¿Y después qué?...

Action-research and ethnography on governance, actors and development in Southern Mexico

Francisco Guevara-Hernández

Promotor:	Prof. dr. P. Richards Hoogleraar Technologie en Agrarische Ontwikkeling Wageningen Universiteit
Co-Promotor:	Dr. ir. C. J. M. Almekinders Universitair Docent, leerstoelgroep Technologie en Agrarische Ontwikkeling Wageningen Universiteit
Promotiecommissie:	Prof. dr. J. Gledhill Manchester University, U.K.
	Prof. dr. ir. J. W. M. van Dijk Wageningen Universiteit
	Dr. ir. M. Nuijten Wageningen Universiteit
	Dr. W. G. Pansters Universiteit Utrecht

Dit onderzoek is uitgevoerd binnen de onderzoekschool: CERES -Research School for Resource Studies for Development.

¿Y después qué?...

Action-research and ethnography on governance, actors and development in Southern Mexico

Francisco Guevara-Hernández

Proefschrift
ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
op gezag van de rector magnificus
van Wageningen Universiteit,
prof. dr. M.J. Kropff,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
op maandag 5 november 2007
des namiddags te half twee in de Aula

Guevara-Hernández, Francisco (2007)

¿Y después qué?...
Action-research and ethnography on governance, actors and development in Southern Mexico

Keywords: Participatory approaches, ethnography, governance, customary laws, power, decision making, actors, local development, small villages, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Southern Mexico

ISBN: 978-90-8504-771-1

Dedicated to:

Paula, Hanneke and Sara Geertje

and

Those who have dared to risk and pay with their lives to build a fairer Mexico

Tiempo de ti...

"Tu diste forma e imagen a la piedra de tu historia,
esa misma que usaste para levantarte,
es la misma que usaron para dominarte,
y será la misma que usaremos para reivindicarte.

Y es que te miro en la distancia y el tiempo
y ahí sigues, tambaleante pero sin caer,
doblándote pero la mirada en lo alto,
cabizbajo pero aun ilusionado,
lleno de orgullo y dignidad por lo que aun serás.

Es tiempo de despertar y caminar otra vez,
es tiempo de romper las inercias
y el silencio que tu mismo aceptaste,
es tiempo de tu tiempo, tiempo para nuestro tiempo,
porque creíste y creemos,
porque fuiste y porque seremos
diferentes y mejores que ayer,
y ya nada podrá detenernos..."

[FGH; July, 07]

CONTENTS

List of tables

List of figures

List of boxes

Acronyms and abbreviations

CEC	Comisión Estatal de Caminos (Chipas)/State Commission for Roads (Chiapas)
CFE	Comisión Federal de Electricidad/Federal Commission for Electricity
CONAFE	Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo/National Council for the Promotion of Education
CONAFOR	Comisión Nacional Forestal/National Commission for the Forests
CONANP	Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas/National Commission for Natural Protected Areas
COPLADE	Comité de Planeación del Desarrollo del Estado/ State Development Planning Committee
COPLANTA	Centro de Investigaciones y Desarrollo de Plantaciones (Chiapas)/Research Center for the Plantantions Development (Chiapas)
COPLAMAR	Coordinación General del Plan Nacional de Zonas Deprimidas/General Coordination for the Attention to Marginalised Areas
EC	Ejido Commissary
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional/Zapatista Army for National Liberation
IDH	Instituto de Desarrollo Humano(Chiapas)/ Institute for Human Development (Chiapas)
IMPROVICH	Organismo promotor de la vivienda del Estado de Chiapas/Organisation for the Housing of the Chiapas State
INAH	Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia/National Institute of the Anthropology and History
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática/National Institute for Statistics, Geography and informatics
INI	Instituto Nacional Indigenista/Institute for Indigenous People
MA	Municipal Agency
MABC	Municipal Agency and Council of Common Goods
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Oportunidades	Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Humano/National Programme for Human Development
PA	Procuraduría Agraria/ Agency for Agrarian Affairs
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional/National Action Party
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática/Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional/Institutional Revolutionary Party
PROCAMPO	Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo/Programme for Direct Support to the Agriculture
PROCEDE	Programa de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales/Certification Programme on Ejido rights
PROFEPA	Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente/National Agency for the Environment Protection
PRONARE	Programa Nacional de Reforestación/ National Programme for Reforestation)
PT	Partido del Trabajo/Workers Party
PW	The Working Women's Group 'Peasant Woman'
PW1	The Working Women's Group 'Peasant Woman 1'
RAN	Registro Agrario Nacional/National Agrarian Registry
SAGARPA	Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación/Ministry of the Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fishery and Food Production
SCT	Secretaria de Comunicaciones y Transportes/Ministry of the communications and Transports
SDR	Secretaría de Desarrollo Rural (Chiapas)/Rural Development Secretary (Chiapas)
SE	Secretaría de Economía/Ministry of the Economy
SEDESOL	Secretaría de Desarrollo Social /Ministry of the Social Development
SEMARNAT	Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca/Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública/Ministry of the Public Education
SRA	Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria/Ministry of the Agrarian Reform
SS	Secretaría de Salud /Ministry of the Health
TELCEL	Telefonía Celular/Cellular Telephony
TLCAN or NAFTA	Tratado Trilateral de Libre Comercio para America del Norte/North American Free Trade Agreement
U&C	Usos y Costumbres/Customary laws
UNT	Unión Nacional de Trabajadores/Workers National Union
VA	Village Assembly
WC	Watching [Oversight] Council
WWG	Women's working group

Acknowledgements

Different people and their institutions have contributed in one way or another to the completion of this thesis. Under the risk of forgetting some of them, I deeply appreciate in advance all their assistance.

The Rockefeller Foundation for all its financial support since my undergraduate period. In particular I thank Ruben Puentes for his permanent encouragement, unconditional assistance and for being a professional example. Ruben, my career could not have reached this point without all the support you have given me. I am eternally grateful to you.

I acknowledge Wageningen University for the opportunity it has given me to interact with its researchers and to get to know more about its academic spaces. My thanks go to the Technology and Agrarian Development (TAD) Chairgroup and especially to its Participatory Approaches and Up-scaling (PAU) programme for all the given support.

I deeply acknowledge my professor Paul Richards for the motivation and encouragement provided along this process, but also for bringing me to a point of permanent reflection on people's acts and the different institutions of society. Paul, you have permanently challenged me in the way to growth. My intellectual progress of these years - particularly in the sociological and anthropological domains - could not have occurred without your inspiring and reflective talks. It was a nice pleasure working so hard with you! Conny Almekinders, thanks for all your intellectual support and willingness to assist me, even when things didn't go that smoothly. During my field work, your phone calls and e-mails were very important to me. In the writing stage, you always challenged me to less thinking and more assertive writing. Inge Ruisch for your real friendship, supportive words and administrative assistance during my stay in Wageningen. Guido Ruivenkamp for your kind words and the interest you showed in my research. Harro Maat and Kees Jansen for your helpful comments that made me look to the other side of the coin. Edwin Nuijten for the nice talks and for sharing part of your delicious beers! Dini Pieterse for all your assistance during my first stays in TAD. Femke van der Lee for the assistance in polishing the first chapters, but most of all for your friendship.

Gemma van der Haar, you deserve a special acknowledgment for your time, talks and accurate feedback that helped me very much in the structuring of this thesis. Joost Jongerden, you also deserve a special recognition for your unconditional support and feedback given on my work. Your suggestions helped me so much to improve this thesis.

My gratitude is also for all my PAU and TAD fellows from the different cohorts and countries, especially to Lanying Z., Geoffrey K., Budsara L., Prossy I., Paul K., Aklilu H., Benjamin M., Christopher B., Chris O., Hai T., Hlami N., Joe R., and Michael M., for the unforgettable moments and mutual support. Carolina C., Daniel P., Kazbek T., Béla T., Florent O., Alfred M., Kalunde K., and Douglas B. for the interesting reflections but also for the always laughing talks.

I acknowledge the Picoteam members, especially Jürgen Hagmann, for his invaluable advices and feedback that helped me in the conduction of action-research and collective actions. Henning Peter and his family, for the friendship and experiences shared so far, which have contributed to strengthen our ideals.

I am indebted to the Autonomous University of Chapingo and to the *Dirección de Centros Regionales*, specifically to Dr. Quito López Tirado. You have shown permanent concern for my progress and I am sorry for not being so communicative with you sometimes, but you know how the work dynamics often make someone disappear from the 'civilised world'. To the professors and lecturers of the Department of Agroecology who invited me to give different presentations and lectures to their students. That allowed me to gain very important feedback on my research but also to involve some students in the research project. To the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Chiapas at Villa Flores, which allowed me to use its infrastructure and meet very supportive students. To my colleagues and dearest friends from RED AC; Trinidad Alemán (ECOSUR), Tajin Fuentes, Roberto Vega (SEDEPAC) and Paco Ramos for your permanent feedback. You all are a nice source of inspiration for working with and for the people. Our collective learning has always represented a permanent growing process. To the dynamic and enthusiastic research team members from Chiapas and Oaxaca states that are now part of my network of friends. Especially to Jesus Ovando and Amparo Serrano and their children, Luis Donaldo and Didier. To Azalea L., Javier E., Elias R., Oel G., Texar V., Hernán G., Isa E., Marleen W., and Eleni M., the time spent together was really fruitful, enjoyable and pleasant.

My eternal gratitude is also for all the villagers of El Oro and California, for the opportunity and time given to me to interact as friends, but also to allow us to conduct this research. I hope that you are not disappointed with the work we have developed together during the past years. I also expect that you can now see that researchers are not only 'well-trained persons' nor only 'thinking heads', but that we remain human-beings, even struggling with the same type of problems as you are. Definitely, your daily efforts, encouragement and capacities have motivated me, but also challenged my own knowledge and skills very often.

My Cuban colleagues and friends María de los Angeles Fonseca Flores and Luís Rodríguez Larramendi from the Instituto Jorge Dimitrov in Bayamo. Thanks for your always supportive words and care. You have been a good example to me on how to move forward with scarce resources. With you, I have also learnt the meaning of the word patience.

I am also deeply grateful to my family in Mexico for constantly asking me about my steps in life, particularly my mother Paula. You are one of my main sources of principles, wisdom and motivation. You gave me the idea of going out there and 'discover the unknown'. Because of you, I now know what is beyond that small town. To my closest family members Ariadna, Teyo and children Javier, Tony and Sebastian. With your questions about my professional life you have made me keep my feet on the ground. Nephews, I hope that you are not disappointed with me: despite becoming a doctor, I still cannot cure any human illness. To my biological parents, Anastacio Guevara Landero and María de los Angeles Hernández Andrade, you both are deep in my heart.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge my Dutch friends for showing me another important side of the Netherlands, beyond the academic environment and institutional walls of the university. Evelien, Patrick and Mees; Ferry, Francine and Femke. Our family meetings, jokes and parties always represented the time for relaxing. Rik Schuiling for your assistance and the nice time spent together during my stay at your home. Suzanne Pagen for the constant reminders about my origins and the culture of the Mexican people. Petra van den Berg for the nice time and conversations we had on the highway during our trips from Bergharen to Wageningen. How to forget the horrible traffic jams on the A50? You also have a lovely and kind family.

My Dutch family, Harry en Truus Aalbers-Janssen, I will be eternally grateful to you. I can not express with words all the respect and affection I do have for you both. What you have done for me and my little family is priceless. You have also shown me many Dutch family rituals which also represent part of my new learning. Harry, thanks a lot for taking me out to many working places, which helped to control my mental and academic anxiety through my arms. We had a pleasant time working together. Sjoerd, your friendship and support, especially with your ICT skills, have been invaluable. Thanks for being my brother and party partner. Floor and Barry, my gratitude for your permanent support and visits to our home. The Janssen family, I appreciate your amiability, mainly during the family reunions and parties. The Aalbers family, thanks for all the"gezelligheid".

Finalmente a Hanneke, mi querida esposa, te agradezco infinitamente todo el apoyo incondicional que me has brindado durante todo este tiempo, especialmente en los momentos más difíciles de este proceso. Soy un gran afortunado al compartir mi vida contigo y agradezco infinitamente a Dios y al Universo que nos hayamos encontrado. ¿Ya ves? ¡Valió la pena todo este tiempo de intenso trabajo y aprendizajes...! Por favor, considera este logro también tuyo, porque sin tu soporte, esta jornada no hubiera llegado a su fin. Además, mi felicidad es plena, porque nuestra pequeña Sara Geertje llegó en un momento tan especial a nuestras vidas para alegrarnos cada amanecer y sobre todo para fortalecer aun más nuestra unión como familia. Creo que ya estamos listos para el siguiente paso...
Ik hou heel veel van jullie!

Francisco Guevara-Hernández Wageningen, November 2007

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 About this thesis

Rural areas in Southern Mexico today have some of the highest poverty rates and lowest education levels of the country; they lack basic health services, suffer malnutrition problems, and face agrarian conflicts and environmental dilemmas not seen before (Castellanos 2000, Muñoz 2000, Nahmad 2004). Local development in Southern Mexico, as this study will show, has long been problematic, and characterised by a complex social, environmental and cultural differentiation.

Over recent decades, different organisations and institutions have run projects and programmes, focusing on agriculture, human health, education or religion. In the coming chapters these projects and programmes will be referred to as interventions. Interventions have often been undertaken with the perception that they address the needs and problems of local people, but many reflect a conventional top-down approach, with questionable impact for the locals. Interventions, actions and subsidies are imposed, without active engagement of local populations (Financiero 2006, Nahmad 2004, Zermeño and Domínguez 2000).

The villages and their inhabitants are often considered objects of rural development initiatives rather than active players. This lack of engagement at the local level has led to many failures, frequent misunderstandings and even worse, heightened conflict among village actors (Alemán 1998, Kraemer 1993, Rivas 1997). However, some of these interventions have shown interesting results. For instance, there are initiatives that support local groups of people who are engaged in productive projects or organisational endeavours (Chapela 1999, Martínez y Ramírez 1999, Pérezgrovas *et. al.* 1997, Santos *et. al.* 1998). On the other hand, some of those who intervene are struggling to find a better, more engaged, participatory approach (Kraemer 1993, Robles and Zarco 2005).

In some recent accounts of these interventions some researchers have argued that they play a very important role in creating interfaces. These interfaces are zones of active engagement between the local and external social forces (Arce and Long 1988 & 1992, Long and Villareal 1994, Nuijten 2003 & 2005, Villareal 1992). Other researchers, however, have strongly criticised interventions in form and content. Critics mainly point to a) often contradictory policies, b) difficulties over strategies to target local people, c) poor results and impacts, d) problems over type and amount of budgets, and e) unclear or hidden agendas (Alemán 1997 & 1998, Jiménez 1997, Kraemer 1993, Mata 1998 & 1999, Rivas 1997). These researchers also stress the importance of the diverse local context to be considered in making interventions. Their perspective is a more 'bottom-up' view.

These top-down and bottom-up views on interventions seem to be framed within different political cultures, and result in clashing views on what to do about rural interventions. This analytical disagreement is important not only for academic debate, but also because it turns local problems into conflicted situations. Part of the problem arises – as will be shown – from the way in which different studies contribute to reinforcing either top-down visions or mystifying bottom-up perspectives. This mystification has led sometimes to overvaluation of particular intervention approaches (e.g. exaggerated claims for participatory developments based on local initiative) and a corresponding loss of objectivity by some researchers about the local context.

This study will attempt to critique (and perhaps also to demystify) aspects of both approaches. This is done by taking a detailed approach to the ethnographic description of how local development actually works in the Mexican context, in order to try and bring out genuinely viable alternative directions for rural development initiatives. The main focus of the study is placed on local actors, governance, conflicts and dilemmas within the villages. This is done from different research angles, and villages are seen as the main level of analysis. Villages are considered complex and dynamic social environments in which disregarded and marginalised Mexican citizens continue, despite handicaps, to engage with and influence development. It will be argued, in particular, that they are far from objects of intervention, but active subjects attempting to grasp, tackle, and reshape their own development from the standpoint of local analysis of the larger dynamic contexts of the political economy of development in rural Mexico.

In general, the study offers a detailed description of the *front* and *back stage* aspects (Goffman 1959 & 1966, Murphy 1981 & 1990) of development-oriented public life in two isolated villages in Oaxaca and Chiapas States. Details will be presented on how the villages are run - in regard to organisational strategies, governance and development interventions. Both collective and individual views are analysed. This complexity is initially approached through a description of customary laws. A second step is the identification of the main important and recognised local structures and actors. Later on, some attempt is made to identify hidden (*back stage*) activities by non-formal actors. This leads to a more specific focus on individual and collective testimony concerning actions, relations, conflicts and dilemmas in regard to the use of local natural resources, and how this information throws light on the exercise of power at village level. These issues are highlighted in relation to both national and local governance frameworks and their jurisprudential and/or political implications. With its emphasis on both *front* and *back stage* aspects of local development activity the study builds a two-sided-story that contributes to the demystification of Profound Mexico. The thesis then concludes with an attempt to say something about how villages - as social entities- and inhabitants absorb interventions aimed at empowerment and local development into their daily lives.

Methodologically, the study mingles anthropological and action-oriented research perspectives, and was conducted using a mixture of ethnographic and participatory tools. The collective and individual cases are presented in the body of the thesis. Building a research strategy that gained the confidence and involvement of villagers was a crucial aspect of the study. The local governance system of *usos y costumbres* (customary laws), not formally included in the national governance system, provided an entry point that allowed immersion in the world of local power and its intricacies. *Usos y costumbres* and its main implications are explored in later chapters. This led to a participatory exercise in the analysis of power; the configuration of local structures (actors, relations and functions) was identified and discussed with villagers. This provided a *front stage* picture of village life*,* referred to later as power mapping.

Beyond the *front stage*, finding the possible hidden or back elements of power in the two villages was also an important research objective. The study attempted to identify hidden leaderships – i.e. key actors working outside recognised or overt structures. The study presents a range of collective and personal views on these covert actors and their actions. The covert dimension is explored through a closer scrutiny of peoples' behaviour in regard to local conflicts around the natural resources. Individual connections to external actors are traced. A jurisprudential and political power perspective is used. Individual relations, concerns and conflicts came into focus as part of this other side of the story (the *back stage*).

Finally, once the pieces of this complex social puzzle were collected, an attempt was done to understand what local development and empowerment meant for villagers. Local perceptions were explored. At the end of the research cycle, a local assessment tool was framed in order to complement the study on villages and their development.

1.2 Research problem

Contemporary Mexico finds itself in crisis: the productive sectors are disarticulated, institutions suffer a crisis of credibility, sustainable use of national resources is at stake due to overexploitation, political elites are mired in political scandals, and emigration to the U.S. and Canada creates a permanent exodus of as many of the poor as can make it, with negative effects on social cohesion of rural communities (Meyer 2005, Riva-Palacio 2006, Wallerstein 2006, Walton and Lopez-Acevedo 2005, World Bank 2006). The symptoms of a nation-wide crisis are specially highlighted in rural areas and the suburbs of main metropolis. Social unease, outright violence and unrest, poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, political manipulation, marginalisation, uprisings and state repression, not to mention a spate of assassinations, indicate that something is deeply wrong in contemporary Mexico (Delgado 2006, Martínez-Soriano 2006, Matias- Cruz 2007, Pérez 2006). The state's response to this internal crisis has been to concentrate on macro-economic development, as part of an effort to position oil-rich Mexico as one of the top fifteen world economies.

Explanations for the current crisis vary, but many agree that it stems from a combination of factors including over-reliance on the free market economy model, the avarice of ruling elite families, the lack of an integrative and inclusive national policy, and a raft of unaccountable political practises sometimes labelled corporatism and populism (Gledhill 2005, Ramírez-Cuevas 2003, Riva-Palacio 2006, Rodríguez 2005). To some it is no coincidence that the world's second wealthiest person in 2007 is a Mexican while more than fifty million Mexicans live under the poverty line (Balboa 2007, Matias-Cruz 2007, Notimex 2007).

Indeed, Mexico's crisis and the lack of attention paid to it by the government, are affecting the marginalised population of the rural areas in very many ways. Social resentment against the state, based on a difficult, long-term colonial and exploitative relation between government and the governed, have tended to deteriorate further in the modern period. The lack of direct and permanent contact - but also a non-integration of local context into national schemes - is a persistent but growing national problem. Local researchers stress that the current degree of social discomfort may represent the first steps in a slow and silent civil war (Cepeda 2006, Martínez–Soriano 2006, Maza 2006, Wallerstein 2006). The initial signals may have been sent from Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla, Hidalgo, Veracruz, Tabasco and Michoacán – the states with the poorest populations.

Contemporary Chiapas and Oaxaca States in Southern Mexico, apart from their biological richness, are among the most impoverished states in the country, and are characterised by highest percentages of indigenous and impoverished *mestizo* populations. Resource richness and human poverty constitutes a highly contradictory situation (Berumen 2003, INFDM 2002 & 2003, Nigh and Rodríguez 1995). As in many other rural and remote parts of Mexico, it is often said that problems mentioned above can be easily distinguished. In both cases, current warning phenomena include massive out-emigration, over-exploitation of scarce local resources and frequent incursion into illegal activities as the only escape mechanism for coping with local adversities. The causes seem to be rooted in the exclusion of rural people, and the highly centralised policies and policy interventions by the federal state (Grindle 1996, Mata 1999, Zuñiga 2006a & b). In other words, rural development is still approached from a top-down perspective, with dangerously little true local engagement. The situation fosters radical – often localist – visions that might one day trend, if unaddressed, towards separation and civil war.

Development agents[1] are trained in skills and delivered to the villages with a mandate, as if 'development' was a practical linear process (i.e. CONANP 2006, SAGARPA 2001). Agents often come with the best intentions, aiming to integrate the local population into their initiatives. But they tend to overlook, or do not know, or misunderstand the contexts and dynamics of small villages. For example, they miss out on the importance of the local institutions and actors responsible for local governance. Issues of local politics, associated with power and decision making, are often not visible to those who intervene.

One of the most obvious examples is the system of *usos y costumbres,* which remains a largely undocumented framework ruling local lives and regulating the use of natural resources. The system basically depends on validated norms, practised values, and respected traditions (Carlsen 1999, De León 2001, Rodríguez 2006). Some anthropological studies argue that *usos y costumbres* have helped Mexican villages to maintain their cohesion, dynamism and social identities. And yet much of this passes unnoticed at higher levels. A result is that real processes of local governance are ignored at the top of the Mexican state; villages finding few points of linkage with the formal administrative frameworks of national government (Maldonado 2002, Mello-Farrera 2002, Rivera-Salgado 2005).

Contemporary Mexican villages present a complex and dynamic configuration. They are the result of historically developed relations, values and traditions, constructed by a range of different actors over time. However, their natural, cultural, socio-economic and political environments tend to clash with the rapidly changing formal frameworks imposed by regional or national governments.

[1] Extension workers, promoters, facilitators and even researchers and students.

On the one hand, previous strategies of *corporativismo* and *populismo,* including policies and programmes, seem to have settled a series of facts, behaviour and attitudes on the Mexican people and their villages. These have generated a number of customs, prejudices and even vices that may need profound personal and collective analysis, since they have been practiced over generations. On the other hand, the fact that villages are remote from the formal structures of the decision making of national government means that they have tended to develop a dynamic, logic, vision and strategy for their existence, subsistence and development. Aspects of this locally evolved system – how villages are run and ruled, but also how they face interventions, build their own processes and contribute to the shaping of local contexts – are not well known, and yet worthy to be more deeply studied. A basic argument behind the present study is that a rapprochement between national and local is badly needed in Mexico, and that understanding what really happens at the bottom is a crucial step. This may lead to better insights on what is needed by way of rural development and where its main problems lie. For instance, to understand the role of local actors and institutions of governance and development, local decision making mechanisms and ways of setting up relationships, validation of norms and rules, etc., requires context-specific analysis. Indeed, studies on how small villages are run, organised, and ruled will help illuminate the interface between, local and national, thus helping development practitioners, government agents and researchers better understand local complexity.

Therefore, two main research problems emerge. The first is related to bottom-up views on locality and its context. In other words, it is desirable to know how villages are organised and ruled, and how decisions are made. The second, related to the top-down perspective, is to understand better how villagers are targeted or reached by interventions, and with what consequences. This also includes the way villages cope with initiatives and development needs.

These two research problems are addressed by studying two small and isolated villages of Southern Mexico. The study paid attention to local actors, institutions, domains of power, empowerment and development, i.e. it sought to penetrate beyond top-down visions and formal images imposed on the country. Data about the rural and local levels are illuminated with 'live' information from the two villages presented. The hope is that the evidence will contribute to better insights on the real situations, but also to the identification of entry points for solutions.

1.3 Objectives

The general research objective of the study is to understand the governance mechanisms of remote Mexican villages in the context of the national political framework.

Specific objectives

1. To study the local context of two small villages of Southern Mexico in terms of their governance, exercise of power and strategies used to address local development.

2. To illuminate local and informal politics in two Mexican villages through the development of participatory power maps.

3. To identify the bottlenecks in terms of the use of natural resources (NR) and how different actors cope.

4. To identify, understand and assess empowerment at individual and collective levels and seek ways of framing and supporting local development visions.

1.4 Research questions and sub-questions

1. How are small villages in Mexico constituted, ruled and run in daily life?
    - How can they be studied from governance and development perspectives?
    - What are the main roles of the Mexican governance system(s) as encountered within development interventions and at village level?
    - Is there any role played by such formal systems in the shaping of villages and their development initiatives and/or strategies, and with what consequences?
    - If so, what are the main perceptions on governance at the village level and its overall implications for local decision making and development?

2. How is power understood, structured, managed, exercised or mobilised at the local level?
    - How can small villages be mapped (in terms of power), and with what tools?
    - What can be understood from the analysis of information about power as 'socially constructed' in daily lives of villages?
    - Who are the main actors and how are their relationships settled at the village level?
    - What are the main implications of power for both collective decision making at village level and for local development?

3. How are villages and their governance system set up, with what consequences for the creation of collective spaces for action and local development strategies?
    - How are different local processes of governance related?
    - To what extent do local power structures oppose or subvert development interventions?)
    - What are the main implications of village individual and collective action for the use of natural resources and local development?

4. How can (participatory) empowerment processes can be identified and analysed while studying villages and local development initiatives?
    - How is empowerment and development locally understood or interpreted?
    - How and according to what criteria or indicators can empowerment be measured, assessed and negotiated?
    - Are development interventions, or any other source of power, leading to the empowerment of Mexican villagers? If so, how is this being done, and what kind of empowerment is being achieved?

1.5 Research approach

In order to conduct this research, a participatory and ethnographic approach was basically framed by ideas drawn from social anthropology. Use is made of Durkheimian and neo-Durkheimian theories and the structuralism of Levis-Strauss. Durkheimian social theory and structuralism are both well described at length in studies by Alexander (1988), Douglas (1986), Giddens (1978, 1979, 1982a & b) Layton (1997), Lewis (1975), Stedman-Jones (2001) and Thompson (1982). The applicability of these ideas to study the complexity of small-scale societies is well-known. In the present case, the aim is to stress organisational aspects of small villages in Mexico, their structure and functions but also the way normative frameworks, as constructed in both the exercise of governance and in local development. No claim is made to any originality in the use of this theoretical tradition, not would a professional social anthropologist find their present usage in any way sophisticated. But the author comes from a world of activist practice, where he believes that these approaches are not as well known as they should be, and that their use in this thesis may be helpful to others working on practical questions of empowerment in rural Mexico. The basic aim is to provide an analysis of villages and their governance, according to a standard framework of theoretical reference, as an initial entry point for understanding the complexity of local contexts. Other theories, such as the cognitive 'constructivism' of Piaget as developed by Freire (1971/2000 & 1998), are also alluded to in some chapters.

The backbone concepts in this research are *'social order'* as envisaged by Durkheim and Douglas, notions of deep *'social structure'* as argued by Lévi-Strauss, and the discrimination of *front* and *back* stages for social action, as developed by Goffman (1959) from Durkheim, but as explicitly applied to rural self-governance in West Africa by William Murphy (1980, 1981 & 1990), Silverman (1965) and Wilson (1990). Other concepts that make an appearance in some of the chapters include the notion of *local levels* for development, as suggested by Uphoff (1986) and Mosse (1998 & 2005), *power* as defined and discussed by Gaventa (2004), Lukes (1974) and Rowlands (1997), *force fields, social spaces* and *interfaces,* as developed by Nuijten (2005 & 2003), Gaventa (2004) and Bourdieu (1985), and notions of *empowerment* drawn from Freire (1971), Kabeer (1999) and Rowlands (1997), among others.

These are the main theoretical elements drawn upon for analysis of the two case-study villages and local development interventions. Figure 1.1 represents the conceptual framework and the route followed by the research.

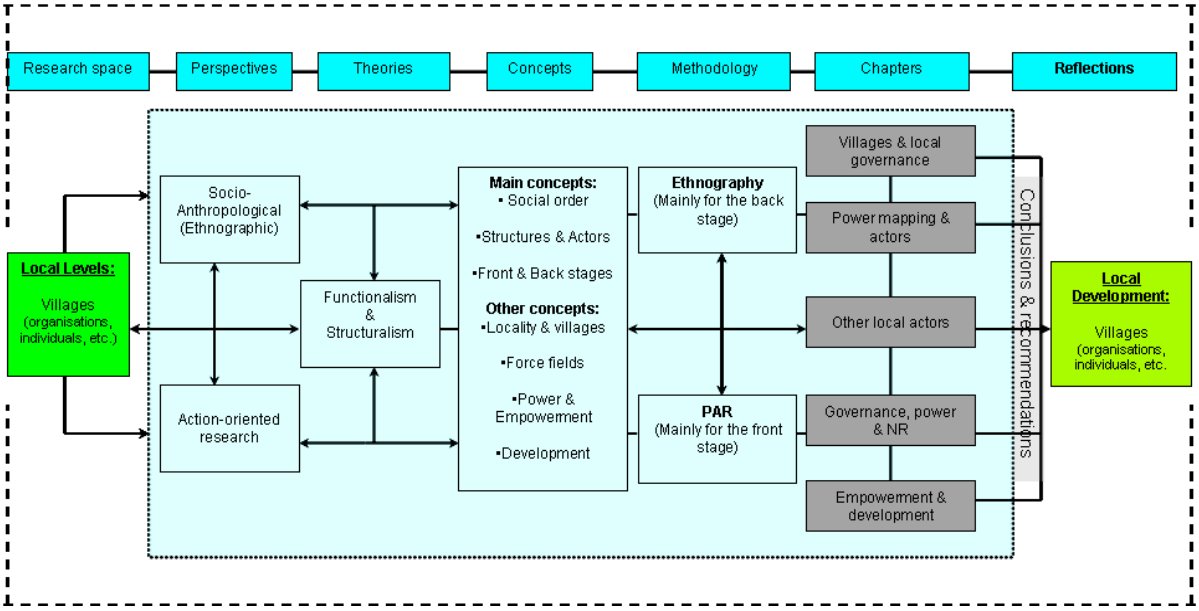


Figure 1.1. Conceptual framework and route followed to study complexity of small villages 'from below'.

The research was carried out in two Mexican villages - *El Oro,* Santo Domingo Nuxaá, in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca State and *California,* Villa Flores, in the Frailesca region of Chiapas State. In the next chapter a detailed description of historical, political and social perspectives affecting these two villages is undertaken. The villagers played an active role in elaborating the descriptions reported.

Methodologically this research was developed with a blend of two main approaches: *action-oriented* and *ethnographic (*socio-anthropological) research methods.

The first, the *action-oriented approach,* was adopted in order to include the villages as part of the research process, particularly for the discovery pairings 'sharing-gathering', 'reflection-construction' and 'negotiation-reflection' in regard to factual information. Villagers were considered as more than passive participants. They actually undertook an active role in contributing to the process of forming research questions. Therefore, the action-oriented methodology was built upon a participatory action research perspective (PAR) in which a learning cycle was run and the stimulation of collective reflections during the sharing information encouraged. Researcher's role was to come in-and-out of the village during a given period (2003-2005). PAR was used because different authors agree on a) the stimulation of a collective *learning* process while *acting* on investigated topics, b) the achievement of worthwhile outputs beyond the specific research

interest, c) engagement of participants in a collective learning-reflection process, d) bringing out local inertias as topics to think about, e) bridging the gap between researchers and the researched, f) challenging current research paradigms (Almekinders and Hagmann 2002 & 2003, Groot 2002, Hagmann 1999, Hagmann and Almekinders 2003, Hamilton 1995, Keune and Boog 2000, Selener 1997).

The second, *ethnographic approach* required some use of anthropological and sociological methods and tools. This was in order to a) conduct cross-checking of information, b) find out non-public social images/regions/stages of local contexts, and c) gather the missing information on villages and peoples' acts and behaviours.

In this way, balance and complementarity between action-oriented and socio-anthropological research perspectives was sought. In general, the overall methodology was based on looking for answers with an analytical and philosophical vision by being as neutral as possible but also by keeping faith with the principle of engaging local people in the research process.

The methods and tools used were initially framed within two main groups:

- *The first group* basically centres on diverse participatory methods from the development sector. These are research team building, participatory workshops, collective reflections and visualisations, and games and dynamics for social integration. The participatory tools adapted for the local contexts are Venn diagrammes, time lines and matrices for problem prioritisation and ranking.
- *The second group* is made up of anthropological and sociological methods such as ethnography with participant observations, field transects, informal in depth interviews with key informants, semi-structured interviews of samples, and long periods of residence in the villages. The research tools are case studies, mapping the villages and their resources, photographs and attending village and group meetings.

Further details on both conceptual framework and research methodology are described in the next chapter.

1.6 Outline

Chapter 2 is entitled *'Conceptual framework and research methodology: towards a study on small villages, their governance and development'*. The chapter draws up an outline of the theoretical framework used in the present study. The main theories, concepts, approaches, methods and tools are placed according to the research scheme followed. Basically, the questions and sub-questions relate to how to study local levels or rural development, including villages, their actors and dynamics, and are initially answered in terms of theoretical perspectives. The chapter addresses all the research questions from a theoretical perspective.

Chapter 3 is on *'The Mexican context: the rural sector and the interventionist policies and programmes for development'*. It presents an overview of the social and political worlds in which this research was conducted. The nation-wide perspective of current official programmes used as top-down interventions is described. The current diversity of interveners, beyond the governmental institutions, and including the civil society and its organisations, are placed in context. Some brief comments from the inhabitants of the villages studied are highlighted, to bring their voices into the analysis at an early stage. Pathways followed in the forthcoming chapters are also sketched.

Chapter 4 is entitled *'Top-down and bottom-up regulatory systems for social order: an emphasis on the usos y costumbres of small villages in Southern Mexico'*. The chapter presents, places and compares two main mechanisms for the establishment of social order in rural Mexico. The first is the top-down framework implemented by the state and the second the grassroots system of *usos y costumbres*. The first is basically ruled by the jurisprudential system of 'should be' laws. The second is based on the practices of daily political and social life of villages, and often called

'practical justice' or 'living law', based around notions of what is and is not 'done'. This chapter addresses research question 1 and some of its sub-questions.

Chapter 5 is about *'Participatory power mapping: a collective identification of development actors in small villages in Southern Mexico'*. It draws on the experience and insights of participatory power mapping in the two villages investigated. The main locally 'recognised' or 'validated' actors and their inter-relations are identified. The study was carried out using an action-research approach, by focusing on the *usos y costumbres* as the most important framework ensuring social order at village level. The chapter also looks at the way power is understood and exercised by actors involved in local development. The chapter addresses research question 2 and its sub-questions.

Chapter 6 is on *'Non-recognised actors and their role in local development: the creation and/or fragmentation of social spaces for collective action in villages of SE Mexico'.* The chapter focuses on those local actors neither recognised nor validated by the local structures in the villages. This chapter brings them out of the 'social darkness' as worthy local spaces of action for villagers. Despite their lack of local recognition, these actors are here displayed as part of the 'hidden' local diversity within the *back stage* of village governance. Types of actors, forces, spaces, and exercise of power are among the elements identified and analysed. The role played by villagers in the creation of these actions is highlighted. Individual and collective leadership and the implications for local development strategies are presented. How power is gained, lost, manifested, hidden, etc., is addressed. Some non-recognised actors and the spaces they occupy were preliminarily identified in the previous chapter, but new cases neither identified nor mentioned before are outlined. Semi-structured interviews and small participatory workshops were the basic tools to gather information. This chapter addresses research question 3 and some of its sub questions at both collective and individual levels.

Chapter 7 is entitled *'Governance, power and natural resources: clash of ruling frameworks and rise of individual dilemmas in small villages of Southern Mexico'.* This chapter explores the *back stage* region of village life. The personal acts and behaviour of people in relation to the use of natural resources is described. The analysis uses governance as an entry point to understand how the ruling mechanisms ensure social order. For instance, as seen in chapter four, governance imposes decision making frameworks on individuals and other local actors. Local conflicts of interests and dilemmas are highlighted by two ethnographic examples. Bottlenecks, confrontations and consequences for individuals, village life and local development are pointed out. Basically, information is gathered from different persons and presented as main sources of evidence. The chapter addresses research question 3 and some of its sub questions.

Chapter 8 is about *'Local insights on empowerment and development: perceptions and assessment efforts in small villages of Southern Mexico'*. The earlier chapters offer insights into the coupling of empowerment and development. The evidence presented in these earlier chapters was derived from observation of local processes, and strengthened through analysis of the actions, relations and interventions at village level of the different local actors. Chapter eight looks for further evidence on what is locally understood or interpreted as empowerment and development. A series of areas and indicators of 'empowerment' for development are identified and framed within an assessment framework, using local input. These areas/indicators are also used to assess both local and individual empowerment. The framework was developed through participatory workshops, semi-structured interviews and numerous conversations with residents of both villages. The chapter also aims to reflect upon experience gained in framing a participatory methodology for assessment of empowerment and development, using results from both individual and collective interviews. The chapter addresses research question 4, including its sub-questions.

Chapter 9 presents some *final reflections* that include the main conclusions, lessons and recommendations drawn from this research. References for the entire thesis and some appendices follow.

Chapter 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
Towards a study on small villages, their governance and development

Abstract

This chapter outlines a conceptual framework and research methodology developed for the study of two Mexican villages, their functioning, structuring and development. Theories of functionalism, structuralism and constructivism are briefly reviewed. Concepts of locality and village, social order, *front* and *back* stage/region are examined in relation to the requirements of the present study. In addition, some attention is paid to how ethnographic and participatory methods can be used to link socio-anthropological and action-oriented approaches.

2.1 Conceptual framework

The following sections describe the theoretical perspective and route followed in addressing the topic of this research. The account follows the design portrayed in Figure 1.1 (chapter 1). The main approaches to studying Mexican villages are outlined.

Small societies: complex configurations

Society, and the way it is formed, has been studied from many different angles throughout the history of the social sciences. Different efforts focus on definitions and constitution, the way notions of society have been shaped or evolved, what actions are constitutive of social order, and how notions of society affect behaviour (Douglas 1986, Durkheim 1912 [1954] & 1893 [1997], Engels 1971 & 1986, Giddens 1982a).

Frederick Engels (1820-1895) and Karl Marx (1818-1883) can be counted among the pioneers of the study of small-scale (so-called 'primitive') societies. They took Darwinian elements to explain the role of labour in the social configuration of humankind (Engels 1971 & 1986, Lewis 1975). They agreed that a big step in passing from primitive societies to more organised communities was the advent of sedentarism, in which it's a division of labour played a fundamental role. According to them, the initial elements of social order beyond primitive communality was shaped through labour processes, a position in which they were later supported by the French pioneer of sociology as a discipline, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917).

Thus through the historical process of intensive transformation of nature and founding of the permanent human settlements small communities began to emerge (Engels 1971 & 1986, Giddens and Doneier 2000). This represented the moment at which human-beings began to add value to territories occupied.

Sociologists have focused on the subdivision of society into types, and often from a dualistic perspective. For instance, it is common to encounter studies of rural or urban societies, agricultural or industrialised societies, primitive or developed societies (Giddens 1982b). In the particular case of small-scale societies, dualism in classification seems more than an entry point to attain a better understanding. Several studies aim to un-wrap local institutions and organisations and settled relations of production in offering an account of development processes. The focus lies on community structures (Giddens 1979, Rossi 1970, Sewell 1992).

Anthropological views look more at the way small groups or individuals interact and build institutional mechanisms to ensure perpetuation and social order (Douglas 1986, Layton 1997, Lewis 1975, Silverman 1965). Historically, the anthropological focus has been with small-scale tribal or peasant societies. In such cases, studies have often looked at the way people participate in the construction and shaping of their local organisations. Thus it can be said that anthropological studies have tended to focus on how individuals interact and create organisations and institutions while generating certain cohesion through occupying a given terrain (Govers 2006, van der Haar 2001). The way groups organise and manage certain resources is a clue to their collective values (Hardin 1968 & 1998, Kramer and Brewer 1984, Richards 1997, Roberts and Emel 1992). In other words, such studies are normally conducted with particular focus on the people and the roles they adopt at the individual or collective level in creating local identities, institutions and organisations, patterns of behaviours, relations and ruling mechanisms linked to interests and satisfaction of needs.

Durkheim held that institutions were a product of collective representations formed through ritual interaction. It was through acting together that groups cemented norms and moral codes capable

of regulating the conduct of individuals. This stimulated the creation of institutions to maintain cohesion among social groups. Over time this led to the gaining of respect for the autonomy, dignity and freedom of individuals. Group values were emergent from both ritual action and division of labour. This led to the creation of collective beliefs, emotions and tendencies, not necessary reducible to the states of consciousness of the individuals but sustained by the organisations in which social groups found themselves, i.e. Durkheim theorises the emergence of social *structures* as well as describing *functions* (Durkheim 1912 [1954]).

The general form of small or primitive society is termed by Durkheim *'mechanical solidarity'*, maintained by the simpler forms of division of labour (Durkheim 1893 [1997]). This, according to him, constitutes the *social structure* that imposes itself in one way or another on individuals as a framework within which they act and behave. While the habit of living with each other is central to ways of being, structure also represents consolidation of beliefs and practices through the rituals and habits (Alexander 1988, Douglas 1986, Stedman-Jones 2001). Repetition and validation definitely build and shape such societies. Durkheim's functionalism[2] considers that institutions (notably religion) maintain the solidarity of social groups.

Additionally, Douglas (1986) postulates that individuals, in small societies, submit their private interest to the good of others. Altruistic behaviour, she suggests, has an influence on the thinking of group members and even leads to the development of distinctive thought styles. In current language, this may be translated collective action and communalism. However the role of mutual trust among individuals becomes crucial. According to Therborn (2004), this is a process of local ideology construction, and a mechanism for influencing peoples' minds, which he terms the ideology of power and power of ideology. Thus, individuals act with certain patterns of behaviours, normatively framed and settled through consensus, based on norms, codes and values. In organising and living together groups build their own identity and cohesion. In this case, Durkheim and neo-Durkheimians (such as Douglas) lead us in the direction of recognising community, communality and collective action as key concepts in seeking to identify the processes through which people form groups.

Theoretically, this contrasts with the stance of rational choice theorists, where groups are based on social contracts (individuals are assumed to give up autonomy for the benefit or convenience of group living). The Durkheimian approach is fundamentally opposed to this line of thinking. The notion of a social contract seems to imply that a prior concept of society exists. Rational choice theory cannot explain the origins of rational choice. Nor can it explain the radical divergence of social order apparently characteristic of the world of globalisation (e.g. the contest between religiously defined fundamentalisms in the United States and Middle East). Markets were supposed to be the measure of all things. But beyond the end of the Cold War 'irrational' social divergence seems to have become more not less important. History has not ended, not can we simply assume that the differences between 'Modern' and 'Profound' Mexico will simply fade away.

