accelerated interest in the water market via Ciel. By demonstrating the manners in which Mexico's entanglement with the United States economy is further complicated by dynamics surrounding public access to water, it is crucial to consider the past two decades as a timeline to follow the border politic potentiated by Mexico's

struggling municipal infrastructure and their agreements with the U.S. in NAFTA.

What can be said of that border politic is that the primary market-players, Coca Cola and Danone, act as ambassadors for the countries from which they originate and are engaged in a power struggle between one another for the title of “principal subjugator” by increasing market shares across the board in a foreign trade relationship. As a result, global visibility and the gap in each nation’s location on a global class hierarchy is increased, thus creating further distinction between the oppressive and oppressed nation. Given leverage from NAFTA, and evidence from consistent annual increase in sales from Ciel, it would be apt to project that the United States will soon overtake Danone in its race for water monopoly in Mexico, and thus increase their ability to regulate border activity.

In what could be described a type of nationalist guilt-tripping, the United States is able to utilize the water market as a primary source of leverage in its 20 year old agreements with Mexico via NAFTA. It shows the United States subscribing to a decidedly nationalist agenda in its carrying out of the NAFTA agreements; One that is outdated in terms of its ability to function in a global economy, and a culture of international business and

networking lexicons without creating an egocentric hierarchy¹.

As country with a strong nationalism all its own, we can see NAFTA’s 20 year mark impacting Mexico with force. After the United States’ mass corporate-export regime unto its neighbors to the south, Mexico’s federal powers are beginning to pursue alternate agreements surrounding the trade of the domestic goods and services they still *do* provide, hopefully as a result being able to raise revenues in order to begin to lower dependence on both United States imports, and export consumption.

Mexico currently attributes 80% of their export market to United States buyers and currently seeks to diversify their global export platform by stimulating pre-existing international trade agreements. While Mexico is currently negotiating a space in the Trans-Pacific Partnership launched by the Obama administration in the US², it is Mexico’s private network that potentiates their global market uprising. This private network, constituting primarily of Latin American and Asian countries, and while already contributing to the economic integrity of the United

¹ It should be noted, however, that the
² a ‘contemporary’ re-imagining of efforts such as NAFTA, which will ultimately lower production costs in lieu of diverse, but Amerocentric outsourcing of production worldwide

States and its products, concurrently develops industries and communities which contribute universal production methods and design perspectives which benefit marginalized populations, particularly, those which are predominantly non-western in cultural practice.

Thus, the question at hand begins to tangibly rupture a global, Western precedent for modernity, in which the historical location of modern culture expands into the economies and industries built within “Third World” polities. It is the result of this type of expansion that syndicates a global resistance to Western and subsequently (and with hope) purely capitalist modes of dialogue between nations complicit in the economy of global trade.

While cast in an idealistic and foreseeing manner, the development of a radical consensus based international-relations reform, here, is what we are looking at, when we take into account the global relevance of a strengthening trade relationships between non-Western economies today. What is apparent in this examination of corporate imperialism in Mexico, is the potential for capital exchange, and shift of power.

What I do see in this potential for exchange around branded water is the ability for it to promote a type of unity. It provides all of the materials with which to create a pseudo capitalist manner of building

consensus, much in the image of an international trade partnership. The difference between a trade partnership, and the type of exchange that I am speaking of particularly is the connotations with which trade comes packaged – a type of power dynamic that is established between the nations involved as a residue of colonialism and a globally dominant Western modernity. This is to say, regardless of whether or not the United States needs Mexico’s exports, in some manner the nation could feasibly bounce back if they suddenly lost that market. On the other hand, Mexico’s current position in the post-NAFTA relationship is one in which the economy would crumble if the United States pulled its exports out of the country. This potential instability can, however, interface a leg up in strategy, given that the nation counter intuitively shifts its focus away from improving municipal infrastructure, and toward updating a transnational model of global trade in which it is the hub for distribution.

While *business* is regulated by international corporate entities, the United Nations, and NAFTA, *exchange* is regulated by economic symbiosis and cultural difference predicated on a platform of heritage rather than structural components.³ The politics of exchange, here, must be negotiated over the course of colonial history *alongside* the politics of business in a Capitalist system. This establishes a power dynamic that is located outside of purely financial or political negotiations, but that is primarily social, and about saving global face.



³Structural differences, or those within the systemic folds of both Western and Non-western markets, are limited to capitalist and non-capitalist systems. For the purposes of this essay, this distinction renders a moot point, and does not support the claim that power is distributed unequally amongst western and non-western nations seemingly unified under capitalism.

*El agua
sería agua*

*Si es o no
cae del cielo...*

