Some context ...

- Introduction to Zapatista! By Big Noise films
7am, January 1, 1994 ...
The uprising led to the creation of the Zapatista autonomous zone ...
The zone provides the base from which the zapatista movement engages Mexico’s civil society – the “otra compana”
The zone is also the focus for a major international solidarity campaign

- ‘Ya Basta!’ and the autonomous movements of the North
- The generation of an international electronic ‘anti-globalisation’ network immediately followed the rebellion (PGA, WSF)
- The early summit protests (Seattle, Washington, Prague) were motivated in part by the desire to draw attention to the Zapatista rebellion
What about Marcos?

- Marcos is one of a number of spokespersons for the EZLN (along with others Fidelia, Ramona, Esther etc).
- Marcos is (apparently) the alias of Rafael Sebastian Guillen Vincent. He is also called ‘El Sub’, Delegate Zero and Dom Durito of the Lacandon.
- He has authored many of the key declarations, public letters and manifestos since the uprising + poetry, novels and childrens books.
- He was voted ‘sexiest man’ in Mexico in 1995.
Marcos is gay in San Francisco, a black in South Africa, Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Isidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, an indigenous person in the streets of San Cristóbal, a gang member in Neza, a rocker on campus, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in the Department of Defense, a feminist in a political party, a communist in the post-Cold War period [...] In other words, Marcos is a human being in this world. Marcos is every untolerated, oppressed, exploited minority that is resisting and saying 'Enough!'
Zapatismo?  

Zapatismo is not an ideology, it is not bought and paid for by a doctrine. It is ... an intuition. Something so open and flexible that it really occurs in all places. Zapatismo poses the question: 'What is it that excluded me?' 'What is that has isolated me?' ...In each place the response is different. Zapatismo simply states the question and stipulates that the response is plural, that the response is inclusive ... 
(Marcos, 2001, p. 440)
Zapatismo – an ‘echo’

An echo that recognizes the existence of the other and does not overpower or attempt to silence it.

An echo that takes its place and speaks its own voice, yet speaks with the voice of the other.

An echo that reproduces its own sound, yet opens itself to the sound of the other.

An echo [...] transforming itself and renewing itself in other voices. An echo that turns itself into many voices, into a network of voices that, before Power’s deafness, opts to speak to itself, knowing itself to be one and many, acknowledging itself to be equal in its desire to listen and be listened to, to recognizing itself as diverse in the tones and levels of voices forming it. (Marcos, 2001, p. 114)
Marcos/Zapativismo – key motifs

- ‘the upside down periscope’
- ‘Mandar obedeciendo’ - ‘govern-obeying’
- ‘Preguntando caminamos’ - ‘walking ... asking’
- The chicken that thought it was a penguin – identity in question
- The pink stiletto and the politics of solidarity
- ‘Behind us we are you’ – subversive affinity
“the upside down periscope”

- The contemporary world is one of ‘surfaces’ - to achieve depth of analysis we need a more holistic approach
- The third world war was a Cold War; the fourth is a war of the ‘empire of money’ against humanity – a war with no front.
- The state as site of democracy and justice has been supplanted by the state as instrument of neoliberal capitalism
- Need for a total critique of the system of power – and reconnection to the ‘bottom’, the hidden and unseen elements of society
Govern-obeying

- One of the most important functions Marcos plays for the movement is giving an insight into the policy of ‘govern-obeying’ by the EZLN and the communes:
  - Zapatista zone is formally ‘autonomous’
  - Each commune directs its own affairs on the basis of direct participation in decision-making (‘encounter, assemble, create’)
  - The EZLN does not ‘lead’ or perform a vanguard function
  - Power is conceived as a social resource, not something that some wield at the expense of others
  - The representative function is ‘delegate’ based.
Marcos has always emphasized that the Zapatista experiment (esp Otra Compana) is conceived as something new, experimental, dialogical and active – learn whilst doing; do whilst learning

- There is no ‘end’ or telos that can help guide us – the journey is the endpoint
- The relationship between theory and practice is played out in real time
- Intellectual leadership = embrace uncertainty and the possibility/probability that one might be wrong.
- Nomadology (Deleuze)
The chicken that thought it was a penguin
The tale of the pink stiletto ...
Behind us we are you ...’

In the world of the powerful there is no space for anyone but themselves and their servants. In the world we want everyone fits. We want a world in which many worlds fit. The nations that we construct is one where all communities and languages fit, where all steps may walk, where all may have laughter, where all may live the dawn. (Marcos, 2001, p. 80)

Marcos from the intercontinental encuentro of 1996