The community: a dynamic and complex society

Several studies and debates have been carried in recent decades aiming at a better conceptualisation and understanding of communities as entities (real or imagined) associated with small-scale societies and local social processes. Several classifications of types, forms and

---

[2] Many authors (e.g. Alexander 1988, Giddens 1978, Layton 1997 and Thompson 1982) agree that Durkheim theory is functionalist, and based around a metaphor of the living organism, its several parts and organs grouped and organised into a system. The functioning of the various parts and organs sustains the organism, i.e. keep its essential processes going and enable it to reproduce. Similarly, members of a society can be thought of as cells, and its institutions as organs, whose function is to sustain the life of the collective entity, despite the frequent death of cells and the production of new ones. Functionalist analyses examine the social significance of phenomena (that is, the purpose they serve a particular society in maintaining the whole). But Durkheim may be less a functionalist than he has been painted (for recent revisionist views see Stedman-Jones 2001 and Rawls 2003).

processes have been proposed and used (Aiken and Mott 1970, Lisbona 2005, Taylor 1982, van der Haar 2001). In this sense, Mary Douglas (1986) agrees with J. Taylor (1973) and M. Taylor (1982) that there are mainly three types of rural societies: *modern or communes, peasant or agrarian* and the *small and tribal*. Across that spectrum, many communities and their variations can be framed - religious, scientific, business, agrarian, urban, medical, anarchic, etc.

During the last two centuries, the concept of community has assumed varying relevance. According to Freeman (1968) the idea is a product of the dualism of modernity, represented by the urban and rural societies. In the case of US communities, modernisation strategies were based on views of progress assessed from the perspective of urbanisation models. Regional development was supposed to integrate more and more rural societies into the urban dynamic. Opposition and tough critiques emerged due the imposition of this kind of thinking on to lower levels of society; i.e. beyond the cities and over small rural communities. Local identities and grassroots processes were threatened with burial. Negative reactions to such threats brought to the fore notions of social participation processes for the analysis of local identities, leadership, power, and visions of local levels of development. The understanding of communities from a more socio-anthropological perspective then took on a high relevance.

The concept of community

The use of the concept *community* has been used to study several aspects of nature across the history. In ecology, it has been used to study groups of vegetables or animals. In the case of mammalian studies the community focus draws attention to behaviour and ways of interaction between mammals, but also the way they interact with the rest of the nature (Feeny *et. al.* 1996, Odum 1953). However, in the evolving specialisation of study of human society, especially after the French and industrial (British) revolutions, the separation of the natural and social 'worlds' marked a key division in the history of the sciences (Giddens 1982b, Giddens and Doneier 2000). In studies on human societies, the major emphasis began to be put on how individuals organise and function, on patterns of individual behaviour and on social processes in settled, organised societies. Thus, several scientific disciplines emerged with a number of overlapping areas of specialisation (Hunter 1953, Lowry 1965, Taylor 1973). In Sociology and Anthropology, many studies drew attention to the construction, assimilation and validation of codes, values and institutions across a range of different societies. Thus, a process of classification also emerged, and the concept of comparative community studies took on more relevance.

Lisbona (2005), Rossi (1970) and Taylor (1982) suggest that 'community' is overall an open-textured concept, and as result controversial to the eyes of different scientific disciplines. In social contexts they agree on three main attributes shared by all communities. *First,* any set of persons who composes a community has beliefs, values and even sometimes ideologies in common. *Second*, relations between members should be direct and by consequence should be many-sided. These many-sided relations are direct to the extent that they are unmediated by representatives, such as leaders or bureaucrats, institutions or codes, abstractions or reifications. *Third*, a community involves reciprocity. There is a wide range of arrangements regarding reproduction and exchange, including mutual aid, and various forms of cooperation, but some kind of system for sharing beyond random interaction is necessary if the notion of community is to be deployed. Thus, various socio-anthropological studies converge to accept the concept of community as proposed by Hunter (1953) and Rossi (1970), who suggest that community should be used to express a centre of power. It is a setting in which power relations and structures can be observed and studied from different perspectives. One variant of the idea is the peasant commune, found in Profound Mexico, as will be demonstrated. The basic notion is that of a small society composed by a set of individuals characterised by some degree of shared values and beliefs, enjoying direct and many-sided relations, and skilled in the practice of reciprocity. This sustains a certain level of functionality, stability and cohesion. It should be noted that this is proposed, in this study, as an empirical and not a normative concept, i.e. it is hypothesised (and then demonstrated) that in rural Southern Mexico communities (in the sense just defined) do have a degree of tangible existence.

Nevertheless, so far the issue of territoriality is lacking within this connotation of community. Not only are time, social codes, values and institutions important in identifying whether or not a

community exists, but the space occupied is important too. Then, space is normally translated into a given occupied and shared territory (Carlsen 1999, Govers 2006). This then becomes an important element in attempts at worldwide classification of communities, as neighbourhoods, villages, towns, cities, nations, ethnic groups, etc.

Yet small communities present a continuum of elements, each vulnerable to increase of scale. Community has to embrace both face to face and multidirectional interactions and relationships. This view is also shared by Govers (2006) and van der Haar (2001) who agree that the concept of community is very relative and multidimensional, where social relations and organisations, but also spiritual beliefs and values, and natural resource connotations play important roles in definition and shaping of different local realities. Therefore participation and decision making processes in communities are take on a broad range, in combination with individuals' beliefs, social values and networks of reciprocal exchanges. The presence of selective incentives or controls is not always necessary; voluntarily cooperation in the production of a public good or of social order can emerge through interaction, related to what Richards (2006 & 2007) calls *performative participation* (as opposed to *discursive or deliberative participation)*.

In this sense, communities or villages[3] within this study are seen as dynamic social entities settled over shared territories in enduring living processes, but also constructed and reconstructed though daily activities constituting and reconstitution local history, culture and political life.

Community studies: some socio-anthropological perspectives

The three main theoretical approaches to study the small villages in this thesis are next presented. They are actually a composite of sociological and anthropological theories widely used in cultural and political studies of small-scale societies.

a) By looking at social order and its role

Within a Durkheimian functionalist perspective, the issue of *social order* seems to be one of the crucial elements to be studied. Particularly, there is need to see how is daily constructed. In such cases Douglas and Durkheim agree that local morals play a fundamental role in establishing social order. Shared values, codes and patterns of behaviours of individuals are among key elements in understanding how local communities work and are framed (Alexander 1988, Douglas 1986, Giddens 1978, Thompson 1982).

Likewise, they also suggest that local institutions ensure cohesion in small-scale societies. Uphoff (1986) agrees that local institutions are complexes of norms and behaviours that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes. The institutions may be a family, a game, a committee, or a ceremony, and so forth. The legitimating authority may be personal, such as a father, doctor, judge, referee, leader, and so on. But Durkheimian functionalism also sees social institutions as encoders of information and rituals in enduring legitimisation. According to Rossi (1970) institutions are often framed and legitimised within the *political life* of the village.

The Durkheimian approach suggests that institutions can be credited with making routine decisions, solving multiple problems and doing much regular or routine thinking on behalf of the individuals. But institutions cannot have purposes, only individuals can intend, plan consciously, and contrive oblique strategies (Douglas, 1986). Therefore the issue of individual commitment to the social order is fundamental. In other words, participation or complicity in the construction of institutions becomes recurrent necessity to ensure consensus over ruling frameworks in any such social order. Where this regularly repeated work of renewing the institution breaks down, then conflict and dissent take over. Thus there is never anything essential or given about institutions. Where they are not renewed they disappear.

[3] The Mexican-Spanish term for village is also town or *comunidad* (community). Thus, from now onwards the term village will be used to connote social aggregations at the smaller end of the community range (say, less than 2,500 inhabitants).

According to Taylor (1982), there are four ways in which communities work to maintain the social order:

- The *first* is practically an extra-rational form of social control based on *threats and offers*. These are no more or less than appeals to individual's self-interest. They have to do with small communities seen from the perspective of force or coercion.
- The *second* way is said to be maintained *by socialisation*. Adults are exposed to public shaming and children are put through painful initiations which train them in the right attitudes. Here, collective sanctions represent a form of collective action. That is to say, social sanctions are applied to penalise uncooperative behaviour.
- In the *third way,* social order is allegedly maintained in primitive or small communities through their structural characteristics. Essentially these are patterns of reciprocity, kinship, and recurrent marriage exchange.
- The *fourth way* social order is maintained is through belief *in supernatural sanctions*, such as fear of witchcraft, sorcery, or punitive ancestors. This last coincides with Therbon (2004) who talks about fear and resignation as two of the main important mechanisms of social order and ideological maintenance. Haverkort (1999) refers to spirituality and supernatural beliefs (the non-material forces) as playing an important role.

In the present study a number of entry points will be used to analyse the strategies through which social order is maintained in Mexican villages, but especial attention will be paid to of the complex of *usos y costumbres* (customary laws). An attempt will be made to build on what local researchers have studied so far, but also to take into account what villagers perceive to be important daily practices with implications for social order and the political life of villages.

b) By looking at social structure and its local implications

According to Lukes (1978) the meaning of the concept of *structure* varies with the context in which it is employed. The structural analysis of some objects is simply the theory of that object viewed as a system. In this sense, structure in its different uses connotes 'essence', 'totality', 'system of relations', 'dependence of parts in relation to a whole' and contrasts with 'observable characteristics', 'aggregate', 'superficial system', 'conjuncture', etc. According to the context there can be different structures in society: class, kinship, occupational, opportunity, age, linguistic, thought, myths, etc. These can be created, maintained and destroyed by acts of power.

Along these lines, Lévi-Strauss (1963) also defines *structure* in terms of underlying principles of organisation which are invisible and often unconscious. Structure is the principle of construction and the object of analysis, to be understood by its intimate reference to the concepts of system and value as defined in semiotics. However, the importance of the structure lies in finding out when a given player can make a choice and when he cannot.

Sewell (1992) argue that the term *structure* largely originated as an application of ideas from biology - as was the case with functionalism - where the structure of an organism is the anatomical arrangement of its various organs. Social systems were seen as organised around an 'institutional' arrangement of individuals defining their social relations. Most clearly expounded by the classic *structural functionalists*, a key notion is the institutions of a society are clusters of norms and meanings, drawn from a cultural repertoire, that define expectations that people hold about each other's behaviour. It is through these expectations that specific roles and reciprocal role relationships are defined.

Lukes (1974 & 1978) and Therbon (2004), argue that human beings in different kinds of societies act and operate with structurally determined limits. Those limits are imposed or agreed in the ruling mechanisms for ensuring social order, according to Douglas and Durkheim (e.g. Douglas 1986). Therefore, structure is considered a pattern, generating an observable uniformity of action in social processes. Power is exercised within structured limits, and structures come to represent sources of validated power within communities, and can be represented by local institutions, organisations and other modalities social grouping and interactions (Hunter 1978, Jennings 1964, Lukes 1978 & 1974).

In summary, *structure* is generally agreed to be one of the most important but also most elusive concepts in the social sciences. According to Sewell (1992) it is sometimes used rather loosely to refer to any observable 'pattern' in social activities, and empirical researchers, for example, have referred to statistical distributions of occupations and employment as disclosing the social structure of a society. More usefully, it is seen as designating the actual arrangement of individuals and groups within larger entities that Durkheim saw as social (as opposed to material) facts.

Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955)[4] applied the term *social structure* to the arrangement of persons in institutionally controlled or defined relations. *Structure* means a system or organised parts which are individual persons who participate in social life, occupying statuses within the system. The social network is made up of social relationships between individuals of a society. The individual is in turn controlled by norms or patterns. It is the function of, for example, folk tales to help maintain these norms and patterns. It was through offering a concept of emergence and maintenance of structure that Radcliffe-Brown made his major contribution to functionalist social theory (e.g. Radcliffe-Brown 1952).

A *social structure* does not, however, consist only of institutional connections. People act upon the institutionalised role and expectations and so come into definite and recurrent relations with each other. Although there is rarely a perfect correspondence between institutionalised expectations and actual social relations, the term social structure designates this crucial *combination of institutions and relations* as constituting the 'anatomy' of a society. Social structure, then, comprises both 'institutional structure' and 'relational structure' (Lukes 1978, Sewell 1992)

According to various authors, e.g. F. Hunter (1953), G. (1978) and M. Jennings (1964), a power structure has two important referents. The first is related to the *people* and *institutions* framed into the local context that have the potential capacity (power) to obtain ends they desire. It is very close to the term *power elites*, where minority group leaders and civic organisation personnel are wont to speak of manipulating the 'power structure' to achieve certain goals. The second referent is analogous to the definition of structure in concepts like social, economic and political structures, thus offering a wider but systematic consideration for the representation of social cohesion. A power structure thus consists of the more or less patterned elements involved in a power configuration or relationship for decision making. Decision making structures may thus be highly stratified, loose, fragmented, (non)integrated, highly variable, and yet quite permanent, and so forth.

Lowry (1965) argued that shaping local power structures represents a proximity on the part of the citizen of small communities to the channels of communication and power in which leadership and influence are exercised, resulting in a community-wide participation. In this sense, local power structures at community level may face several challenges of a personalised kind, putting the communities at stake at any given moment. For instance, hidden structures – such as local elites or families - may have a kind of hidden power to influence decision making without visible indicators (Rose 1967, Schermerhorn 1961, Wright Mills 1967).

This struggle among and between people and local structures is called by Lowry (1965) the *field of struggle,* or by Bourdieu (1985) and Nuijten (2005) the *social or force fields*, which in practice seen to be resultants of power exercises that contribute to daily life relations and the permanent constructing and shaping of power structures of communities. Therefore, the inertia of daily life could also lead to alienation and/or apathy, as well as sustaining social cohesion and integration processes. These force fields can also be considered sources of pluralism, while communities experience conflicts between myth and reality or ideology and society (Bourdieu 1985).

[4] He was interested in the functioning of the social structure and had significant influence in both anthropology and sociology. The functionalist dimension of Radcliffe-Brown's work, combined with its structural underpinnings, constitutes the foundations of *structural functionalism* in social sciences.

Power structures and the creation of social spaces for action

Frade (2003) and Polanyi (1969) suggest that within the *force fields* created by the interaction of actors, institutions, and organisations the spaces for action are created by people with similar interests, needs, wishes, desires and so forth, through both their common actions and via a shared frame of codes and values. The notion is captured in some accounts as *power to*, *power from within* and *empowerment* (Freire 1998, Law 1991, Rowlands 1997). However, there may exist certain threshold conditions before people are really able to act individually and collectively in their own interests.

Gaventa (2004) argues that understanding power may provide an insight on how better to perceive such spaces for mutual action. He suggests that power in practice may be better understood within three main dimensions: *places*, comprising different scales or levels (local, national or global); *power* itself, looked at in terms of the way it is manifested (e.g. invisible, hidden or visible); and *spaces,* looked at the way it is structured (provided/close, invited or claimed/created).

Therefore social spaces are created locally through individual or collective action reinforcing or challenging local values, norms and codes. This process might eventually reach upwards to affect regions or nations (Mosse 1999, Murphy 1990). This is the *bottom-up approach,* typically stimulated through participatory approaches to rural development. One of most visible examples is social mobilisation of local social movements. Whether conditions (knowledge, laws, skills, information and other resources) exist for the creation for such spaces is an open question; people should look for them. This is close to the concept of emancipation, empowerment and participation (Freire 1971/2000 & 1998). Thus, the creation of social spaces around real and lively concerns becomes in first instance meaningful for local people and a target for collective actions.

Many development interventions seek to engineer such spaces for the poor via a range of initiatives and approaches. These include the stimulation or facilitation of knowledge formation, building of skills, and mobilisation of resources. But unless led by the initiative of the poor themselves it amounts to an interventionist or *top-down approach*. Top-down approaches assume that someone creates a space for somebody else and that the intended user will automatically occupy the space and shape it according to actions then taken. In other words, spaces for action (it is assumed) can only be created by outsiders, and inclusion occurs when locals learn about the options and become evolved. The weaknesses and hazards of the approach are well described in for example Mosse (2005) and Townsend *et. al.* (2004). Unfortunately, many have missed the real presumptions behind the creation of spaces of local action. Some pay attention only to the formation and consolidation of non-formal organisations or groups (Hagmann *et. al.* 1998, Townsend *et. al.* 2004).

Therefore, the spaces of action as structures can also be identified as a type of power manifestation, i.e. social and cultural creations mainly resultant from the human inter-actions and the relations under given contexts. If so, certain conditions are needed to both set up and manage such emerging arenas. Individual(s) will have the last decision to take risks, change the rules or do nothing in order to make such spaces work out and become a reality for themselves (Kostner 1994, Waitley and Tucker 1989). The *how* will depend on peoples' own interests and decisions. Looking for external support and waiting for someone to come along may be seen as a normal reaction. But in the work described below it was considered important that people became aware of the importance of acting upon their own lives and problems, and not inhabiting spaces for empowerment created by outside interventions (Buck 1984, Freire 1971/2000, McKee 1993).

Ergo, it will be argued that social mobilisation and consultation are only forms or structure, rather than empowerment as such. For empowerment people have to consciously look, claim and create their own spaces. However, such spaces will not continue to be the same over time, but will open up or close down according to a myriad of actions taking place locally. Thus, spaces and actions will contribute to the construction of processes like social cohesion for endogenous or local development, but are also a likely source of local divisions and conflicts (Hickey and Mohan 2004, Mosse 1999 & 2004, Sen 1999). Empowerment, as conceptualised in this thesis, is not a species

of conflict resolution, but a means to self realisation after decades or centuries of repression and indifference.

About institutions and organisations: elements of social structure

So far, studies on social structures are close related to the way people create and validate local frameworks for their lives. They delineate spaces of interaction that bring out social cohesion or differentiation, but also a certain social order. The local institutions and organisations, and social relations creating these social spaces represent the basic structural components regulating people's actions in small-scale village-like rural societies.

In this sense Uphoff (1986) argues that terms, institutions and organisations are commonly interchangeable, and this contributes to ambiguity and confusion. According to him, there are three categories more or less recognised: a) organisations that are not institutions, like many NGO's, b) institutions that are not organisations, e.g. laws, marriage, etc., and c) organisations that are institutions (like churches, universities, etc) or vice versa (institutions that are organisations, e.g. the security services).

In this sense, *'Organisations represent structures of recognised and accepted roles. Those structures that result from interactions of roles can be complex or simple. The more complex an organisation is the more varied its capabilities. Therefore, organisations may operate in formal or informal basis. The latter means there is no legal or otherwise explicitly prescribed basis for roles or for the authority and other resources associated to them'...* (Uphoff 1986 p. [8])

But organisations acquire special status and legitimacy as soon as they satisfy people's needs or meet normative expectations over time. At this point one can say that an organisation becomes institutionalised. Therefore, institutionalisation is the process by which organisations and procedures acquire a value and stability.

Then *'institutions in general, whether organisations or not, are complexes of norms and behaviours that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes'. (*Uphoff 1986 p. [9])

One approach to the study of institutions focuses on the *rules* that shape behaviours, rather than *roles*, which accomplish the same thing. The approach was first proposed by institutional economists. Thus Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (1992) and Goldsmith (1992) made a distinction between *rule-oriented institutions* and *role-oriented institutions*. The former may be defined as the rules of the game in a society, or the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. The latter are defined as organisational systems that bring together people with different social backgrounds, knowledge and techno-scientific skills to address, collectively, specific outputs in the process of dealing with problems and uncertainties. This is very close to the issue of social order, as expounded by Durkheim and Douglas, where Institutions have also been taken to refer to entities that pattern behaviour-like routine, norms, shared expectations and morality.

However, role-oriented or rule-oriented approaches to institutional analysis encompass consideration of people's values and social norms. Then, at the bottom, it would not be rare to find out more role-oriented structures than ruled oriented. This may also be related to what Richards (2006 & 2007) calls *'performative participation'*, in which people collectively construct, validate and develop their own norms, values and routines within local frameworks, not only to rule their lives but also to shape and control other local processes, such as technology development.

So far, the first approach to the study of villages was about how social order is built and assured; the second approach is about the construction of the local means to delimit people's actions and behaviour. A social structural approach, in this regard, is about gaining insights into institutions, organisations and ways of interacting are constituted in daily practices, and how local agents then cope with top-down interventions. Later it will be argued that it is useful to approach this topic through a power mapping approach, in order to uncover implications for institutions, organisations and individuals.

c) Examining 'front' and 'back' stage/region

There is another important theoretical approach to study small societies and associated social facts, which builds on the work of Goffman (who himself built on Durkheim). This approach has resulted in useful unwrapping of complex webs of local facts, ideas and visions. It is based on the assumption that social life has both 'staged' and clandestine regions. This social demarcation is actually a heuristic dichotomy, logically proposed as a framework to look at what *is* and *is not* normally said, seen, heard and done. Sometimes it goes against any logic just to persuade agents to talk about socially unacceptable facts or business. This is to say, there are secret or hidden elements, and the researcher needs some insight into these secret regions in order to develop a wider perspective and build stories with two sides. The idea stems from the work of Goffman (1959 & 1966) but was applied to the study of villages in Liberia and Sierra Leone by Murphy (1980, 1981 & 1990). Murphy shows how organisational means are deployed by social actors to distance themselves from and manoeuvre around constraints imposed by institutional structures and norms. Public language and events are manifestations of facts in the memory of people, to show what they want to portray in terms of unity or cohesion. Public display – as in a public meeting to discuss development interventions – serve to recall shared concerns and positions within a community, and to 'act out' social codes of concerning values of cooperation.

But there is more than can be accessed through participating in these kinds of public events. Secret (*back stage*) regions are accessed only through talking to people once the trust has been built. What is mostly manifested in public is the repetition and validation of social codes, but the same values do not come to the fore necessarily when the same people are talked to in confidence and/or in private. Many times secrets only come out when close communication or observations are conducted regarding certain unclear or illogical public facts. Information is teased out uncomfortably. In public, pleasantries are exchanged, validating local norms and values through unwritten rules and cultural acceptance. This happens especially in public meetings or informal talks in the presence of others. Nevertheless, this social image has another face - secret, private, hidden, and shaped by intense conflict, local pride or acute tension. Both public and secret regions represent aspects of the social diversity of villages or any other type of small-scale social organisation.

To access these hidden regions demands much skill in observation and communication, as well as good functional grasp of the composition of local groups, and the nature of prevailing institutions and norms, and of the way externalities affect the social system.

In this sense, many researchers have conducted studies on power relations from different perspectives and angles, depending on their scientific disciplines (Govers 2006, van der Haar 2001). However, many have relied on conventional research methods for approaching villages and villagers, in some cases relying mainly on sociometric methods. In several cases, the local actors have been considered as static elements in their analyses. Or in other cases they are just looked as sources of information to be trawled by researchers' nets (Pretty 1995, Pretty *et. al.* 1995). This actually risks missing what is truly dynamic about the local situation. Here, much stress will be placed on customary rules, known as *usos y costumbres.* They constitute a regulatory system regularly validated in daily political life in small villages of Mexico, as a main institutional and relational structure ruling rural lives and ensuring some kind of social order. They are not readily studied through formal techniques oriented to *front stage* information. In chapter four *usos y costumbres* will be analysed not only from the way they are publicly presented but in terms of the hidden side, the *back stage* from which they draw much of their functionality, just as Murphy (1990) describes elders organising two-part meetings – a public event to allow women and youth to let off steam, and a closed session in which the real deals are done. The main concern will be to paint a two-sided portrait but drawing on local versions about how the power implicit in customary regulation is exercised and validated. The main repercussions on the local development of the case study villages will be described.

2.2 Research methodology, methods and tools

The research space

Local levels and the importance of contextualising the villages

The initial idea to identify, understand and look at 'lower' levels of society - and particularly small villages in Profound Mexico - was taken from Uphoff (1986), who suggests an initial detailed location of 'local levels' as a primordial entry point for the study of development (Figure 2.1). A second inspiration was the realisation that people normally make decisions based on local priorities because 'local' is somehow a lot more tangible than 'global', according to Kostner (1994). In the present case, the thesis considers the village a basic element, but with awareness that many village people are involved in mobility among levels, with major implications for development. Therefore, a wider and flexible concept of locality is introduced. This means that the local levels proposed by Uphoff are not necessarily fixed for social studies, but flexible and dynamic, depending on the context and peoples' actions (Sewell 1992, van der Haar 2001). Evidence in this case comes directly from the people of the villages.

In order to study villages, entry points have to be identified. In accordance with Mosse (1998 & 2004) identification of local processes is important, but it is necessary to gather public and hidden information on such processes, in order to get as much evidence as possible about how to interpret potential discourses and to ensure freedom from manipulative information management by different local stakeholders. Therefore flexible methods and tools are necessary in order to conduct flexible studies.

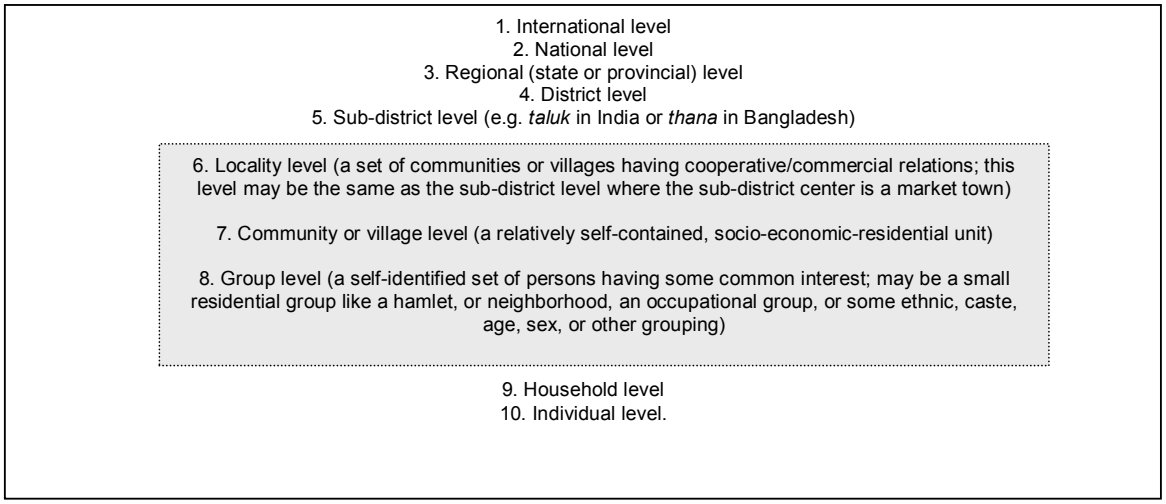


Figure 2.1. Levels of action with interventions, according to Uphoff (1986). *Note:* the inside frame (in grey) represents the local level.

In fact, the research space of this thesis was also defined beyond the cold numbers and mathematical extrapolations of international, national or regional analysis, as found in for example Behrman *et. al.* (2004), Behrman and Skoufias (2006), Posada (2006a), Ruíz *et. al.* (2002), Sadoulet *et. al.* (2001), Skoufias and McClafferty (2001), Walton and Lopez-Acevedo (2005), Zermeño and Domínguez (2000), who offer mostly generalised and optimistic data about the top-down initiatives undertaken by the Mexican government over the last decades. In other words, the levels to which these studies mainly refer are municipal, state or national or international, and mainly focused on interventions and their institutional implications, rather than on the people's targeted and local needs, and the implications of such needs.

The present study explores these 'bottom' levels of development beyond the villages. The research space is basically downwards from the municipality, but punctuated with evidence from villagers, families and organisations. Thus the central space of research is here *the village level* (Figure 2.2).

How the villages are run, shaped and/or structured is addressed, but also examples of peoples' actions and viewpoints will be highlighted, to attain a better understanding of local processes. This research space will be deployed first on what the local context represents for local development in terms of initiatives and ruling mechanisms. Second, an attempt will be made to show how villages are constituted, shaped or run, beyond the upper levels of local society. Third, how interventions are tackled or used by the villagers will be analysed.

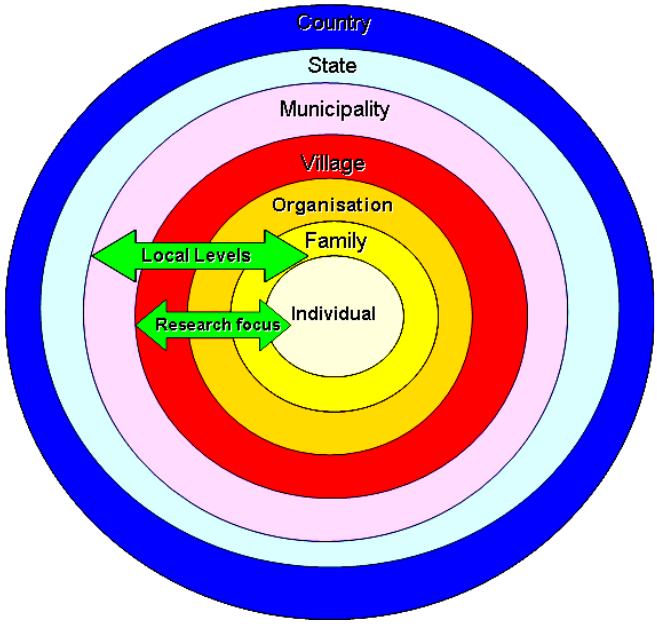


Figure 2.2. Local levels and research space covered in this thesis with a particular attention to the villages.

The Mexican unit of local levels: communities, towns or villages

In Mexico, for several decades, the concept of the village[5] has been a central subject of research for several anthropologists. Many studies and interventions have also been implemented, especially in villages with indigenous populations. They have been conducted by targeting cultural, economic and political issues, and by seeking for better insights on ethnicity and language, social relationships, local institutions and organisations, natural resources, productive systems, poverty, and impacts of social and economic models implemented by the state (i.e. Chevalier and Buckles 1995, DeWalt 1979, Eckstein 1978, Gledhill 1991, Govers 2006, Nuijten 1992 & 2003, van der Haar 2001). Nevertheless, much of the focus is on very specific aspects, such as families, individuals or local productive systems; the 'tangible elements' of villages. Few have analysed in detail 'intangible' issues such as local governance and its implications for village dynamics and the lives of individuals. Issues like the creation and maintenance of social order, as imposed by governance mechanisms on local organisations and institutions, and the setting up of daily relations among actors, and practice and validation of local norms, values and behaviours are less commonly addressed (e.g. Gledhill 2000 & 2005, Nuijten 2005, van der Haar 2001).

The fact is that thousands of Mexican villages seem to continue practising local mechanisms to rule their lives, administer resources, and maintain cohesion or divisions; apparently well beyond the reach of the state's laws. In this sense, some authors confirm the cultural notion of village as the original expression of 'indigenous' – i.e. as the way people live, organise their activities and define their identity, but with special emphasis on notions of consensus, justice and equality (Bonfil-Batalla 1990, Govers 2006, Nuijten *et. al.* 2005).

[5] The term community will be used more in the sense of communal activities, actions or resources of the collective. This last is related to the type of villages labelled by the Mexican government according to land distribution. However, the term *village*, in this case, considers both *ejido* and agrarian communities of Mexico. They may also be used as synonyms.

Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that Mexican villages basically share four elements to be constituted as communities of practices or *pueblo*: a) the relation with a common territory, b) sense of belonging, c) a common culture, and d) a collective project for the future (Carlsen 1999, van der Haar 2001). 'Indigenists' researchers and some Mexican anthropologist suggest that many indigenous villages do not have the last element. A reason is that the colonisation took advantage of local fractures to defend itself. However as communities of practice, villages are normally constituted by groups of families linked by ties of reciprocity, rituals of marriage, and other social relationships, such as *compadrazgos* (godparentship), and where a collective territory is shared and in which life is passed (De Mente 1998). Moreover, villagers often share a social feeling of protection and exercise a right to defend their own space and territory (see chapter 7).

Villagers make their life within spaces created by themselves, 'being community' according to their language. In other words, people from small villages live according to notions of '*being communal'* or *'collective'* overall. It is their existence as collectives and contrasts to the individual organisation of life they experience in other situations and places. They look first to communal benefits and later on to individual advantage. The local power is in the peoples' hands, under their own logic, and based upon their local political structures (Carlsen 1999, Schermerhorn 1961). They regard distinct classes of citizenship as differentiated by being *comunero* (communal or collective), *ejidatario* (village with rights over a piece of land) and *avecindado* (incomer or settler).

Labelling villages: an agrarian question

Before Mexico's major land reforms occurred (after the Mexican revolution of 1910) many villages were part of the *haciendas* (or landlord estates). These landlords received in inheritance amazing fortunes from the colonial period (García de León 2002, Grindle 1996, Warman 1979). Later on, with the constitution of 1917, three different forms of land tenure in Mexico were established: private, public, and social. This classification was not totally followed, neither practiced, until 1937 during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (Lombardo-Toledano 1973). The social land, which was basically distributed among the rural population, was also further subdivided into *communal* (mainly for areas in Southern Mexico with indigenous populations) and *ejido* lands (mainly in North, West and Central Mexico). This brought about two types of small villages: e*jido* villages and communal or agrarian villages. Then, villages tend to be labelled according to their land holding rights, *ejido* or *agrarian (communal)*[6].

Ejido villages are the nucleus of the *ejido* lands, where *ejidatarios* have their houses and integrate themselves as a social community. They are expected to have services as a health centre, basic school, electricity and water. In legal terms, an *ejido* is a landholding peasant community, or a collective land held by a group of people and recognised by the Mexican Constitution. According to Mexican legislation, it is a legal entity in the 'social interest sector'. Its jurisdiction is in the hands of Mexican-born peasants. The holding consists of the *ejidal* plots, i.e., individual farming plots, the school plots, the *ejidal* urban zones, houses and annexes to each plot, and any water and forest resources associated with the area assigned. Two basic kinds of *ejidos* exist: the 'individual' *ejido*, in which land tenure and 'ownership of rights' are legally vested in a community, but cropland is allocated by plots (*parcelas*) on a semi permanent basis among the individual *ejidatarios* (*ejido* members). The 'collective' *ejido* is an entity in which land resources are pooled for collectively organised usage (DeWalt 1979, Eckstein 1978, Gledhill, 1991). A majority of *ejidos* are of the individual kind and only a few of them in the South of Mexico are basically *ejidos colectivos*.

On the other hand, communal villages have 'possession rights' of a given surface of land for the village. Villagers can use the natural resources according to their own local rules and ways of organisation, but they are not owners. Individual land property (plots and other resources) does not exist and everybody is able to get from the territory 'the necessities to live'. These villages are called *Comunidades Agrarias* or agrarian villages, according to the type of possession: i.e., *bienes comunales* or common goods (Cámara de Diputados 2006).

[6] Article 27 of Mexican Constitution (Cámara de Diputados 2006).

Thus, in general, social lands (*ejidos or bienes comunales*) have been worked by *ejido* members (*ejidatarios*); *comuneros* (villagers with rights over the common resources) and *colonos* or *avecindados* (new settlers or incomers). On the contrary, private lands have been worked by owners, sharecroppers, and landless peasants. The ranchers have property titles and are allowed to sell the land and buy new parcels (DeWalt 1979, Eckstein 1978).

During the biggest Mexican land re-distribution (between 1937 and 1940) and onwards, rural and specifically agrarian sector reforms came to clearly differentiated by the type of social organisation around land rights (Nuijten 2003, Warman 1979). However, the indigenous and *mestizo* (or blood-mixed) villages of Southern Mexico saw few if any important changes in the practices of daily life (Concheiro and Grajales 2005, van der Haar 2001). The major change was a range of villages, including new *ejidos* and *comunal* areas, were formed to colonise the huge rainforest areas, especially in Southern Mexico. The older established villages officially recognised and largely left alone within certain regions of the country (Concheiro and Grajales 2005, De Mente 1998, García de León 2002).

Most of smaller villages – whether new or old - were automatically covered by the administrative umbrella of municipalities after the land reform. Nowadays some conflicts still exist, mainly because of interventions related to the provision of services and use of economic and natural resources (Concheiro and Grajales 2005, Gledhill 1991 & 2005, Nuijten 2003, var der Haar, 2001).

In this sense, in most villages dependence on the natural resource base is a crucial element in villagers' lives. Complex social factors determine the manner and intensity of use of local resources. On first impression daily livelihood practices may be quite difficult to unravel. Trying to figure out what determines or conditions the use, exploitation or management of local natural resources may result in misinterpretations. One can say that economic factors play the most important role; however local processes are not always easily or comprehensively described in economic terms. Social as well as economic needs are figured into the local needs and aspirations of villages and individuals.

Villages studied

The villages investigated are both located in Southern Mexico. One is called El Oro, and belongs to the Santo Domingo Nuxaá municipality, Oaxaca State. The other is called California, located on the *Sierra* of the Villa Flores municipality, in the Frailesca region of Chiapas State (Figure 2.3).

Among the main reasons to select these villages:

- We had heard and known something about them due to former visits with undergraduate students
- They both apparently presented interventions of different types
- There are located in two of the poorest states of the country. They are considered to belong in the very highest percentile according to rates of marginalisation and poverty, more so than surrounding villages even
- They were very isolated and somehow reluctant initially to welcome outsiders
- Both of them practice a governance system based on *usos y costumbres (U&C)*

Figure 2.3. Location of the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas, and the villages El Oro, Santo Domingo Nuxaá and California, Villa Flores. (*Source:* elaborated from different maps gathered on the internet)

El Oro: main characteristics[7]

El Oro is an indigenous Mixtec village located at the highlands in the *Mixteca* region of Oaxaca State. The village has about 1,200 inhabitants (75 % are children under 15). There are about 130 citizens with rights on local resources and decision making autonomy in regard to resources. All of them are called *Mixtecos,* and they share a millenarian culture of social organisation, with particular elements of own language and traditions. This village belongs to the municipality of Santo Domingo Nuxaá, within the district of Nochixtlán in the Mixtec region. The municipality and El Oro itself are ruled by the U&C system. El Oro is one of the five most important *Agencias de Policía* (i.e. agencies under municipal control). The others are Ojo de Agua, Llano de Ayuca, El Porvenir and La Muralla. The most important Mixteco root being strongly kept is the language that is mainly used as a connection with other villages in the region. Actually their language is also a local motive of pride. No other cultural manifestations as Mixtecos are observed.

El Oro has a warm semi-humid climate but because its altitude (2,350 m), nights are cold (between 8-10 degrees C). The rainy season is from the end of May until October with annual rainfall of 800 mm. Close to the village there are two very small and clean rivers, from which water is directly brought a high point in the village, stored and distributed through eight taps. The natural vegetation is mostly pine forest and tropical oaks, locally used for fuel, house building, and to make charcoal and furniture.

The houses in El Oro are basically made of wood and sun-dried clay blocks and have dirt floors. Villagers base their productive activities upon small scale agriculture and livestock. However, the main cash earning activity is the exploitation of a portion of forest. The villagers mostly sell wood or charcoal. The main crops are maize, wheat and oats (cropped by men on collective lands) and a few vegetables species like beans, chilli peppers, courgette and lettuces (cropped by women around the homestead). The livestock rearing is basically small herds of goats and sheep, with some households owning a few cows and chickens. All of them are the responsibility of women

[7] Information mainly gathered from a pre-diagnosis made during the first visits to the village. Complementary information was picked up from the villagers along the research period.

and children. Most production is destined for self-subsistence. What is left is sold on the market in Oaxaca. The land tenure is the communal type. Rights to use local resources are regulated by a system of customary laws, exercised as the main mechanism for allocation and control. In other words, everyone with local rights and respect for internal agreements, norms, and traditions can make some use of the soil, water and forest resources available.

Since the municipality and the village are considered highly marginalised and poor (Berumen 2003, CONAPO 2006, INEGI 2006abcd, INFDM 2002) some external poverty alleviating interventions are encountered at the village level. The (federal) government offices run a health and education initiative called *Oportunidades*. A couple of villagers have been trained as health promoters, and are supposed to educate villagers regarding family health, reproduction and enhancement of social harmony. Monthly economic support is provided to every woman with children. The other federal initiative is called *Procampo*, which provides a cropping-season allowance to all male and female farmers, to buy inputs for the maize fields. Other productive interventions have been run by a local NGO for about twenty years. The NGO was initially called AMEXTRA and later on *Misión Integral*. This NGO depends mainly on an American Protestant church (*Floresta*) for support.

The distance between Mexico City and El Oro is about 588 km. Access to El Oro is possible by travelling from Mexico City to Oaxaca City by bus (about 6 hours) or airplane (a 45 minute flight). Once in Oaxaca, it is necessary to take the village's 'rural bus' at the riverside of 'Rio Atoyac' (near the *central de abastos*). The bus travels from Oaxaca City to El Oro every day with exception of Mondays, leaving at 2:15 pm. The village is reached after a two hour trip. The other option is to drive. Once in Oaxaca City, it is necessary to take the freeway to Nochixtlán and after about an hour a famous curve called 'El Caracol' will be reached. Exactly in the middle of that curve is a connection to a rural road. At that point it is necessary to leave the freeway and enter the dirt road. In about another hour El Oro will be approached.

The collective reconstruction of El Oro history

History re-construction was a collective exercise undertaken with villagers during a couple of workshops in order to identify the most important moments lodged in the collective memory (Table 2.1). The following data were compiled using the time-line as a main participatory tool. Information was also cross-checked with local informants. This was in effect the initial attempt to describe village life in *front stage* terms.

Table 2.1. Most important historical moments of El Oro identified during the workshops.

Year	Event
1909	The first two Presbyterian families expelled from San Domingo Nuxaá arrived to this area with forest. The Presbyterian church arranges some talks and negotiation with the Catholic and Methodist churches at the municipality
1914	Due to the Mexican revolution some people also look for refugee in this isolated area. At the same time because of a dry season in the valleys, food was scarce and hunger affected the region; this forced some people to look for assistance in the El Oro
1915	Some North Americans (gringos or *güeros*) came and opened a mine to extract gold and mica in the village territories. Villagers were cheated about the mine and were only hired as labourers
	Adoption of the system of *usos y costumbres*
1921	The first Presbyterian chapel is built on the highest hill of the village. It was made of local timber
1925	Villagers assist in building another chapel in Chinapa, a neighbourhood village
1930	Villagers define an area to settle the cemetery
1935	They participate in the construction of the rural road linking to the freeway that connects Oaxaca City and Nochixtlán
1938	The first elementary school is built. At the same time the first education committee is formed
1942	The village is recognised and registered as a communal village through a national decree
1948	Further extraction of gold and mica
1960	The Presbyterian chapel roof is replaced with a local material called *tejamanil* (leaves of a palm tree)
1965	The villages is constituted as an Agency of the municipality
	The first mill is bought and the committee for its management is formed
	The committee for local infrastructure and construction is also formed
1966	The Presbyterian church faces up a crisis, and only one family in the village is practicing the religion. A 'faith re-conquer' strategy is launched and North American missionaries start to come to the village. They stayed up to a month and brought from the USA several presents like cloth and toys for the children
1968	The DIF office (office for family integral development) launches the first open school for adults. The committee is also constituted

Table 2.1 (Continued)

1969	The rural road to connect the villages Herradura-Ojo de Agua is made
1970	The elementary school started working with six grades of education
1976	A well is opened in order to provide water to the villagers
1977	The first fertilisers are introduced into the village
1980	The villagers participate in the building of another Presbyterian chapel in the village of Tres Vistas
	It is noticed that the amount of water is going down drastically and the crops start to decline in production
1983	The forest exploitation started on an intensive basis due to economic crisis
	The construction and running of the kindergarten is carried out
	Coplamar (a programme from the state of Oaxaca) starts to provide some assistance for local health. Then a health committee is also formed.
1985	The current building of the local authorities is opened
	Electricity is introduced
	The Presbyterian organisation called AMEXTRA (an NGO) arrives in the village
1986	Two local shops are opened, both of them managed by the village. The committees for their management are formed
1990	The water is brought from the small rivers
	The rural road from El Oro to Chinapa is opened
	The Presbyterian chapel is built in the village of Piedra de Cal
	A basketball field is built
1992	The electric network is extended A forest nursery is launched by the NGO and some villagers participate
1993	The satellite telephone is introduced
1995	Electricity and water is provided to Chinapa village
1997	Some ecological (dry) sanitary cabins are built with Coplamar's support
	People from *Misión Integral* (before AMEXTRA) arrived
1998	A committee for road maintenance is formed
	The secondary school 'by TV' is built and opened
	The Catholic chapel is built and Catholicism is formally practiced
	The governmental programme *Progresa* is provided to eight families
1999	The Presbyterian chapel is rebuilt with concrete
2000	The forest nursery is expropriated by the village
2002	The village buys a bus to work as a public transport from the village to Oaxaca City. The committee for its management and administration is formed
	The government programme called *Oportunidades* is brought to the village and all the women are included
	The well runs dry
	Another forest nursery is run in Chinapa with villagers' support
2003	A committee is formed to ensure water provision to the village
2004	A committee for running a local museum is approved as result of these research workshops

These important dates give an initial idea about the local development efforts and how El Oro has been structured as a social entity over the past century. The main dates and facts are used to explain further events affecting local actors in chapters 5-7.

California: main characteristics[8]

California is mixed village where *mestizos* and indigenous people have lived together for almost 30 years. The village has about 800 inhabitants (here also 75 % are children and young people). There are 70 men with resource rights and 10 settlers (or *avecindados)*. This village is inhabited mainly by immigrants from other regions of the state of Chiapas and the coast of Oaxaca. California is the result of two typical Mexican phenomena: a) land conflicts and fights against huge-land concentrators (landlords), and b) the process of re-location of population displaced by a federal hydro-electric project. Most re-locations in Mexico reflect social conflicts and popular mobilisations. In this village the common language is Spanish, but between families from the same ethnic group indigenous languages - mainly Tzotzil and Tzeltal – are still in use.

California is an isolated village placed in the *Sierra* ('high lands') of Villa Flores Municipality. Geopolitically and administratively it belongs to that municipality, located in the Frailesca region of the State of Chiapas. Villa Flores is ruled under a democratic system of governance based on elections, where political parties compete for the head of the municipality every three years.

[8] Information gathered from a pre-diagnosis made during the first visits to the village. Complementary information was also picked up from the villagers during the research period.

However, California is one of 992 of villages composing Villa Flores. Its representation is through a municipal agent, who is internally and locally selected every three years. Nevertheless, the village is basically administered through the system of customary laws with an own governmental structure.

Moreover, California is located within a national rainforest protected area called *'Reserva de la Biosfera de la Sepultura'.* The village – as would be expected – has a humid tropical climate, at an altitude of about 1,500 m. During the day it can be exhaustingly warm, but at nights temperature can go down to between 16 -18 degrees C. The rainy season lasts from May to the end of March with annual rainfall of 2550 mm. There are about seven small branches of a main river crossing the village. Some of them are damned and there is a main construction for water storage, from where water is distributed among the population throughout pipelines. The natural vegetation is composed of rainforest trees, with some tropical pine trees. About 50% of the houses are made of local sun-dried clay blocks and thatched from local available plants. Their floors are basically of dirt. The rest of the houses are made of modern construction materials got from different interveners. Villagers base their main activities upon small-scale subsistence farming. They crop maize, beans, chilli peppers, banana trees and mangos. Only a small portion of the agricultural production is sometimes sold on the market, either in Villa Flores or in the capital city of the state, Tuxtla Gutierrez. However, most villagers earn cash from extensive live-stocking based on small herds of local race cattle. Most women have a few chickens and turkeys, to obtain eggs and meat for the family. Besides, it is common to see small gardens with medicinal plants and vegetables surrounding the houses. For most villagers, production and particularly agriculture-related activities are seen more as a way of life than as an economic activity. Animals, plants and other resources are sometimes just seen as savings strategy for the future. It is locally said that *'produce is sold only when we really need cash or have an emergency'.* The village holds about 1,222 ha of land. It is distributed under two systems, collective *Ejido* and common lands. Main crops and animals are kept on *ejidal* lands. The other natural resources, including forest (used for wood and firewood), hunting of wild animals (for food) and water, are regulated through a system of *common* rights, shaped by internal rules exercised through customary laws. Thus, administratively this village belongs to two classificatory worlds: it is both an agrarian community but also collective *ejido* village. Its local governance is settled through the *usos y costumbres* system.

The census for the Chiapas State considers the villages surrounding the *Sierra* of Villa Flores as being among the poorest in La Frailesca, and in the state as a whole (CONAPO 2006, INEGI 2006abcd, INFDM 2003). Over at least 15 years, villagers have received certain monetary and material support from governmental programmes, notably *Oportunidades* and/or *Procampo,* but also from two political parties. Governmental assistance has been used to keep the peace in the area, to avoid rebellion or insurgency. However, it seems political parties seek mainly captive votes in election periods. These interventions are looked on by the villagers as *'presents and nothing more,'* as they say. This situation has apparently settled certain paternalistic patterns of behaviour on villagers in the *Sierra* of Villa Flores. But it should also be noted that the village is placed within a national protected area, and the use of common resources is restricted by federal laws. Apparently, because of the lack of other local opportunities for personal and local development, people overexploit the few natural resources, emigrate or become enrolled in illegal activities. Detailed information will be presented in following chapters.

The distance between Mexico City and California village is about 1,200 km. Access to the village is possible by travelling from Mexico City to Tuxtla Gutierrez by bus (a 14 hour trip) or airplane (2 hour flight). Once in Tuxtla, it is necessary to take a bus or *'taxi colectivo'* to Villa Flores (a two hour trip). In Villa Flores it is then necessary to wait for a rural bus which goes to Tres Picos village or one that travels to Los Angeles village. Both of them leave Villa Flores at 2:15 pm every day. After a trip of nearly three hours the bus going to Tres Picos will stop in California. The one going to Los Angeles will drop passengers at an intersection of the rural road. Passengers then need to walk about 45 minutes to reach the village. The other option is to drive. Once in Villa Flores, take the freeway to Chanona and Agrónomos Mexicanos. After passing this last village (about 6 km) there is a connection from the main freeway to a rustic road. This is the main entrance to the *Sierra*. Following that route for about an hour the intersection between California and Los Angeles will be

approached. Once there, it is necessary to take the left fork and in about 10 minutes California will be reached.

The collective reconstruction of California history

Historical re-construction was also carried out through two workshops and use of the history line as main tool (Table 2.2). Cross checking of information was undertaken with key informants.

Table 2.2. Most important historical moments of California identified during the workshops.

Year	Event
1975	Before California was founded, this village was a huge ranch called Sólo Díos (Only God Knows). The owner was Mr. Adalberto Hernández Gómez. According to the villagers, Mr Hernández never showed documents on his property rights
1979	They said to be about 20 people started the 'fight for the land': Thus the settlers were: Antonio Ramírez de la Cruz, Carlos Martínez Pérez, Belisario Sánchez Méndez, Régulo Gómez Méndez, Seir Gómez Sánchez, Martín Gómez Sánchez, Leandro Hernández López, Miguel Sánchez Hernández, Manuel Sánchez Sánchez, Andrés Sánchez Sánchez, Francisco Zaraus Martínez, Alfonso Guillén Moreno, Alfonso Guillén Grajales, Daniel Guillén Grajales, Juan Gómez Paquistán, Joaquín Escobar Escobar, Ciésar Gómez Sánchez, Mario Hernández López, Jesús Barrera, Rosendo Rincón Magdaleno, Ciro Hernández, Alfonso Hernández Estinca, Reynol Hernández Estinca y Asunción Pimentel
	The first 'houses' were raised with plastic bags under the trees. Then, a temporary local Municipal Agent (MA) is appointed in the village as recommended by municipal officers.
1980	The first extraordinary meeting is held in order to constitute the Village Assembly (VA) and the *Ejido* Commissary (EC). At this moment, the U&C is accepted as main ruling mechanism.
	During 1980 and 1981 the settlers held several talks with the municipality and provided the first personal identification data and pictures of the occupied area
	Several verbal and weapon-backed threats were launched by the land-owner. Some felt intimidated and left the 'village' for some weeks. They later came back and joined again
1981	The area was totally coved by natural vegetation with huge tropical trees, tropical pine trees and oaks. When they needed to crop for food and some cash to continue with the process of settlement, several trees were cut down and shifting cultivation started to be the practiced. Crops like maize, bean, pumpkins, and chilli peppers were grown. Later on a few trees and other fruits were planted. Bananas, sugar cane, mangos, citrus, sweet potato, sweet cassava are some of them
	The first credits are provided by the municipal office for rural development. Credits received were for cropping maize and bean. The municipal president was Roger de Coss
	Alter the credits, villagers opened new areas to crop more maize and bean, then a federal officer came to stop them and some were threatened to be taken to jail
1983	The first wooden houses are made and a preliminary delimitation of the 'urban' area of the village is made
	The first families (wives and children) of the settlers start to join them and travel from former areas of residence. Some came from different regions of the state; from the *Tzotzil and Tzeltal highlands (*Las Margaritas, Soyaló, Bochil, San Francisco, San Juancito, San Juan Chamula, Mapastepec, Joaquín Miguel Gutiérrez), form *the coast of Chiapas*: Tuxtla Chico and Huixtla, *The coast of Oaxaca*: Chahuites and Tapananepec
1985	Electricity was introduced with support of the municipal office called Copladen
	The first cows were provided by the rural development office of the municipality
	Villagers started to look for support in many offices to build up the Casa *Ejidal (Ejido house or building)* and introduce pipelines to lead water from the rivers into the village, and store it
	Activities of two local churches began in the village: Adventist and Pentecostal
1986	The first elementary school is established. Its name is Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. It had only one classroom built with the Copladen support. The municipal president was Álvaro González (alias big horse)
1993	A conflict with the neighbourhood villages Tres Picos, Los Angeles and Ricardo Flores Magón breaks out. It was during the federal process of lands delimitation
1994	The president Ernesto Zedillo visited the village together with the governor Albores Guillén. It was due to two main reasons: to bring material support after the disaster caused by a hurricane which destroyed almost all the houses; and the handing of the federal certificates to recognise the village as a communal settlement as well as *ejido*
	Some first rumours about a national decree for a nature reserve surrounding the village territories are heard
1995	The 17 of September is the only local celebration held so far about the village constitution. It is due to the fact that the religions being practiced did not allow the people to have massive celebration. It is because the opportunity of misbehaving of the villagers, like drinking alcohol and fighting
1997	The second classroom is built with Copladen support during the municipal period of Oscar Zebadúa
	A credit providing some sheep is received from the municipality
2000	The rural development programme of the municipality provided more than 2,000 coffee plants to the village
	30 dry sanitary cabins were installed in some family' homes during the presidential period of Víctor Hugo Zuart Velázquez through the Copladen. At the same time, the SEMARNAT provided the village with thousands of plants of tropical trees to reforest the village's lands
2001	Copladen provides another set of 38 dry sanitary cabins
2002	SEMANARNAT paid to the villagers about $ 60 USD per hectare for areas proven to be reforested
	Copladen provides metal pipes to re-habilitate the village's water system
2003	An extension of the electrical network is in process of being accepted. Copladen assists them to negotiate to the CFE
2004	The idea of seeking a village bus came out during these workshops and a committee was formed

In California as well as El Oro, the important dates give an initial idea about the local development efforts and the structuring of California as a rural social entity. The main dates and facts are used to explain further facts relating to local actors in the following chapters.

Research methodology, phases and tools

Emerging participatory methods seem to have some interesting elements to take into account for researching at the village level. Some of them are from the development sector; others derive from the innovative ideas of certain researchers in sociology and anthropology. The main aim is a more interactive way of understanding local actors as part of a constructive process (Abbot 1996, Guijt 1995, Röling 1996). Thus, action-oriented research has emerged as a distinct field. This seeks to mingle methods and tools used in anthropology and in the development sector. The mixture includes participant observation, resource mapping and facilitated problem analysis.

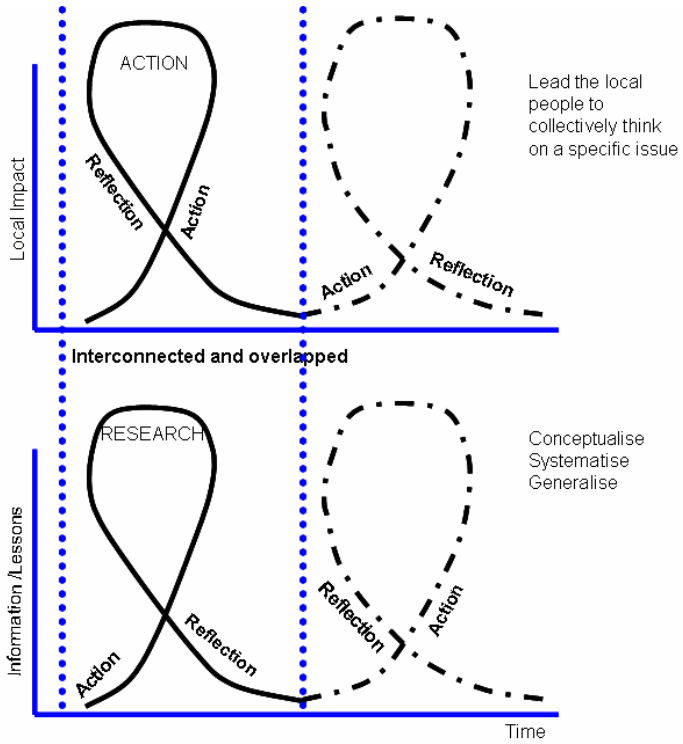
Participatory approaches and research tools initiate a different manner of interaction among stakeholders within rural development. Several interventions look at them as fairer alternatives to establish relations between outsiders and insiders (Keune and Boog 2000, McAllister and Vernooy 1999). In this study, in order to study the two villages and their development a Participatory Action Research (PAR)[9] was carried out, in order to create a context in which villagers could themselves approach the structure, rules, and functioning of their own villages in ways that might strengthen ongoing transformations (as indicated in the historical assays above). PAR was used as the main methodology to launch local learning cycles relevant to both action and reflection among participants. The villages, in turn, agreed to the writing of this study as a documentation of these experiences, and as a contribution to agreed research objectives (Figure 2.4). To this end, therefore, a series of about 20 participatory workshops (ten per village) was run during the years 2003 and 2005 in the two villages. Thus, information was collectively re-constructed and gathered during the research process. People participated in the analysis of their own realities, while a research team was facilitating the emerging discussions.

As mentioned above, a series of field activities was framed within a PAR methodology. It addressed reflection, while *acting* and *interacting* within two simultaneous learning cycles[10]. The methodology proposes:

- The stimulation of a participatory learning process while acting on and investigating a relevant issue for the villages
- The suggestion to set up two parallel learning cycles, one for action and the other for research. Both of them seek to stimulate or provide a basis for participatory action, whilst researchers play the role of facilitators, stimulating the cycle with the local people
- Approaching shared thinking and analysis on local conditions
- The making of people aware of a new manner of interaction with outsiders
- The researchers constantly gathering lessons from the action, keeping in mind research objectives
- Conceptualisation, generalisation and systematisation as major tasks in order to have a good perspective on the PAR process (Figure 2.4)

[9] Participatory research describes different levels and types of local involvement in and control over a research process. It actually demands diverse methods, tools and approaches. It includes methodologies such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and Farmer Participatory Research (FPR). The rationale for using participatory action research may be *functional*, to encourage community participation in order to improve the usefulness of the research to local people, but also to stimulate at the same time different reflections with and for the people, over their own concerns, but also to identify short-term actions (see i.e. Almekinders and Hagmann 2002 & 2003, Ashby *et. al.* 1987, Chambers 1994, Chambers *et. al.* 1993, Hamilton 1995, Keune and Boog 2000, Pretty 1995, Selener 1997, Simpson 1998).

[10] See also Abbot (1996), Hagmann (1999), Hagmann and Almekinders (2003), Hagmann *et. al.* (1998 & 1999), Hamilton (1995).



Above – the learning cycle of the village; below – the learning cycle of research.

Figure 2.4. Representation of two learning cycles according to the proposed PAR methodology.

In summary, participatory action-oriented research aims to trigger two learning cycles, in order to stimulate joint reflection on aspects of village life that have become inaccessible to critique and reform due to local routine and inertia. A learning cycle is a set of actions facilitated and implemented by the researcher in order to bring people together to start analysis of local context and concerns. It runs from inclusion of research objectives to the analysis of findings. A cycle is closed with local agreements and when researchers catch up sufficient information for analysis on the collective phases and actions implemented during the research.

In this case, different methods and tools were framed by this overall idea. Framing also included an awareness of critical voices concerning the rhetoric often used with some participatory methods, as noted by Guijt (1995), Groot (2002), Michener (1998), Richards (1995) and Ricks (2003).

Field research phases, methods and tools

The field research process was conducted in different phases in combination with different methods and tools.

a) **Team building and preliminary tools identification**

This was the first research stage. Actually it was decided upon for two main reasons. The first was because we embraced the objective of trying new approaches to interact with the locals at the same time as collecting data. Secondly, it was necessary because of the existing lack of participatory research teams and available experience for working at the village level in Mexico. We had the opportunity to see some local research teams claiming to work in a participatory and interdisciplinary manner, but once in the field they often worked solely with extractive tools and methods. The necessity to build capacity emerged naturally within the current research. A team was formed, composed of researchers and students from local universities who were initially invited to participate in a two day workshop in which research proposal objectives were presented and widely discussed. At the same time, the identification of candidates for the project, and their willingness to get involved were accomplished.

Thereafter, the team was intensively trained over a period of three months for their role in conducting action research. Two experienced researchers and facilitators played the role of trainers. Theory and practice of participatory methods and tools were studied. Finally, there was a preliminary identification of potential tools to be used. These were practiced and calibrated before going to the villages.

b) Getting into the field

The entry point was when the research team travelled to the villages and had its first impression of the two localities. Once in the villages, it happened that by meeting the local authorities, permission to conduct the research was requested. Village chiefs recommended us to present the overall ideas of the research to the Village Assembly[11] during the next scheduled meeting. 'Research' was thus added to the monthly agenda.

c) Presentation of team members and research project: getting local permission

The research team was invited to attend the meeting at which villagers discuss local concerns. The last point on the agenda was our presentation, including the ideas about conducting research in their villages, and why it might be interesting. After introductions, and a presentation of research objectives, the team was asked to leave the public hall and villagers started an internal deliberation. The discussion was conducted by the local authorities in both villages. After almost an hour of discussion, the research team was asked to come to the hall to listen to the decision. The assemblies accepted the research idea with the only condition that every piece of information gathered would be shared with the villagers after every event conducted. Furthermore, villagers made it clear that they would expect the research team's support in certain matters they might propose in the course of the interaction with them. The research team also made it clear that they had no investment resources for the villages, since they lacked any means to contribute directly to economic development. The research team made a first agreement, and a first research meeting was scheduled for two weeks later in both villages, in order to make a detailed presentation of the research phases and negotiate agenda and other logistical aspects.

d) Setting the research agenda *versus* local interests

Once the research team arrived in the village, first activities were conducted. Preparation and posting of invitation letters was made in public places for the first workshop. The first facts were observed, before conducting of the first workshop. The elderly in El Oro manifested an interest in recapitulating their life and history as a village. They approached the research team and tried to convince the facilitators about the importance of the topic. Their concern was that youth knew nothing about the village's past. That moment was crucial to understand the importance of flexibility in research strategy and need for openness to arrive at the right moment to launch learning cycles of the participatory action research. This provided a useful initial entry point, alerting the team to a number of important issues, and encouraging greater participation by villagers.

Thus, without abandoning the objectives of the research, the research team decided to make a presentation with two perspectives. One was to inform villagers about the research team's interests and objectives and a second was to let the locals post their opinions and concerns, but also to gauge their interests and expectations. Several ideas and suggestions came from their side, leading to negotiation on points made. Village history and its importance for locals, and analysis of strategies for dealing with the main local problems, were their main negotiated demands. These were in fact crucial elements that the research objectives required us to address in any case. These issues were then taken into account in the design of the first workshops. Thus the agreed agenda was made clear to all, after full negotiations on both requirements. The team then took the El Oro experience to California. In California, ideas on analysing history and problems previously discussed in El Oro were well received. Thus there

[11] The Village Assembly in small villages is the maximum authority to make decisions. It is composed of all village citizens with rights to participate in the consensus forming processes. The chiefs are the body of village representatives, and make decisions on the administrative level, while monitoring overall activities (see chapters 4-6).

was a filtering and adjustment of previously considered tools, and they were made more suitable for the local conditions as a result. Drawings and puzzles were developed in order to help illiterate villagers participate in the agreed activities.

Another agreement, previous to the workshops, was the elaboration of a general village's appraisal, in order to get a quick overview about people, natural resources and main productive activities. By making some fields visits to their farms and talking to some people valuable information was compiled for each village.

e) Workshop implementation

This phase was the main backbone of the action-research methodology leading to documentation of the village in its *front stage* aspects. For instance, village history, certain elements of the local governance system, power mapping and all other public information was collected during this phase. The workshops comprised three steps:

i. Planning. Team members discussed a strategy to be followed, basically which issues were to approach and the specific tools and materials to be used at every workshop. Planning followed a diagnostic exercise, taking into consideration suggestions from local people. Type of invitation, materials to use because illiteracy, time and venue for the event, were decided. These activities were planned in the villages a month previous to each workshop and reviewed three-five days before the workshop took place. Research team always made an open invitation to all the villagers to attend, but they were also personally visited at home and invited to participate. Careful observation of who decided to attend and who not, was made. The basic participatory tools used during the workshops for gathering of information were often adjusted to fit local situations, and to ensure stimulation of people's participation. This was often done through visual diagrams. The main participatory tools[12] were as follows:

- *The time line* was used to re-construct interactively village histories, based on knowing of most important events in the villages, historical organisation and general aspects of local governance. It was locally called *'la linea de nuestra historia'* or 'our history line'. Two workshops per village were conducted.
- *Venn diagram* techniques was also modified and used to identify local leaderships, actors and the relations among them, types of interactions between villagers-villagers and villagers-outsiders, and intervention groups. This tool was crucial for the participatory drawing of local power maps. This was locally called the *'el comal y la tortilla'* (cooking wraps plate). Five workshops per village were conducted.
- *Problem matrix* was adapted and used for problem analysis, from identification to ranking and scoring, and also for identification of problems. Different views of problems came out, but also cause and effect were analysed. Villagers called this the 'problems table' or *'el cuadro de problemas'.* This tool was very useful to identify local areas for development and empowerment, and the actions taken by different local actors. Three workshops per village were conducted.

ii. Conduct of workshops Research team members played specific roles in each workshop. There was a facilitator, co-facilitator, writer, observer and logistic supporter. Motivation and encouragement for both members and participants were basic aspects considered at the commencement of each workshop. Time management was very important since villagers are not used to staying in long sessions. Thus no workshop was longer than three hours. The research team members rotated roles at different workshops, with the exception of the observer.

[12] For further details on these tools see Appendix 1. For more participatory methods and tools for conducting PAR see also Bell (1999), Geilfus (1997), Guzmán *et. al.* (1996), Kaner (1996), Macdonald and Hearle (1984), Miranda (2000 & 2001), Pretty *et. al.* (1995), Sadomba 1996, Shah 1995.

iii. Reflection had two aspects:

- *Local reflection* was carried out during and at the end of every workshop, involving all participants. Inputs and outcomes were discussed and analysed in small group evaluations. Finally, information shared and gathered was left in the villages, to foster further local self-reflection when the research team was gone. The way the results were presented for internal use was decided by the villagers, and research team only assisted in the activity. Different flipcharts and summary of the proceedings remained at the villages. Some were placed in the public halls. Some examples are the tables 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5.
- *External reflection* was conducted with the research team, in order to evaluate each workshop. Outputs, outcomes, roles played, feelings generated, and so on were discussed immediately after every workshop. These reflections were useful in preparing future research steps.

f) Documentation, systematisation and analysis

This phase was undertaken every time a workshop or any other activity was carried out at village level. Support from the research team was crucial, especially during the workshops, in which the systematiser sought to concentrate all the information on specific proceedings. The central idea was to gather as much information as possible from what had been collectively discussed or individually shared by villagers. For instance, information gathered outside the workshops was typed into annexes of workshop proceedings. Thus more details - but also observations on social dynamics and the results of in-depth discussions - were documented. Personal notes and observations on the workshops, field visits, informal talks etc. were taken by the research team leader, who was also the observer during the workshops.

The following tables are examples of how the information was gathered and locally shared.

Table 2.3. Village history.

Constitution	Observations
Origins	Main insights on the village foundation
Important moments	Placed by decades and identification of important dates and events

Table 2.4. Village current configuration.

Who is who	Observations
Local organisations/institutions Actors (passive and/or active, formal or non-formal, etc.)	How they looked at themselves and placed their organisations within the village
Linkages and other types of local relationships	According to closeness to the village and importance (size and thickness of arrows)
Leaders & representativeness	Names of committee coordinators and other local leaders
Interventions or external organisations in the village	If they identify any kind of intervention and intervener

Table 2.5. Village problems and status.

Problem analysis	Observations
Identification, ranking and scoring	What were the main problems and their roots
Solutions proposed or thought about, actions being taken	Who was addressing what and how, especially If they recognise the role of interventions or interveners
Goals achieved/not achieved	Main achievements and challenges

g) Ethnographic methods

Participatory methods were an excellent option to figure out *front stage* village representations and interactions (see chapters 5 & 8) but there was also the necessity to think about alternative tools to bring out the hidden aspects or *back stage* representations and interactions. It was here that anthropological methods were used basically to try to figure out information not shared or recalled during the conduct of the action research. These methods were also useful for cross-checking information on local structures and for collecting missing data. Ethnographic observation was conducted based on participant observation, and via field trips, informal talks, semi-structured interviews and long periods of residence in the villages. The research tools were case studies, maps of the villages and their resources, photography of relevant events and attendance at monthly village meetings. Particular use was made of semi-

structured interviews with some key informants during field visits to villages. These interviews were typically conducted one or two weeks after a workshop was conducted.

The villagers approached as key informants for semi-structured interviews and informal talks were as diverse as possible. They included commoners, but also chiefs and persons appointed with specific local duties. Some had very strong ideological positions (basically political and religious). Others were performing tasks in village life. Gender was also an issue kept in mind while conducting the ethnographic research; however because of cultural aspects (in the case of El Oro) women were basically approached by female students on the research team. In California it was acceptable for the male principal researcher to talk directly to women. The sample size was about 30 people per village, for this aspect of the research. Criteria to select interviewees were among other things: gender balance, wide age-range (from 18 onwards) and participation (and non-participation) in the local governance system, or in other local organisations and in workshops. For other characteristics, see Table 2.6.

Due to of the sensitivity of many of the issues discussed in the interviews, and the risks taken by the informants, many real names have been changed or interviewees are identified in the text only as 'one of the informants'.

Table 2.6. Main characteristics of the interviewees in each village.

Condition	El Oro	California
Women	12 (40 %)	18 (60 %)
Men	18 (60 %)	12 (40 %)
Oldest interviewee	75 years old	63 years old
Youngest interviewee	20 years old	24 years old
Age average	43.4 years	45.7 years

h) Blending of participatory and ethnographic methods

A framework for empowerment-development assessment

Different participatory workshops were carried out to identify local meanings of empowerment and development, but also to assess whatever other insights might emerge from the villages. These workshops were done using a participatory tool called 'matrix for problem analysis', in which the people identify[13] their main local problems and actions to be taken or capacities to be addressed. Thus criteria were reinforced but areas and indicators of local development also emerged. Indicators came out of the collective reflection of participants on what and how problems were being addressed. They were in relation to the components of local development activities (in terms of areas and criteria) analysed by participants. The main tools used to gather information related to each area of village empowerment-development were three different semi-structured interviews. Examples of those interviews (in Spanish) are offered in the Appendix 3.

Identification and framing of indicators and development areas

The idea of framing a methodology for development components and empowerment indicators is rooted in the notion of the importance of continuing to seek grassroots perspectives and views. The idea of looking for complementary linkages regarding power and governance was also important. Thus, an attempt to assess local perceptions on empowerment and development status and capabilities was carried out. Areas of development and particular indicators of empowerment per area were collectively identified and framed within matrixes linking empowerment indicators and local development components. The overall idea for the identification of criteria, indicators and so on, was taken from work by López-Ridaura *et. al.* (2000), Masera *et. al.* (1999) and Masera and López-Ridaura (2000) on a framework for the evaluation of sustainability in natural resource management initiatives. This basically coincided with the notion of process assessment proposed by Mosse (1998) and Mosse *et. al.* (1998). Later on, an assessment of the status of individuals and the two villages in terms of development and empowerment was conducted.

[13] The identification is done as follows: ***listing*** as the identification of elements or ideas from a brain storm. ***Clustering*** as the defining small groups or bunch out of a big list of elements. ***Scoring*** as the number of points or votes given to each element of a group. ***Ranking*** as the process of positioning (placing) items such as individuals, groups or businesses on an ordinal scale in relation to others. A list arranged in this way is said to be in rank order.

Finally, the identification of trends (situation and capacities) at both village and individual levels in terms of empowerment and development was attempted via graphic representations (e.g. amoeba diagrams). These offered a snap-shot visualisation of variation and/or similarities in development potential and empowerment across individuals and villages. Information gathered in semi-structured interviews and informal conversations was also subjected to a simple codification scheme in order to assess trends. Since sampling was purposive and not random no attempt is made to analyse any of this data in quantitative, statistical terms. But in the write-up in subsequent chapters attention has been paid to Silverman's requirement that qualitative analysis should aspire to standards of plausibility and coherence (Silverman 1997 & 2000). The main guarantee that the research presents something more than a series of self images of village elites is the care taken to ensure access to the *back stage* of village social life, and in constructing samples covering a full range of genders and interests.

Chapter 3

THE MEXICAN CONTEXT:
The rural sector and the interventionist policies and programmes for development

Abstract

This chapter presents an overview of the Mexican context in which this research was conducted. The nation-wide perspective of current official programmes, used as top-down interventions, is described. The current diversity of interveners, including governmental institutions and civil society and its organisations, are also placed in context. Some brief accounts from the villages studied are highlighted and contrasted to the current national policies for poverty alleviation and the rural development. The main current implications for the villages are also preliminarily identified as preparation for the forthcoming chapters. The present chapter partially addresses the first research question and some of its sub-questions, in relation to current initiatives for local development implemented by a variety of agents, and comments on their implications for understanding the local context in 'Profound' Mexico.

3.1 Introduction

Mexico has struggled with its construction as a state since independence from Spain in 1821. Over the centuries, governance has been a key issue. New and/or reformed constitutions and laws have been passed, and different development models implemented. Despite these efforts, the country is still characterised by remarkable contrasts in terms of income, and for decades, social conflicts, political scandals and economic crises have been recurrent phenomena (Calva 1994, Jáquez 2005, Riva-Palacio 2006). According to various authors (Grindle 1996, Meyer 2005, World Bank 2006, Zuñiga 2006a & b) Mexico is still perceived as one of the most unequal countries, with high rates of poverty and marginalisation.

A relatively recent episode marking an important stage in Mexico's history was the revolution that took place between 1910 and 1921. This was in effect a massive mobilisation of demand for better social conditions for the masses, better basic incomes and more equal distribution of access to resources. Associated with this demand was the demand for institutional renovation and modernisation, to ensure fairer relations between the different social sectors (Gledhill 1991 & 2005, Peterson 1999, Ramírez-Cuevas 2003, Warman 2001).

The post-revolution period (1921 onwards) was used to reform and initiate several institutions that together would form a more 'national-democratic' governance system, which then allowed the ruling political party, the PRI[14], to remain in power for 71 years. The period was characterised by several reforms and the stimulation of all productive sectors according to a modernisation development model (CIA 2006, Gledhill 1991 & 2005, Pacheco 2003). The rural sector was initially visualised as one of the national development pillars, and treated with special attention. There were two reasons for this: the revolution emerged from these areas (Gledhill 2000, Grindle 1996) and because a majority of Mexico's resources for development are found there. The bases of the Mexican macro-economic development began to be laid on petroleum, metals, tourism, land and agriculture, after their respective expropriation (Merrill and Miró 1997).

However, somewhere in the course of Mexico's recent history attention to the rural sector was lost. The rural sector was abandoned in favour of Mexican participation in an international race for competitiveness (García 1997, Gledhill 2000, Trujillo 1990). Thus, rural development has over the last few decades been mainly addressed by the Mexican government through a policy of stimulation of agrarian production and competitiveness with international markets. The implementation of this policy has involved a centralised paternalistic strategy (Barkin 1994, Esteva 1994, Mata 1999). This has created a visible contradiction; the Mexican economy is based upon natural, mineral and cultural resources located mainly in the South - in the so-called 'Profound' Mexico, the most marginalised or disregarded part of the national terrain. It needs to be emphasised to those who think of these rural areas mainly in terms of agrarian resources that they are also rich in petroleum, gold and silver, and amazing riches, of both tropical and temperate forests (Merrill and Miró, 1997).

Mexico's overall development model and its current implications

Mexico has a free market economy with a mixture of modern and outmoded industry and agriculture, increasingly dominated by the private sector. However, over the medium term, Mexico has faced the continuing challenge of carrying through its political and economic reforms in the

[14] Institutional Revolutionary Party or *Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)* and formely called *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR) and *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (PRM).

face of numerous potential setbacks. A major challenge is that of restoring healthy economic growth and improving domestic productivity and national competitiveness in global markets. Mexico's participation in NAFTA[15] provided strong incentives and opportunities to increase the competitiveness of the economy. One of the key problems has been to continue opening the economy while minimizing the potentially destabilising human costs of economic dislocation, particularly in rural communities threatened in the short run by a free market. The main income sources of many small villages derives from small scale productions systems for agriculture and handicrafts and micro-business enterprises; currently many communities also depend significantly on remittances sent by migrants working in the United States and Canada (Martínez 2006, Posada 2006a & b, World Bank 2006).

Another key problem is that of promoting balanced development among the country's diverse regions. Data from the 1990 and 2000 national census show a declining but still significant gap in basic quality-of-life and educational indicators between the relatively prosperous North and the less developed South and South-West. Once sustained growth is achieved, Mexico's main challenge is to overcome the wide regional disparities that threaten to strengthen, resulting, in effect, two Mexicos, as documented by Bonfil-Batalla (1990). These disparities amount to a huge gap between rich and poor Mexicans in terms of social, cultural and economic resources and access to opportunities for development (Esteva 1994, Maza 2006, Odena 1995).

Census data reveal that indigenous and other rural people remain the most marginalised sector of Mexican society (Cepeda 2006, CONAPO 2006). Despite of richness in culture and natural resources, more than 40% of the Indigenous and rural population of fifteen years of age and older was illiterate in 1990 and 2000; this is roughly three times the national rate (Mata 1999). Thirty percent of Indigenous children between six and fourteen years of age did not attend school. Indigenes also had significantly higher morbidity and mortality rates associated with infectious and parasitic illness, higher levels of nutritional deficiencies, and lower access to such basic services as indoor plumbing, piped water, and electricity.

After all, it seems like Mexico's modernisation implies development only of urban centres, which demand more and more goods and services to supply new and rapidly increasing concentrations of population. However, most immigrants are from the rural areas, and they leave behind a sector which is supposed to provide food and environmental care. Without effective villages industrialising cities will struggle to satisfy basic needs for food and other basic goods and services, as well as labour demands (Calva 1994, García 1997).

In this case, the national government and its policies, rather than strengthening locally rooted food chains and productive in-country farming systems, and engaging rural dwellers to provide on a sustainable basis environmental services such as water, forest and landscape conservation, seems to prefer to stimulate importation of basic grains and other food products than could in fact be efficiently obtained locally. Apparently, international trade and agreements are setting the rules and delivering Mexico into the hands of an international market, for which the environmental, social and cultural price is paid locally (Barkin 1994, Cepeda 2006, Esteva 1994). As will be argued in this thesis, the country lacks a clear vision of rural development.

Two nations in one country

Social and anthropological studies often mention the existence of two Mexicos, two nations in one. These are sometimes termed 'modern' and 'Profound' Mexico[16]. This differentiation suggests not only big contrasts but also that the two worlds have been socially constructed in parallel. It is not envisaged, in the thinking of some, that these two worlds should ever converge. Despite federal

[15] North American Free Trade Agreement (*Tratado Trilateral de Libre Comercio para America del Norte: TLCAN*) signed by the end of Salinas' administration (1994) with Canada and the U.S.A.

[16] The differentiation seems to be rooted in the idea of the existing Mexico before/after the conquest that began around 1510 and 1517. The confrontations of both worlds emerged with several social and cultural manifestations (Bonfil-Batalla 1990, De Mente 1998). Nowadays, both present very visible differences which make them interesting arenas to be studied.

efforts during the last two centuries to impose a model for building Mexico as a unique nation, there is much social, cultural, political and economic resistance, and many localised particularities still present and active in Mexican life. Visible development differences are more and more accentuated at the everyday level. The two Mexicos' idea has been historically highlighted to explain both causes of poverty and obstacles to addressing effectively a range of national developmental problems.

The first of the two Mexicos is basically shaped in the image of a progressive and successfully developing country, and often labelled as *modernised, industrialised or urban.* The notion of 'modernised' is often linked to the industrial areas and the cities, some of which are as well-endowed and developed as many in Europe and North America. The first Mexico, then, can be considered 'Europeanised' or 'Americanised' Mexico. It is mainly visible to analysts through a range of economic indicators showing comparability with occidental living standards. It is largely built upon the combination of a highly productive petroleum sector and low-wage service activities. Geographically, this Mexico is mainly found in the Central, Northern and Western parts of the country, and mostly dominated by the white-skinned people, who form a minority of the total Mexican population.

The other Mexico is sometimes termed the profound, or local, or rural Mexico (Bonfil-Batalla 1990, Nolasco 1990, Odena 1995).This second Mexico comprises mainly 'Southern people', but also includes the urban poor living in the suburbs of the major cities. The population is mainly indigenous and marginalised *mestizos* (mixed blood) Mexicans[17]. This Mexico is strongly rooted in the past, and characterised by a general poverty. Its population has the lowest standard of life, and is hampered by lack of opportunities. It represents between 60-75% of the total Mexican population (CONAPO 2006; INEGI 2006c). Ironically, this second Mexico is often cited for its amazing cultural heritage, rooted in pre-colonial civilisations (Odena 1995). Particularly, the indigenous regions are sometimes characterised as *'living archaeological entities'*, attracting international tourism because of languages, customs, colourful clothes and folklore (Muntzel and Pérez 1987, Nolasco 1990). The economy of this Mexico is remains rooted in small-scale productive activities, including (semi)-subsistence agriculture, livestock management and local forestry, artisanship, to which remittances from migrants are an increasingly important addition (Duch-Gary 1985, Hernández 1980, Martínez 2006).

The Profound Mexico is politically and legally composed of thousands of municipalities and villages which are supposed to be ruled by a common national governance system. However, in practice most of them have at the same time traditions that are locally even more important than any federal law or institution (De León 2001). Thus, many Mexican villages may seem to be part of a different Mexico, a part where national visions may have penetrated into daily practices, but where people essentially lead a different kind of life (Collier and Lowery 1994, De León 2001, van der Haar 2001). They might actually be seen as contradictory and insupportable small-scale rural formations, doomed to fade away, if looked at from the naïve perspective of modernisation theory. Nevertheless this Mexico has a life and viability of its own, even if mostly hidden from international view, and relegated to very slow endeavours at transformation (Mata 1999, Maza 2006, Zuñiga 2006a & b). The isolated efforts of so-called 'social dreamers' have contributed to change, but also to a mystification of Profound Mexico. It is the purpose of this thesis to try and move beyond 'dreaming' and open up this world, and its durabilities, to a more probing, sustained analysis, as a basis for a more realistic approach to transformation through participatory development.

3.2 Rural sector development and government policy

There are many government agencies in Mexico focused on the rural sector[18], centralised in Mexico City and with regional representations in the different provincial states. In 2006/7 these included (from the government's *executive branch*): *Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación* (SAGARPA); *Secretaría de Desarrollo Social* (SEDESOL); *Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria* (SRA); and *Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y*

[17] It is currently about two thirds of the 103, 263, 388 Mexicans (INEGI, 2006c)
[18] http://fox.presidencia.gob.mx/, accessed January 2006, and http://www.presidencia.gob.mx/, accessed March 2007.

Pesca (SEMARNAT). Other branches with especial programmes for the rural areas are *Secretaría de Salud* (SS), *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP), *Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes* (SCT) and *Secretaría de Economía* (SE). Each houses particular rural programmes, offices and projects. The ***legislative branch*** has two special commissions called Rural and Agrarian Development Commissions, one at the Congress and one at the Senators' chamber. They are supposed in particular to discuss, reform, or propose new laws and programmes to be submitted at the parliamentary sessions. However they are also in charge of the analysis of proposals coming from the executive branch (i.e. initiatives proposed by the President and Ministries). The ***juridical branch*** then has a Rural and Agrarian Tribunal in charge of all conflicts arising from the rural sector, including all the land conflicts.

In practice, this amounts to a dense web of institutions, bureaucratic apparatus, administrative hurdles, policy directives, laws, programmes, interests and people through which the sector is supposedly guided to perform its function. However, at the local level at which rural activities take place, much of this complicated institutional world is largely unknown. Rural people have very often not even heard of the existence of the various institutions, programmes and laws listed above. They only know about the officers who visit the villages to ask for authorities' signatures, demand votes during election periods, provide some subsidies, or arrest local people.

Government and its *corporativismo*

Government rural development policies often change, usually associated with the transition from one president to another. This produces disarticulation among official programmes, policies and people, but also frequently leads to discontinuation of projects once the politicians have left their positions (Mata 1998). Only rarely policies are continued and if so, programmes run with different strategies and budgets; they are (in effect) totally controlled by the state, and richly embroidered with official rhetoric and political discourse. Instead of realising a vision of rural population and civil society as important protagonists of the rural development process, many politicians consider the rural sector as an obstacle to the complete modernisation of Mexico (García 1997, Mata 1999).

The most common governmental strategy for rural development has been to seek to centralise and assert control over policies, institutions, resources, and visions, particularly in relation to local organisations, seen as a threat to central hegemony (Vázquez 2004, Zepeda 1998). One of the most important elements followed throughout post-colonial Mexican history, and particularly during the post revolutionary period (1921-1938), has been so-called *corporativismo* (corporatism)[19]. The UNT[20] (1998) defines *corporativismo* as: *'the obligatory incorporation of citizens into the state through different corporations and guild-like worker unions and organisations, including all the productive sectors (industry, farmers, and professionals, etc.). The objective of such incorporation is to ensure – via an authority principle - the execution of state projects and mandates.' '…This incorporation of citizens is achieved through tripartite mechanisms or official leadership, in which workers' representatives and businessmen accept governmental decisions in a spirit of apparent national unity…'*

[19] Corporatism is used in social sciences to describe a practice whereby an authoritarian state, through the process of licensing and regulating officially-incorporated social, religious, economic, or popular organisations, effectively co-opts their leadership or circumscribes their ability to challenge state authority, by establishing the state as the source. Contemporary political scientists and sociologists use the term *neo-corporatism* to describe a process of bargaining between labour, capital, and government identified as occurring in some small open economies as a means of distinguishing the deals struck from popular activism (Kay 2003). In some recent social science literature, corporatism (or neo-corporatism) has been stripped of its lacks negative connotations. However Vázquez (2004) uses the term with a critical connotation to mention the tendencies in politics for legislators and administrations to be influenced or dominated by the interests of business enterprises, employers' organisations, and industry trade groups. The influence of other types of corporations, such as labour unions, is perceived to be relatively minor since they are co-opted. De la Garza (2001), Medina (1995) and Vázquez (2004) also consider *corporativismo* to be a mechanism to defend a political or economic system based upon centralisation and control of society through unions and labour organisations. The main characteristic is that the state intervenes rigidly on all productive activities. As a mechanism it is commonly present in countries ruled by military dictatorships.

[20] *Unión Nacional de Trabajadores* (National Union of Labourers), a state-incorporated organisation.

Corporativismo has been very important for the cooptation[21], control, guidance and manipulation of local organisations such as farmer labourer, and professional unions, and even minor political parties (Medina 1995, Pacheco 2003). *Corporativismo* emerged during the post-revolutionary period, and was legalised by the federal law on work in 1931 (UNT 1998). These controls were practically exercised from 1936, during the administration of the most popular Mexican president, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río. All organisations were expected to follow the state's mandate of order, discipline and work, to contribute to sectoral functioning in the countryside, and at the same time to ensure both governability and political stability (De la Garza 2001, Kay 2003, Medina 1995).

In practise, corporativismo represents a controlling and co-opting mechanism over society at large, and its modes of self-organisation, and imbues a strong military philosophy of discipline. The thinking behind it is that the government should function as a referee in regulating social life. This worked as a major mechanism constituting various institutions and organisations, and was also a factor in shaping new laws during the post revolutionary period (UNT 1998, Vázquez 2004). Thus, the state supposedly regulates all aspects of the productive systems, but is basically guided by criteria of political control criteria and clientelist mechanisms rather than by a philosophy of popular empowerment or efficiency. Authoritarism, paternalism, corruption, repression, political manipulation and brokerage were automatically and perhaps unwittingly institutionalised during decades in which the state shrank from engagement with the real developmental concerns of the grassroots population. In the post revolutionary period this meant, in practice, that every worker union or other civil organisation had to be affiliated to an official political party. This helped perpetuate the ruling PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, over its 71 years in power (Kay 2003, Martínez-Soriano 2006, Vázquez 2004).

Local organisations became the connection between the state and the Mexican rural populace, but it needs to be understood that these organisations were rarely if ever expressions of popular agency, but incorporated entities exercising a kind of indirect rule on behalf of the state. The larger intermediary organisations co-opted by the state played a major role as brokers between the state and the villages (Balboa 2007, Grindle 1996, Merril and Miró 1997, Pacheco 2003).

In theory, villages were to be supported in their development efforts by state policies and resources. The middle ranking incorporated organisations supposedly 'deliver' this support. However, in practice policies were often little more than manipulative political messages, and resources remained in the hands of a political elite (Arce and Long 1992 & 1998, Gledhill 1991 & 2000, Grindle 1996, Nuijten 2003). These intermediary organisations and official programmes have in many cases been used as electoral platforms by the ruling political party, the PRI. A new ruling party, the PAN[22], has adopted the same strategy to entrench its own power and influence over the rural population, and to secure its electoral base (Alvarez 2006, Balboa 2007, Crespo 2000, González *et. al.* 2006, Pacheco 2003). The co-opted organisations may thus be seen as an extension of the government and are thereby considered responsible for the establishment of a social culture of dependence, brokerage, clientelism, corruption and manipulative leadership in the rural areas (De la Garza 2001, Grindle 1996).

During the early 1970s the political system collapsed. Several governmental programmes for poverty alleviation failed to have real impact through lack of resources. What little money there was available remained with the co-opted organisations to keep them afloat. Poverty pushed the local population into unsustainable management of the resources (Leff and Carabias 1993). Social mobilisation was repressed by the armed forces (Matias-Cruz 2007, Zepeda 1988).

By 1976, during the president López-Portillo's administration, an electoral reform was the first step in trying to escape the *corporativismo mentality*, and reflected an apparently new social concern for the welfare of rural people. During president Salinas's administration (1988-1994) additional reforms took place and the power of a number of major national organisations responsible for

[21] Cooptation refers to the tactic of neutralising, controlling or winning over a minority against predominant popular forces, by assimilating them into the established group or culture. It is actually a type of domination.
[22] *Partido Acción Nacional* or National Action Party.

hijacking rural resources (notably land and petroleum) was reduced. Some key national leaders of corporative organisations were jailed for corrupt acts, and to serve as example for the rest (CIA 2006, Kay 2003, Merrill and Miró 1997).

Salinas also launched new public polices with which the government aimed directly to reach the rural and urban marginalised populations (Vergara 2000, Zermeño and Domínguez 2000). These policies involved - for example - cash transfer programmes (Salas 2000, Senado de la República 2003). Thus, *populismo* (populism) as it was called by local and critical researchers, emerged with a strong backing at the national level. Partially, problem of lack of connection to the state was thereby solved. However, many researchers see the replacement of *corporativismo* with a *populismo* as a means by Salinas to regain support from the people after having been suspected of fraud during his election to the presidency (Jáquez 2005, Riva-Palacio 2006, Vergara 2000).

Nowadays, economic neo-liberalism and globalisation are two processes that are increasingly dominant in shaping Mexican policies, as in many other parts of the world (Castellanos, 2000, Warman 2001). Unfortunately, neither liberalism nor globalisation is able to deal with the problem of rural poverty, except through long-term promises of 'trickle down' effect (Cepeda 2006). If such effects are found they are very hard to observe. The countryside is still faced with many problems and reaching a point of general social disturbance. Earlier reforms and policies implemented in the rural sector have some support from changes in the national constitution; for example, article 27 establishes the government as a duty holder in regard to rights over natural resources, development initiatives and the priorities to assign to their attention (DeWalt 1979, Eckstein 1978, Gledhill 1991, Nuijten 2003). But little real reform is evident. Many assume that legislation over natural resources and associated rights is mainly a means to maintain a certain degree of social order in the countryside; attention to practical better use and management remains a sensitive issue and actual changes are limited in impact (Gutiérrez 2003).

Recently, demonstrations and uprisings have developed into nation-wide social movements, demanding for land and better rights over the use of natural resources and other federal resources assigned to states and municipalities (Collier and Lowery 1994, Concheiro y Grajales 2005, Ramírez-Cuevas 2003, Wallerstein 2006). Three of the largest of these movements are the so-called *Movimiento de los 400 Pueblos* (movement of the 400 towns); the *Zapatismo,* represented by the populist *Zapatista* army (EZLN *guerrilla*) led by Sub-commander *Marcos*, and the APPO (*Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca*) in the Oaxaca State (i.e. García de León 2002, García 2002, Gledhill 2002 & 2005, Peterson 1999, SRA 2005). Their demands – by and large – remain unmet. So while *corporativismo* has been replaced by *populismo* at the level of the ruling parties, this has not solved the problems of rural development.

3.3 Current policies and initiatives: *populismo*[23] *in action*

Previous attempts to attend to and integrate the rural sector and population into national structures and policies can be classed into periods. The reconstruction period lasted from 1910 to 1921. From 1922 onwards several institutions and official organisations were created to provide basic services (education, health and distribution of natural resources). This was part of the implementation of an agreement over peace. This period was also characterised by the development or transformation of major social organisations such as the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) and the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC); the first integrated labourers and the second grouped farmer organisations. The initial idea was to create a settled connection between the state and the general population, in order to accelerate both integration into Mexican society and the formation of a sense of national identity, thus to attract federal resources. However, the two national organisations were practically corporate entities of the state, rooted, from their point of origin, in the political and electoral ambitions of the ruling PRI.

[23] Other official programmes of recent years aimed at the rural sector, to tackle poverty, were launched between 1970 and 1980. These included *Programa de Inversión para el Desarrollo Regional* (PIDER), *Programa de Salud Asistencial Rural del Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social* (IMSS), *Programa Nacional de Integración de la Mujer al Desarrollo* (PRONAM-CONAPO), *Coordinación General del Plan Nacional de Zonas Deprimidas y Grupos Marginados* (COPLAMAR) and the *Sistema Alimentario Mexicano* (SAM) (Meza *et. al.* 2002).

In terms of national data, 15 million people lived in extreme poverty in 1985; by 2000 this had increased to 28 million, and in 2006 to about 50 or 60 million (Castellanos 2000, Muñoz E. 2000, Muñoz P. 2006). The increase in poverty has basically been in rural areas, where options are less than in the cities. However, the maximum growth of poverty (between 2000 and 2006) paradoxically coincided with maximum export rates and the best performance in terms of indicators of macroeconomic development (Posada 2006a). The Salinas administration launched the National Solidarity Programme (*Programa Nacional de Solidaridad* or *Pronasol*) in 1989. The name was changed to *Progresa* during Zedillo's administration (1994-2000) and to *Programa Oportunidades* (Opportunities) by the Fox administration (2000-2006). *Pronasol* focused on rural and agrarian issues, including village health, education, and productivity. It also provided subsidies. In practise, it generated little structural change but some cash and other material resources for small villages and families.

Pronasol was introduced in 1989 as one of the major programmes during Salinas' regime to soften the impact of his neo-liberal reforms, and at the same time to diminish some of the practises associated with corporatism (De la Garza 2001, Kaufman and Trejo 1997). Families received direct federal subsidies, and were supposed to use the cash to improve the education, health and nutrition of their children. In the case of social projects, villages were asked to contribute to the cost and/or supply the necessary labour (Merrill and Miró 1997, Vergara 2000). This seemingly implied a new relation between state and municipal governments. Apparently it bypassed state bureaucracies and channelled federal funds directly to municipalities and village organisations. *Pronasol* thereby undermined state governments' control over municipal finances, and promoted municipalities' dependence on the federal government. Currently, the programme is maintained under a different name, with economic resources administered by the federal government to transfer cash to poor rural families, and to target health, nutrition and education issues (Kaufman and Trejo 1997, Zermeño and Domínguez 2000).

Pronasol also contained a subprogramme called *Procampo*. This latter was intended to address specific issues relating to the agrarian sector's productivity. Afterwards, *Pronasol* was split into two main social policies during Zedillo's administration (but with the same strategy of cash transfer): the *Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación* (*Progresa*) and the *Alianza para el Campo* (*Procampo*). Both policies and programmes continued during the Fox administration but with new names and somewhat refocused strategies, though the overall intentions remained the same. These were *Contigo* ('with you') which included *Oportunidades* (Opportunities) and a continuation of the *A*lliance for the Agriculture Sector (*Procampo*) as a cash transfer mechanism. Both programmes have been supported since launch by a fifteen-year loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, which means that the programmes are 'advised' and 'monitored' by bank representatives.

Initially, such programmes were coordinated by federal and state institutions and offices. Later on they were partially operated by the municipalities. In theory, this provided more freedom and room for manoeuvre for the municipalities in their capacity as managers of federal resources and programmes (Kaufman and Trejo 1997). Since then, municipalities have taken on an important role in social programmes and in local and rural development issues. It also transferred rural development bottlenecks from top levels of the bureaucracy to the level of local government (Gledhill, 2002) because administrative capacity, knowledge and skilled personnel were weak at municipal level.

It can be argued that via these developments municipalities handed over their sovereignty and liberty to become simple operators of national policies dictated by federal government and monitored by programme administrators and ministries. According to Mello-Farrera (2002) and Trejo (2002) this disabled municipal governments in playing an active role as local development promoters, because they became enrolled in bigger bureaucratic procedures, with the most important being to account for budgets during financial yearly terms. Something similar happened with *Procampo*, a national-wide strategy to attend productive issues in the rural sector, focusing on farmers dedicated to maize, wheat and beans. Initially, *Procampo* was considered a sub-

programme, but during Zedillo's administration it became independent. It will be described in further detail below.

Kepleis and Vance (2003) and Peterson (1999) argue that these programmes were essentially cash transfer programs, and launched to alleviate massive social discontent in the countryside. Some researchers state that the real intentions and most visible implications of these initiatives were to perpetuate authoritarian regime of the PRI (Gledhill 2002 and 2005, Grindle 1996). After 2000, the PAN appears to have taken over the strategy in its own interest (Alvarez 2006, Balboa 2007, González *et. al.* 2006).

PRONASOL, PROGRESA OR OPORTUNIDADES: 'New' governmental policies and 'more of the same'

Pronasol was initially composed of three sub-programmes (Alvarez 2006, Merrill and Miró 1997). *The first* sub-programme focused on public service provision, such as sewage and drainage provision, supply of drinking water pipelines and paving of roads. Program officers decided on the type of activity, the location and date of implementation, and whether or not tasks were accomplished. Villages were asked only to contribute labour. *The second* sub-programme emerged during *Pronasol's* second and third years of operation. It was more production-oriented, and was to be run by village-level institutions. Small credits were provided and rural cooperatives encouraged. This sub-programme was basically designed by anthropologists working at the national institute for indigenous people (INI), and they tried to incorporate concepts of participation and joint-responsibility into the financed projects. *The third* subprogramme began during *Pronasol's* third and fourth year. It did not really target poverty alleviation but focused on the constitution of small-scale social organisations, such as solidarity groupings for teachers, nurses and lawyers. According to Vázquez (2004) and Vergara (2000), the idea behind this initiative was the provision of some monetary resources to former leftist organisations, in order to keep them quiet and peaceful. The support can be seen as a continuation of *corporativismo;* it was a modern form of co-optation.

One particular case that received much attention was the constitution of a new political party with support of the third sub-programme. The party is the current *Partido del Trabajo* (PT or Workers Party). It actually began as PRI's back-stopper during federal and regional elections. Initially, it comprised a national coalition of several left-wing organisations in Northern Mexico (Jáquez 2005). After 1988, these organisations ensured financial support, resulting in better organisation and mobilisation of more people. The upshot was a political party under government auspices (i.e. with PRI's support and influence). According to Jáquez (2005), the intention behind the formation of the PT was to divide the large and strong national social mobilisation of earlier years[24]. If this author is correct, this is yet another example of how the PRI as government used federal funds to continue corporatism, cooptation and division of rival organisations as its main strategy to remain in power.

During Zedillo's administration *Pronasol* was restructured and renamed *Progresa* (in 1997), whereupon it became the main 'mechanism' for addressing extreme poverty in rural areas, according to the government's social policy agenda (Ruíz *et. al.* 2002). In practise, it continued established official policy, and was implemented through a series of programmes and subprogrammes. It remained in essence a cash transfer programme. Its primary thrust was to develop the human capital of poor households by improving education, health and nutrition outcomes. Household heads were required to visit health care clinics and send their children to school in order to be eligible for the bimonthly payments. To achieve the programme's objectives, transfers were provided directly to the mothers, under the assumption they wee more likely to use funds in a manner beneficial to the development of their children. The gender orientation of the programme was one of many mechanisms geared towards improved outcomes.

Molyneux (2006) and Skoufias and McClafferty (2001) have documented how *Progresa* developed selection criteria for determining eligibility. The eligibility criteria were principally based on

[24] The social mobilisation was integrated in a national coalition of political left-wing forces called *Frente Democrático Nacional* that launched Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas as presidential candidate in the elections of 1988. The coalition later became the Party of the Democratic Revolution or PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*).

household well-being. The selection was done in three stages. First, poor villages were identified, based on an index of marginality developed from the national population census. This marginality index included the share of illiterate adults, access to water, drainage and electricity, number of occupants per room, dwellings with a dirt floor, and population working in the primary sector. Marginal villages were considered potential target locations and were classified on location and existence of health and school facilities. Once villages were identified, the second step was the selection of households, based on an internal household census. Thus, poverty scores were produced for each household using a statistical procedure, and any households below a certain poverty line were included as beneficiaries. After households were identified as potential participants, the third step was to present a list of these households to village assemblies for review and discussion. In practice the lists were rarely modified; if a village disagreed with the rankings on the list, its inhabitants were automatically excluded from the programme.

By the end of 1999, *Progresa* was providing bimonthly transfers to approximately 2.6 million households (or about 40% of all rural families, and 11% of all Mexican families) (Ruíz *et. al.* 2002). The programme operated in almost 50,000 villages, and had a budget of US$ 777 million, or nearly 20% of the Mexican government's budget for poverty alleviation (Skoufias and McClafferty 2001). Average payments to beneficiary households in 1997 were substantial, and represented 29% of the average per capita income of beneficiaries. Households receiving *Progresa* funds were not permitted to receive other forms of antipoverty or education subsidies. This did not apply, however, to *Procampo* beneficiaries and therefore many households were provided with *Progresa* and *Procampo* transfers at the same time (Ruíz *et. al.* 2002, Zermeño and Domínguez 2000). In course of time, *Progresa* was gradually expanded to urban areas, especially to the suburbs of the main cities, to cover finally a total of 5 million families, i.e. about one quarter of all families in Mexico (Berhman *et. al.* 2004, Berhman and Skoufias 2006, Kaufman and Trejo 1997).

Because *Progresa* linked payment of transfers to school attendance it was claimed that the programme had a significant impact on education attendance and health outcomes (Molyneux 2006, Skoufias and McClafferty 2001). Apart from linking the cash transfers to school attendance by children, the money was also conditional on the mothers' participation in *pláticas* (organised meetings) at which health and nutritional issues and practices were discussed. These meetings were normally conducted by physicians, nurses or local promoters trained in such topics by *Progresa's* officers. The assumption was that if these meetings improved knowledge and practices of mothers relating to child nutrition and health, this would improve the educational performance of the children.

Furthermore, there was also a *nutritional supplement* or *'papilla'* for pregnant and lactating women, and for children between the ages of four months and two years. Children between two and four years (up to 59 months) also received nutritional supplements if any signs of malnutrition were detected by clinical personnel. Mothers had to visit the nearest rural clinic at least once a month to pick up six packets of supplements per eligible child. Each pack contained five doses, enough for one dose per day. There was *growth monitoring* at each of these rural clinics, as a prerequisite for receiving nutritional supplements for pre-school children (Molyneux 2006, Ruíz *et. al.* 2002).

Related to direct educational components, the programme required regular school attendance (at least 85 % of the time) to continue grant bimonthly payments. Programme rules allowed students to fail each grade once, but students were not allowed to fail twice (Berhman *et. al.* 2004, Berhman and Skoufias 2006).

During the Fox administration (specifically, in 2002) the programme was renamed *Oportunidades* (opportunities). Essentially, it continued with the same principles. Specifically, *Oportunidades* aimed to improve human development by focusing on the children's education, nutrition and health (Berhman *et. al.* 2004, Berhman and Skoufias 2006). It was highlighted again that the programme was based on the assumption that poor households do not invest enough in their human capital, and are thus caught in a vicious cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty, with children dropping out of school and destined to suffer the long-term effects of deprivation.

Molyneux (2006) also argues that families selected for the *Oportunidades* programme continued to be helped through cash transfers towards the financial costs of having children in school. The bimonthly transfers were primarily in the form of 'scholarships' for children to attend school, supplemented by additional cash to improve nutrition where required. The practical functioning of the programme continued to centre on mothers as the key to securing improvements in the life chances of their children, born and unborn. Secondary outcomes, such as building the capacities of mothers, empowerment, citizen participation, strengthening ties between villages and even gender equality, were included in the programme's goals. But how these programmes were run and /or interpreted has varied over time, and the quality of what is on offer under these headings depended always upon institutional factors, and the quality of programme managers, field officers, local authorities and cooperating professionals.

Officially *Oportunidades'* guiding principles were to differentiate it from support programmes by emphasizing participants' 'co-responsibility'. Families were expected to take an active part in their own development, in order to move beyond the *asistencialismo* (dependency on assistance) and the paternalism characteristic of earlier welfare systems[25]. This principle of self-reliance is enshrined in the Social Development Law (*Ley de Desarrollo Social* of 2004) which provides the legal and operational framework for *Contigo* (With You), the new social assistance policy, of which *Oportunidades* was part, introduced during the Fox administration.

Some local voices

Despite all the documents and reports on the programme's impact, which stress the budgets spent, there is something missing. The missing ingredient is how the programmes were perceived by beneficiaries. What we need here is some sense of what was sensed, said, and experienced by the final users. Apparently, the programme demanded changes in villagers' lives, but contradictory versions concerning these changes are often heard. For instance, some villagers interviewed in this research were blunt

...*'Taking our children for regular health checks, making sure they go to school, attending endless workshops and investing several hours per month for cleaning buildings and rubbish is just a bother, as if we live for attending programme activities. Actually we participate just to get the little cash from "daddy government"'*.

The fact is that at the village level, the programme is not carried out in compliance with the formulated rules. For example, the amount of cash received by the mothers per school-age child was about US$ 60 in 2000 and is currently about US$ 90 per two months period.[26] But local accounts indicate that *'...a maximum of two children are able to receive the money but all school-age children must be registered in the programme'.*

Villagers also said: ... *'You know what happens with this programme? Nothing changes, we are treated as usual, they see us only as children fit only to receive gifts. We consider this as more or less an exchange for our votes. Officers stress programme activities just before election periods and in between things are like they always were...'*

Others complained in another way: *'Why to send our children to school? Once they finish primary school we are unable to support the next education level. At that point, everything is finished for them because secondary schools are far away. If lucky, the village has one; but afterwards? How can they go to next level preparatory for university education?.*

Some referred to... *'in the remote situation we find ourselves, what is next? (¿y después qué..?), what about later; we often see on TV that there are not enough jobs for professionals, so why study just for studying's sake? Is it not better to encourage our children to start working very young and make a living anywhere? Unfortunately, there are no real options for us; it is always more of the*

[25] Presidencia de la República (2006). http://www.presidencia.gob.mx/actividades/desarrollo/?contenido=27577, accessed on Oct. 24, 2007.
[26] *Idem*.

same with governmental programmes, they are just like weak medication. The dose keeps the illness down, but does not cure it....'

PROCAMPO: The same as usual and 'little crumbs'

The PROCAMPO programme was conceived in 1993 as a new agricultural income support plan, launched at the beginning of the Salinas administration as a subprogram of *Pronasol*, in response to the generalised social tension which developed during and after his election campaign (Sadoulet *et. al.* 2001, Vergara 2000)[27]. The objectives of the programme were political (to help manage the acceptability of a free trade agreement among farmers), economic (to provide farmers with liquidity to adjust production to a new set of relative prices), and social (to prevent an increase in already extensive levels of poverty among smallholders, and a rapid process of emigration to the cities and the US border).

Nevertheless, Bonnis and Legg (1997) and Kepleis and Vance (2003) indicate that there were two main official objectives behind the programme that are not often mentioned: a) to compensate farmers for the anticipated negative effect of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on the price of basic crops and b) to assist more marginal producers in dealing with the agricultural transformation (and privatisation). In practice the programme started with the 1994 growing season, and the first of *Procampo's* payments were made in the growing season of 1994 to eligible farmers, i.e. those who produced grains, beans and oilseeds on farms smaller than eight hectares. *Procampo* also replaced the already existing price support programme for small grains with direct cash payments of 12 billion 'new pesos' (US$ 3.5 billion), representing an 83% increase over supports paid in 1993. The programme was initially funded from a fiscal surplus that had accumulated since the late 1980s, but also with a long term loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (Merrill and Miró 1997).

In 1995, President Zedillo shifted *Procampo's* operation to the newly created agency of Alliance for the Countryside (*Alianza para el Campo*) and extended it for a fifteen-year period (Merrill and Miró 1997, Sadoulet *et. al.* 2001). Thus, the government of Zedillo introduced the new programme as an adjunct to its programme on labour and business. The alliance programme placed responsibility for agricultural support on the government, and direct cash subsidies of about US$ 60 per planted hectare were to be paid to producers of various basic food crops. The new programme also sought to improve credit flow to farmers from Banrural[28] and other state agencies (Bonnis and Legg 1997, Zermeño and Domínguez 2000).

Procampo was intended to support the transition from a traditional policy of agricultural self-sufficiency to a more market-oriented system in which individual producers rather than government bureaucrats would make the production decisions. The programme also sought in the long term to compensate for producer subsidies in other countries, reduce domestic commodity prices to levels consistent with world market prices, encourage crop diversification and conservation, boost the competitiveness of the domestic food processing sector, and encourage the modernisation of Mexico's agricultural production and marketing channels (Bonnis and Legg 1997, Kepleis and Vance 2003). The direct payments were also expected to slow rural migration to cities and provide needed capital to impoverished subsistence farmers. Finally, *Procampo* was supposed to enable peasant farmers (and others) to switch from traditional maize cultivation to newer crops which would command better prices, such as wheat, soybeans, and products such as

[27] There are different versions concerning Salinas's election; some strongly believed it to be part of a historical and well-planned institutional fraud against the left-wing alliance in which Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was the strongest presidential candidate. The same versions are debated nowadays about the election of Felipe Calderon, held on July 2, 2006. Myth or reality, the fact is that trust in Mexican institutions has been heavily eroded during the last twenty years, and stagnation and fatalism among the poorer sectors, particularly in small villages, is a visible reality.

[28] A federal bank officially called *Banco Nacional de Crédito Rura*l launched on 15th October 1975 by the government in order to integrate three already existing banks of credits for the rural sector. These were the *Banco Ejidal, Banco Agrícola* and *Banco Rural* (www.banrural.gob.mx, accessed on May 04, 2007). Banrural was supposed to provide credits and payments for the rural sector dictated by the governmental polices. Banrural was abolished officially by president Fox in 2003 (Senado de la República, 2003).

fruits and vegetables. Impact was likely to be greatest in North-Western and North-Eastern Mexico and the *Bajío* region of West-Central Mexico, where in the late 1980s and early 1990s many growers had switched from production of rice, cotton, sorghum, oilseeds, and wheat to more profitable corn and dry beans (Merrill and Miró 1997, Zermeño and Domínguez 2000).

Procampo's beneficiaries in 1994 were 3.3 million producers of corn, beans, sorghum, wheat, rice, soybeans, and cotton, together accounting for 70% of Mexico's arable land (Kepleis and Vance 2003, Ruíz *et. al.* 2002). Barley and safflower producers were added to the programme in autumn 1994. The new subsidies were based on the size and productivity of land holdings and were paid to both commercial and subsistence growers. The government claimed that the new programme would cover almost 2.5 million farmers who had not benefited from the previous price support system. About 800,000 farmers who did benefit from that system were to receive both price subsidies and the new *Procampo* subsidy for an eighteen-month transitional period.

Yet, from April 1995 onwards, the payments were gradually reduced in order to bring food prices into line with market conditions. Payments were restricted to farmers growing one of nine eligible crops (maize, beans, wheat, sorghum, rice, soybeans, safflower, cotton and barley). In 1996, eligible farmers received payments for land allocated to any agricultural or forestry activity, or placed in an approved environmental programme, but they were not allowed to use the land for any other purpose. Payments were given on a per hectare basis for each crop season and were fixed at the same rate across the country, irrespective of the activity for which the land was used (Bonnis and Legg 1997, Ruíz *et. al.* 2002). Meanwhile, the total of direct payments under the programme increased, although at a slower rate than the reduction of price support. Total support to agricultural producers fluctuated between a minimum level ensuring adequate income for subsistence farmers and a maximum level that would guarantee profitability for commercial producers. The funding was expected to remain steady for ten years, until 2003, and then decline over an additional five years until the programme's termination in 2008 (Merrill and Miró 1997, Zermeño and Domínguez 2000).

Procampo's fifteen-year duration was intended to give farmers adequate time to adopt new technologies, develop producer associations with other farmers or private agribusiness firms, and to rationalise land use. In order to encourage alternative crop production, *Procampo* was also to continue the provision of payments to growers who decided to change from programme crops to alternative crops or to livestock, forestry, ecology, and aquaculture activities during the programme period.

According to Molyneux (2006) and Peterson (1999), these programmes, although relatively well administered, have had little impact in reversing a deteriorating economic situation in the rural areas. *Procampo* subsidies merely cushioned the impact of declining world market prices for maize. The assumption that producers would turn to other crops in which Mexico had a 'comparative advantage' was wishful thinking. The subsidy did not compensate for the continuing 'price-cost' squeeze that producers experienced, let alone giving them a breathing space to think about growing a different crop which might be more profitable in the longer term (Merrill and Miró 1997).

Some critics of government alleged that *Procampo,* like *Progresa,* was intended to generate rural support for the ruling PRI (Grindle 1996). Presumably the rural people would recognise that PRI was supporting their livelihood and vote for its continuation in government. Ironically, but somehow typical of the crude reality affecting user visualisations of the programme since its first years of operation, is the fact that the *campesinos* (poor smallholder farmers) insisted on calling the programme *'PRIcampo'*, thus perhaps deliberately refusing to see it as an official policy of the state (Gledhill 2002 & 2005).

More local versions

As in the case of *Pronasol*, *Procampo* beneficiaries have perceptions on the impact of the programme at variance with the picture painted in the official reports. Peasants (*campesinos*) often said:

'the old times were better, it would be more helpful if the government went back to subsidising the prices of seed and fertiliser, because nowadays we can no longer afford to sow more than a hectare even with the Procampo money'.

The fact is that many women in the rural areas are outspoken about the programme. They often pass comments, related to family conflicts, about the programme's way of operating:

'The "PRIcampo" brought more problems than benefits to our families. Our husbands used the cash as money that came easily into their hands to buy more alcohol or get drunk in the cities, and also to go out with ladies of doubtful reputation'.

People initially looked at the programme as a source of cash to be immediately used for any purpose.

Other critical villagers also mentioned:
'...we have been trained to accept the crumbs of the government rather than the cake of the party. It is not surprising that nowadays we are only waiting for a hand from daddy-government to reach out to us'.

Others comments on the way the programme operated were that *'we cannot use our Procampo money in our agricultural practices since we receive the money at odd moments, but always outside the sowing season. Sometimes Procampo payments arrive at harvest time*. These expressions of exasperation are very common in the countryside, and reflect badly on how the bureaucracy operates.

3.4 The civil society and its role: a new *corporativismo* as brokerage?

Beyond formal governmental interventions, there are other efforts to support the rural sector, and particularly in remote villages where apparently alternative approaches are possible (see Barkin 1994, Kraemer 1993, Muro 1994, Robles and Zarco 2005). These alternatives have emerged in parallel to governmental interventions, especially in the last two decades, and are carried on by organisations representing the so-called civil society, basically by non-governmental organisations (NGO's), churches and research institutions (Figure 3.1). They are mostly supported, financially, by international overseas agencies. The organisations implementing these projects say they seek to attend those areas and people excluded from governmental initiatives (Bautista 1996, Blanco 1997, Guevara 2002). Some have run specific projects to attend to concrete problems in production systems, or among families and in local organisations or villages in rural areas. Nevertheless, some initiatives are still struggling in finding a way to go beyond rhetoric, clientelist relations, enthusiasm of practitioners, and localised impacts, and to achieve sustainability in the long term (Alemán 1998, Guevara *et. al.* 2000, Kraemer 1993). In other words, these projects continue to struggle to break through the daily practices of current *corporativismo* and *populismo* implemented by government. Apparently, some have contributed interesting results and there are interesting impacts, but unfortunately few cases have been rigorously analysed or massively scaled-up. The challenge of analysis is accepted in the present thesis.

Beyond analysis, some of these organisations offer interesting experiences, which may provide guidance on new approaches to rural and local development problems (Chapela 1999, Pérezgrovas *et. al.* 1997, Ramos 1998, Robles and Zarco 2005). However, there are many basic questions to be probed first. How, for example, are villages defined and targeted? How do 'alternative' initiatives work? How are they placed within the complex context of village life worlds and the rural sector overall? What roles are allocated to, and what actions are to be taken by, the various partners? These seem to be among the main questions that still require to be answered, and this thesis will seek to address them.

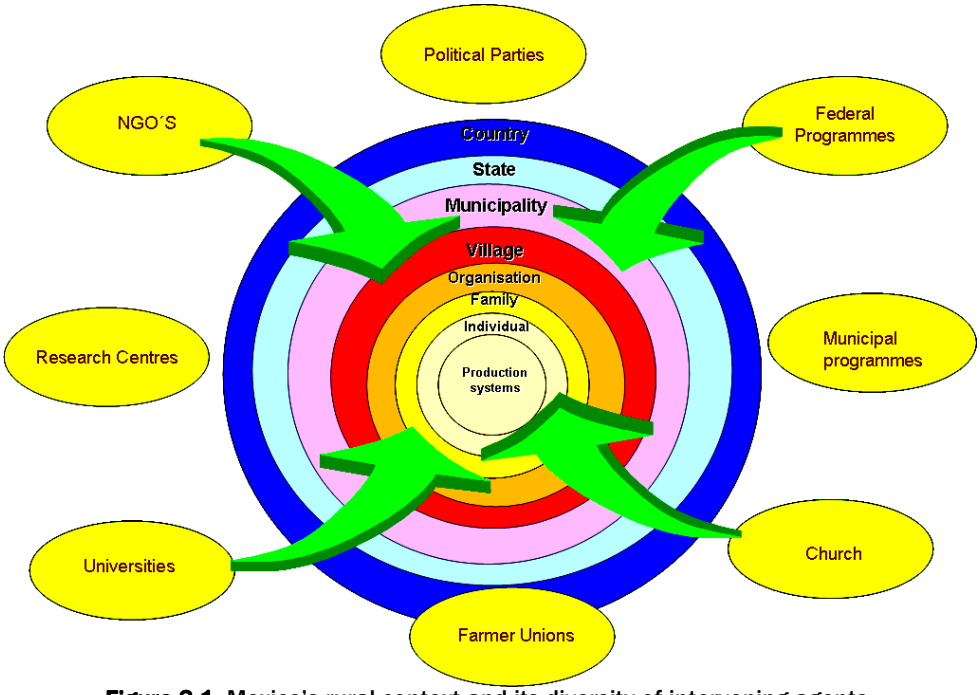


Figure 3.1. Mexico's rural context and its diversity of intervening agents.

3.5 Concluding remarks

Top-down official programmes or initiatives seem to be historically at high risk of abuse by authorities and manipulation for political ends. Álvarez (2006), González *et. al.* (2006) and Vergara (2000) all suggest that programmes have been manipulatively used as electoral machines, whereas poverty rates are still going up. Migration to the US seems to be an escape mechanism, for those seeking better life prospects. It is documented that migration is one of the main means of livelihood of rural populations, but it has also become a main source of international income for the country as a whole. These resources are often directly injected into rural areas and poor families, but are not necessarily productive investments. Survival is still a main consideration. This is an indication of the inefficiency of the state in poverty alleviation.

Corporatism and populism seem to have contributed to social complexity and articulation of the rural sector. Brokerage, corruption, manipulation - and even social disarticulation of local organisations and other rural stakeholders – are among some of the results we will encounter at the village level.

In the case of initiatives run from civil society, these also are very variable, and mostly unregulated. The freedom of action and implicit ideologies lurking behind many of these interventions may, despite good intentions and potential impact on rural problems, result not only in uncoordinated changes but also induce strong political discomfort, both at the village level, and also at the level of the institutional environments within which the Mexican government operates.

The information here presented on the Mexican context amounts to a preliminary overview of the rural poverty problem, gathered from written reports and interaction with small villages. The findings offer an orientation towards what is happening in the villages, and the way people today look at programmes such as *Procampo* or *Oportunidades.* Local attitudes, perceptions and strategies also throw light on how users of governmental policies might deal with major challenges over the mid or long term. This chapter has partially addressed the first research question and some of its sub-questions, in relation to the local context, interventions and implications for village development. More detailed evidence is now needed on how rural and marginalised villagers face up to the various regulatory frameworks and top-down initiatives with which they are presented.

Chapter 4

TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP REGULATORY SYSTEMS FOR SOCIAL ORDER: An emphasis on the *usos y costumbres* of small villages in Southern Mexico

Abstract

This chapter describes two regulatory systems that aim to the secure social order in rural Mexico. The first is a top-down system implemented by the State and basically composed of 'should be' laws. The second is a system practiced by the villagers, called *usos y costumbres,* based on practices of daily political and social life of the villages. This is often called 'practical justice' or 'it is socially done'. The *usos y costumbres* has been studied by Mexican researchers in terms of differentiation of its components in practice. The present chapter tries first to place the two systems for attaining social order within the larger Mexican context. Second, it seeks to show how *usos y costumbres* is framed into a regulatory system of local governance. Third, attention is paid to the main implications for the political and social life of the two case study villages. This involves an ethnographic approach to the study of local ideas about the system's functioning in daily village life. The *usos y costumbres* basically represents a system of practical norms and values, validated and reproduced over decades and even centuries for self-government of life in small villages. It is even sometimes considered more important than state law for ensuring local order. Finally, both systems depend on different political cultures, and their interaction may be responsible for clashes in or complementarities of vision and practice concerning local development. In other words, development requires the settling of certain tensions concerning norms, rules, behaviours, dilemmas or conflicts at village level in a plural legal environment. This topic is further pursued in following chapters.

4.1 Introduction

In social sciences, but also in the practice of development, the concept of village or community is seen as important in defining any space of attention at the local level. Pragmatic perceptions and definitions are normally used to plan interventions (Mello-Farrera 2002, Hunter 1978, Uphoff 1986, Taylor 1982). Nevertheless, in most of the cases, the concepts often reflect external perceptions about local realities. They normally embody a static vision of the village as the given unit of analysis within which development actions 'need' to be implemented.

A perspective to understand the villages as rural societies emerges from the Durkheimian sociological tradition[29]. This tradition considers small societies to be the product of permanent and dynamic processes of social construction and practices of daily (conscious and unconscious) life. It is also proposed that the study of communities be treated as parts of a social system to be analysed by components or parts that are interconnected (i.e. in functionalist terms). Keeping in mind this functionalism and the arguments of Douglas in relation to local institutions and their role in ensuring social order and cohesion in small societies, then villages can be approached by studying the local processes involved in producing legitimacy and social order (Durkheim 1893 [1997], 1912 [1954], Douglas 1986, Giddens 1978, Layton 1997, Stedman-Jones 2001, Thompson 1982). For instance, the causal sequences or habitual behaviours socially assimilated in myths, rituals, beliefs or symbols, may represent an entry point to study of local complexity in interlocking institutions (Lewis 1975).

Following this line, Mexican villages are considered small and dynamic social entities, and the issue of how they maintain or come to participate in social order seems to be a main bone of contention to be understood. Social order as analysed in this chapter is to be understood as the result of a blending of practices from two different governance systems, exercised simultaneously in daily interactions of villagers and their local organisations. The two regulatory systems are different in their practises, exercises and legitimisation processes.

The first one, the nation-wide system, is a vertical or top-down system in which the country, states, municipalities and villages are bonded into a single national (hierarchical) system of jurisprudence. The second governance system is called *usos y costumbres (customary laws).* It is a bottom-up and village-based system, based on local history, political culture and daily practices, with values and norms established through conventions and accepted patterns of behaviour practised over decades and centuries.

In this context, Mexican villages seem to present two different governance systems. Most of them - especially the municipality-towns - are governed by people elected through a democratic process. Elections are actually stimulated and regulated by the state and justified in the national constitution (articles 41 and 115). However, in many cases, small villages and even plenty of municipalities, especially those populated by indigenous people, practice a local governance system based on internal norms, tolerated but not endorsed by the national constitution (article 2)

[29] See section on studies of communities with socio-anthropological perspectives in chapter 2.

(SEGOB 2004). This means that village order is significantly determined by what is accepted, practised, validated and recognised at the very local level. It also implies that decision-making on local concerns is made under village rules (i.e. by a rather vaguely defined inter-generational group of actors). Different national researchers mention the presence of such traditional and normative systems, and indicate that many small villages are 'outside' the legislative system determined by the federal and state governments (i.e. Blas 2007, Dalton 1990, Gay 1990, Vallejo 2006).

The *usos y costumbres* became a controversial issue at the top of the state governance system after the social uprising of 1994 (the *Zapatista* movement)[30]. Especially indigenous people from the South of Mexico began to demand respect for and recognition of their rights in regard to self-organisation, local governance strategies and use of local natural resources. Among others, the *Zapatista* movement wakened some kind of social consciousness among the population, challenging to the hegemony of national government, and brought crucial elements to the national agenda. Most of the topics upon which the *Zapatistas* demanded discussion had to do with respect for and recognition of the history, culture, traditions, rights, resources and ways of organizing of indigenous and other poor sectors of Mexican society (COCOPA 1996, Collier and Lowery 1994, Gledhill 2005).

Several ideas and suggestions on how to approach the rural problematic emerged; however, they were scarcely listened to at national level. Issues like rural development, local governance and indigenous rights still 'float' in the national debate. Despite a national law for the indigenous sector passed by the parliament, social discomfort is still latent in many rural areas of central and Southern Mexico (INI 2001). This because the law did not include fundamental demands and proposals from civil society, nor were the people consulted before it was passed. A law was drafted for validation but feedback was never expected. Thus social conflicts between small villages and the Mexican State have been at stake for more than a decade. There is even still a state of low intensity of civil war in some instances, and the slogan of *'rights for all, equally'* is still blowing on the breeze (Ramírez-Cuevas 2003, Wallerstein 2006).

In this sense, in order to know more about Mexican villages, the issue of local social order becomes a crucial element for analysis. This chapter displays the two main regulatory systems for governing the small villages. Both of them are placed at their context in terms of national jurisprudence. The *usos y costumbres* (henceforth U&C) is framed as a governance system regulating local lives. The picture is based both on investigations by national researchers[31], but also on particular versions provided by the villagers from the two small villages researched in this study. This local material tests the consensus concerning the elements analysed. The chapter also addresses research question numbers one and two in relation to local governance, social configuration and relations among local power sources. This perspective on village social order is framed by a social regional/stage approach.

On the one hand, the two governance systems to be described seem to depend on different political cultures causing clashes of local vision and practice in village life. However, there is also in some respects a degree of complementary in the operation of this plural legal framework, contributing to village functionality. This can be particularly seen in the prevalent norms and behaviour of villagers, and they way these contribute (positively) to the settling of local dilemmas and conflicts and management of development initiatives. Evidence and examples will be analysed in more detail in later chapters.

[30] Through the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* or Zapatista Army for National Liberation); later, the movement reached other sectors of Mexican society especially the intellectual and academic sectors and jointly constituted the FZLN or *Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* to negotiate peace with federal government officers and several state institution representatives.

[31] Along the conduction of this research, the author visited – in different moments - the national archives (*Archivo General de la Nación*) in order to look at the Indian Code for the New Spain (*Código Indio para la Nueva España*) in which the initial statements of the U&C seem to be described. Unfortunately the librarians always denied the access to the document with the argument that its access is only possible with an official letter from the national political system.

4.2 Mexican villages: top-down and bottom-up visions

The concept of *political village* considers the village as a group of people living in a given territorial space and ruled by the same nation-wide political system (Bobbio 1985). This concept is widely used in the administrative state system. The village is particularly considered as a group of people with a territorial base, integrated according to the division of labour and politics. It clearly distinguishes between 'to govern' and 'being governed'. The concept has been used in several Latin-American countries in planning development initiatives (Fink 2004, Trejo 2002). It fits with the idea of the village as part of a wider homogeneous entity – the nation - made up of people sharing a single cultural background and forged through participation in a single educational system

This perspective does not recognise that members of a *political village* may not share a common vision of the world or religion, or partake of a common perspective on how to use natural resources. It seemingly ignores the possibility that a village can be composed of culturally-diverse individuals with different cosmo-visions. Members from this type of villages are incorporated as governed individuals who do not necessarily share the same identity as equals. These latter elements are said to contribute to the level of belonging and citizenship of individuals.

In recent decades, the concept of *natural village* has been recaptured and used with a more anthropological focus, particularly with stress upon the idea that villages have a kind of inherent complexity, having been shaped by local practices of daily life over centuries (Gurría 1973, Maldonado 2002). Under the influence of anthropological thinking, it is possible to conceive of villages as having a life and particularity of their own, rather than regarding them as the last, most local, derivative of a state administrative system. Nowadays, the concept highlights the importance of social and cultural diversity and the importance of local realities for rural people (Fink 2004). In Mexico this concept of natural village is also used as synonym for indigenous or autonomous village (Carlsen 1999, Trejo 2002).

One of the main recurrent arguments is that a village needs to be defined by more than its physical environment and boundaries on a map. It includes spiritual elements, rituals, beliefs, and relationships with nature crucial for successful village life. Therefore, a Mexican village should not be only considered as a group of people with a common territorial space and position in the hierarchical governmental structure. It extends into the ordinary relations of daily life and is outlined by local scope for individual and /or collective actions, access to natural resources and local ways of living in general, as small-scale societies undergoing permanent social construction and re-construction (Govers 2006, van der Haar 2001). Furthermore, groups of villages may share a common history, language, codes, rituals and many other cultural elements transmitted for generations. Thus, they should be considered as social systems which regulate rights and obligations between the individuals as equals. The village, in this sense, might use perceptions of reality, principles, norms, values and behaviours that are different from the institutional state system (Bonfil-Batalla 1990, Maldonado 2002, Odena 1995). Communal or cooperative forms of use of natural resources and rules and practices of local governance provide some examples of this.

Some authors consider that small villages share strict local rules and institutions, reciprocity, consensus, ceremonies and *tequios*[32]. Some others also consider such villages as a type of social organisation composed by different environments permanently shaped by human actions. Norms and collective representations are shaped and re-shaped by face-to-face social action on a daily basis. This concept of the dynamic natural village is close to the vision of institutions shaped by ritual action, as found in Durkheim, Douglas and Goffman, etc, in theorising society as built 'from below'.

[32] Also known as *faenas* and basically implying non-remunerate and obligatory collective work to be provided to the villages generally once a month.

4.3 Regulatory systems for ensuring social order

All villages in Mexico are administratively part of the national governance system as defined in the National Constitution. The village is thereby officially and directly regulated by the municipality (article 115) (Figure 4.1). Thus, national decisions concerning local development and the use of natural resources are taken at the top and channelled through the national system to the municipality level for implementation.

Nevertheless, thousands of Mexican villages seem to continue practising a localised system to regulate the lives of villagers, administer local resources, and maintain cohesion beyond the reach of state laws. Authors converging on the cultural notion of the village, particularly in the way people live, organise their activities and define their identity (e.g. Bonfil-Batalla 1990, Govers 2006, Nuijten 2005) often put a special emphasis on the notion of consensus, justice and equality of local processes, which then seem to be in a permanent confrontation with the jurisprudential national system. Inevitable questions at this point concern the differences or complementarities between the two regulatory systems in ensuring social order. What are the main differences, and what are their main implications of these differences at village level?

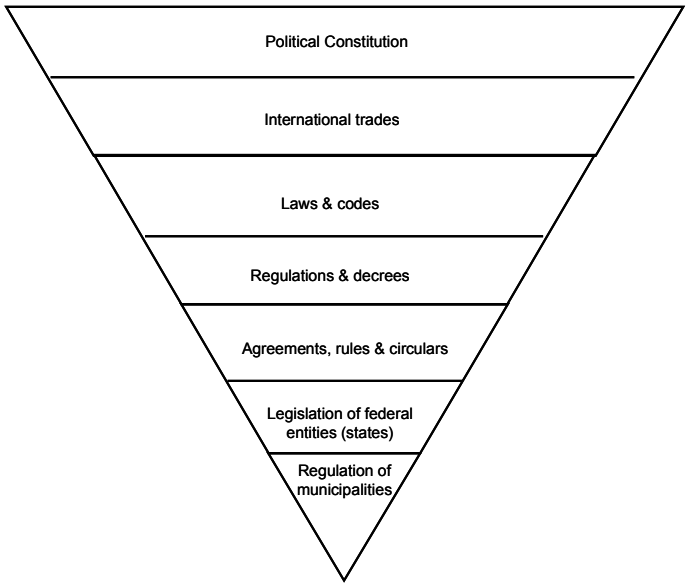


Figure 4.1. Mexican jurisprudence. **Source:** elaborated with the Mexican Constitution as basis.

The top-down, democratic system represents majorities, and is supposed to be a fair representation strategy. However in practice it seems like it has only been setting up a series of declarations which may have impractical or contradictory results at local levels, especially in villages where justice is apparently practised and rights exercised in a different way[33]. As will be later clarified, it appears that local spaces for participatory decision making and collective action have been relegated, imposed or blocked by a top-down system of 'should be' laws. Therefore, the advantages of the top-down system seem to benefit mainly certain Mexican sectors dominated by political and economic elites (Meyer 2006, Rodríguez 2005). The next chapters present concrete examples of such clashes and confrontations, while also recognising certain complementarities as manifested in concrete, hybrid local practises.

1- National level: top-down jurisprudence with *'should be'* laws

Mexican geopolitical organisation is based on a three-level hierarchical structure: the federal republic as first level, federal entities (states) as the second and the municipality as the lowest level (article 115 of the Mexican Constitution). Mexican legislation is based on the National

[33] According to Rodríguez (2006) it is more related to political justice as recognised by Aristotle (384-322 BCE) or practical justice of the 'it is socially done and accepted' kind.

Political Constitution of 1917, also called *magna charter,* which is rooted in the old Roman right as also practiced by the French legislation. The Mexican legislation is based on the principle of *'should be'*. It is the way society should be run, ruled and regulated and the way people should behave in order to ensure social order. It is in this sense normative law (i.e. Foucault 1983) as opposed to law based on accumulated experience of what does actually work and what constitutes sound judgement (the case law stressed in England, for example).

Over time, the Mexican Constitution has been subject to reforms in many of its articles. Almost all of them have been modified, changed, replaced or reformulated. The Mexican Constitution is 'sacred'. Proposing a total reform or a new constitution is always considered tantamount to a sin within Mexican society, especially within the circles of political elites, the main beneficiaries of the normative system (Meyer 2005, Rodríguez 2005, Rodríguez 2006). The result is a patch-work of decrees and amendments, together forming a complex system with space for multiple interpretations, and thus manipulations. All international trade agreements, federal laws, codes, regulations, decrees, agreements, rules and circulars, the local laws of states, and municipal regulations come under the 'magna letter' (Figure 4.1).

In order to regulate the various sectors[34] of Mexican society, there are 242 federal laws[35]. Every law presents a particular regulation, rules and/or procedures to be executed. Regarding the rural sector, which involves natural resources and many productive activities, there are more than 28 laws. It represents between 8 and 10 % of the total number of Mexican laws. Most of these laws are basically elaborations of articles 4, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 73 of the Constitution. All reforms fall under article 73 of the National Constitution, which postulates that any reform is a legislative responsibility of the Congress and the Senators. The laws regarding the rural sector cover among others agrarian issues, sustainable rural development, ecological equilibrium and environment protection, wildlife conservation, forest management, fishery management, water management, soil management and conservation, cattle farming, organic production, coffee production, sugar production, societies for solidarity, and production cooperatives.

Federal laws are often based on information from specific research centres, laws from other countries and advisers to members of Congress (Warman 1979). Public consultations are rare (Rivera-Salgado 2005). This explains why society (interested actors), when realising that a given law is going to pass the Congress and will be decreed by the President, start to mobilise and organise marches in order to manifest disagreement. This happened in 2001 in relation to the peace settlement in Chiapas, in 2002 for the rural development law, and in 2004 and 2005 in protest against the bio-safety and GMO (genetically modified organisms) law (Esteva 2003, Mexican Press 2001-2007)[36]. These social mobilisations have brought some modifications to the laws, but most passed as intended by the president, Congress and industrial sector. Demonstrations still continue but many laws are passed 'without any noise', avoiding the initial possibility of social unrest, as happened with the recent law reforms on social security and the health services law and the mass media law. The price paid by the State remains the possibility of massive social demonstrations organised in Mexico City.

Many people in the villages do not know about the existence of genetic modification of crop types and other laws for the rural sector. They only get to know some general practical information on penalties and prohibitions when they break the law. This usually happens when government officers go to the villages to demand order (see chapter 7). They normally explain the laws in terms of prohibitions and obligations. People thus see laws principally as restrictive, rather than as a

[34] Mexico's productive life is divided among three main sectors: primary or rural; secondary or industrial and tertiary or services sector. A quaternary sector concerning intellectual property, knowledge and science is found in other countries but not in Mexico, where such activities are considered services and belong to the tertiary sector.
[35] Officially there are 242, but some are subdivided, such as the laws on navigation and trade in international waters, and laws governing the stocks market.
[36] By Mexican press I mean mainly articles and editorials issued in three important newspapers: *El Universal* (http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/), *La Jornada* (http://www.jornada.unam.mx/) and *El Financiero* (http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx). These papers followed all the legislation process in Congress but also reported on the social mobilisation of civil society during those years.

code protecting their interests. For instance, the use of wild life or communal forest is conditioned by conservation laws. These laws and their regulations mostly state what not to do, and the penalties that follow any breach. How the natural resources should be (sustainable and effectively) used is delegated to the villages, or to civil organisations such as NGOs or universities.

Added to this situation is the fact that most of the villagers are illiterate. Many people in the kinds of villages studied here cannot read or write, and do not understand Spanish. The fact that they live marginalised and isolated lives, often in inaccessible areas, further widens the gap of knowledge, information, importance and even understanding about laws and other interventions from the top-down system. This allows, and almost forces, some municipalities with large indigenous populations, and thousands of villages sharing common resource pools, to practise other types of regulatory system.

How political power and state laws operate: the top-down system in action

Mexico as nation is divided into thirty-one states and a Federal District. Each state has its own constitution, modelled on the national charter, and has the right to legislate and levy taxes, apart from interstate customs duties. Following federal organisation at the national level, the state (and local) governments also have three branches - executive, legislative, and judicial. Yet despite its federal hierarchical structure, Mexico's political system is highly centralised. State governments depend on Mexico City (where the federal institutions are abased) for much of their revenue, which they, in turn, funnel off to municipal governments in a paternalistic manner. Furthermore, Mexican presidents have historically played a prominent role in selecting PRI and nowadays PAN[37] gubernatorial candidates and in settling state-level electoral disputes (Grindle 1996, Merril and Miró 1997, Pacheco 2003).

The Federal District, which encompasses Mexico City and its suburbs, traditionally falls under the supervision of the president, who previously appointed a mayor (*regente*). In addition to performing municipal duties, the *regente* is also the head of the Department of the Federal District. In September 1993, the congress approved an electoral reform package that introduced the indirect election of the *regente* of the Federal District. Indeed, since 1997 the head of the Federal District (or Mexico City) has been democratically elected for six-year terms. Since then, the elections have always been won by the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), a left-wing party. The Federal District has also local courts and a representative assembly (legislative branch) whose members are elected by proportional representation and a judicial branch (with several judges to impart justice). The representative assembly, historically a local advisory body with no real legislative power, was scheduled to elect Federal District mayors beginning in late 1996. All this is stated in the article 2 of the constitution (Cámara de Diputados 2006).

The states: regional government

Every Mexican state is like a small republic, where the same scheme encountered at national level is practiced at the lower level. Thus, the 31 Mexico's states and the Federal District are ruled under the *magna charter* but with particularities reflected in their own local constitutions and laws. The state executive branch is headed by a governor, who is directly elected by simple majority vote for a six-year term, and, like the president, may not be re-elected. State legislatures are unicameral, consisting of a single Chamber of Deputies meeting in two ordinary sessions per year, with extended periods and extraordinary sessions when needed. Deputies serve three-year terms and may not be immediately re-elected. Legislative bills can be introduced by deputies, the state governor, the state Superior Court of Justice or by a municipality within a given state. Replicating the pattern of executive dominance at the national level, policy-making authority at the state level has historically resided mostly with the governor. The state judiciary is headed by a Superior Court of Justice. Judges (magistrates) of the Superior Courts of Justice are appointed by governors with approval of the state legislatures. The superior court magistrates, in turn, appoint all lower state court judges. Thus, state governments are headed by elected governors, with unicameral legislatures and subordinated to federal courts (Cámara de Diputados 2006, CIA 2006).

[37] PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) was the former and long-lasting ruling party of Mexico. It has been today replaced by PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*), a right-wing grouping.

Every state is supposed to work closely with the federal institutions to ensure the state's development, including economic, political, social and cultural issues. Aspects such as production, health, education, security and justice must be targeted. Furthermore states are also in charge of ruling the municipalities within each jurisdiction. Although each state receives an important budget from the national government to cover programmes and bureaucracy, they states are also in charge of collecting taxes, normally paid by the local productive sectors (Cámara de Diputados 2006, Merril y Miró 1997).

The municipality: lower government

The lowest unit of Mexico's main governmental system is the municipality or county (*municipio*). In 1996 there were more than 2,000 legally in existence, and by 2005, the number had reached 2,435. Municipal governments are responsible for a variety of public services in their jurisdictions, including water and sewerage, street lighting, cleaning and maintenance of infrastructure, public safety and traffic, supervision of slaughterhouses, and the maintenance of parks, gardens, and cemeteries. Municipalities are also free to assist state and federal governments in the provision of elementary education, emergency fire and medical services, environmental protection and the maintenance of historical landmarks. Nevertheless, from a geographical point of view, every municipality is composed of a number of smaller villages surrounding the main municipal town. Thus, the geographical jurisdiction of the municipality contains a variable number of inhabitants. Besides, every municipality has rights over a certain land area, containing land and other natural resources that, with exception of petroleum and metals can be exploited as the municipality sees fit (Cámara de Diputados 2006, INEGI 2006a, Merril y Miró 1997).

Municipal governments are also composed of three branches. Every municipality is headed by a Mayor or Municipal President and a Municipal Council (*Ayuntamiento*) comprising regents (*regidores*) popularly elected for three-year terms. There are (as we will see) exceptions for some municipalities, where municipal presidents are selected by the *system of U&C.*

Related to the municipalities, articles 2 and 115 of the 1917 Constitution proclaim the autonomy of local governments according to the principle of the Free Municipality (*Municipio Libre*) (Cámara de Diputados 2006). Although they are authorised to collect property taxes and user fees, municipalities have historically lacked the means to do so, relying mainly on transfers from higher levels of government for approximately 80% of their revenues. This authorisation to collect taxes and fees is a response to concerns that excessive centralisation of political power and financial resources would jeopardise long-term popular support for the PRI (and nowadays PAN, and in some regions of the country the PRD). President de la Madrid (1982-1988) advocated to reform intergovernmental relations in order to allow greater municipal autonomy. De la Madrid's municipal reform culminated in the 1984 amendments to Article 115, which expanded municipalities' authority to raise revenue and formulate budgets (Grindle 1996, Merrill y Miró 1997).

2- Local level: a system of practical jurisprudence based on bottom-up rules

The governance system of '*usos y costumbres*'

Different studies have looked at cultural, political, legal or sociological perspectives of the U&C. Several have also highlighted its importance for ruling particular aspects of rural life, for instance, access to natural resources or rights to participate in the political life of the village (i.e. Carlsen 1999, De León 2001, Esteva and Pérez 2001, Gledhill 2005, Maldonado 2002). Others have identified how it functions, or the way it structures local governance, as a major local and meaningful institution. In the case of this research, further attention is drawn, for instance, to the *cargos* (duties) as a main component of participation in the political life of villages.

Therefore, the U&C is seen and framed as a governance system, constituted of historically built collective norms and rules, and that continually re-validates and re-constructs itself to ensure and regenerate local social order. Huge cultural diversity and their many enduring social manifestations thereby explain the variations in its operation. This mainly depends on the type of villages, or the social groups present (*mestizos* and/or ethnic) (Bonfil-Batalla 1990, Lombardo-

Toledano 1973, Rivera-Salgado 2005, Warman 1979). In other words, the rural life in Mexico is a complex mosaic, not easily represented by means of a simple portrait or sketch.

a) Origins: when and where U&C first emerged

In any brief historical account of U&C it first seems important to point out that the different kingdoms in Mexico before the Spanish colonisation[38] utilised a caste system. Those kingdoms were distributed from what is now the South and South-East of the United States as far as Panama. The area embraced several distinct cultures, including *Aztecas*, *Mayas*, *Zapoteca*, *Mixteca*, *Totonaca*, etc. Each area had its own languages and hierarchical governance systems, and can be described as a mix of independent nations.

On the other hand, the U&C system has its origin in Castilla, Spain and was imported during colonial times, together with the concept of *natural village,* as proposed by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) in his book *Monarchy* of 1313[1992]. According to Guardiola and Guerrero (2002), in Castilla-Aragón, Spain, the *usos y costumbres* had a role as a factor in political negotiation. It was also known during the Middle Ages under the name of *Pactismo de Aragón,* i.e. the fact of having a pact or agreement for protection. It stood for a pact between the commoners and the king. The people protected and defended the land of the king and the king protected the people within his kingdom with the army. The pact allowed the people to keep their traditions and a certain autonomy. In return, the king received social acceptance and protection for his territories. The deal between king and people was recognised, validated and protected in ex-change for tolerance and respect for the local traditions of the population. The philosophy behind during the Century XIII it was 'we are worth as much as you are, but together we are worthier; we make you our king if you respect our customs and traditions, otherwise we prefer to continue as always' (Guardiola and Guerrero 2002). Over time, the idea of U&C evolved in both Spain and Mexico as a governance system including local traditions and norms.

The friars, bishops, and the administrators of the domain of New Spain (Mexico) adapted the principles of U&C to meet the need to adapt to and rule over the social dynamics of native lives. The system was imposed in order to continue and speed up the colonisation and the validation of Spanish conquerors as a ruling elite, but also to ensure acceptance of Spain as the motherland (Dalton 1990, De Mente 1998). In practical terms, the imposed element was a way of organising small villages to ensure a degree of social cohesion and peace, in the aftermath of a period in which the conquerors had killed massively and publicly executed previous leaders as rebels and 'trouble makers'. Thus, duties were imposed on their successors, and supposed to ensure social order with a high respect for the colonisers and their descendents. Over the centuries, this originated the formation of huge *haciendas* (agrarian estates ruled by landlord patrons) throughout the countryside. Locals were forced to be baptised, take a Spanish name and work as serfs/peasants (Gurría 1973, Humboldt 1811 [1990], Maldonado 2002). The *haciendas* were eventually broken up under land reform at the beginning of the 20th century and peasant cooperatives emerged in many places. But in some more remote areas, and particularly after the independence from Spain in 1821, many villages hitherto only marginally incorporated into the peasant economy adapted governance according the U&C into their daily practices. This shaped a local governance system that functioned as a protection mechanism for local social cohesion against outsiders, but also established a pattern tantamount to self-governance of the lives of villagers in small congregations.

Nowadays, the U&C is not officially recognised by any federal law with exception of the Constitution of Oaxaca state, which considers this possibility within articles 25, 29 and 98[39] (SEGOB 2004). Nevertheless, U&C is practically tolerated by the top-down governance system as implemented by official institutions and organisations. Despite this legal gap, the U&C actually

[38] The colonisation of Mexico began in 1510.

[39] This recognition was made during reforms to the Oaxaca State Constitution in 1997. The inclusion of U&C as a governance system is mainly to be found in article 29 but also in articles 25 and 98. Out of 570 municipalities in Oaxaca State, there are 418 ruled under U&C. However, in the Mexican Constitution the concept of local governance is unclear and vague. References to local governance do not include U&C at all. It is simply mentioned that local governance systems may be respected by any other law or regulation.

represents a very important system functioning as an informal institution in many Mexican villages.

The rights to use natural resources (land, water, forest and wildlife) have been officially granted by the national constitution of 1917 to the villages, whether these are *ejidos* or communal agrarian aggregations[40]. This is clearly defined in article 27, which recognises villages as the social entities having a right to use the natural resources present in their territories (Cámara de Diputados 2006, INI 2001). This also means that villages are entitled to regulate the access and use according their own rules, and thus provides a basis for self-regulation (Lombardo-Toledano 1973).

b) Main components: how U&C is structured

The description of U&C presented in this chapter is based on the study of the villages El Oro and California, and further complemented by reference to the writings of Carlsen (1999), De León (2001), Esteva and Pérez (2001), Leyva (2003), Lisbona (2005), Nuijten *et. al.* (2005), Rivera-Salgado (2005), Rodríguez 2006 and Roquas (2002). The U&C system may vary between villages, depending on their history and context. Nevertheless, U&C as a governance system, essentially has three main components: the *cargo* (duty), the *Asamblea General Comunitaria* (General or Village Assembly [VA]) and the Norms and Rules. After presenting how these components are related to each other, and to the villagers, their functioning will be described.

'Cargos': duties for all

The first component of the U&C system is the *cargo component.* It represents the fundamental political space of village. The *cargo component* implies that every man[41] is obliged to give a 'free service' to his village. A man in this respect is every male between 18 and 65 years old, and considered part of the village. In this sense, there are two types of inhabitants in small villages: those with local rights expected actively to participate in the social and political life of the village, and others (i.e. incomers), who hold neither rights nor duties). People with rights and duties are obliged to perform their duties for free at anytime. The first are called *comuneros* or *ejidatarios,* depending of the type of village (*ejidal* or *communal*). The others are called *avecindados* or *colonos* (new settlers or incomers). The implications of these differences are further explained in the next section. Sometimes young men under 18 are included as soon as they are married. A man is usually being appointed to several *cargos* (duties) during his life. Thus, a person will have different functions, including functions at the municipality level – which are part of the legal system.

Alabán (39) from El Oro said: *The important thing is that people in such positions do not become powerful as individuals; they are just public servants who work for the collective during a period of time. It is like a personal life-time career within the village.* The fact is that there are multiple *cargos* in the village and their allocation depends on the role to be played by the villagers.
The *cargo* component includes two types of duties - *internal* and *external*. Representation stands here not only for a position with a responsibility, but also as a symbol of village functionality; instances would be the policeman or the leader of a given committee. These duty holders must be overall respected by the whole population, since they are appointed by the VA. In general, both internal and external *cargos* report to the local authorities. These are generally the chiefs or heads (locally called *'*leaders in turn') of a local committee*.*

Duties of *internal* representation are related to the regulation of local life. This includes local authorities, committees and leaders who regulate the use of water, roads, religious activities, etc. Thus, *'our village authorities, together represent an Executive Committee, basically composed of a core group of people including the village's head or chief, the secretary and treasurer among others. However, the chief or president of the Executive Committee is also entitled to perform an external duty of representation of the village to the outside'* said Tranquilino (65). According to Israel (64) *'there are multiple cargos in the village. There are cargos of governance: like the*

[40] See chapter 2, section on labeling of villages.
[41] Every man with rights over local resources and considered part of the village. They can be as young as 15 years but must be married. Exceptions are men over 65 years, people stripped of rights and *avecindados* (new settlers or incomers).

Executive Committee or Authorities [to which people are] appointed for a three–year term; or development: members of committees appointed on a yearly basis. Often it is the Ejido Commissioner, the president of common goods or the Municipal Agent who can be the head of the Executive Committee, depending on the type of village and local agreements. Since we are a communal village we have our Agencia Municipal together with the council of common goods (Concejo de Bienes Comunales) and our chief or head is the local Municipal Agent, selected by us.

The *external* duties are basically functions of representation of the village to the outside world. The village's image must be protected. Examples of outside representation include, in El Oro the *Agente Municipal* (Municipal Agent) as head of the MABC (Municipal Agency and Council of Common Goods), and in California, the *Comisariado Ejidal* (*Ejido* Commissioner) and the local Municipal Agent (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2). *'When we are appointed with an externally related duty, like Municipal Agent or Ejido Commissioner, we are able to negotiate projects, resources and conflicts with any external agency, official governmental offices, internal sector of the village, or even the President, on behalf of our village'* said Eduardo (43), a villager who once had had the chance to deliberate with president Zedillo.

The most important figure in the external representation of a village is the person appointed by the municipal authorities to a position in the government administrative system; for example, as municipal counsellor, mayor or head of a municipal area. Then, the VA must decide who will best perform such a duty. In El Oro it has occurred only twice over the last decades that the municipality of Santo Domingo Nuxaá solicited the village for a representative to be part of the Municipal Executive Committee. It was Tito López Sr. and Tranquilino Sánchez who performed the role of watching council officers at the municipality during the 1980s. In California no one has been asked to perform such a duty within the Villa Flores municipality. This is probably just bad luck. Most such requests do, in fact, fall on municipalities ruled under the U&C system.

Typically, during their life, men[42] move up in the system from one *cargo* to another one with higher responsibility. They assert the norms and values of the village through the actions they take and decisions they make. At the same time, they gain and keep certain local rights, but most important, they get respect and honour from other villagers. Israel (64), from El Oro says: *'the rule is simple: every man must participate in the village's life and governance, it is our village and the tradition and we make it all possible. At the same time we gain or keep our rights on local resources, to participate in the political life of El Oro, but also as an individual [we] gain prestige, respect and honour'.* In fact, '*We begin at the lowest level when we are young. This means as a young man being part of the watch committee (Comité de Vigilancia) or being a policeman (topil or policía). Achieving a good personal record [in these activities] is the most important, and therefore we must take every cargo, duty and position very seriously and perform it as well as possible'*.

Aarón (75) said: *'Once we performed all the cargos, we can feel free to give any extra service to the village. We can then also be considered advisers or part of the group of elder counsellors for the new generations and local authorities'*. Actually, it was seen that some of the elders were regarded very respectfully in both villages. It was mentioned that when a person reaches the age of 65 he is automatically excluded from taking any *cargo*, no matter whether the person has passed through all the *cargos* or not, but the prestige and recognition accumulated really counts locally and cannot be diminished by age.

The principles behind the *cargo* component are: a) *obligation* to fulfil and provide a service, b) *reciprocity* in distribution of responsibilities, c) *prestige* (mostly social honour) and *rights* as the only payment and recognition received and, finally d) the *sanction* (penalty) for the failure or refusal to accept the duties assigned.

[42] Historically, the women have not been entitled to play any role within the system. This makes the U&C inherently gender biased. However, this situation is changing and nowadays women can be seen performing certain *cargos* at different local committees (see chapters 6 & 8).

Thus villagers whether *comuneros* and/or *ejidatarios* are always proposed and appointed to perform public positions (*cargo*). The appointment is normally made during a collective meeting for selection. *'If a person refuses, there must be a good reason. A reason can be that he is already performing other duties or because of health problems. If someone does not justify his refusal, it will affect his personal record. He will also be fined and, even worse, [will be] not well regarded in the village'*, said Eduardo. *Comuneros* and/or *ejidatarios* often participate in different committees at the same time, but there can only be one leader. Furthermore, the more committees a village has, the larger the chance that a person is appointed for more than one *cargo*. For instance, in El Oro there are many committees, and it is therefore not strange to see a person appointed for a *cargo* every year. It is also quite common that one person participates in two or more committees at the same time. This can be a good reason to reject one of them, especially because villagers say they are afraid to fail. People do not receive economic remuneration for the *cargos*.

In some indigenous villages, such as El Oro, it is relatively easy to identify the people with *cargos,* like the head of MABC (Municipal Agent in this case) and his collaborators. In this sense, Adolfo (54) commented: *'The members of the MABC must carry a special wooden stick with leather strips hanging down called 'bastón de mando' (stick of mandate) during our special events or to welcome visitors. This bastón de mando represents the maximum mandate in the village.* Abelardo (47) added: *'The policemen (topiles) are also easily recognised: they must carry a dry goat or bull penis hanging from their trousers. This is to be easily identified by the villagers in any case of emergency, but it is also meant to impress.'* It symbolises the social agreement among the villagers to maintain order, and the respect the policemen is due.

Sometimes, a *cargo* implies high commitment and personal costs. This is especially so for committees responsible for religious ceremonies. Being appointed to a religious committee in Catholic villages usually implies providing the funds for the most important ceremonies. Because the Catholic Church is not so important in El Oro and California, this committee does not exist here. However, it was said that in other villages, the *cargo* concerning Catholic celebrations might imply covering the costs associated with the village yearly festivity, in which the entire population of the village is invited to take part. Such events normally lasts a couple of days and might easily cost US$ 10,000[43] for a village with about 7,000 inhabitants. The party is a mix of indigenous traditions with Catholic religious ceremonial and usually celebrates a local saint or the Virgin. The person responsible of the ceremony is called *Mayordomo* (chief of the committee). There is normally a maximum of three *Mayordomos* per committee (head and two assistants, i.e. second and third *Mayordomos*); there is only one financier - the first M*ayordomo*. Some villagers see this as the main reason (they say before it was not necessary) why many *mayordomos* nowadays migrate and work in the cities or in the U.S.A. for a year; they need to accumulate financial resources in order to cover the expenses of this festivity. However, others suggested that migration is more related to the lack of local profitable employment opportunities.

According to Francisco (58), a villager from California, once the *cargos* have been allocated, all *comuneros* (or *ejidatarios*) and also new incomers (*avecindados*), have to participate in communal work (*faenas* or *tequios*). *Tequios* or *faenas* consist of a work day, once in a while, that every head of the family must provide to the village. The local authorities are in charge of scheduling these working days. Men come together on the appointed day and, for instance, collectively clean the streets or main roads, or take care of the maintenance and/or construction of the village's public buildings. Towards the end, women and children bring food for all, and the day ends in a kind of picnic with chatting, eating and drinking. These social events are like celebrations, and enhance social cohesion, according to local versions of events. For further details on *cargos* and committees in both villages, see Tables 5.1 and 5.2 (chapter 5).

'La Asamblea General Comunitaria': the General Village Assembly

Another important component of the U&C as a local governance system is the *Asamblea General Comunitaria* (or VA). The VA is the highest public authority for village decision making. It is the space where villagers attempt to forge a consensus on important local issues. This is also the

[43] This was cited as the cost of festivities in 2003 at San Juan Mixtepec, another village in the Mixtec region of Oaxaca.

summit of local political life. Every village seems to have its own styles and protocols for conducting these assemblies. Some meet once per month (i.e. they are committees); others only meet when there are real issues to be discussed and then they are attended by the entire population.

In California and El Oro the VA come to the pubic debate on a monthly basis and all people with rights in the village are expected to participate. It means that all *comuneros* or *ejidatarios* and other members of the village will be there, including those who do not hold formal rights. This means that women and men meet face-to-face in public. The Executive Committee (MABC or EC) prepares an agenda during the previous meeting and/or during the intervening month. However, at the moment of the meeting begins, everybody can add new points to the agenda. Thus, all the points are boarded and discussed. Sometimes, problems and other village issues are analysed in advance by the Executive Committed members. They propose ideas or suggestions on how to address such issues. In the meeting, if VA members do not agree with something, small sub-groups of interested people are formed to discuss and make a decision. Later, decisions are presented to the VA for their validation. In general, decisions are based on consensus, whenever this issue seems troublesome and out of the routine. Depending on the issue, this consensus making can involve from 30 minutes up to two hours of analysis and discussions. By the end, the secretary of the monthly meeting raises the different decisions made, and the Executive Committee closes the session and thanks the VA for participating.

In some villages, consensus formation and decisions regarding local concerns are made during a public discussion, followed by a vote of the VA. In El Oro and California, the consensus is made through group discussions. Here it is important to mention that only right-holders participate in the consensus making. Non-rights holders are free to provide their opinions, but they are not allowed to make suggestions or actively participate in the small-group discussions. More details on this process of consensus making are given in the next section on 'meetings' in the villages. Nevertheless, the picture is very similar to the process described for a Mende village in Eastern Sierra Leone by Murphy (1980, 1990) in which women and youth are allowed to 'let off steam' in the open meeting, but decisions are then made through a process of an in-group of elders and land-holders 'hanging heads'.

In addition to these general assemblies, there are normally small meetings of the different committees. The committee members meet to analyse the issues they plan to bring forward in the next VA meeting. For instance, they can meet and talk about agrarian, religious or neighbourhood matters. The committee members are entitled to meet independently whenever it is necessary and conduct their duties with freedom. The VA and the Executive Committee validate this right. However, the VA enjoys a real and powerful authority to rule local political life, and also represents a special phenomenon in itself. All the local organisations are obliged to present their progress, concerns and plans to the VA in monthly meetings. Then the VA questions, discusses and decides on the various outstanding issues. Furthermore, the VA is also the responsible of appointing the various *cargos*. Thus, the VA comes to represent the social entity in regard to validation and/or disapproval of duties and acts being performed and conducted by the *cargo* holders, and in judging the actions of local agents in general.

'El reglamento interno': internal norms and rules to ensure social order

The third component of the U&C is represented by the local norms or rules that the villages use as their main 'code of conduct'. These main local 'norms' are described in a document called the *reglamento interno.* This document is first elaborated as part of the village's constitution and modified whenever necessary by the VA and local authorities, through active participation of all villagers. This code of conduct is normally written by those who are literate but norms must also be memorised by all the people. The document basically defines the rights, rules, responsibilities, obligations, rewards and sanctions being used in the village. Furthermore, it also states how to distribute, use and administer local resources among the population.

The *reglamento interno* states rights, obligations and rewards for all who respect it and participate actively in village life by performing their duties in as good a manner as possible. For instance, in

order to be considered part of the Executive Committee or become the local chief, it is necessary to perform village *cargos*. It is also important to respect and follow all the internal procedures and traditions. These are often strict and time demanding. For example, one of the traditional norms is not to get caught while drinking alcohol in public areas. Another example is that a villager with rights (*comunero*, *ejidatario* or *avecindado* in process of gaining rights) is not allowed to migrate or temporarily live elsewhere. He is only allowed to move from the village if he has a good reason, like for example children' education, or accepting a political position in the municipality, facing health problems or lacking the capital needed to perform a village-assigned duty. However, leaving the village, even temporarily, implies a considerable risk of losing rights gained. At the same time, if someone lives abroad and is appointed for a *cargo* in the village, he must return to the village for a year or more to perform his duty. This allows him to retain status and rights and sometimes, most important, family honour and prestige.

The *reglamento interno* also defines penalties, locally agreed, for those who reject a duty, break local rules on use of natural resources, disrespect the authorities or VA, or cause any problem. When a rule is broken, the local authorities or VA looks in the document for the type of sanction to be applied. For instance, in the case of rejecting a *cargo*, which must be seen as *'dar servicio a la comunidad' (provide my service to the village),* the person is socially excluded from village life for a year or more. This means that the person who rejects a *cargo* can not participate in the VA and its decision making process. A penalty can also be the cancellation of other rights like access to services or natural resources. The worst penalties a person can be given are being expelled from the village and losing all rights gained.

Social exclusion as a penalty for a committed fault or crime can be imposed by one of the responsible authorities, or in public by the VA. This way, according Taylor (1982), the social order is maintained through socialisation (sharing in public) of penalties of village members; collective sanctions represent a form of collective action. Other punishments are fines, to be paid in cash or an assignment of social work in the village. This might include repairing the streets, collecting rubbish or cleaning and painting the school, etc. One can also be punished by a number of hours in the jail. This is a rustic cage-like construction in the centre of the village. This is said to publicly denigrate the person's status and family honour. All the punishments, in one way or another, have to do with losing family honour and personal recognition, a value highly regarded in both villages, as mentioned.

Some people complained that meeting these kinds of responsibilities was now hard. One informant commented: *'being in top positions like the Executive Committee (authorities) used to be the most honourable role, but the current situation of the village makes the performing of such a duty complicated and often causes a long-lasting headache'*. Another remarked that: *'it is just a waste of time because we do not receive any payment and have to invest a lot of time in dealing with internal problems'*. *'This is one of the reasons why about ten percent of villagers from El Oro live elsewhere and never come back to visit their relatives',* this informant added. Most of the interviewees with similar views had rejected *cargos* and some have been excluded for more than 10 years already.

So far, complementarily with the top-down system can be seen. This is apparent in the way both systems frame and operate sanctions granted to the people. The *reglamento interno,* as well as many other Mexican laws, seems to represent a 'local law' with principles of rewards and sanctions, properly established, validated and exercised.

c) How the system works: a settled political process

The U&C functions through two main processes which actually represent in sum much of the 'socio-political life' of the two case-study villages. These two processes are the main mode of settlement between the three main components mentioned above, as the main interlinking spaces of village social relations. The processes are *meetings*, in which the whole system (but particularly the VA) is joined in making power manifest, and decision making is done, and the *governance periods*, in which all the various components are framed and decisions acted upon.

Meetings: the moment to make consensus

During the meetings, the VA is visible but also socially consummated. *Cargos* performed by the people are monitored and evaluated in VA meetings, and decisions are made regarding the rules used in the village. The importance of such meetings (in effect, village parliaments) is that the decisions are based on collective consensus and subsequently implemented by the people themselves, as earlier explained. In El Oro and California there are two types of meetings: *ordinary* or *extraordinary* meetings*.* Ordinary meetings take place on a monthly basis (either the last or the first Sunday of the month). However, the extraordinary meetings, or ordinary meetings that deviate from the normal Sunday schedule, are announced publicly through a local sound system. In addition, the members of the Executive Committee are in charge of '*pasar la voz',* meaning that they invite everybody individually by passing from house to house.

The ordinary meetings

The ordinary meetings are meant to scrutinise and analyse the progress of local committees and *cargos*, and address other general village issues (like local conflicts or development interventions). The Executive Committee is in charge of facilitating the meetings. They create the proper discussion environment and take care that the meeting's agreements are systematised and summarised by the literate villagers. The authorities from the Executive Committee are (ideally) collectors of opinions rather than ones who give commands. Nohemías (42) from El Oro mentioned: *'at the beginning of the session, a list of participants may be 'signed' by every comunero. Those who can not write just stamp their finger prints. During the session, all the various leaders of committees present the progress of their committees and the problems and/or demands from the villagers. An ordinary meeting can easily take many hours, even days. For example, in El Oro, we normally begin by 9.00 or 10:00 in the morning and end by 18.00 or 19:00 hours, with breaks only for joint meals. It depends on the number of issues we need to analyse but also on the time we need for the consensus in the small groups and public deliberations.*

Zibeón (20) added: *'sometimes, some people walk out of the meeting and get sanctioned for doing so. When a person walks out, the secretary of the Executive Committee stands up and makes reference to the reglamento interno, which mentions that if a person leaves the meeting without any unjustified reason he is automatically sanctioned. This is to first of all to make the people aware of the possible sanctions'. If someone leaves the meeting without any reason, a penalty of about US$ 10 is levied'*. On *another occasion*, Sarahí (31) stated: *'participants just close the doors, asking the "topiles" (policemen) to avoid [prevent] people leaving the hall.*

The meetings are also characterised by a strict formality and rituals. For example, during the deliberations, *comuneros* address each other in ceremonial and respectful ways. The head of a committee will for example, when talking to the VA, MABC or EC members start with: 'appreciated comrade' or 'esteemed authority' and so on. People tend to make their opinion known in the form of solemn speeches, making the meeting like a public political event. The fact is that before closing any meeting villagers have already taken joint decisions concerning the village's life. Finally, the decisions made in the meeting are written down in a notebook called *'Acta de hechos y acuerdos'*, or book of facts and agreements by the assigned secretary (a literate villager). The *Acta de hechos y acuerdos* is not open for outsiders, but can be consulted by interested villagers. Nor can outsiders not seeking rights in the village be allowed to be present in the meetings. It happened that after two years of visiting California and often asking for permission to be present in one of the meetings, the VA finally gave permission for two research team members to be present in an ordinary meeting. In El Oro the people never accepted the researchers' request, but some women accepted to provide information and details on the meetings to female interviewers.

In this sense, in El Oro, is not accepted that women could openly talk to strangers especially to men, since villagers can easily think of the outsiders trying to have affairs with local women. This is a cultural manifestation of the *macho* behaviours and deeply rooted in many small villages. Other probable but never expressed reason, may be the fact that women are not locally considered by the men as reliable keepers of secrets.

The extraordinary meetings

Francisco explained about the extraordinary meetings*: 'these meetings are actually held in two situations. The first situation is when an appointment of a cargo needs to be made. This means that the VA meets in order to select authorities and committee members. The second situation is when there are very urgent village issues'.* He added: *'Extraordinary meetings can take more than a day, especially when there are tough and long debates.* Eduardo mentioned: '*if the ordinary meeting is considered a formal event with fancy rituals and ceremonies, then the extraordinary meeting is even more ritualistic…*' Aarón from El Oro said: '*We need to do so because it is the only moment in which we can express in public the respect we feel for each other, especially to our authorities, the people who have already done a lot for the village… those people [have already] gained a lot of respect'*.

In the first situation, the meetings promote overall consensus for the selection of people as local authorities or heads of committees. They will be then locally called *'leaders in turn'* and *'people in or with cargos'*. They are validated and legitimised through the same kind of nomination and selection process for the *cargos*.

Tito (35) from el Oro explained: *'The meeting is called for by the Executive Committee in turn. The selection of a person for a cargo starts with a public nomination of candidates where everybody is allowed to propose his/her candidates'.* Another Tito (33) [also from el Oro] added: *'One cannot be self-proposed for a cargo. The villagers have to propose the candidates during the meeting. Later on, it continues with a general discussion (in small groups) on the capacities, background, experience, family and individual records of the candidates. Finally, consensus of the most capable people to be appointed is made'*. It was also mentioned that if the discussion groups come up with lists of candidates, then again, a public debate is raised, until the selection is made. Belisario from California added: *'It is not over until the VA is satisfied with the names and roles to be played by the appointees*. Thus, the selected members are appointed with specific duties within the local organisations of the governance system.

Alabán from El Oro said: *'people can be appointed from "topil"(policeman), the lowest duty, to chief of the village or representative of the village to the municipality. It includes coordinators, heads or leaders in turn of all local committees. This way, people become responsible [for] the regulation of the village's life: [this involves] the administration of natural and economic resources, respect for local traditions, proper behaviour of villagers, peace keeping and proper functioning of all services and productive systems'*.

This selection process brings home one of the differences between the democratic process of election by votes as practiced by the top-down regulatory system and the nomination and selection of candidates by consensus of the U&C. In the first case, different candidates proposed by the respective political parties compete in order to win a political position of public representation through the votes they capture. In the second case, people in the villages propose essentially one candidate who is evaluated and accepted or rejected in public. Discussion groups and deliberations are conducted during an extraordinary meeting. After the meeting, propositions are brought to public debate where consensus must be reached in order to satisfy all the participants.

During the extraordinary meeting, VA members propose names and the candidates can also argue about whether or not to join the committees. Vicente (63) from California said: *'If there is resistance from villagers to a proposed candidate or from a candidate to accept a cargo, then the secretary of the Executive Committee facilitates a process of public selection. In other words, a public debate is held in which positive and negative records of every candidate are listed and finally evaluated. Thus the process is closed until the VA accepts someone for the cargo. In this case, public consensus is [arrived at] by skipping the small-group discussions'.*

Somebody mentioned that once, during a meeting in El Oro, there was a tough discussion on a person who was proposed as member of the MABC. The discussion focused on the fact that he was of the López family, married and later divorced from a woman of the Sánchez family. Apparently, the reason for the conflict was that the man had had a child out of marriage. Someone brought up

the issue during the selection discussion for the man to be part of the MABC committee. That person also mentioned that nowadays both families are fine in their relations, but if woman's family were to feel affronted, then the situation could revert to family conflict again, and affect the village harmony or dynamics.

The villagers' legal problems or political ideologies can also come out during the consensus formation process (see chapter 7). Villagers have mentioned that during the selection meetings the candidates might hear rumours about their personal life they did not even know about.

Nevertheless, according to some villagers, 'being a committee member opens a door' to occupy a power position within the village. On the other hand, to be in a committee position may also represent an opportunity for people with different ideas to implement such ideas and turn the U&C into a more dynamic system. It is called, in the Mexican popular expression, *'making the power balance'*. However, rejecting an appointment within the village's *cargos* would mean being subjected to the sanctions mentioned earlier.

During the field research period, extraordinary meetings were held in both villages to renew the Executive Committee. In El Oro, thirteen people were appointed by the VA during one extraordinary meeting, to serve for either three-year or one-year terms, depending on the *cargo*. If something unexpected happens, another VA extraordinary meeting is held. For instance, in the case of California there was also a story about the former village chief or *Ejido* Commissioner. He was stabbed with a knife by a villager during one ordinary meeting. According to various versions of the story, the chief was not respecting village agreements, making his own decisions, travelling whenever he wanted, drinking alcohol in the village and not carrying out his duties properly. He was asked several times by the VA to resign, but he never accepted. Then the VA appointed another person for the *cargo* of *Ejido* Commissioner. The VA declared that the former chiefs' rights were taken away from him and he was asked to leave the village. He ignored the villagers' demand and continued appearing during the meetings. He started to misbehave during the sessions and pretended to continue being the head of the *Ejido* Commissary (EC). Then, someone was appointed to 'scare' him during the next monthly meeting. However, the trouble maker got hurt with the knife and immediately taken by his relatives to a hospital in Villa Flores. He never came back to the village under the threat of next time being murdered. Stories of this kind are common, according to the villagers, but since some of them represent a risk to the villagers, they are locally told only in secret.

In the case of California, new members of the *Ejido* Commissary are locally legitimised and validated, and 'the power of the village' is transferred to them by the members stepping down. Leaving authorities prepare a stamped and signed letter to cover the change of power. In addition to such a letter, the secretary also documents the process in the *Acta de hechos y acuerdos,* in the form of a small narrative, by highlighting the selection process and the people appointed. This process of stating shifts in authority and the assignment of *cargos* seems to be taken from the formal top-down regulatory system practiced at the federal, state and municipal government levels. Beyond verbal agreements made by the VA and the local committees, a document needs to be signed in order to have the appointment 'officially' recognised, and symbolically accepted among the villagers. The document is then used during the negotiations to the municipal or state officers. This local 'officialisation' represents another existing similarity between the two governance systems.

Governance periods: local times

Since the U&C seems to be the most important system underpinning the rules of village life, it also appears to frame *cargos*, VA, meetings and norms in time. In both villages the governance system was settled for three-year periods in the case of Executive Committee (authorities). *'In El Oro the Executive Committee is represented by the MABC'* Abelardo said. In California, Rubinoy (28) mentioned: *'it is represented by the Ejido Commissary with the Ejido Commissioner at the head. Periods of one-year are usual for the people with cargos in all the local committees with exception of the EC and MA'*. Thus, villagers appointed are in charge of *cargos* within the village over periods similar to those associated with power-holding within the top-down system. In some other villages

visited, *cargos* for local committees were sometimes for longer periods. In the case of municipalities ruled under the U&C, *cargos* are sometimes assigned for four-year periods.

d) Daily practices and villager participation

One way to understand the functioning U&C is to look at how it operates to maintain basic social distinctions at the village level. Holding rights under U&C determines how villagers are differentiated and their degree of participation in local activities. For instance, *ejidatarios* and *comuneros* have direct access to the local natural and economic resources and the decision making process over those resources because they are right holders; however, *avecindados* are apparently excluded.

Carlos (62) from California said about the position of *avecindados*: *'They are normally relatives of local families who came along and joined them. They can also be landless or expelled families from other villages or states. They are initially allowed to settle in the village, make use of the local services, work as labourers, borrow or rent land, and if desired, ask to be part of the cargos, and participate in the discussions and debates. But, they do not have rights to use natural resources, like the forest and grazing land in a 'free way' as we do. They cannot propose people for cargos, lead the small group discussions or announce conclusions of the consensus-making exercises. To gain those rights they must behave properly, respect the local norms and show the willingness to get involved in the local process at anytime'.* Adolfo from El Oro stated: *'avecindados must follow a simple rule: observe, listen, talk when necessary and shut up'.*

Edilberto (38), an *avecindado* in California, said: *'in general we are well treated in the village, but initially we did not have the same rights as the ejidatarios or comuneros'.* His brother Arturo (25) added: *'there are some people who sometimes try to take advantage of our situations. We can complain about that during the VA's meetings or just ignore them'.*

Eduardo from California explained: *'the rights to access land and other natural resources are gained conditionally until they are well integrated into village life, have accumulated good records and start to be assigned for a cargo.* In other words, an *avecindado* is on the first step of a ladder scaling positions within the local governance system. Tito from El Oro explained: *'Once avecindados have lived in the village for some years, they can be able to meet the requirements to be a comunero. The decision that someone wants to be a comunero must first be made by the person himself and his family. Then he has to make a public demand to the VA during one of the ordinary or extraordinary meetings. They can also be proposed by a comunero or ejidatario. They will then be evaluated, and approved or rejected by the VA and the decision will be respected by the Executive Committee [MABC]. If the candidate is approved, he will immediately get a first cargo, usually "topil" (policeman), for a one year period. Indications the candidate might migrate away in future can be an objection for the VA to accept him'.*

To become a *comunero* or *ejidatario,* an *avecindado* must participate in all local processes, respect all norms including communal work (*tequios* or *faenas*) and accept all *cargos* assigned, without expecting any payment. Nevertheless, several years will pass before a person is accepted. Even in *ejido* villages, where individuals can sell their rights over land[44], if an *avecindado* acquires such land use rights, the VA has to evaluate and decide whether or not the *avecindado* can become a *comunero* and allowed to use local resources. On the other hand, *avecindados* can also be expelled from the village at any time and the rights gained will be taken away if there is any misbehaviour or disrespect.

In the case of women and children, they seem to be lacking any rights of their own. Their rights are considered to be belong under the umbrella of the family-head, i.e. the rights of a wife are granted only through her husband. Eufrosina (42) from El Oro said: *'If the man has rights, the family hold them too'*. However, Blanca (48) also from El Oro added: *'if a woman becomes a widow, she automatically gets the rights of the husband. But the oldest son (if not married or otherwise the*

[44] Land cannot be sold in the collective *ejidos* or communal villages. It is only use rights over land, water and forest that are transacted.

second one) is the one who must participate in the political life. Thus, cargos will be appointed to him and the rest of the family will continue to hold the rights'.

e) The settlement of local relations

Reasons why the U&C system retains its hold over rural life may be found in the nature of prevailing interpersonal relations. The system seems to be the top manifestation of patrimonial relations normal between villagers in Mexico. The fact is that personalised relations are very important in the social functioning of rural Mexico. Personalised relationships play a more important role than impersonal, bureaucratic norms and regulations (see chapter 7). *Parentela* (extended family) members, *compadres* (godparents), *cuates* (very close buddies), and friends expect from one another various degrees of loyalty, material and spiritual assistance, emotional support, physical protection, and even flexibility in the enforcement of laws, norms, and regulations. Primary ties are defined through blood descent, which is traced equally through the father's and mother's side. Every person is, therefore, a member of two family lines. The person's name, which often includes the matrilineal after the patrilineal component, represents this arrangement. For many families, however, *compadrazgo*, or the system of god-parenting, offers a way to expand their support network. A family initiates this ritual kinship network by inviting a man and woman to serve as godparents for a child. Through *compadrazgo*, the child's parents and godparents - now known as *compadres* (literally 'co-fathers') and *comadres* ('co-mothers') - enter into a complex relationship of rights and obligations. When needed, a family often turns to its children's godparents for assistance. For instance, an employer is expected to look first to his or her children's godparents when hiring additional workers. At the same time the *compadrazgo* expects intense loyalty to the employer from any worker hired by this means.

The importance of personal relations helps explain the prevalence of U&C. The importance of blood linkages among the population, and the relevance of the principles like the respect for the elderly, for parents and for close relatives, goes hand-in-hand with an inward-looking code based on knowledge of family background and run through sanctions of shame and family honour. Furthermore, villages are in a number of cases mainly composed of closely related kin. This aspect is actually very clearly visible, and will be boarded in the next three chapters.

4.4 Final remarks

The two Mexican villages studied concentrate power in local hands, based upon the rule and regulation of local political spaces the U&C system. The U&C system has been constructed, practiced and shaped over decades. It frames a governance system with its own components, spaces of action and relations ensuring social order, imparting justice, and maintaining control over collective actions and natural resources management. In accordance with Foucault (1983), this represents as an instrument of power to ensure sovereignty and discipline.

The U&C represents the most important locally constructed institution in the two investigated villages. One main positive characteristic is that it directs attention to village problems and brings up village issues. Those issues oblige the villagers to join discussions and participate in the social and political life of the village in the seeking for solutions. This is done by appointing responsibilities to authorities and people in general through the VA. The VA is the highest and more powerful authority, and the cargo is a fundamental political responsibility of villagers with rights. The cargos are named or appointed by consensus during extraordinary meetings to perform different duties assigned by the VA. This gives the people with cargos some authority and power to make decisions and create their own space for collective actions in relation to village interests. Moreover, individuals can 'build' their own capacities and become formed through their own local political performances. They not only develop as individuals, but also shape collective feelings within the village. The meetings are the moments when the U&C becomes 'alive' and effective for collective actions. These points will be addressed further in the next chapter.

Participation within the U&C is performative and manifested in three domains: work, power and party. Thus, objectives for local development are sought as a collective activity located in a common territory and pushed forward by people with similar mindsets and culture. Principles of the U&C for the collective are: reciprocity (based upon mutual support), power (as resting in the

collective hands of the VA), willingness (to serve the different cargos freely), and the shaping and defence of a territory with own history and culture. The VA represents, specifically, the space in which local consensus is forged and the public manifestation and validation of leadership takes place. Therefore it seems clear that the U&C is indeed a system, built upon long-lasting social relations as well as recurrent day-to-day practices of individuals, framing the flow of daily life into a semblance of social order, at minimum cost to the Mexican state, even if at the expense of local dynamism. Participation, inclusion (and exclusion), practical justice and collective actions are all key concepts belonging to the system of U&C.

It seems that the U&C system is judged by protagonists to be worthier and fairer in sustaining durable local social relations than what might eventuate from further local extension of the top-down system. It thrives on horizontal human relations and communication channels that the top-down governance system has failed to stimulate. However, the U&C can also be looked upon as only one governance system next to many others. It is socially constructed, accepted, felt, defended and retained as one of the most important local institutions. In other words, it seems to contribute to the structuring and functioning of Mexican villages. People still believe and actively participate in it. It is an effective way (as yet) of assuring cohesion, social order and collective decision making. The fact that the local authorities are part of the village and villagers actively participate in the VA also encourages active participation in the decision making processes. More evidence on these points is presented in the next chapter.

But there is a negative side. It encourages the false idea that since villages still function as autonomous and living social entities they can be safely left to their own devices. This is responsible for a debilitating neglect by national and state government and also for a strong sense of local inertia, since villagers are hardly forced to question or doubt their embedded habits and the roles they play. This inertia, apparently imperceptible in the eyes of locals, is addressed in aspects of chapters 5-7.

For some authors, the U&C system also represent a power control mechanism in which exploitation and social exclusion of some local sectors can be clearly identified (Blas 2007). Alienation, apathy and other manifestations of social disorganisation may indicate that the system is obsolete, or hides certain crucial aspects of village life. These latter elements are not yet clearly manifested in either village, where this little appetite for change. The only negative feedback comprised comments against the part played by certain people in performing their *cargo roles*, but not necessarily directed against the U&C system itself. But it is already apparent from some evidence presented in the present chapter that those who feel oppressed by the system absent themselves from it, generally by out-migration. U&C may therefore be suspected of partitioning the rural poor in Profound Mexico into a relatively declining proportion of those who still are prepared to tolerate (or who can benefit from) the system, number of those prepared to stay, and an increasing percentage of those who have abandoned the system largely or entirely. At this point the issue of gender and youth empowerment becomes crucial. If women and youth acquire rights only through husbands and fathers then they risk becoming an oppressed group within a declining system, and a potential source of future trouble.

Regarding the outside relations, the U&C system still represents certain social forces of resistance against the top-down governmental system. In this sense, knowing more about local strategies to cope with, address and face interventions becomes important in any deeper understanding of the two villages. More insights on this point will be forthcoming in the following chapters.

The top-down system is supposed to ensure social order in Mexico, and yet it seems to interface quite well with the locally practiced U&C system. The structure and function of both systems is quite distinct. The top-down system is based on a democratic system of election in which political parties compete. Authorities elected do not have to establish their merits in the society that they are supposed to represent. They make their 'pitch' to the political party and certain elites. Therefore, they basically represent first of all the party's interests as a branch of the national level system. Congress men, deputies, governors and other municipal officers under the political system of parties, postulate themselves as representatives of the people, but actually act according to the

interests of their political party. Furthermore, they make use of jurisprudential institutions and official ways in seeking to impose new regulations and laws at all levels of Mexican society.

The system of U&C, by contrast, to many villagers, seems to represent a real and concrete rendering of local norms; the village is personalised in the VA. However, the U&C seems to present certain affinities in relation to the top-down system. Some similarities were observed in the way the *reglamento interno* is organised and exercised; this was apparent in the form in which entering authorities were symbolically placed in local documents, and the issue of organising periods of governance. In chapters 5-7 some of this elective affinity is further analysed, through detailed cases showing how the two governance systems interact, and the extent to which confrontation and accommodation arise through local visions and practices of participation in village lives.

This chapter has raised, and subsequent chapters will pursue, the issue of whether the democratic government system of the state, so far called 'top-down', is a fair system of representation, and whether U&C represents a kind of practical democratic alternative. The state system of democratic representation imposes a series of statements which turn out to be unpractical and contradictory at the local level, where social order seems to be ensured in a different way. Moreover, it appears that local spaces of action created under the U&C are not arenas where the democratic system properly functions for the villages. A system that seems to hold out some prospects of complementarity is perhaps less compatible than it at first appears. No simple merging of the two systems seems easily possible.

Finally, the chapter has established in descriptive manner a general picture of how U&C affects the governing of two small villages in *Profound* Mexico. An initial sketch of potential clashes, contradictions and complementarities has also been presented. General insights on the U&C and the way it can be seen as a local governance system have also been drawn. The implications of U&C for the political life of the villages also came out. Therefore, the coming chapters will aim to probe the working of the U&C in both its *front* and *back* aspects. A dark side will become apparent. The chapters five and six will attempt to follow actors as they play important roles in both villages. Chapter seven will seek to illustrate dilemmas, conflicts and clashes affecting collective agreements and individual decisions to use common natural resources. The overall aim is to assess what life the system continues to possess, and the extent to which true emancipation of the Mexican rural poor can be achieved through strategic use of the local space for manoeuvre granted by constitutional tolerance of village custom.

Chapter 5

PARTICIPATORY POWER MAPPING:
A collective identification of development actors in small villages of Southern Mexico

Abstract

This chapter presents local actors involved in the *Usos y Costumbres* system through which village life is regulated. The different groups or committees making up the administrative structure of the villages are seen as local spaces for political action. Villagers as well as outsiders act out social and political life, based on values and norms of *Usos y Costumbres*. Based on data from El Oro and California the chapter seeks to portray how villagers look at themselves in terms their roles in village development. A local perspective on how these spaces of action are created and shaped by the villagers as main actors is conveyed. This descriptive account is linked to issues raised in the previous chapter on local governance.

5.1 Introduction

Small villages in the Mexican context can be seen as both political and natural villages (see chapters 2 & 4). However, they are also social entities in which internal and external forces consistently interact. The dynamics of these interactions and the forces behind them translate into the actions of local actors and thereby construct and shape what can be called 'village life' (Hickey and Mohan 2004, Long 2001). Thus one can consider the conflicts, behaviour and progress of the actors as manifestations of the interacting forces of daily life (Hunter 1953 and Hunter 1978). In other words, actions are created by individuals and organisations performing social roles as actors (Long and Long 1992). In such situations, governance systems represent the regulating frameworks within which shared codes, values and relations are placed. For some, this is the power they face.

The way actors shape and re-shape local structures through the routines of daily life is crucial for understanding social phenomena (Mosse 2004, Nuijten 2003, Uphoff 1986). The identification of local actors, their actions, the structures that frame their way of acting and the manner in which they emerge is important in any attempt to draw a social portrait of a rural community (Long 2001, Long and Long 1992). How power is exercised in enacting social life can be grasped through the notion of the social map or power map of actors (Crozier and Friedberg 1980, Giddens 1979, Sadomba 1996).

In the case of Mexico, different studies on power issues in villages have been carried out by focusing mainly on aspects of local development, natural resources management, management of environmental problems, agricultural interventions, agrarian conflicts, and so on (Govers 2006, Nuijten 2003 & 2005, van der Haar 2001). Many studies have also looked for better insights into local realities from a conventional perspective, often by observing villages and people as researchable objects (Chevalier and Buckles 1995, Jiménez *et. al.* 1997). In Mexican villages, this "objectivising" approach by some researchers has at times made villagers confused and even angry. Villagers often say that researchers just come, stay and leave, and never come back with their results or products of their stay. Many of them complain about the lack of information provided after a research exercise is completed (Alemán 1998). It is not strange to see villagers denying researchers entrance to their village or even expelling them. Despite this obvious tension, only a few studies have tried to overcome this constraint.

In the present case the researcher sought to involve villagers in reflection on local realities and at the same time sharing all information that came out. This was done by organising a series of workshops (chapter 2). The workshop approach aimed to bridge the gap in the interaction between researchers and villagers, but also was adopted in the hope of developing a new and viable perspective on how to conduct action-oriented social research through joint generation and validation of information, as suggested by Alemán (1998) Guzmán *et. al.* (1996) and Ricks (2003).

This chapter looks at the visible interaction between actors, mainly villagers and intervening outsiders working at the local level, in the functioning of the social and political institutions of the village; i.e. the analysis focuses on *front stage* social action in the terminology used by Murphy (1980, 1981 & 1990) and Silverman (1965), following Goffman. Analysis of the actors and their interactions helps to reveal the way structure(s), places and norms are shaped by certain dynamics and social forces. These overt dynamics and social forces at the village level seem to be basically ruled by the system of *Usos y Costumbres* (U&C). The system was described in the previous chapter. The present chapter draws on collective reflection by villagers on how their villages through (and beyond) the functioning of the U&C regulatory system. The result is a power map

positioning various types of actors, their areas/spaces of action, and links and implications for popular participation in village development tasks. This chapter aims to contribute to answering the research question concerning how local governance shapes the social configurations of the two case study villages.

5.2 Power mapping as methodology

Power mapping is also called actor mapping, structure mapping, social mapping, retrospective community mapping, etc., and mainly stems from analysis undertaken by development practitioners using participatory rural appraisal techniques (PRA) and other participatory approaches (Bass *et. al.* 1995, Chambers 1994 & 1999). Power mapping is a tool intended to offer a visualisation of local actors and the sets of social forces playing a role in the local configuration (Fundación Arias 1997). It is used in this chapter to provide a graphical representation of actors present in the villages, and in particular those with a role in the regulatory system of U&C and those involved in local development. Furthermore, the social spaces or areas where decisions are made and actions taken are also identified. The combination of these elements allows an analysis of through whom, where, and how decisions are made, and the significance of these decisions in village development.

Power mapping makes use of a simple mathematical procedure known as Venn diagram[45], which in this case is used to represent how local actors are placed in terms of their importance in affecting village decisions. In this case the placement is undertaken by the villagers themselves. It is called power mapping because the actors are supposed to be actively involved in decision making in relation to the regulation of village life and require to hold power to do so. In terms of this mapping exercise, an actor can be a person, group or an organisation. Power mapping helps to analyse the roles played by different actors in the addressing local development concerns.

In this context, questions are considered on how power is gained, used and lost. This involves looking at who has access to, and who has control over, local resources (natural, political, economic, etc.), and who benefits from rural development interventions. Also it is important to consider who is included and excluded within decision processes, how networks emerge, and how they influence social integration and consensus formation. Not all power is of the same type. A wealthy person may use money to influence a decision. In other cases compliance reflects respect for the person issuing a command or request. Thus it is important to specify which type of power is being exercised, and to offer some account of how power is gained and/or managed. Answers to these questions will throw light on the structures influential over specific actors, and what kinds of power-play is possible in different structural contexts. Finally, it is important to determine who does and who does not play a part in village development processes, and how the become incorporated in or excluded from such activities.

In order to conduct power mapping in El Oro and California villages, it was necessary to conduct a series of workshops in which all the villagers were invited to participate. For details on methods see chapter two, particularly the section on workshop implementation. Power maps were drawn up together with the villagers. Participants were basically villagers from the different sectors of each village, including people with *cargos*, *avecindados*, women and even children. In average at each workshop there were between 30 and 50 people. The information presented in the figures and in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 was gathered from drawings, figures and diagrams drafted by participants in these workshops. Some complementary or missing information, in relation to the actors and their roles, was added from information gathered in informal interviews.

The fact is that villagers had hardly ever had the opportunity to reflect on past and current social dynamics. However after the third participatory workshop (out of five) in a period of several months there were plenty discussions between them. They started to visualise, recognise and evaluate themselves as part of something that had changed over the years'. According to participants, that 'something' was the resulting social configuration of the village; or in their own terms, it was *la vida de la comunidad* (the village's life), i.e. local actors and their relationships, as viewed by

[45] For further details see Appendix 1.

themselves. As a result of the workshops the villagers identified a series of actors and their relations together forming the recognised collective or *front stage* social image of the village (see Tables and Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The outcomes of the series of workshops in El Oro and California - their respective power maps - are next presented.

5.3 Findings: Two case studies

Case A: El Oro, Santo Domingo Nuxaá, Oaxaca

Village configuration as locally perceived

El Oro village was founded in 1909 by two families of Santo Domingo Nuxaá. Santa Domingo Nuxaá is the village were the municipality of which El Oro is part has its administrative jurisdiction. It is 30 km from El Oro. The families were expelled from Santo Domingo Nuxaá because of religious belief (they became Protestants). They decided to settle in a remote communal area of the same municipality since they were allowed to use this land as *comuneros* of the municipality. To get those families out of the municipality centre the local government gave them permission to settle permanently in this distant site. It was not until 1915 that any form of collective governance took shape (Table 2.1). The settlers named a local committee to work as the authority of the village and to deal with all local administrative concerns. This was the Executive Committee, currently named *Agencia Municipal y Bienes Comunales (Municipal Agency and Comunal Goods* [MABC]). This was the point at which the system of U&C became the main instrument of local governance, to ensure the social order at the village. It is thus important to recognise that U&C is not always associated with tradition in established settlements, but can also be adopted to regulate the affairs of new settlements. In accordance with Foucault (1983), this is a source of power to ensure sovereignty and discipline.

In El Oro, workshop participants identified and positioned 27 local actors. In effect they mapped out the main social bodies or committees comprising the action space for governance at village level. All actors were basically differentiated in terms of origins, roles played and type of representation. Different committees, and external organisations and institutions, were identified and linked via the mapping exercise. These different entities are characterised as *internal and external actors* but also as *locally recognised* and non-*recognised actors.*

The implications and importance of being an external or internal actor in the village has mainly to do with the right to participate in village collective decision making; non-recognised and external (even some internal) actors are not entitled to participate. In this case, 'locally recognised' means that the actor is part of the local governance structure; i.e. they have a voice in the political space of the village, the Village Assembly (VA), the space where collective decision making takes place. This means that they are also entitled to perform duties assigned to them by the VA and take decisions on their own as necessary to carry out the tasks. Nevertheless, internal but non-recognised actors can participate in the VA as individuals with rights in the political life of the village but as organisations because they are locally non-recognised by the VA (see next chapter).

Internal actors

In El Oro, 18 *internal actors were identified*: 15 'locally recognised' and 3 'non-recognised' (Figure 5.1). The MABC is the main collective actor in village decision making, including all its committees (for forest nursery, groceries supply, rural shop, water, construction, road, kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school, open school, sports, health care, mill, and the bus and other vehicles).

One of the responsibilities of the MABC is to assist and monitor the progress of the different committees, making announcements in the VA and facilitating the process of selection of candidates for the different '*cargos'*. The MABC also deals with external initiatives, local conflicts and the administrative responsibilities of the governance of the village. For instance, the Municipal Agent, the head of the MABC, travels into, talks to and negotiates with the outside world. As head of the MABC actually represents the governing structure of the village, and thereby the village itself. The other members of the MABC support him in this duty, for example by writing administrate letters, managing the communal funds, presenting monthly financial status reports to the VA and even organising and facilitating meetings of the various committees. In other words, the members of the MABC have the power to govern the village under the validation of the VA.

The recognition and validation that villagers grant to actors in this decision making process is in accordance with their origins and the nature of the activities taking place in the village. Validation in this context is considered an act or process of making something valid, ratifying it, or checking that it satisfies certain standards or conditions. In this case, people publicly manifest, encourage and accept certain actors and recognise theirs room for action to fulfil village interests under U&C norms. Most internal actors originate in the village itself. However, there were also three actors who emerged from the mapping exercise as independent internal actors, but with important external linkages. None of these three was recognised, but only identified, and were mentioned as supporting specific local actions in the village. These were the Presbyterian church, the Catholic church and a woman's working group[46]. These actors have apparently created a space of their own, outside the local governance structure (see next chapter).

External actors

Villagers in El Oro identified nine *external actors* (Figure 5.1): an NGO and eight governmental institutions. The NGO is called *Misión Integral* (formerly, AMEXTRA). The governmental institutions are COPLAMAR (coordination for marginalised areas), Seguro Social (IMSS-Ministry of the Health), Ministry of the Social Development (SEDESOL-Oportunidades), Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, Livestock and Rural Development (SAGARPA-Procampo), Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT-Pronare and Conafor), Municipal funds (Municipio), Ministry of the Education (SEP), and the Ministry of the Communications and Transport (SCT-temporary jobs). The governmental institutions have a presence in the village through specific initiatives.

Indeed, the fact that they were 'identified' by the villagers but characterised as a distinct type of actor indicates that the villagers concede that they create or manoeuvre within certain spaces beyond the U&C. Therefore, visualising them as another type of power holder probably represents an entry point for identification of a range of active, passive, challenging and other types of actors and relations. According to Gaventa (2004) and Nuijten (2003, 2005), this local diversity of actors may also represent the manifestation of different 'force fields' and spaces for action where power is gained, lost, created, manifested, hidden, etc.; in a different manner to the sphere of locally established power demarcated by U&C.

Villagers were asked why some actors are seen as more or less important in the village. They gave several reasons. They accepted that the MABC is the most important actor within the village because the VA delegates power and tasks of representation. Furthermore, they said it is the only way the village life can be regulated properly. They expressed that this does not mean they as individuals have little responsibility or participation, because everybody must perform several duties during their lives if they want to keep their rights. After MABC, they identified all other local actors with their respective names and leaders (Table 5.1), assigning all to a lower level of importance (Figure 5.1).

During the collective analysis villagers stressed that it is the U&C that demands that they organise and participate in village tasks and decisions. They expressed the view that they are committed to but also sometimes overwhelmed by too many responsibilities to attend all local concerns. They did however recognise how valuable the U&C is, with its various social bodies (committees), for their cohesion. They clearly mentioned that it is the only way they have learned about village development. Expressions of pride in the way they perform their duties were often encountered. They also flatly rejected the idea that any outsider should come and say how the village should be ruled.

Thus, the U&C system is widely accepted as the framework through which all internally-recognised actors gain their mandate. The three others actors with local influence (the two churches and the women's groups) have emerged in the village action space in a different way and are locally identified but non-recognised by the VA (see chapter 6).

[46] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the U&C has been a men-driven governance system which has apparently excluded women and youth from the local decision making.

Table 5.1. Main actors emerging from the power mapping in El Oro, Oaxaca.

Actor	Constitution*	Current Representative	Type of actor	Area/space of action	Members	Addressing	No. of Links	Type of links	Links to	Participation in the workshops
Municipal Agency & Bienes Comunales (MABC)	1915	Jorge López	Internal & recognised	Political	4 persons (Agent, Secretariat, Treasurer, Substitute) + 3 Watchers, 6 policemen	All internal & external issues of the village, especially the administration of all local resources	Many	Permanent & temporary	Almost every actor in village & the different governmental institutions	5 times
Forest Nursery Committee	1992 & 2000	Israel López	Internal & recognised	Environmental & productive	3 villagers	Seedling production & reforestation of common lands	3	Permanent & temporary	MABC, Pronare-Conafor & Misión Integral	5 times
Groceries Supply Committee	1986	Miqueas López L.	Internal & recognised	Social	2 villagers	Buying all groceries for the shop	1	Permanent	MABC	3 times
Rural Shop Committee	1986	Elioenaí López L.	Internal & recognised	Social & productive	2 villagers	Sells & shop	1	Permanent	MABC	2 times
Water Committee	2003	Tranquilino Sánchez	Internal & recognised	Social & environmental	2 villagers	All water issues	2	Permanent & temporary	MABC & municipal Funds	2 times
Construction Committee	1965	Alabán López Aparicio	Internal & recognised	Social	7 villagers	Public buildings & other infrastructures	3	Permanent & temporary	MABC, municipal Funds & SCT	1 time
Road Committee	1998	Isaías López y Catalino López	Internal & recognised	Social	3 villagers	Maintenance of road	3	Permanent & temporary	MABC, municipal Funds & temporary job programme (SCT)	2 times
Kindergarten Committee	1983	Filadelfo López L.	Internal & recognised	Cultural	6 villagers	Kindergarten issues	2	Permanent & temporary	MABC & SEP	4 times
Elementary School Committee	1938	Hermenegildo García L.	Internal & recognised	Cultural	10 villagers	Basic education issues	2	Permanent & temporary	MABC & SEP	4 times
Secondary School committee	1998	Odilón López L.	Internal & recognised	Cultural	6 villagers	Middle level education issues	2	Permanent & temporary	MABC & SEP	3 times
Open School Committee	1968	Eleazar López	Internal & recognised	Cultural	4 (+ 8 women Assistants)	Adult education issues	3	Permanent & temporary	MABC, opportunities prog. & SEP	1 time
Sports Committee	2001	Juan Sánchez	Internal & recognised	Social	4 villagers	All sport events & sport infrastructure maintenance	2	Permanent & temporary	MABC & other villages	4 times
Health Care Committee	1983	Eliut López	Internal & recognised	Social	4 promoters	All problems related to health	3	Permanent & temporary	MABC, IMSS & opportunities prog.	5 times
Mill Committee	1965	Rodolfo López	Internal & recognised	Social & productive	5 villagers	Ensure proper milling services	2	Permanent	MABC & Misión integral	5 times
Bus (cooperative) Committee & other vehicles	2002	Tito López Aparicio	Internal & recognised	Productive & social	3 bus drivers 3 other drivers	Offer transportation services to main city	1	Permanent	MABC	5 times

Table 5.1 (Continued)

Presbyterian Church	1909	Alabán López Aparicio	Internal but non-recognised	Religious	2 villagers	Offer spiritual services	2	Permanent	Misión Integral & MABC	3 times
Catholic Church	1998	Filadelfo López López	Internal but non-recognised	Religious	1 villager	Offers spiritual services	1	Permanent	MABC	3 times
Women's working group	1998	Florinda Sánchez	Internal but non-recognised	Productive	3 (President Treasurer Secretariat) + 13 members	Small family businesses & vegetable production	6	Permanent & temporary	MABC, Mission Integral, opportunities, education, health committees & Presby. church	5 times
Coplamar & IMSS	1983	-	External & non-recognised	Social	Federal officers	Support & training the health committee & medications	-			No, without repres. in village
SEDESOL (Oportunidades)	2002	Eufrosina Sánchez (local promoter)	External & non-recognised	Social & Economic	1 villager & state officer	Support & training for families & other complementary education	2	Temporary	MABC & health care committee	3 times
SEDESOL (Diconsa)	1986	-	External & non-recognised	Social	-	Supply most of the groceries for the shop	-			No, without repres. in village
Misión integral (before AMEXTRA)	1985 & 1997	Sergio, Azalea, Carlos y Raúl	External & non-recognised	Productive, Economic & Social	3 facilitators	Support & training for the women group, Presbyterian church & the forest nursery	5	Permanent	MABC, Women's working group, Presbyterian church & mill committee.	5 times
SAGARPA (Procampo)	1998	-	External & non-recognised	Productive & economic	Federal officers	Provide small subsidies to farmers	1	Temporary	MABC	No, without repres. in village
SEMARNAT (Pronare & Conafor)	2000	-	External & non-recognised	Environmental & Economic	Federal officers	Support forest nursery	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
Municipal funds	1940	-	External & non-recognised	Productive & economic	municipality & state officers	Support & invest in villages infrastructures	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
SEP	2000	-	External & non-recognised	Cultural	Federal & state officers	Provide all teachers	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
Temporary jobs Programme (SCT)	2000	-	External & non-recognised	Economic	Federal & state officers	Provide funds for road maintenance	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village

*** In the case of external actors, the year indicates when the village began to have some links to them.**

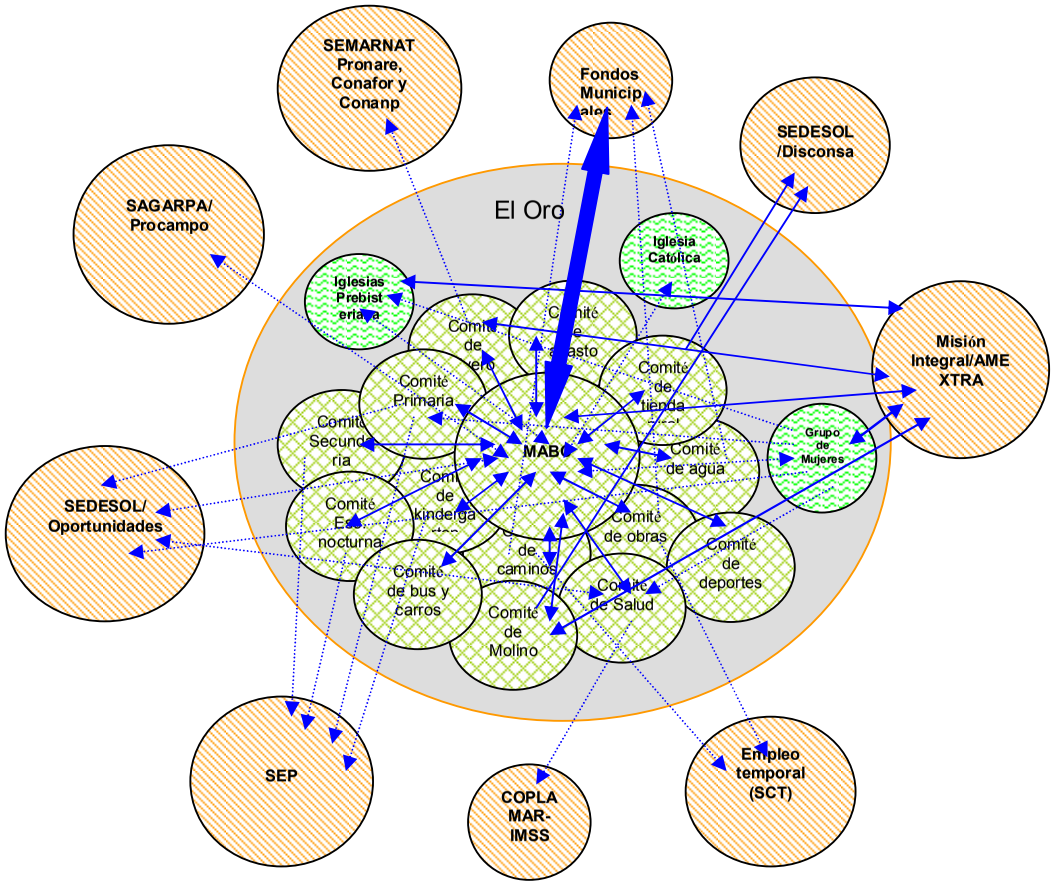


Figure 5.1 The power map developed through participatory means at El Oro, Santo Domingo Nuxaá, Oaxaca in 2003-2004.

A further differentiation of actors

There is another type of classification or differentiation of actors that can be made on the basis of the workshops outcomes. This *is related to the area or space of action* in which the actors perform. The spaces can be placed in an order of appearance – as ranked by the villagers themselves – as they emerged from the previous classification; various political, productive (economic), social, environmental, cultural and religious actors occupy these areas or spaces of action.

The only explicitly political actor recognised within the village is the entity presiding over the system of U&C, i.e. the MABC also known as Executive Committee. This actor has a powerful role in representing the village to external actors, but it also ensures that internally the rules and norms are followed and respected, according to local agreements. In this sense, The MABC is the only operational actor occupying a full political space of action within the U&C structure. In other words, it exercises a significant amount of power as assigned by the VA. In practical terms, the U&C seems to be the main structure working as an umbrella for all the other internal actors. It is in this sense the backbone of the village.

In this context, it is worth noting that the collective actor associated with the biggest space or arena for social action was not identified or mentioned during the workshops. This is the Village Assembly (VA), composed of all men (adult) villagers with validated rights, and placed above the others actors represented by the committees already identified. This VA is part of the U&C structure (see previous chapter) and in terms of importance and power for decision making it ranks above the MABC. So its exclusion from the power mapping exercise is a puzzle. This non-inclusion of the VA as an actor has to do with the concept of actor itself in El Oro. Tito (33) mentioned: *'a committee is in charge of the local actions in relation to the village's needs for improvement, and with its own space of action'*; however, he also added: *'the 'VA is the only space for villagers to propose, approve or reject the actions, representations and performance of the local committees.* The vision is functionalistic – i.e. the VA allows them to coordinate and work together. It is in this sense an embodiment of the village, and not one of its executive institutions. Actors are those entities or individuals appointed with specific duties to be locally performed. Villagers must participate and take part in them in order to continue keep their rights over local resources and citizenship (*cargos*). Power lies with the MABC, authority and legitimacy with the VA.

Despite the fact that MABC is seen as the most important and powerful actor in the village and in charge of the administration of resources and also supervises other village actors in carrying out their duties, the MABC always resorts to the VA for approval. This is a crucial aspect of the functioning of the U&C, since it pays tribute to the notion that social order is structured. The VA selects, validates, rewards and punishes in order to rule the village and settle relationships among other actors. It therefore is important to point out that the VA represents a powerful collective space in the village – so significant that it is taken for granted.

Intra-village links

The local relations of El Oro were basically identified as the links established by each actor, as identified in the mapping process. Villagers could identify the intensity of the links, but also they characterised the links in terms of number, type (permanent or temporary) and direction (one-way or two-way). Villagers clearly stated that these identified links together do not necessarily represent the entire web of existing local relations. In that regard, they also mentioned that individual links to other individuals outside or inside the village can also play an important role in terms of local support for personal activities. In the present case, however, they focused their attention only on the links of the local actors previously identified as part of the collective life of El Oro.

The MABC of El Oro was identified as the most linked actor because of its importance as already described. The MABC is like the big spider at the centre of the web (Figure 5.1). Basically, it has relations to all the other identified actors. MABC links are also very diverse in terms of origins, directions and duration over time. Basically, they divide into those that can be considered temporary or permanent.

The strongest link of the MABC is to the municipal funds office in San Domingo Nuxaá. Links to the local committees are in a two-way direction, and have permanent status. Examples of MABC temporary links are, for example, those to the churches and to the women's working group. They are temporary in the sense that the link is active only when there is a specific activity under way.

The MABC distributes resources from external actors, facilitates interaction among committees, and monitors their progress. In the other direction, the committees also exercise a kind of political power via their links to the MABC, because they can influence certain decisions of the MABC; instances are through proposing items for the agenda for the VA or strategies to be followed in negotiating a given project with an external actor. This way, committees play an important role in balancing the power of the MABC. These power-balancing functions are apparent in the 'force fields' suggested by Nuijten (2003, 2005) through which for instance, personal leadership, village conflicts, negotiations and/or economic or political interests become apparent.

Despite the fact that some internally 'recognised' actors report administratively to the MABC, they are independent in establishing external links beyond the village's boundaries as required. This explains the temporary or permanent links between committees and external actors that do not require to pass through the MABC for acceptation (dashed and continuous arrows in Figure 5.1). For instance, forest nursery committee is independent, in being entitled to conduct its duties and establish all necessary links for plant production and reforestation. Nevertheless, every project or negotiation with external actors is under the scrutiny of both MABC and VA.

The links of MABC with the other internal but 'non-recognised' actors, like the women's working group (WWG) or the two only churches present in El Oro were not clearly identified during the workshops, despite the fact that they exist, e.g. local religious events use village infrastructure. The WWG sometimes uses a classroom of the primary school to meet with people from the NGO, for example. The only two temporary links to external actors mentioned but not clearly identified relate to governmental interventions.

The internal non-recognised actors (churches and WWG) are autonomous. The churches are responsible of the spiritual life of villagers. The WWG is the most linked internal but non-recognised actor. The WWG and churches have both temporary and permanent links to different internal and external actors. However, links to the internal actors, like committees or MABC, seem to be weak. This seems to indicate the historically gender-biased status of U&C, but that the WWG is de facto important, and in the process of opening up a wider space of action at village level. The fact is that WWG has important links to *Misión Integral*, which has been crucial for its constitution and consolidation. It could thus be argued that empowerment of women is the product of external intervention. But WWG is also apparently opening "new windows and doors" for self-empowerment and contributing importantly to households improvements. This is discussed further in chapters six and eight.

In relation to the external actors and their links to the internal actors, *Misión Integral* as an NGO seems to have its space and target groups well defined. It links with WWG, the forest nursery, the mill, MABC and the Presbyterian church. In this way, *Misión Integral* has built some trust in El Oro over the years. This is because of its religious history and technical capacity to collaborate with the village. Facilitators from the NGO have established good working relations and their support is often mentioned and acknowledged, including by villagers who are not part of the WWG. In the next chapter the NGO's way of working with the village is further described.

In El Oro, according to the villagers, the external relations with governmental programmes are more important for the local actors than for the government. This is their interpretation, based on the fact that officers from governmental programmes rarely visit the village to establish real collaborative projects; this pattern of behaviour is common among Mexican officers, according to Arce and Long (1988 & 1992). Villagers mentioned that officers only visit El Oro when they need something. According to them, officers visit the villages for three reasons: a) to collect stamps or signatures from local authorities in order to justify their activities or projects, b) before or during federal or state elections periods to influence the local votes, and c) if a project of the municipality

or Oaxaca state is being executed in the territory of the village and the VA's approval is needed. The second point is the main reason for officers from the programmes *Procampo* and *Oportunidades* to have links with the MABC.

This means that the only external actor in El Oro resident in the village is *Misión Integral*. Governmental institutions and programmes are only relevant for the villagers when contact gives them access to resources. Thus the relations of El Oro to the outside 'formal' world are based on the local needs and obligations of committees. The village representatives travel to the offices of external actors, basically governmental institutions located in Oaxaca City or Nochixtlán, only when necessary, i.e. when they need something. There is no regular reporting function.

Finally, it is also important to keep in mind that village links are also a result of interpersonal relations between individuals, whether or not they belong to any local agency. More attention to these kinds of relationships is given in chapter seven.

Power as locally understood

During a workshop, a small group discussion focused on issues related to power in the village. Villagers from that group talked about 'power' as the 'personal and achieved right to participate in the decision making of the village'. According to them, power can be held individually or in collective. This is visible during the VA meetings or in the various committees in which villagers act on their own behalf or on behalf of a 'recognised actor'. Participants also said that they can use local natural resources because the personal power they hold enables them to do so, and to influence village decisions over such resources too. This power is recognised and validated by the VA and is again a functionalistic aspect of village life.

In this sense, the most powerful actor in accordance with its history, representation and responsibilities within the village is the MABC. This actor represents the local authority with the power to rule the village according the local traditions and norms, validated but also supervised by the VA. According to Rowlands (1997), this type of actor may hold power 'to', 'with' and sometimes 'over' the other local actors.

The other 'recognised' actors, i.e. local committees, also hold power, but not as much as the MABC in terms of village duties and responsibilities. However, these other actors are autonomous to a degree through being responsible for specific tasks. They can settle all their necessary links and negotiations, but their decisions are overseen by the VA. This is done in collective meetings. This can be seen as a mechanism for accountability and transparency. The VA thus embodies power as exercised over the administration and regulation practiced by several institutions, as mentioned by Leeuwis and van den Ban (2004).

Actors without this type local power are the external and the locally non-recognised ones. However, this does not mean they are unable to exercise power of some kind, or that they are prevented from participating in the locally settled exercise of power. Their interests and spaces of action are differently configured, however, and in consequence, the type of power they possess is of a different order, and shaped by other types of relations, including external relations (see next chapter).

The current functionality of village collective decision making

El Oro has three-year cycles of political life, in which for all locally 'recognised actors', links are worked out, duties performed and spaces shaped., The selection of people takes place during a meeting of the VA through a process based on consensus, as explained in the previous chapter. In this sense, becoming a committee member means 'opening a new door' to a power position within the village. Good performance of *cargos* in earlier committees represents *'puntos ganados'* or a 'good record', often converted into a more powerful position in the political life of the village. All the 'recognised' actors must inform the VA about their progress and concerns once a month. This is the space and moment for the collective decision making in which consensus and cohesion are ensured, social order validated and power exercises balanced. As noted above, women did not

take part, historically, as internally-recognised actors. This situation seems to be quickly changing (see chapters 6 & 8).

El Oro villagers recognise two difficulties in relation to local development activities. The first one is in dealing with the bureaucracy, as requested by the municipality and/or different governmental institutions. Especially the administration of governmental programmes can be cumbersome. Large numbers of forms and surveys need to be filled in by the villagers to receive the state or federal resources under the programmes *Procampo* and *Oportunidades*[47]. According to local opinion, this represents a terrible headache, especially for illiterate villagers. The second difficulty relates to the loss of motivation of villagers to actively engage in village life. Villagers report that over the past seven years punctuality to attend monthly meetings and performance of duties related to the various *cargos* has seriously declined. Among key reasons, villagers recognise out-migration, inertia resulting from the intensified pressure of daily activities, a rise in inter-personal conflicts and a trend towards viewing household issues as being more important than village issues.

Local authorities (MABC) said that a general apathy is especially notable among the younger generation of villagers. They are more preoccupied with their own business, but also for them 'the village' has less importance than for the older generation. This represent a crucial juncture in the evolution U&C as a governance system, as fragmentation of local actors and/or the creation of alternative spaces for action, may damage social consensus and change the power balance between established and emergent political and social spaces. In this increasingly volatile situation, women, *avecindados* (new-settlers), 'hidden' groups and leaders, etc., may play a crucial role in manifesting and shaping new interests. These emerging changes in the forces fields governing village life seem likely to lead to accelerated change in overall configuration of power relationships and in the dynamics among local actors in the short or midterm. An implication is that relationships between the village and higher authority will have to be reconfigured. Nevertheless, as yet, El Oro is still run and ruled by the MABC (authority), VA (a restricted population bearing full local rights) and committees made up of people with *cargos*. This configuration of actors is the current context within which different activities contribute to village development.

Case B: California, Villa Flores, Chiapas

Village configuration as locally perceived

California is a young village, founded as recently as 1980. This village is the result of an agrarian movement of *avecindados* from the highlands (*Sierra*) of Villa Flores municipality during the late 1970s. It was founded by about 20 people, all landless farmers (also called 'land seekers)' who lived as *avecindados,* and were seeking an area where they might have a 'piece of land to crop' and found a 'new village'. While working in a neighbouring village as land labourers, they held meetings during the evenings and organised themselves to take over an area abandoned by a local landlord. Put, bluntly, California might be described as a squatter settlement.

Soon, the inhabitants began to build up a social identity alongside the construction of the first houses. From the beginning an open-decision-making process and strong sense of commitment and responsibility among villagers have been a very important element in the process of 'building California' (Table 2.2).

The current social configuration in terms of actors and relations in California is thus the result of 27 years of internal organisation with locally defined rules and norms, but also compliance with outside forces in the form of the municipality and the laws imposed by the top-down federal system. The rules and norms in the village are derived from a mix of traditions and visions of villagers from different origins and ethnical groups. Most of these elements derive from the different cultural and political arrangements settlers experienced in their original places, before they came to live together in California (chapter 4). What the California case shows clearly is that U&C is a flexible system, with a degree of what plant breeders would call 'hybrid vigour'.

[47] For details on these programmes see chapter 3.

In part this is because the villagers from California were as 'steeped' in U&C as those from El Oro, and it comes as second nature to invent a new variant as part of the settlement process. They have been raised in the U&C system and thus hardly analyse the evolution of the village since its settlement. This lack of awareness about the system was actually a complaint from old village leaders often mentioned to the research team. California is actually at a crucial point in its development because leaders who initially founded the village and developed its governance structures are becoming old (they are in their 60s to 80s). This actually made villagers more open to the collective exercise proposed by the researcher to reflect on how the village looks in terms of local actors and the development achieved so far. Local opinion considers that California has already achieved what might have taken 100 years in some other villages.

In the workshops, organised as in El Oro, participants identified and differentiated a series of entities in terms of *internal and external* and (locally) *'recognised'* and *non-recognised actors.* Again, an attempt was made to map the actual powers exercised, and space for action controlled by, those with assigned duties. This then led to a specification of village configuration and development pattern (Table 5.2). In California, workshop participants identified and placed 28 local actors present in the village, comprising local authorities, committees, working groups and externally linked organisations and institutions.

As in El Oro, being an external or internal actor in the village relates to the right to participate in the collective decision making. Non-'recognised' and external (even some internal) actors are limited in their participation. Once again 'locally recognised' means that the actor participates in the governance structure; i.e. has a formal voice in the political space of the village, viz. the VA, where collective decision making occurs.

In California villagers also recognised and gave validation to actors according to their responsibilities as part of the U&C structure for village development.

Internal actors

The villagers of California identified 10 *internal actors* (eight less than in El Oro): six recognised and four without local recognition. The *internal and locally recognised* are: the *Ejido* Commissary (EC), the Watching [Oversight] Council (WC), the local Municipal Agency (MA). All are locally considered authorities, and deemed to be the most important in terms of responsibilities and duties. The other three internal and locally recognised actors are local committees for water, health care, and education.

The responsibilities of the EC are similar to those of the MABC in El Oro: to assist and monitor the progress of the different committees, to convene the VA, and to facilitate the process of selection of candidates for *cargos*. The EC also deals with external initiatives, and local conflicts, and assumes administrative responsibilities for governance of the village. For instance, the *Ejido* Commissioner (the head of the EC) travels outside, and negotiates with different official institutions. The other members of the EC support his activities. In other words, the members of the EC are in charge of the village governance and they work under the validation of the VA. The difference in name in the two villages has to do with the fact that California is an *ejido, while* El Oro is a communal or agrarian village. In other words the difference is based on the land tenure system imposed by top-down government.

The MA is the entity that maintains a close link to the municipal officers and programmes of Villa Flores and is also locally named by the VA. The MA consists of two persons and its only role is external representation of the village and participation in some municipal meetings in Villa Flores where village needs are raised. Besides, the MA also has the role of an information broker and usually brings to the village information from the municipality regarding initiatives and regulations. The MA has always been seen by the municipality as the main link between village and municipal officers. In fact, it was the first formal actor recognised at the municipality level, before California became an *ejido*. The municipality itself suggested constituting this entity in order to establish permanent contact and exercise a certain 'control' over a young, emerging settlement.

Table 5.2. Main actors emerging from the power mapping in California, Chiapas.

Actor	Constitution*	Current Representative	Type of actor	Area/space of action	Members	Addressing	No. of links	Type of links	Links to	Participation in the workshops
Ejido commissary (EC)	1980	Eduardo Sánchez Bautista	Internal & recognised	Political	5 (Commissioner Secretariat, Treasurer 2 substitutes)	All internal & external issues of the village, especially the administration of local resources & agrarian issues	Many	Permanent & temporary	All external & internal actors	5 times
Watching [oversight] council (WC)	1980	José A Zaraus Martínez	Internal & recognised	Political	3 (coordin. secretariat & assistant + 12 policemen)	Monitor & assists commissary activities	9	Permanent	Only to the internal actors	4 times
Municipal Agency (MA)	1980	Vicente Cruz Cruz	Internal & recognised	Political	2 (Agent & secretariat)	Represents village to the municipality but is also in charge of local peace & security	10	Permanent & temporary	To the municipality (external) & to all the internal actors in village	5 times
Water Committee	1985	Belisario Sánchez	Internal & recognised	Social & Environmental	2 (Coordinator & secretariat)	All water issues	3	Permanent & temporary	EC, MA & municipality	5 times
Health Care Committee	1998	Pedro Cruz Ocaña	Internal & recognised	Social	1 villager	All problems related to health	3	Permanent & temporary	EC, IDH & SEDESOL	5 times
Education Committee	1986	Hermilo Ramírez de la Cruz	Internal & recognised	Cultural	3 (coordinator, secretariat & treasurer)	Basic education issues	4	Permanent & temporary	EC, SEP, SEDESOL & municipality	3 times
Catholic Church	1985	1 local member	Internal & non-recognised	Religious	1 assistant	Offer spiritual services	1	Permanent	To the main church in Villa Flores city	2 times
Protestant Churches	1985	3 local leaders & three chapels**	Internal & non-recognised	Religious	1 local pastor per chapel	Offer spiritual services	3	Permanent	To catholic churches in Villaflores & Tuxtla Gutierrez	2 times
Women working group 'peasant woman 1'	1996	Praxedis Nango Símuta	Internal & non-recognised	Productive & Social	3 (coordinator, secretariat & treasurer) + 70 women	Enhancing households & supporting women's productive activities	8	Permanent & temporary	EC, MA, municipality, the coalition, IDH, Coplanta, INPROVICH & PRI	5 times
Women working group 'peasant woman'***	1998	Mary Cruz Zaraus Ramírez	Internal & non-recognised	Productive & Social	3 (coordinator, secretariat & treasurer) + 10 women	Enhancing households & supporting women's productive activities	3	Permanent & temporary	EC, municipality & PRD (political party)	Not interested
Municipality	1980	-	External & non-recognised	Political & Social	municipal officers	Providing different resources	2	Permanent	MA & EC	No, without repres. in village
IDH	1986	-	External & non-recognised	Social	State officers	Supports health & family services	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
Civilian registry office	1980	-	External & non-recognised	Social	municipal officers	Supports marriages & births	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village

Table 5.2 (Continued)

SEP	1986	-	External & non-recognised	Cultural	State & Federal officers	Supports education services	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
CONAFE	1987	-	External & non-recognised	Cultural	State officers	Supports education	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
TELCEL	1991	-	External & non-recognised	Social	Private sector	Supports communication services	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
INEGI (Procede)	2000	-	External & non-recognised	Social	State & federal officers	Supports I& [WHAT IS THIS?] possessors	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
RAN (Procede)	1997	-	External & non-recognised	Social	State & federal officers	Supports land rights holders	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
PA (Procede)	1999	-	External & non-recognised	Social	State & federal officers	Legal support on problems related to land	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
SDR (Coplanta)	2000	-	External & non-recognised	Productive	State officers	Supports & provides subsidies to farmers	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
SAGARPA (Procampo)	1990	-	External & non-recognised	Economic	Federal officers	Provides small subsidies to farmers	1	Temporary	EC	No, without repres. in village
INPROVICH	1999	-	External & non-recognised	Social	State officers	Supports house building	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
Protección Civil & COPLADE	1985	-	External & non-recognised	Social	State & municipal officers	Ensures security & local infrastructure	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
SEDESOL (Oportunidades)	2000	-	External & non-recognised	Social	Federal officers	Supports health & education services	2	Temporary	EC & health care committee	No, without repres. in village
CFE	1985	-	External & non-recognised	Social	State & federal officers	Provides electricity	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
La Coalición	1990	-	External & non-recognised	Social	Civil society	Supports local organisation	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
CEC	1988	-	External & non-recognised	Social	State officers	Supports roads maintenance	-	-	-	No, without repres. in village
SEMARNAT (Pronare, Conafor & CONANP)	1988	-	External & non-recognised	Environmental	A local promoter & federal officers	Monitors the use of natural resources in the protected area	1	Permanent	EC and local fire combatant	No, without repres. in village

*** In the case of external actors, the year indicates when the village began to have some links to them.**
**** The three chapels play a role in social aggregation but are also responsible for social divisions (because of religious reasons some families got divided and constituted these new 'churches').**
***** This was the first effectively organised women's working group in California, and was led by María Dominga López Pérez (59). It was said that this group was unable to deal with the local power structure, and because of local political reasons the group was first fragmented and later disintegrated. It was originally constituted in 1989 and worked until 1997 with women participating actively. Later attempts were made to revive this group. Further details are boarded in the next chapter.**

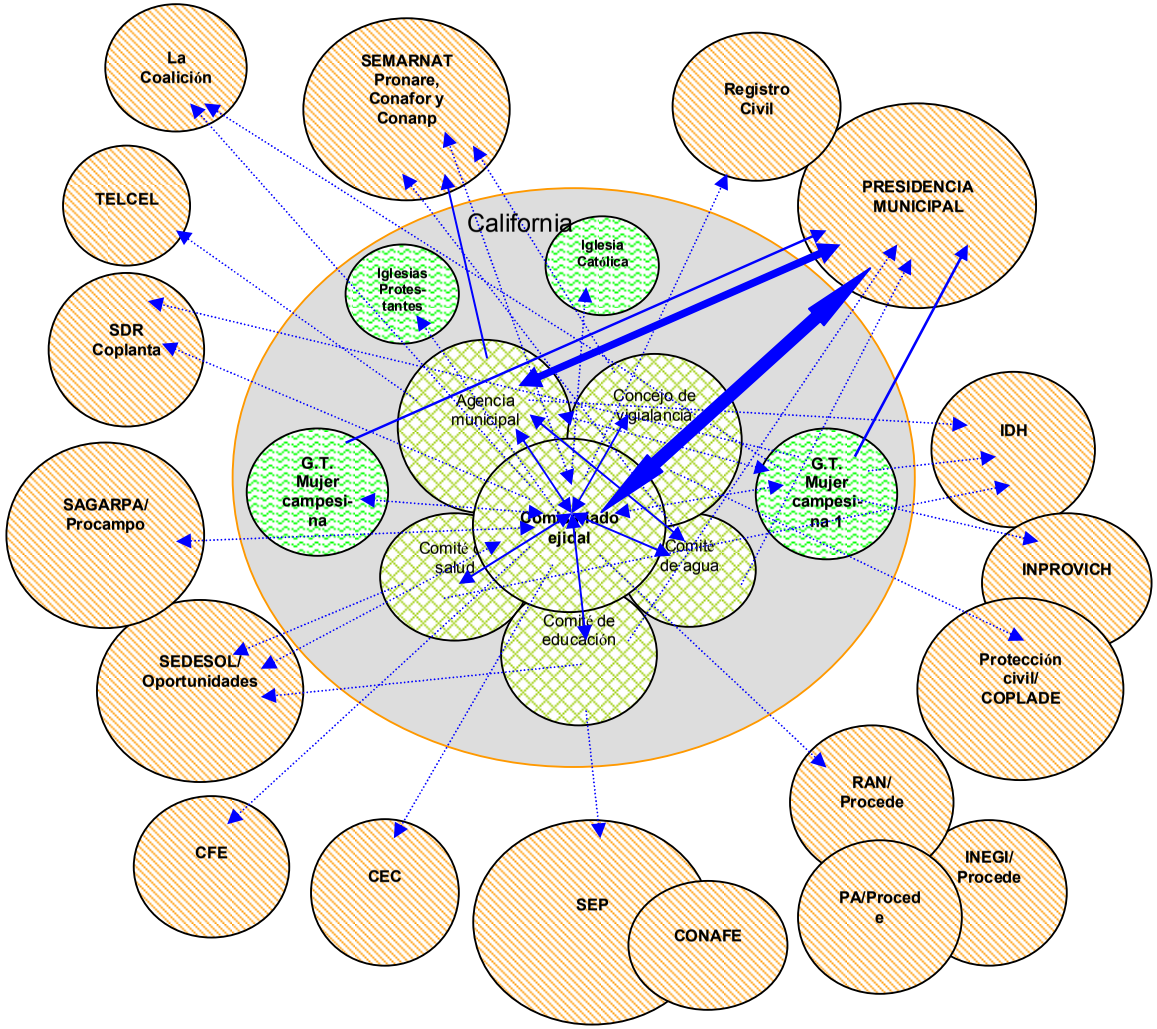


Figure 5.2. The power map developed through participatory means at California, Villa Flores, Chiapas, in 2003-2004.

The WC is in charge of keeping the internal social order, maintaining proper use of natural resources and watching that the EC and MA work peacefully together. It only has an internal function, and does not maintain links outside the village.

In practice, there is good communication and coordination among the six locally 'recognised' actors. Activities to be developed, consultation with the VA and ability to mobilise villagers are very clear. Furthermore, the research team saw these functions exercised outside the village during official meetings in agencies and federal offices, where California seemed to operate as a coherent group.

While most of this group of actors emerged from the inside, there were also four which emerged as independent local actors but with external support. They do not have a voice in village decision making. They were actually identified as internal actors in the power mapping exercise but ranked as non-recognised: the Protestant church, Catholic church, and two women's working-groups ('peasant woman 1', PW1, and 'peasant woman' PW). However, the villagers' functional representation of these actors allows that they can participate in the political life of the village as individuals. The functioning of these groups is described in the next chapter, but once again it is worth noting that there is strong bias against regarding women as independent political actors, even in a hybrid system of U&C.

External actors

In California, the 18 *external actors* identified are basically governmental institutions present in the village because of specific projects, programmes or support given to some local and internal actors. They are mostly goods or services providers, comprising 16 federal, state and municipal institutions or programmes, a private telephone company and a civil society organisation. These are the municipality of Villa Flores, IDH (institute for human development), Civilian Registry, Ministry of the Education (SEP), CONAFE (SEP), INEGI, Procuraduría Agraria, RAN (agrarian registry), SDR (Coplanta), SAGARPA (procampo), IMPROVICH, Civilian Protection (coplade), SEDESOL (oportunidades), CFE (federal commission for electricity), Comisión Estatal de Caminos, and SEMARNAT (pronare, conafor and Conanp). The private company providing rural telephony is called TELCEL, and the civil organisation for farmers is called La Coalición (The Coalition).

A further differentiation of actors

In California, the outcomes of the workshop make it possible to distinguish another type of classification or differentiation of actors. This second differentiation *is related to the area or space of action* in which the actors perform their duties. These spaces can be classified as political, productive (economic), social, environmental, cultural and religious actors. Again the three main political actors in California are the EC, WC and MA. In terms of power held and duties the EC is the most important entity in regard to all village issues, being equivalent to the MABC in El Oro. The WC and MA are as powerful as the EC but have fewer duties and responsibilities. As local authorities, the three are publicly validated by the VA. Therefore, EC, WC and MA work jointly with the other internal actors (committees) under the authority of the VA. Thus they represent the most important and powerful actors in charge of the administration of resources and the facilitation of activities by other village actors and individuals. In practical terms, the U&C is also the main structure serving as an umbrella for these and other internally-recognised actors.
As in El Oro the VA was not identified as an internal actor by workshop participants. This non-identification again has to do with villagers' notions of the concept of action (and committees as actors). When facilitators asked specifically, villagers again said that the VA is not a committee with an action-oriented task, but rather a jury offering verdicts on the legitimacy and effectiveness of local processes, and validating the actions taken by all the local committees. Basically, the responsibilities of the VA are suggestion, approbation, rejection and supervision of actions taken by the internally-recognised actors constituting the executive branch of the U&C.

Intra-village links

In California the links between actors were identified and defined in terms of the necessary contacts established by each actor and settled in order to meet village development needs. The

type, direction and intensity of linkages were also identified. This resulted in a web of links among and across actors in the village and with the outside world (Figure 5.2).

Again, the six internal 'recognised' actors are shown to have two types of links with other actors: temporary and permanent one (dashed and continuous arrows respectively). However, most of the village links in California are considered temporary. Interestingly, most links are directed from internal to external actors, with the exception of the EC and MA, which are linked in both directions, though with the strongest links to the outside. This brings out the importance of both entities for the village in the relation to the municipality authorities in Villa Flores. According to one villager, the constitution of the MA was an initiative of the municipality seeking to maintain a permanent link to a new emerging 'agrarian' village in an isolated locality[48]. Over the years, by adopting certain social, political and productive practices, these entities have locally shaped the U&C system, and eventually began to function as a collective *ejido* with links to various external actors.

Initially, villagers placed the identified actors very close to each other, even overlapping them. In doing this workshop participants were trying to signal the identification of 'recognised' internal actors with the core of the U&C. Later they decided to draw arrows to offer a better visualisation of the variation of links among the actors.

Nowadays, the EC is the actor with most linkages to the external and internal actors. The EC, as the entity with most linkages, confirms that it has numerous duties and responsibilities, as previously identified by the villagers. All its links with internal actors are two-way links and involve both 'recognised' actors (permanent links, e.g. the MA, WC) and 'non-recognised' actors (temporary links, e.g. to churches and working groups as need arises). The EC has very strong and permanent links to the municipal offices. It is through these links that negotiation of conditions and resources that benefit the village passes. The EC also has a two-way linkage with the *Procampo* and *Oportunidades* programmes, but on a temporary basis, depending on specific projects and activities.

Since all the internal actors (committees, MA, WC and EC) are 'recognised' by the VA, these actors have local power to deal with the all the duties assigned to them and to establish links with outside actors on behalf of the village. However, beyond the EC, the WC, MA, the other internal committees also play very important roles in the establishment of external links, since the VA also entitles them to do so in order to perform their duties.

In California discussions and negotiations among actors to clarify misunderstandings are not uncommon. Misunderstandings arise because in a 'hybrid' context boundaries and responsibilities of the actors tend to intersect in the spaces for action, at which point force fields may clash or confront each other. In one case, the leaders of the internal committees, including WC and MA, which fall under the oversight of the EC, complained that the EC at times makes them feel subordinate, by demanding them to perform particular tasks. At one time the committees reacted to balance the situation by refusing to carry out the tasks demanded.

Indeed, the 'recognised' internal actors play crucial roles in the balancing the local relations of actors with external actors. The fact is that EC, MA, the WC, all the committees, and even the non-recognised actors in California have very interesting links to both internal and external actors in order to perform their duties.

Links of 'recognised' internal actors with the 'non-recognised' internal actors (i.e. the women's working-groups and churches) were not clearly specified in the workshops, but they are said to exist. The village authorities give support to these groups to organise local events and allow them to use village buildings and recreational areas. Any such relations can be classed as temporary, however. This implies that the women's groups and churches do not have any direct responsibilities in the eyes of the village authorities. They are in fact autonomous and conduct their

[48] For differences between agrarian and *ejido* villages see chapter 2, section on labelling villages.

activities according to their own agendas. The two women's groups focus on productive alternatives and goods and the churches are more concerned with the spiritual life of villagers than with involvement in civic governance.

The women's working-groups

The women's working-group 'peasant woman 1' (PW1) has temporary links to two internal actors considered local authorities (EC and MA). However, the most important links are to the various external actors providing them material and organisational support. For instance, the PW1 has permanent and very important links to the municipality, a political party (PRI – not identified as an external actor in the workshops) and to the *Coalición* (a second level regional organisation that mobilises people and resources with political interest). According to some villagers, the PW1 is becoming an important role player for household developments. Participant women run production projects in the sphere of agricultural and domestic production, and enjoy some external support to get infrastructural goods for their households.

The other women's working-group called 'peasant woman' (PW) is less active. It has good links to the other political party, the PRD (also not identified as external actor) and to some municipal officials. The PW also obtains some resources and projects for those women who do not participate in or sympathise with the PW1. Affinity or discrepancies between women seem to be related to the political ideologies behind by the two political parties supporting these groups. PW is less active, and has fewer members than the PW1.

The fact is that both women working groups have their own spaces of action beyond the spaces within which the 'recognised' internal actors interact. The spaces for 'recognised' internal actors are historically men-led and ruled, and have actually excluded women. The two women's working-groups groups seem to be creating new spaces and opening up alternative opportunities for women's self-empowerment through economic means that contribute to the improvement of household life. This is further analysed in the next chapter.

The Catholic and protestant churches

The group of Catholic villagers does not involve more than 10 families, i.e. an estimated 10 % of the total population. Once a month, Catholic family members come together and celebrate service at the house of one of the members. Once in a while a priest comes to the village and celebrates mass. The links of the catholic families are based on their relations to the mother church in Villa Flores. The other three religious groups are locally identified as a single group comprising 70 families practicing protestant religion. Nevertheless, they are actually three different protestant religious groups. One group is Pentecostal and the other two are Adventists. There is no major doctrinal difference between the last two, but because of internal conflicts they split. In California, as in El Oro, religion plays an important role in establishing links between villagers and external actors beyond the links of locally 'recognised' actors. The role of these religious groups is further analysed in the next chapter.

Links between internal recognised actors and external actors are practically non-existent except for the link between the EC and the municipality in Villa Flores. Once again villagers view this as lack of interest on the part of the state. Officers from the external agencies are said to visit the village only sporadically. Again, as in El Oro, visits intensify only in election periods or if there is some major breach of federal laws.

In contrast, villagers performing duties associated with the internal agencies often reach upwards, and visit the different offices of governmental institutions to look for projects and resources. Thus, governmental institutions and programmes are used only when local actors are seeking to meet the needs of the village. This indicates that external actors in California are not considered as players participating in the life of the village, but as an otiose authority to be reverted to when need arises. Government comes from within; the authorities are sought only as 'providers of good and services'.

In summary, California has different types of links, when the total linkage between internal actors and with the outside world is taken into account. However, as villagers commented, the links also result from interpersonal relations, which may or may not belong to any locally 'recognised' or 'non-recognised' agency. In other words, beyond the links of the local actors as representatives of the collectivity, there exist also some very important individual links based on family ties, friendship and religion, that also play a role at the household level. Therefore, paying attention to family-based social networks can prove to be very interesting in gaining insights into how villages function, as suggested by Bourdieu (1985), Nuijten (2003 & 2005) and Villarreal (1992). These links will be more closely examined in chapter seven.

Power as locally understood

Villagers from California also saw power as the 'personal and attained right' to participate in the decision making of the village. In their view, power can be used individually or collectively, during VA meetings, or in engagement with the 'recognised' internal actors such as the various committees. It was also mentioned that power enables those with it to use it to influence village decisions. It was agreed that power is publicly recognised and validated by the VA. Again, the understanding is functionalistic – the purpose of power is to run the village. Villagers did not mention the importance of their varying capacities to exercise power in a village context. They considered that a person in a position of power, e.g. holding a *cargo*, is prepared for and capable of carrying out the duty. The logic behind this assumption is the capacity building process – as to be seen in chapter eight- through which village office holders typically climb from their first position as *topil* (policeman) to higher *cargos* over a number of years, gathering experience along the way. Villagers also agreed that any type of power exercised outside the spaces of 'recognised' internal actors also lies outside the boundaries of the U&C system. This becomes a reason for not taking account of other types of power in village internal decision making. It would be like mixing electricity and gas. As will be discussed later the autonomy of U&C is both a strength and weakness.

The current functionality of the collective decision making

In terms of social and political dynamics, California also has a three-year cycle in which all the 'recognised' internal actors, their links and duties are enacted, and then re-shaped. All the 'recognised' internal actors and relations are intimately related to the local governance system of U&C. Many committee members are volunteers. But in cases where there is no volunteer, the candidates are publicly selected in collective debates until a consensus is reached and people appointed.

Historically, women in California did not take part as 'recognised' internal actors. However this situation has already begun to change and some duties are already delegated to women (see next chapter).

A difference between California and El Oro is the fact that California villagers at the moment do not consider their *cargos* as headaches. According to them, a *cargo* represents an opportunity to travel, meet people and make contacts outside the village for 'future needs'. This point is very important for rural people in Mexico, because nobody knows when someone will need someone's or anyone's support. Having an extended social network is recognised as useful and valuable (De Mente, 1998). The world of U&C is no longer self-sufficient, at least in California, a village founded by outsiders on the move.

5.4 Final Remarks

Relevance of power mapping

Regarding power from a functionalistic perspective helps shape a better understanding of social power cycles, the role of local actors and the trajectory of political life. Power mapping proved a useful entry point to figure out how the villages seem to villagers. Local actors and their links, spatial connotations and the direction and intensity of social relations all became apparent, based on collective agreements between villagers and researchers. A simple or pragmatic but important local classification of power intensified people's knowledge of their own political reality, and the way they perceive themselves as belonging to social entities built up over decades.

During the workshops organised by the researchers, only public information, i.e. 'visible' information on the actors, came out. This means that through the workshops the researchers viewed the social *front stage* aspects of village life. Initially nothing led us to think there were other existing hidden actors and spaces. This happened because sensitive issues were difficult to raise in public or handle in discursive workshops, especially where different forces seemingly came into interaction in a public forum (cf. Richards 2007). Nevertheless, despite the assertive identification of internally-recognised actors, it is also necessary to look for other local actors not rendered visible in the workshop environment. A *back stage* view of village society requires us to include other actors not identified by the power mapping. Local conflicts hitherto carefully hidden begin to appear. The next chapter will address some of these issues in relation to struggle within the local power structure.

Internal-recognised actors depend very much on the U&C as a local governance system that frames and centralises local power to make decisions at the village level. Serious problems among those internal actors were not clearly visible with this first approximation to their reality. However, once people reflected and became aware of the context in which they are immersed, they started to discuss, share, analyse, and look at their villages as dynamic entities with a number of important areas of conflict and contestation.

A conclusion: how viable and important is the local configuration?

The U&C governance system is the most important structure for internal actors to focus collective action and decision making on village development concerns. The social configuration of El Oro and California as it is nowadays reflects many years of practising local rules, norms and codes. In other words, a durable alliance of local actors has emerged and constructed a functional social configuration. This has led the villages to meet certain development needs, and has also given them an identity as social bodies with interesting socio-cultural aspects, as seen in the practices of daily life. The two villages examined present a very similar configuration of actors. The key actors are in both cases basically settled in the way they regulate resources, and this dictates the pattern of local development processes.

The municipalities exercise a top-down type of power, particularly for the distribution of state and federal resources to the villages. This explains the strong and permanent links that both villages maintain with their municipalities. However the freedom of villages to make their own decisions, rule their own lives and use their natural resources makes a difference in the local configuration and local processes. Local power at village level seems to be more practiced among equals in a horizontal manner in which collectivism - a concern for consensus and shared decision making – apparently plays a fundamental role in maintaining social cohesion. Every person with acquired rights has access to power and is free to play the same game as the others within the cycles of the governance system, and by taking part in the VA or adopting local *cargos*.

In this sense, the internal actors are socially recognised and locally validated. Such validation has to do with the right to participate in the village decision making as committee, group or organisation. This recognition rests on public acceptation and respect freely given. Factors ensuring acceptance and respect include the way the actor operates, the way decisions work out and the extent to which decisions acquire the VA's validation. In other words, local power is not something automatically available. It has to be worked for and renewed through system performance. There are both internal and larger factors that threaten to undermine such renewal as hinted above, and discussed further in later chapters.

Perhaps the system is running on borrowed time? Indeed, local actors seem to depend very much on the manner in which power has been historically exercised and managed over generations at village level. A general historical template seems to be important, even where new, hybrid systems of U&C emerge. However, other important actors are denied local recognition, e.g. the women's working groups and churches are definitely kept apart of the U&C's structure. Lack of internal legitimacy or recognition does not imply lack of agency, however these actors are for the present content to accept to limits on their activities, and move only in their own circumscribed spheres. But this situation may not last for ever. The seeking for new types of power relations and the building new spaces will sooner or later have to reach accommodation with competing forces. How

this works out in relation to local development and the use of natural resources will be analysed in the coming chapters.

Chapter 6

NON-RECOGNISED ACTORS AND THEIR ROLE IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: The creation and/or fragmentation of social spaces for collective action in small villages of SE Mexico

Abstract

This chapter identifies part of the *social back stage* or hidden social aspects of the two villages studied in this thesis. The chapter shows how actors not formally recognised in local governance processes ('non-recognised actors') emerge and how their space for action is created. In the previous chapter, some of these actors were identified by the villagers themselves, but others emerged from informal talks and semi-structured interviews with the villagers, and from participant observation. Their origins, character and the spaces they inhabit are analysed. In particular, their role in relation to the development of the village is examined, as is there connection to the local leadership and the exercise of power.

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the local governance structure of two small villages in Southern Mexico was presented. This structure principally comprised a series of local actors, grouped in committees, functioning under the umbrella of the Village Assembly (VA), and together representing the system of *Usos* and *Costumbres* (U&C). It was explained how power was locally exercised through a system that the village members 'recognise' and thereby 'validate'. This system was characterised in terms of '*front stage* work' - i.e. political performance in terms of mechanisms visible to and recognised by the local actors. From the initial work of the research team in the village it emerged that this is only part of the play of social forces in Mexican village life. Other actors did not 'surface' through the use of the research team's repertory of participatory tools directed towards the analysis of power structures in the two case-study villages. In retrospect, it can be recognised that actors in the villages have certain tacit social agreements and rules about how the visible social image of the village is to be constructed. However, various non-recognised and non-validated actors only appeared when more in-depth field work was conducted. The chapter thus first makes a methodological point – 'participatory' methods do not by themselves penetrate to these hidden, *back stage* regions. Using a more anthropological approach, the chapter proceeds to analyse the roles of various *back stage* agents, using the three dimensional concept of power, space and place proposed by Gaventa (2004).

Goffman (1959 & 1966), Murphy (1981 & 1990), Olivier de Sardan (2005) and Silverman (1965) have all argued that more research should be done on the areas and actors not forming part of the publicly recognised system. Collectively, these authors make the point that not everything is publicly shared or agreed, simply because 'custom' is validated by ruling frameworks and the local exercise of power. They suggest the existence of hidden information, areas, facts, and other shadowy aspects of social life in small scale societies, and that people do not talk about these issues easily in public because of local implications in relation to social order. Social cohesion can be protected as much by what is not said as by what is. This has enormous implications for a participatory development practice built exclusively on discourse (Richards 2007). Thus, the existence of *front* and *back* stage/regions (an idea developed by William Murphy, from Goffman, and ultimately rooted in a Durkheimian understanding of the social as performative) is proposed as a device to establish a more rounded view of local political process. According to these authors, understanding of the *back stage* region enables the proper study and interpretation of locally created conflicts, and clashes of vision and interpretation that are, in this case, an essential part of the village life and its functionality.

Therefore, it is not only necessary to understand the 'recognised' actors but also those that are not recognised, but who nevertheless somehow have an important influence on village life. For instance, some powerful families, elite groups and other aggregations of less visible actors may be present in the village and part of its power process, even though operating in a rather invisible way because their actions and domains lie outside the publicly validated structure (Jennings 1964, Lowry 1965). They may be also playing important roles locally, especially in addressing other type of issues that would be controversial or conflictual if seen as part of the validated structure of U&C. Whether these interests shape spaces for action and operate on local power processes consciously or without self-awareness is an empirical issue to be determined.

In Mexican villages studied, the existence of *back stage* forces have been recognised in relation to the influence exercised by religious organisations, productive or working groups, political organisations, powerful families, etc. operating to some extent outside the framework of overtly recognised and socially accepted ruling frameworks. Most of these protean forces seem to be

emergent under a range of different and interesting situations to be analysed. Actually, they were in some case recognised as existing by villages, but they were not seen (or admitted) to be as important players in village development. The spaces these *back stage* elements occupy seem strongly dependent on local leaderships. Their influence and social acceptance among the certain villagers might represent alternative spaces for pursuit of personal or family goals outside the overt collectivism apparent in the system of U&C.

Apparently, non-recognised actors are local people with acquired skills, knowledge and outside contacts, able to move, struggle and seek beyond the limits of the village's local institutions and protocols. Some of them may be playing roles as facilitators, leaders, guides, pastors, acolytes, political connectors, promoters, and so forth. According to different authors, like Murphy (1981), Olivier de Sardan (2005) and Wells (1983), they can be termed *power brokers,* because they work as connectors between the external and the internal worlds, and thus situate themselves as key players in village processes, while at the same time remaining outside its structures. In fact, typically, brokers occupy certain spaces in order to facilitate resource flows based on information, capital, knowledge, contacts, spiritual services, etc.; in short, they bridge certain gaps related to local concerns and build local capacities, perhaps through training. But how do these actors emerge, who are their leaders, what are their roles, how are they placed and seen, and how do they work and play the game of power at village level? Additionally, how are their spaces for action gained, lost, created, protected and challenged? These are some of the questions this chapter seeks to answer.

The chapter assumes that both recognised and non-recognised actors are important role players in local development. Their identification as active, passive, rising, falling, etc., will help better understanding of local processes and configurations of power at village level. In this sense, by addressing the research question 2 and 3 in relation to the power exercises and the creation spaces of collective action for local development, a wider view on the diversity of local actors will be attained in order to gain better insights into village functionality. Another assumption is that the roles played by these non-recognised actors serves to open up new spaces of (inter)action for other villagers. Some of the dynamism of life comes into focus. A final assumption is that the *front stage* is closely related to the public image of village collectivism, and that the *back stage* is built upon family or individual interests, and manifested through local leaderships formations outside the U&C structure.

6.2 Findings

The information is presented as in the previous chapter, in the form of two case studies, per village investigated. The information in each case is organised in terms of: 1) description of actors and their action spaces, 2) main highlights, 3) implications for the village, and 4) general considerations. The information is summarised in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. For methodological details see chapter two and theme one in the Appendix 2.

Case A: El Oro, Oaxaca State

1) Description of actors and their action spaces

In El Oro, after more than two years of field work, seven non-recognised local actors were found beyond the only three collectively visualised in the power mapping exercise described in chapter five. These actors were sometimes mentioned by the villagers, but never in a way that indicated they were considered important players in the governance structure of the village. Two of the seven are religious actors, two are productive (one environmental), two are political actors and one is cultural and educational. The two political actors are also called 'social advisers'. The identification of these political actors took quite some digging and poking. Individual semi-structured interviews with a range of key informants resulted in the following descriptions of the actors and their spaces of action. Details about these groups is given in the following boxes

Table 6.1. Main instances of non-recognised actors and their spaces of action in El Oro, Oaxaca

Group	Year of constitution	Leader	Addressing	Supervision by	Intervener (main linkages to)	Type of actor/group	Type of space	Type of power
Presbyterian church	1909	Alabán López Aparicio	Spiritual services & strengthening local moral values & beliefs	Municipal brother church & the American organisation called *Floresta*	*Floresta* in the U.S. & Other Presbyterian churches in the state	Religious	Created	Invisible
Catholic church	1998	Filadelfo López López	Spiritual services & strengthening local moral values and beliefs	Main church of municipality (Nuxaá) or region (Nochixtlán)	The Dominican dioceses at Oaxaca city	Religious	Created	Invisible
Forest nursery (*Vivero*)	1992 & 2000	Israel López	Plant production & reforestation	Local authorities board	*Misión Integral* (NGO)	Productive & environmental	Created	Visible
Women's working group	1998	Florinda Sánchez	Local entrepreneurs handicrafts & home gardens	Women Group (13 members)	*Misión Integral* (NGO)	Productive	Created & gained	Invisible
The López family	Since village foundation	Tito López López	Provides 'advice' & 'voice' to the local authorities	Nobody	Village authorities & some external connections to the Municipality	Political	Gained & Inherited	Hidden
The Sánchez family	Since village foundation	Tranquilino Sanchez López	Provides 'advice' & 'voice' to the local authorities	Nobody	Village authorities & some external connections to the Municipality	Political	Gained & Inherited	Hidden
Communitarian museum committee*	2003	Tito López Aparicio	The rescue of village's history	Initially by the MABC	The research team & the national institute of anthropology and history in Oaxaca city	Cultural/ Educational	Invited & Created	Not yet clear

*** This actor emerged as a result of participatory workshops implemented in the village during the research conducted for the analysis of village's history and its relevance for the locals (see chapter 2).**

Box 6.1- Presbyterian church

Origins: This local actor occupied a social space in the village from even before the foundation of El Oro. The story goes that original settlers were living in St. Domingo Nuxaá, the main village of the municipality. Because of coercion from Catholic church members, two families were forced to move out and look for a piece of land where they could settle. Those two families became Presbyterians after they left Nuxaá. At the same time other protestant churches were also under pressure from the Catholics in the municipality. This forced the municipality to negotiate and distribute land in the municipality among Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian church followers. Thus the Sánchez and López families arrived in the highland part of the municipality and founded the communal village of El Oro in 1909.The name was chosen because of the presence of an abandoned gold mine in the area. The two families were looking for a place where two main things could be ensured: the building of a chapel or church to be able to freely practice their religion and b) land on which they could grow crops and keep livestock for their subsistence.

Type of actor, space and power exercised. Since the foundation of the village this local actor has functioned as a religious congregation. As such, it has played an important role in shaping the villagers' beliefs and behaviour. Over the years many relatives of first settler families came to the settlement and joined the congregation. They were attracted by the local opportunities for living in peace and ensuring a way of living, by being closer to their relatives. In 1909 the group began to function as a village. They defined a ruling mechanism. Since their only reference was the system of *Usos y Costumbres* (U&C) as it had functioned in the village where they came from, this formed the basis of their U&C system. They started practicing U&C from 1915. This represents a separation of political life from their spiritual or religious one, but the influence of religious values on the U&C is obvious in daily behaviour, such as prohibitions on selling alcohol in the village and use of bad language. Thus, family ties and religion have been among most important elements of village cohesion in El Oro, though not conceptualised as such the power mapping exercise. The power of the church is in a sense invisible since rooted mainly in the minds of believers.

Participants: Nowadays, nearly 80 % of the approximately 1200 villagers, including children, are Presbyterians and say that they actively participate in religious activities. There is a yearly celebration to meet Presbyterian congregations from other villages in the region. During that celebration villagers also receive special guests from the American Presbyterian organisation known as *Floresta,* which has its headquarters in the State of California, U.S.A. The congregation is principally organised and coordinated by three persons who constitute the committee that organises church activities (one of them is the leader and two are ordinary members).

Functions and implications: In the spiritual space that the church forms people gather weekly and reinforce their group cohesion through worship, a ritual factor in reinforcement of moral values. The members of the congregation spend the entire Sunday morning in the church, while during the week they meet occasionally in the evenings for additional religious discussion. Most villagers are strong in their religion (i.e. they attend church sessions every Sunday), and the moral values that are associated with the Presbyterian church have dominated village life for decades. Most of these values relate to individual and family life and are based on a literal reading of the Bible. Personal behaviour is supposed to align with the values expressed by the church. For instance, family aggression, drinking, prostitution and participation in non-church festivities are forbidden.

Leadership: The leader of the congregation is a young man, Alabán López (39). He is also the oldest son of one of the historically recognised leaders of the village. Alabán fulfils the role of pastor, and spiritual leader, but is also an important contact between the local church and other religious groups inside and outside the village. In his role as pastor he often visits families where a member may have misbehaved or broken one of the rules of the congregation. He also talks to visitors and other outsiders about the importance of the Bible and the Presbyterian religion in the lives of villagers.

Box 6.2- Catholic church

Origins: This actor has less importance in the village than the Presbyterian congregation. The small Catholic congregation was founded in 1998. They aimed at a better integration of new settlers or incomers in El Oro. It is also said that the Catholic congregation was constituted because a part of the population no longer identify themselves with the Presbyterian church. Another reason for the Catholic church to become established in the village, mentioned by the villagers, is inter-family conflict. One villager approached the Catholic church in Nochixtlán and looked for support. Subsequently he was trained as an acolyte and soon thereafter he delivered the first invitations for gatherings. The participants were invited to read the Catholic Bible and preach. Initially they held the meetings at the Acolyte's house but nowadays they come together in the other participants' houses. All followers have in their house a small altar with images of Jesus Christ and a number of Saints.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: This actor is seen as offering an alternative religion. Advice, spiritual services and mutual support are the main benefits for members. Sometimes, material support, in the form of clothes or toys for children, is provided by the mother church at Nochixtlán, or the Dominican diocese of Oaxaca city. Sometimes support is provided to enable the congregation to attend meetings outside El Oro.

Box. 6.2 (Continued) ...

Participants: Only 10 % (approximately 120 villagers, including children) are active Catholics. The Catholics in El Oro also depend on a core group of three persons who organise and coordinate church activities. One of them the leader. There is no resident priest.

Functions and implications: The Catholic church also plays a role in strengthening local moral values and beliefs. However, it is also expected to bring communion among those who did not see themselves as part of any spiritual congregation. Another important role played has been to act as a shock absorber for inter-family feuding. It was mentioned that the group has been active in reducing the level of potential aggression among some village members. The core group prepares open invitations to all villagers to spend at least an afternoon together, read the Bible and chat about moral values. In fact, only followers attend. On Sundays they meet for about an hour, to pray and read the Bible. Once in a while they participate (as a group) in Mass at the main church in Nochixtlán. They also receive once per month the visit of a priest who coordinates activities with the acolyte. The power exercised is also invisible due to it being rooted in popular beliefs.

Leadership: Historically, there have been two leaders of this church. Before it was Abelardo Castellanos López (47) and nowadays is Filadelfo López López (60). They brought people together by inviting them to their house for spiritual services. They also established the interaction with the local authorities in order to be respected. They connected Catholic villagers to other Catholic organisations and missions. Besides they have tried to make the people aware of the importance of having a religion in their lives. Despite of the efforts made by both churches (Catholic and Presbyterian) in El Oro, there is still about 10 % of the population without any overt religion. That percentage is largely made up of village teenagers between aged 15-19.

Box 6.3- Forest nursery

Origins: This local actor emerged from a process of raising local environmental consciousness started by a NGO. It was said that AMEXTRA (1985-1990), an NGO which later became *Misión integral* (1990-present), came to the village with a series of initiatives. Initially, the Village Assembly (VA) and executive committee (MABC) decided to give permission to the NGO facilitators to invite villagers to participate in various activities, based only on personal interest. Among those initiatives was the establishment of a forest nursery. The need for such a nursery was identified in an appraisal that the NGO made during 1984-1985. Rapid deforestation and the clear indications of soil erosion led villagers to the conclusion that reforestation was a priority, but there was not much interest in fully participating in running a tree nursery. Around that time there were also the first conflicts arising from forestry management regimes imposed by the municipality and the claims some villagers then made on the forest (see next chapter). Thus, AMEXTRA facilitators started to work with some village volunteers in 1985. Additionally, the NGO also runs different projects, focusing on agroforestry, medicinal home gardens, small animals (chicken, goats and sheep) and woodworking. About 30 % of the population has been involved at one time or another in one of the AMEXTRA projects. One of the things they have learned is how to manage productive projects.

According to the villagers, the initial idea of having a forest nursery was not very attractive, despite the locally recognised importance of reforestation. Arguments against focused on the time that had to be invested in such activities. The project stumbled on until 1998 when *Misión Integral* took it over and re-launched it with a handful (about 5-8) of committed village volunteers. Thus plant production (mainly pine trees) and reforestation of degraded areas was mainly based on efforts by villagers and an NGO.

In 2000 two specific situations raised the local importance of the nursery. The first had to do with conflicts over forest involving the municipality and some business interests of an outsider (see next chapter). The other was the persistent attention paid by the NGO facilitators to raising awareness about environmental problems that finally awoke villagers' interest. Deterioration in water sources and depletion of soil fertility proved to be detonating moments in that year. Food production was seen to be drastically declining, and people started to think about this as a big problem and sought reasons together with the NGO facilitators. Also, in 1998, massive fires in forested areas of the country had also affected El Oro. This was the moment that villagers first found out that they could tap federal resources to maintain a permanent nursery. In 1999 they started talks and consultations with the VA, and by 2000 the nursery was taken into the village's hands from the NGO. The nursery then began to be operated by a committee under the U&C system. It was moved from a back yard of one of the volunteers into a communal place at the main entrance of the village. Facilitators from the NGO were quite happy since it meant the initiative was consciously, first of all, locally accepted and later on adopted and validated by the village. This seemed to indicate that the U&C system had some capacity to respond to new environmental issues. *Back stage* manoeuvres by the NGO had resulted in *front stage* acceptance.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: This activity started as a project without any local validation or recognition, but over the years has become a recognised economic and productive space. Nowadays, plants needed for local reforestation are produced for village use, but are also sold in the region. Sales have become the main way to keep the forest nursery alive and working. Moreover, becoming a recognised local actor with time, and holding visible power, has allowed the villagers to think of the activity as collective work worthy of the village community. The nursery committee is currently an important player in local decision making in relation to the environment and reforestation issues.

Box. 6.3 (Continued) ...

Participants: At the beginning a small group of people working with two facilitators took charge of the forest nursery operation. Later, when the village took over the activity, three local leaders and about other 15 people are yearly appointed by the VA to work on it. Their roles are plant production, distribution among the villagers, ensuring seedlings are planted and monitoring the care given to them after planting. Furthermore, a close linkage and collaboration with *Misión Integra*l has emerged as a way of providing technical assistance and training support on an ongoing basis.

Functions and implications: The forest nursery is nowadays the main social space where plants for reforestation are produced. Besides, it is also an example for surrounding villages and municipalities on how an isolated village can manage a nursery to produce useful plants in an organised manner. It serves as an example for governmental environmental agencies. Beyond the plant production, the nursery has also become an important space -for the committee remembers - in which to talk about the importance of environmental issues and to look for solutions to water conservation and soil erosion problems. They normally meet once a week and the most important conclusions are raised darning the monthly meeting of the VA. Furthermore, the forest nursery is economically sustainable. By selling plants to other municipalities and even some governmental agencies, resources to continue operating are ensured. In general, the population feel very proud of the nursery which is also considered outside as a good effort by El Oro villagers.

Leadership: The three leaders selected and the appointed villagers always make a plan and delegate responsibilities among members of the group. However the main responsibility for the nursery overall is borne by the 'leader in turn'. In 2005, this person was Israel López Santiago (64). He was in charge of both the internal and external representation of the forest nursery. His duties had to do with the internal negotiations between village authorities and the village people to ensure the nursery work was achieved. In terms of external representation and activities he had to settle relations with the NGO and also some governmental agencies to access both resources and potential customers.

Box 6.4 – Women's working group

Origins: This local actor also emerged from interventions by *Misión Integral*. In 1998, the NGO launched a micro-credit programme to start small-scale enterprises and help cash circulate in the village. Villagers could get a loan if they came up with a little proposal (verbal or on a piece of paper). Initially, it was men especially who submitted proposals for e.g. carpentry enterprise (woodworking) or to buy animals like chickens, lambs and goats. They received loans in the range US$ 100-500 and the technical assistance. Having started up the enterprise, they could pay off the loan over a year, with payments every last Friday of the month. The money recovered by the NGO was used to finance new initiatives. With this experience in mind, a project for women was financed. First, they organised themselves as a group, and prepared a collective proposal to raise more funds. They called it *'Fondo Revolvente'* (revolving fund).

Every member of the group was supposed to have the same chance of being financed after the first small business was set up by the first borrower. This avoided the capital demands of them all starting at the same time. Month by month women returned 10 % of their loan to the three group leaders. The leaders saved the money to provide new loans to other members when demanded. Nowadays, this is the only local economic actor which actually works together as an organisation. The rest are small individual enterprises.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: This actor and its space was characterised by villagers as a 'women's project' outside the system of formally recognised village activity. According to the women, the group's relegation to the margins has to do with two main reasons; it is composed only of women, historically excluded from other local initiatives - and it was an outsider's idea. Probably the local structure was not yet seen the real importance of such activities for the village. In fact, the group had brought opportunities to women beyond the productive and economic realm. The type of power exercised by them is hidden, in the sense that it is not yet widely recognised as being a power in its own right. Detailed analysis is undertaken in the next section of this chapter.

Participants: In the beginning about 13 women were interested. Over the years this number has grown to between 15 and 22 women permanently participating. They renew the organisation yearly, run annual cycles of credit. They name three coordinators: the representative, administrator and secretary. Their roles are to keep the credit system moving, supervise monthly payments, oversee all members' participation in meetings, organise the group to sell some products, and keep contact with *Misión Integral* facilitators. A women facilitator of the NGO visits the group once in a while in order to supervise how the loan is managed and recuperated, but also to provide some training, as occasionally demanded, mostly relating to administrative issues and group cooperative dynamics. Through her talks and training sessions the women members have become aware of other issues, such as running joint initiatives. Evaluations of enterprises are also facilitated by *Misión Integral*.

At the same time, during monthly meetings, the women are stimulated to save some of the money they earn, as a family savings strategy for emergencies or to meet times of local crisis. The women access capacity building by serving on the board, and also by running their own initiatives.

Box. 6.4 (Continued) ...

Functions and implications: Beyond the possibility of access to micro-credit, the women nowadays run a small cooperative in which jointly produced handicrafts made from pine leaves and traditional clothing, sold at the open market in Oaxaca City. the individual enterprises for which loans have been taken are include local selling of ice and ice creams, sodas, bread, vegetables (bought outside the village), animals, groceries, and school materials, production of legumes, and so on.

This space represents a consolidated niche of diverse actions by women stressing productive initiatives. The creation of this space depended upon an NGO intervention, but also the active role played by the women. Nowadays all the members still play active roles and are aware of the importance of remaining together. At the same time the credit scheme represents an important means to generate income for families. Besides, it represents a unique space for women to come together to discuss, reflect, make decisions, receive training and learn. In summary, this activity has laid some foundations for empowerment of village women. The main objectives are, according to the participants: *'earning money for the family, support of husbands, savings, and personal and collective learning'.*

Leadership: The three leaders are yearly named and actually play a role of linking internal and external actors. Basically their functions are to keep the links established to the NGO and clients in Oaxaca city and to ensure the proper working of the group and its initiatives. The woman leaders in 2005 were Florinda (45), Blanca (54) and Herminia (55). Moreover, they also serve as motivators and team integrators. They make the old and new members aware of the importance of the group remaining unified.

Box 6.5- The López and Sánchez families

Origins: The identification of these two groups was a very difficult task, because the role of these two powerful families is kept hidden from outsiders' eyes. Not many people were open or able to talk about them. After a long time interacting with villagers and several attempts to bring the issue out, finally three persons decided to talk. They demanded secrecy and anonymity and also decided to talk only outside the village. Thus three long conversations took place in Oaxaca city. Two informants were members of the families in question. They mentioned that some local families are basically identified as very important due to their role in the foundation of El Oro. They commented that importance, beyond the power to make decisions, lies in the reputation and social status won by their ancestors. This family reputation is socially acknowledged by the villagers as an inheritable thing. They said that the López and Sánchez families have passed on high reputation over three generations already. The current heads of both families are the grandsons of the original founders. They said this situation (recognition of a tacit factor in village politics) started in 1925 during a specific discussion in the village meeting. Pride, prestige and personal recognition have since granted family members, and especially to the current 'heads', space to move behind the scenes. The notion of founders' rights is widespread in so-called 'lineage' societies. It is concluded that some kind of (patri)lineal inheritance of founder's rights is socially recognised in El Oro.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: According to the above, both families enjoy recognition not only by their members but among other villagers too. The heads of such families seem to be the main actors holding a hidden, historical power which is basically political. This is apparent in the way these heads serve as informal and behind-the-scenes advisors to the village authorities. However, that power is also sometimes exercised in more overt ways. I was told that sometimes the heads of the two families try to influence local and collective decision making so that it directly benefits their own interests (see next chapter). These actors and their hidden, inherited power proved difficult to investigate. The reason seems to be the local social protection that villagers give to what amounts to a patrimonial power source.

Participants: These two 'ruling houses' are not large. Nowadays, they comprise basically the father, mother and children still living at home (i.e. they are nuclear rather than extended families). The most powerful individual is the father who acts as family head. It proved impossible to gather much direct information on the status and agency of the family members, but in the next chapter some of their actions in relation to the village are described.

Functions and implications: According to the three informants, inheritance works as follows: the fathers of both families are the heads, and the oldest son is the first candidate to inherit the prestige and whatever benefits come with it. Thus, as soon as the father dies, the son automatically takes his esteem. It means that the oldest son will hold the 'inherited thing' and become powerful in terms of status and respect. An interesting situation seems to come out when a second or third son takes over any powerful position in the U&C structure. Sometimes close alliances are settled or conflicts emerge due to brothers or sons finding this situation the only way to access other types of power beyond family ties. This inherited space is reinforced by the family itself but also by villagers who unquestioningly believe in inherited prestige.

Leadership: The heads of the two families are Tito López Sr. (68) and Tranquilino Sánchez (65). Their main roles are to continue with the lineage system of inherited reputation and status for the family and to exercise influence over the game of power as played in the village. They have also at times occupied *cargos* and performed different roles within the village. That makes even more difficult the identification of any boundaries between inherited or acquired spaces of prestige and status.

Box 6.6- The communal museum

Origins: During the participatory workshops conducted in 2003, the communal museum came out as an idea that later on was materialised as a local initiative. The Village Assembly and MABC agreed to form a committee in order to address the initiative. The villagers themselves identified the idea of the local museum as a necessity in order to rescue part of their lost history and traditions but also to re-start teaching it to their children. The research team provided some support in terms of official information about the rural museums programme, elaboration of aims, names of key contacts and ideas on how to organise the activity. Later on the villagers took action by themselves, and by 200 had developed a place were archaeological pieces and other local instruments and tools used at the former gold (*El Oro*) and mica mines are displayed. They also developed good links with a researcher in the university of the State of Oaxaca (UABJO) and with officers of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH).

Type of actor, space and power exercised: Apparently this new activity has been granted a local space, but it has also created its own space as an actor in the cultural and educational field. Given the relevance of the museum for the villagers, it is supposed to be integrated in the village structures a soon as it is properly working. So far, however, the power exercised by this young actor is to some extent of low visibility for most villagers.

Participants: the participants are 10 local volunteers (mostly women) and the leader,

Functions and implications: Despite being approved in 2003 by the VA and the MABC as a local committee, the volunteer group has not been allowed to participate in the decision making of the village. In fact, it is mainly treated as a non-recognised actor. In 2006 it was said by the village's chief that the committee had a very specific task to be accomplished. Later, the committee was supposed to vanish and the museum was to pass into the hands of the MABC. According to villagers, the role to be played by the museum is to strengthen local knowledge and cultural pride in the past, but also to serve a purpose in better integrating the younger generation into the existing dynamics of the village. An implication of the finding that the committee serves a vital purpose but lacks recognition is that the elements managing U&C recognise history as an important resource for maintaining the status quo, and already seek to take over the venture when it is fully operational.

Leadership: The leadership role was played by Tito López Aparicio (33), one of the most enthusiastic and motivated young leaders of the village. The other participants - especially women - were also very active in trying to show their commitment to the village history, which according to them must be taught to their children. It seems clear that the museum project is viewed by its protagonists as a way of depicting dynamic aspects of U&C, while other elements seek to capture the project in the name of 'tradition'. This indicates a degree of struggle shaping contacts between recognised and non-recognised actors in El Oro.

2) The main highlights

Using Gaventa's (2004) three dimensional concepts of power, space and place, the religious groups as non-recognised actors have created spaces in the village under their own initiative, but using considerable external support from their respective church organisations (Presbyterian and Catholic). The power they tap is thus 'invisible' because it is largely external, and does not figure in the local governance structure of the village. The forest nursery committee and the women's working group (WWG) are based on spaces created by the local actions of villagers, instigated and supported by interveners. In this sense they do not different much from the churches. However, nowadays the forest nursery committee presents a visible type local power, validated and manifested in its right to participate in decision making during village meetings (chapters 4 & 5). The WWG draws on a hidden type of power. Paternostro (1998) calls this the 'secret or silent power of women'. According to her, women hold a subtle form of power to influence decisions made overtly by men, but related to their family connections and sexual life. Two families in El Oro, the Sánchez and Lopez lineages, have a power gained and validated historically. Their power is inherited from generation to generation. This means that their actions are not publicly considered as important for decision making in village, because they are in some way 'untouchable' advisers. They can nevertheless influence much of what goes on behind the scenes in village life. It was also seen that recognised actors respect the two old male leaders of these two families very much indeed, and in some cases villagers tolerated them acting beyond the limits of local institutions and traditions. As in the case of the use of the communal forest areas, the actions of these leaders seem to be out of alignment with the U&C codes (see next chapter) but are accepted according to, metaphorically speaking, some notion of *droit de seigneur* or *derecho de pernada*.

The forest nursery is an example of an intervention that has the potential to become part of the local power structure. *Misión integral,* an NGO from Oaxaca City, launched the initiative to

contribute to local reforestation in areas where natural forest was rapidly declining due to extraction for local and commercial use. After some years during which villagers were trained on nursery management tasks, the Village Assembly (VA) and local authorities (MABC) decided to constitute a committee responsible for the management of the nursery. This new committee became part of the group of committees that the VA considers important for village life. The nursery is now working under the village scheme but also as part of the local governance system. The VA, MABC and the other local actors (like the water and health committees) consider it an important and relevant actor in the village. The forest nursery committee members are appointed every year. The museum committee might have followed a similar path, but is not recognised as a standing committee of the MABC. Possibly, the key difference is that the nursery committee 'adds value' in material terms, whereas the museum committee is dealing in ideological resources that potential threaten the control exercised by the MABC.

The families López and Sánchez are important actors in the village because both families helped found El Oro. The heads of these families are among the most respected village leaders, but as much for their family position as for their record. Indeed, one reason to respect them is because of their ancestors' role in founding the village. A second reason for respect is that both contributed to the local governance system by performing all the '*cargos*', from '*topil*' (policeman) up to the head of the village (president of MABC). While in the *cargos,* they never abused or disillusioned the people (according to local consensus). In this case, inherited and acquired prestige reinforces each other, and there is no clear demarcation between the two forms of power.

The fact of inheriting rights or status is called in Mexico *'Derecho de Sangre',* or rights based on blood and family history. This has facilitated the continued flow of benefits and privileges to certain families mainly among top political and economic elites (see Rodríguez, 2005). Among other benefits, it is relatively easy to open up paths to powerful political positions, and in consequence to gain access to privileged information, which can in many cases translate into opportunities for making quick money (De Mente, 1998).

At the village level there was no clear evidence of the same process at work. These leaders are actually considered old people with a strong influence on their children and grandchildren but also with some relatives, but they are no rich people. It was also very difficult to see where their real influence lay; it may be that they are less versed in the exercise of real power than purveyors of a powerful image. They may advise leaders, but it is not clear how often this advice is heeded. Nor do these elders from elite families normally participate in public meetings. But nevertheless villagers often mentioned them as powerful persons and as sources of good ideas for decisions to be made. One villager said: *'when they say something they are really listened to with attention by the authorities and the village in general. Later on their ideas and advice are mostly taken into account during our meetings but it is also true that sometimes they are just totally ignored'.* They both are part of the old 'retired leaders' but still belong to the VA. The 'retired' leaders are old people - 65 or older and who performed their *cargos* - and former village chiefs and no longer appointed to any *cargo.* However, they are often consulted for advice before a difficult decision takes place.

In daily life, the importance of perpetuation of family reputation seems to be a factor in village integration and cohesion. There are apparent family codes which condition enduring family ties. A very obvious example is to be found in the family names in the village. Most of the population is either Sánchez or López. Combinations are very common, and the Sánchez-López and López-Sánchez groups form a majority. People acquire other family names due to women from other villages having been taken as wives by local men. Basically about 40 % of the population has a family name containing the element Sánchez and another 40 % López. The rest present different names, but their ancestors can generally trace links back to Sánchez or the López.

Finally, the WWG emerged as an initiative of *Misión Integral* which has been trying over the years to figure out productive alternatives for the women, but also to strengthen their capacities for collective action. The group emerged from a project that took place in 1998, and nowadays members are running a range of small enterprises and a cooperative. Small family businesses,

such as grocery shops, and handicrafts and artisan clothing stores are women's local initiatives, with relevance in terms of income and decision making at family level.

Summing up, these non-recognised actors have been shown to represent or create alternative or complementary spaces of action for the villagers in El Oro. Some may be considered parallel or opposite spaces to the local power structure due to the actions they pursue. However, most have actually been emerging as working actors beyond the structures validated and recognised by the system of U&C. These non-recognised entities mainly focus on individual interests and family necessities rather than village concerns. This means that the local power structure settled by the U&C may only attend the collective necessities of the village and its structures. Non-recognised actors may be rather focused on spaces not created under the ruling mechanism. Attention is drawn to the fact that most of them have been created with outsider support.

3) Main implications for the village

Reasons to participate

According to what was locally expressed in El Oro, some reasons why villagers decide to get involved in alternative groups, organisations and emergent activities is presented as: *a) to get extra monetary resources or a paid job, b) to learn more or about other things, c) to have a space for women to make [our] own productive decisions, d) to travel and visit unknown places, e) to make new contacts for potential jobs in the future.*

Actually, most reasons to participate were related to family and personal development, but often in relation to a concern to alleviate poverty. Elda (44) - a member of the WWG - stated: *'we participate not to be against the MABC or the VA but because of the opportunities we find individually and the benefits for our families.* Inocenta (49) mentioned: *'our husbands work very hard and sometimes we cannot cover our basic necessities. We also work very hard at home and are not paid for that; we need to ensure our family's food'.* Hortencia (37) more practical: *'our children need more than a house and education. Cloths, shoes and good food are sometimes difficult to afford.'*

Some opinions were related to a desire both to increase personal knowledge and achieve village improvement. Nohemías (42) – while working at the village nursery- stated: *'it is important for our village to produce pine trees, first because El Oro is seen as an example of an environmental village – second, because we are able to learn more techniques with the support we receive from forest engineers of 'Misión Integral'. '[Furthermore], beyond selling the plants we may be able to improve our local infrastructure, like the village main building, the basketball field, public water pipes and school painting, and so on'.*

The fact of having non-recognised actors with records of active participation in certain initiatives and important roles played contributed to build another image of the local development of El Oro. These actors definitely make their spaces real by working together and implementing worthwhile actions to generate income.

Role of leadership

Local leadership is built up in two different ways in El Oro. The first is basically built up through the governance system and its component *cargos* (duties publicly assigned to villagers) where male villagers pass through different positions of local representation during their lives. They build capacities by becoming skilful and prepared to participate, and then make collective decisions to guide village life. This actually represents a strategy to encourage and make people participate, but it also builds the village's identity as a dynamic social body.

The second way consists of personal engagement in initiatives or projects run by external agents as interventions. Instances are found among the people participating in *Misión Integral* initiatives or those participating in the governmental programme called *Oportunidades*[49]. In these cases,

[49] It is a national programme launched by a consortium of different ministries of the country. For further details see chapter 3.

leadership and other human capacities are built (in or out of the village) with outsider support. Villagers receive information, training and even resources to initiate or strengthen certain alternative action spaces. Along with these actions leaders look for followers to engage and improve their individual or family lives through achieving some of the goals set.

In some cases, the significance of leaders in non-recognised activity lay only in acting as brokers and external organisation or institution. External developmental agencies usually look for the strengthening of local efforts to run initiatives. Some others play a political role in negotiating local projects or resources. Both need brokers to mediate external and local interests. Religious actors serve as counsellors to stimulate local cohesion and strengthen moral values, beliefs and behaviour. Nevertheless, they seem also to play important roles in improvement of basic conditions. More than individual leaders, religious groups play an important part in establishing new spaces for moral action. Their role is dynamic and not limited alone to brokerage. Religious groups use the spaces they create for far-reaching experiments in social and economic innovation. The point was argued at length by Max Weber in exploring the links between Calvinism and the rise of capitalism (see Brubaker 1984, Lewis, 1975 and Parking 1982).

These non-recognised actors deal with issues beyond the local power structure, attending to other concerns villagers consider important in addition to the routines imposed by the governance system based on customary laws. Non-recognised actors act, and at the same time create and shape their own spaces for action, with the support of individuals or families.

Role of knowledge and technology

In El Oro, aside from individual's interest in seeking for better opportunities for personal and family development, there are three main elements normally necessary if actors are to succeed in opening up new spaces for social action. These can be labelled *resources, knowledge and technology*. Resources are normally sought by the leaders of each group. Knowledge and skills are normally considered only within the scope of initiatives or projects brought by external actors. In the case of recognised actors, the local power structure normally provides all three components through U&C committees and organisations.

Technology is interesting due to the fact that interventions usually come with a 'package of technology' to be used by local actors within their spaces. In the case of the religious actors knowledge is basically transferred by local pastors. They normally receive 'the new knowledge' from and will even sometimes be endowed with economic resources by the 'bigger brother' churches outside the village. The basic means, in this case, to bring people together is the Bible, in combination with a mix of beliefs and personal desires concerning spiritual life. Sometimes, villagers who have received training as acolytes are transferred with new tools to work in the village. In these cases, they arrive to apply what is in effect a new technology (even if it is spiritual rather than material).

Technology to manage natural resources or for agricultural activities remains mainly based on local innovation and use of traditional knowledge. For the use of the forest villagers will extract wood without management, according to rules defined by the VA and MABC. In some cases they may ask the facilitators of *Misión Integral* about the use of certain species. This opens a door for new techniques. The main role of technology, then, is to open pathways of incursion into the village from the outside.

Role of interveners

The main interveners in El Oro are basically of three types: productive-political interventions from governmental agencies, spiritual interventions by churches, and productive interventions from NGOs (or specifically, in this case, one established NGO, *Misión Integral).*

Interveners or external actors are seen and locally used as sources of ideas, training, financial support and at times new technology. The local spaces of non-recognised actors are daily shaped by the actions of villagers in pursuing their own ideas on how personal and family development should be achieved. The main roles of outsiders and their interventions are as providers.

Furthermore, outsiders participating with non-recognised actors do not try to deal or struggle against the local power structure. They maintain independence from the U&C and have their own dynamic and strategies to continue working in parallel. This seems to avoid any confrontation with local structure.

Local contradictions or opportunities seized?

All the villagers from El Oro respect their local governance system very much. They said that U&C represents the main mechanism to rule their collective lives in general. They actively participate in the local power structure via accepting *cargos*. In other words, at least in the case of men, they align with structure imposed by the U&C because they can decide what is locally worthwhile, recognised and validated, for themselves. Nevertheless, at the same time, they may also be able to participate as non-recognised actors and open up alternative spaces. For instance, this includes participation of some formally recognised leaders as participants in religious organisations, and membership by men and women of small productive cooperatives, such as the rotational credit groups. The parallelism of the recognised and non-recognised power structures is part of the reason U&C remains viable.

Religion seems to be very important for villagers in regulating their moral values, beliefs and behaviours. Therefore any separation of public (social and political) life from personal family life around the parallelism of U&C and religion could be seen as a very complicated social process. But how is it possible to separate personal-family life from social-public village life when a person or family belongs to both groups, and is simultaneously acting 'on stage' and 'behind the scenes'? The answer may be simple or difficult, depending on the level of local consciousness of the people and how much they are aware of this separation. This is related to what Durkheim calls the level of maturity of societies expressed in both mechanical and organic solidarities (Durkheim 1912[1954], Giddens 1978, Hickey and Mohan 2004, Layton, 1997).

For El Oro villagers, some answers centre on pragmatic reasons and decisions taken about personal and family development opportunities *versus* village development as a big protective social body in which rules for social cohesion and a space of cohabitation are settled. In practice, people participate actively in the power structure settled by the governance system in order to keep their local rights over resources. On the other hand some of them also participate in the creation of alternative spaces to meet needs beyond the set of those enabled or denied by the structure of village collectivism.

However, historically excluded or relegated sectors, such as social groupings of women and others with limited formal rights, seem to have reason, opportunity and necessity to create alternative spaces for themselves. In such cases it is not strange to see the encouraging response and engagement manifested by such villagers when certain conditions for knowledge or resource accession are present. Women are very motivated towards and satisfied with their non-recognised space for collective action. So far, no moves have been made to bring these female spaces under the regulation of U&C, and women's room for manoeuvre may indeed be protected by its lack of formal recognition.

4) General considerations

The WWG is an instance of an action space for women, historically excluded from public debate or participation in village decision making. Nowadays they can propose ideas to the MABC and VA but are not allowed to run village-level initiatives. Despite their importance in making income and circulate cash, WWG are not recognised or validated, either as important or powerful actors. Besides, WWG leaders do not appear to look for such recognition. According to a classification of power proposed by Rowlands (1997), women hold 'power to' and 'power with' and sometimes 'power over' things and people in hidden ways. This power is based on decision making over use of natural and economic resources at household level. The power is real, since women provide food, health and education for their children and assist husbands in the task of family support.

The WWG has become a women's space for talking about their problems and acting upon them. At the beginning, Blanca (48) commented: *'it was very difficult because we were not allowed to*

participate in any group discussion; we had to humble ourselves while asking for permission to meet… Initially, our husbands did not give us permission to get together'. The *de facto* emergence of women's groups, accompanied by a degree of economic success, actually represented a change in the *macho* culture still rooted in many Latin American countries. Deeply Mexican villages are no exception.

Nonetheless, women demonstrate strong convictions and encouragement to work together as well as individually. They definitely have gained some power as a group. They now meet and discuss several issues. Some of them are related to the use of funds and credits, but others to community health and children's education. According to members, most group conclusions are now discussed with the husbands while in the bed. *'We have now an impact on them. Our men often use and appropriate issues and ideas from us, which are raised sometimes during meetings with other men or in village reunions',* one anonymous informant said. This is precisely the hidden or silent power over men in practice mentioned by Paternostro (1998).

By 2005 women had begun slowly to participate more in decision-making at the village level in El Oro. Apart from having their own meetings, they now also take part in some committees of recognised actors, namely the health and education committees. Nevertheless, so far, no woman has ever been appointed to a position in the top political committee, the MABC. The fact that men started to accept the presence of women in public affairs seems to indicate a slow evolution in gender perceptions within a *machista* village and a recognition of women's capacities.

There were few signs overall, however, of non-recognised actors ever struggling against the U&C and its overall structure. The normal focus for debate was the potential support that could be offered in terms of resources to extend the village's budget. There is as yet no talk in the spaces of action of the WWG etc of complaint about being excluded, non-recognised or non-validated. The situation in El Oro does not seem to be affecting or generating any type of social conflict so far. Where grievances were expressed they seemed to relate mainly to issues of personal and inter-personal behaviour.

Furthermore, the creation of social networks and connections to different external actors has resulted in an interesting strategy followed by non-recognised actors, reflecting their dependence on external support. Tapping external resources allowed leadership to be exercised more broadly, with wider benefits to the village, including the system of U&C. It seems that so far local phenomena such as out-migration by men and progress towards women's emancipation at village level mainly serve as useful inputs for the further development and evolution of the U&C as the main local ruling mechanism. But co-optation or fragmentation of some non-recognised spaces might also happen soon. Forest nursery and communitarian museum offered clear examples. The nursery offered material support to the village ideal represented in U&C, but real tensions appear to have emerged around the museum project, with the U&C system seeking to co-opt it for its own purposes, and perhaps against the interests of women and youth. On balance, however, it appears that 'appropriation' of those parallel spaces may bring recognition to some of these non-recognised actors and make U&C stronger as a result. It seems possible, at least, that a degree of emancipation may occur through validation or protection of unrecognised actors, permitting them to participate in village decision making, thus strengthening the system overall.

However another implication for both recognised and non-recognised actors is emerging out of migration. In El Oro about 80 % of adults have experienced temporary migration to Mexico City, the U.S.A. or Canada. The elderly, women and children would become the main group of in habitants in El Oro in future. It was also said that about 10 % of villagers have settled elsewhere and never come back. Migration had also contributed to the social fragmentation of certain spaces or disintegration of some men's working groups. This implies that women and young actors with different experiences may demand more share in determining the direction of village processes. On the other hand, this might represent further opportunities for women to take a more proactive role at the village level, because an empty niche. At the same time, political parties seem to be interested in and looking to impose a different type of political life at the village. They are finding fragmented villages and spaces with potential adepts and captive votes, as a result of which the U&C system may also be at a risk. Apparently, regional political leaders have recently visited El Oro and approached the women's group by promising support and close collaboration. The risk of

external political ideologies imposing confrontations with the locally constructed system becomes latent. The same situation might also happen with new religions. In this case, the services offered may either strengthen or break established patterns of behaviour and reinforce or change local moral values. This possibility agrees with De Mente (1998) about the destabilising impact of rapid changes in religion aimed at basic features of established rural morality. For instance, in many other villages of Chiapas and Oaxaca, new religions do not let children to participate in school civic activities like parades. In other cases, new religions impose on the followers an attitude against the *tequios* - collective work for the village usually in monthly basis - because according to the religious leaders, devotion and collectivism must be only showed at the church.

Case B: California, Chiapas State

1) Description of actors and their action spaces

In California, the research team found nine non-recognised local actors beyond the four actors previously identified in chapter five. These non-recognised actors were sometimes mentioned by villagers, but never in such a way as to suggest that they were considered important players in the village. The following description gives a sketch of their main characteristics. The summarised information in relation to this case study is shown in Table 6.2 and the following boxes.

Table 6.2. Main instances of non-recognised actors and their spaces of action in California, Chiapas

Group	Year of Constitution	Leader	Addressing	Supervision By	Intervener- related (main linkages to)	Type of actor/group	Type of space	Type of power
The working women's group 'peasant woman 1'	1996	Praxedis Nango Símuta	Seeks funds & run productive projects with external resources & looks for household improvement	Women (70 members)	Municipal government, regional organisations, & political party (PRI)	Productive	Created & gained	Invisible
The working women's group 'peasant woman'	1989 & 1998	María Dominga López Pérez & Mary Cruz Zaraus Ramírez	Seeks funds & run productive projects with external resources & looks for household improvement	Women (10 members)	Political party (PRD) & municipality	Productive	Created/ fragmented/ gained	Invisible
The Martínez Family & its head	Since village foundation	Carlos Martínez	Running a local grocery shop, also 'provides' advice to local authorities. He also works as middle man buying & selling some agricultural products around neighbouring villages.	Nobody	Municipal & state officers	Political	Gained & want to be inherited	Hidden
Adventist church 1	1985	Ma. del Socorro Sánchez Bautista	Spiritual services & strengthening local moral values & beliefs	Local families	Brother churches of municipalities & region	Religious	Created & fragmented	Invisible
Adventist church 2	1996	Isidro Sánchez Hernández	Spiritual services & strengthening local moral values & beliefs	Local families	Brother churches of municipalities & region	Religious	Created	Invisible
Pentecostal church	1985	Bernabé Sánchez Camilo	Spiritual services & strengthening local moral values & beliefs	Local families	Other similar churches in other villages & municipalities	Religious	Created	Invisible
Catholic church	1990	Lázaro Rodríguez López/María Elena Lázaro Palacios	Spiritual services & strengthening local moral values & beliefs	Local families	Main church at the municipal	Religious	Created	Invisible
Bean growers*	2003	Vicente Cruz Cruz	Seeking funds & linking people to governmental funding offices	15 group members	Municipal & state officers, research team	Productive	Created	Invisible so far
Bus committee (nowadays a cooperative)*	2003	Francisco Zaraus Martínez & Eduardo Sánchez Bautista	The local needs of transporting people and local produce to the market in the city	Cooperative members (10 villagers)	Federal & municipal transport officers & research team	Productive	Created	Invisible so far

*** These actors also emerged as a result of the participatory workshops implemented at the village during the research conducted for the analysis of village's history and its relevance for the locals (see chapter 2). During 2003, they both came out as ideas to attend to a necessity but later on they became local projects. At the moment (2007) both of them are working as non-recognised committees and playing an important role as local development actors**

Box 6.7- The working women's group 'peasant woman 1' (PW1)

Origins: This activity was begun in 1996 by a very active woman leader who came to live in California in 1994. She initially invited women who had some experience in working together in a former group, but also those who did not have experience in participating at any type of organisation. They originally met once per month in order to hold discussions on 'women issues' like health and family needs. Some months later, the leader raised the idea of looking for support outside the village, since she was told about certain opportunities to get production funds from municipal programmes. She travelled to and investigated options at different municipal offices. A few months later, the first support to the group was granted. They got funds to buy materials for improving the condition of the women's houses. Since then the group started to negotiate resources and materials for their households beyond the scope of the village committees. Since the beginning the group has worked closely with municipal officers who were explicit about their political interests. Officers had always raised expectations about getting votes for the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party or *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*), the ruling political party of the municipality at that time. However, independently of the connection established with the political party throughout the municipality, the group continued running its own productive projects.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: Since its origins, this group has been an active player, placing itself as a very dynamic actor within the village. Over the years the women participants have created their own space for action and have also gained certain reputation, not only by through their projects or the resources obtained but also because this area of activity has become a good opportunity for women to build leadership capacities and achieve self-empowerment. However, from an external point of view, PW1 also seems to be used as political and ideological space, influenced by the PRI. The power exercised by this actor within the village is not clearly visible. This issue is revisited below.

Participants: Initially, the group began with 10 women but through time and the opportunities offered to women, it comprised more than 50 women in 2005, including the core group, of which the leader is part.

Functions and implications: It was clear that the municipality and PRI officers have sometimes used this women's group as a social thermometer in order to know how things are moving in California and other surrounding villages of the *Sierra* of Villa Flores. This group has tried to convince other women, husbands and relatives to vote for the PRI. Apparently, the alliance worked well until 2003, when the PRI lost the elections in the region and particularly the municipal chair. Nevertheless, the PW1 has continued to count on PRI office support.

The participants meet once per month and progress, ideas and initiatives are discussed. Apparently, the woman leader who started the group has been always in the board as its doyenne, being present in every external negotiation but also acting as back stopper for other women under practical training for leadership roles. Women said that the old leader's support is always necessary due to her capacities to overcome tough situations, especially when dealing with politicians and to make new connections to official institutions.

Leadership: The group has always named a board of three leaders every year. The leaders' functions are basically to deal with negotiations to tap resources outside the village, and to handle the administration and distribution of resources and monitor the actions of the group. The pioneer and initial leader was Praxedis Nango Símuta (45), but subsequently a couple of other women have also taken this role, with Praxedis as back stopper. By the end of 2003 Praxedis left the village with her husband. The reasons were basically lack of economic resources to treat her husband's illness and the lack of a near-by medical centre to take him in case of emergencies. Nowadays the group is led by Luvia Sánchez Bautista (33), who coordinates all the activities with two more women. They often say, with a deep nostalgic breath, that everyone in the group is still missing Praxedis very much. They hope to see her back in the village. Since her departure the group is still struggling to find a way to move forward without her.

Box 6.8- The working women's group 'peasant woman' (PW)

Origins: This actor was the first working group of well-organised women in California, and was led by a very active woman villager. Originally the group was constituted in 1989 and worked until 1997. Women were very enthusiastic and participative. The PW was constituted by the enthusiasm and leadership of an abandoned woman. Her husband changed his family by following the 'American dream' (going to the U.S.A.) and never came back to the village. Since she realised her husband could never come back, this woman started to work as a small-scale activist within the village in order to explain the women the consequences of being left-behind. Initially, the VA and other local authorities offered support and assisted her to overcome the difficult family situation. Later, projects from the municipality targeting women started to come to California through the *Ejido* Commissary (EC) and the VA decided she could lead the women in an informal way because of her enthusiasm and capacities. Over the years, political misunderstandings with former EC members came out and the PW group was fragmented and disintegrated in 1997. Later, this group was re-formed by a very young woman (Mary Cruz) but behind the scenes advised by the former woman leader. In 1998, and by considering the experience of the other women's group (PW1), Mary Cruz tried to revive the group. She went to the municipality but the officers did not react since the support had already been given to the other women's group embracing most of the women villagers. Then, Mary Cruz intelligently went to the opponent political party offices, the PRD (a left-wing party called Party of the Democratic Revolution or *Partido de la Revolución Democrática*). Her petitions were listened to, and some months

Box 6.8 (Continued)...

later help followed. The PRD demanded the same as the PRI, to ensure a certain number of votes per election from the village. In this way, PW re-emerged with very similar objectives, intentions and actions to PW1. Material resources to improve the condition of the women's houses, and small funds to run productive projects, also came to the village through this actor. Since then, there has been some friction, confrontation and jealousy between the two women's groups.

Type of actor, space and power: Since its origins, this actor has placed emphasis on organising women for production. Moreover, a space has been carved out, lost and regained through a difficult process of struggle both inside and outside the village. The conflict with the local authorities in 1997 was a proof of that struggle. The conflict had basically to do with resource distribution, which included the leader's discomfort that resources from the municipality were not received directly but passed through the village central power structure, the EC. Apparently, PW began to interfere and question internal politics-related issues that the men in particular were not prepared to let happen. Nowadays, due to its close relation with the PRD, the group is considered a conduit for external political influence in the village. However, inside the village it is not seen like that, but just as a women's activity aimed at getting extra resources from external organisations and institutions. The power exercised by this actor also seems invisible.

Participants: Initially, in the first attempt from 1989 the group began with 10 women and expanded up to 50. Nowadays only 20 women villagers participate.

Functions and implications: Since the PRD won the municipal elections in 2003, this women group took on a bigger relevance in California. The party promised more things and funds for the women and children. During 2004 and 2005 more economic resources for local projects and materials for construction arrived in the village.

The women participants meet on a monthly basis to analyse their progress and concerns in relation to initiatives the group runs. Sometimes they have discussions on how things are happening in the village and their role as an organised women's group. However, this latter type of discussion is considered somewhat secret, and not to be mentioned in the village. Once in a while women leaders are called to the offices of the PRD in Villa Flores, especially during electoral campaigns. During those meetings, the women receive talks about leadership.

Leadership: The initial leader in 1989 was María Dominga López Pérez (59) and later Mary Cruz Zaraus Ramírez (30). Nevertheless, since one of Mary Cruz's sisters became successful in moving people from the region to Arizona and Texas (U.S), she was also convinced to 'do the trip to *al Norte'* (the North) *'in a search of better opportunities for the family'* (as she put it). Her parents disagreed, due to the fact that they thought she was moved by curiosity and the unbelievable stories told by other migrants. By 2004 she had left the village together with her husband, leaving the children with the grandparents. A year later she abandoned her husband and immediately got engaged to another villager from California living in Phoenix, Arizona.

Currently, the group is led by two women who were previously trained within the group. They are Guadalupe Alegría Méndez (39) and Ana Luz Vázquez Lázaro (33). Together, they coordinate with another two women all the activities and actions taken by the group. They are said to be learning a lot in relation to how to make progress as a group given fast changing conditions in the village, the municipality and the region in general.

Nowadays, this actor is organised along earlier lines. Three women leaders are named by the participants on a yearly basis. They constitute the board. Re-election can happen, but depends on the capacities built by the group. The original leader (María Dominga) continues to work as a back stopper**.** The PW board is in charge of negotiations and bringing in external resources, but also of administration, distribution and monitoring of actions taken internally.

Box 6.9- The Martínez family

Origins: The Martínez family like the Sánchez, Zaraus, Cruz and López families are among the initial village founders. However, two persons mentioned that the only person demanding to be recognised with an apparent social status is the head of the Martínez family. It was cross checked by talking to all the other founding families, the Martínez family included. It came out that the Martínez family's head tries to get more attention within the village. The talks with him brought out that despite his farmer origins, and elementary school education, he had once worked as a laboratory assistant in an agriculture research institute on the Coast of Oaxaca State where he became a skilful person with a higher level of knowledge and information than the rest of the villagers. Because of institutional reforms he was fired and at the same time his first wife died. He wanted to start all over again and went to Chiapas State searching for better opportunities. There, he met some of the current villagers and helped them to get organised to settle and run the village. They were interested to listen to him because his words were always expressed like a politician, with a strong discursive sense. He repeatedly insisted on the risks taken and the danger to his life as what was in effect a 'squatter' village came into being. He also stressed that his family is very progressive because always participates actively in the village tasks. However, some people said that he just wants his family to get permanent recognition and respect. The family already enjoys a lot of respect.

Box 6.9 (Continued)...

Nevertheless, the Martínez head would like to experience more attention from the village, and would like to see the development of a notion of inherited respect, as found in the more settled village, El Oro. This response is interesting in that it shows a behind-the-scenes actor busy forging tradition as an element in U&C.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: The head of the family is definitely a political actor in the village and is trying to establish for his family the idea of a political space through which respect, recognition and rights from his participation in the village foundation process can be channelled and inherited. Definitely he personally has a gained space in the village, but the future recognition of his family will depend on the compliance of villagers and the local power structure that emerges. The power held by this actor is both hidden and not as great as he would like it to be.

Participants: The family is composed of the wife (42), a son (12) and the *pater familias*.

Functions and implications: According to views expressed by villagers, the head of the Martinez family wants to institutionalise inheritance of respect acquired by village founders. However, other leaders seem to be more interested in village progress than the past. This is because the village has a wider progressive image; encouragement to pursue personal and village development goals, which seem to be the villagers' 'motto' - demands a lot of time and energy from them -. Furthermore, from an anthological perspective, since the village is composed of a very diverse mix of inhabitants from different cultures and regions, the setting up of an agreed process of inheritance would represent a very long struggle, with many conflicts, discussions and misunderstandings likely to derail the process. In the Mexican literature [i.e. Chevalier and Buckles 1005, Carlsen 1999 and De León 2001] it is said that indigenous and older villages tend to be more homogenous in terms of cultural values, and liable to adopt or reject changes more quickly. California is a relatively young village with a high cultural diversity. According to this criterion it might find the cultural innovation Martínez proposes difficult, not least there were more than 20 founding villagers, which would imply many inherited families might context the inheritance of paramountcy.

The fact is that villagers often consult the Martinez head and pay attention to what he suggests or recommends. However, some villagers also disagree with him, because of his attitude on some issues, especially while talking in public. Apparently, he is seen by some as arrogant in attitude and makes some locals feel uncomfortable. Despite his attitudes, he is in general much respected.

Parallel to his farming activities he also runs a small grocery shop. The shop also includes a small mobile shop run from his pick up truck. He also goes out of the village three or four days a week to buy and sell articles and agricultural products in other villages in the *Sierra*. This makes him well known outside the village; second, he is able to meet many people and third, he has numerous contacts and relations in these places. Sometimes such contacts have come to the village to propose or negotiate issues of concern to the village, like offering better prices for local products.

Leadership: The head of the Martínez family is Carlos (62) and his efforts for the village are locally acknowledged. His actions in the past, and his current trips and connections, represent an opportunity for village development. Furthermore, Carlos is very respectful of the local authorities because he has already completed all the *cargos* and knows very well how the system works. Then, every time he makes a new connection or contact he immediately informs the authorities and villagers.

Box 6.10- The Adventist churches 1 & 2

Origins: Despite the fact that in public discussions villagers only identified two main religious actors (the Protestant and Catholic churches) two more such entities came out of subsequent interviews. The Protestant churches were fragmented into three actors. Religion in California was instituted after the foundation of the village. Villagers were practising their beliefs at a family level based on former religion influences, but they did not at first form congregations for worship. It was in 1984 that they started to talk about edification of public spaces, including building a 'house' for the followers of religion. In 1985 villagers built a small rustic structure. That was the Adventist church.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: The fact is that as soon as villagers started to meet and practise the Adventist religion, they were practically creating their own local space. But due to family-related conflicts over the way some marriage services were conducted, but also in relation to some complaints about the behaviour of religious leaders, the church was internally fragmented in 1996. Some families decided to drop out and create a new congregation under the same religion. Thus, the Adventist church ended up with two village chapels. Power is exercised by this actor in ways that seem opaque at village level.

Participants: Nowadays 40 % (approximately 320 villagers, including children) of the population of California is Adventist, but split into two balanced small groups (about 50:50).

Functions and implications: The Adventist church has been a factor of both cohesion and also division among villagers. Initially Adventism played an important role within villagers' lives in terms of the strengthening and

Box 6.10 (Continued)...

reinforcement of personal beliefs and morals. Conflicts emerged due to family misunderstandings and leadership complaints. The fragmentation of the church divided a sector of the village and affected some individuals' reputations. Although the crisis period has now abated the sense of competition between both religious groups remains evident, especially as each wants to have the cleaner, nicer, more beautiful chapel, but also the greater number of adherents. Nowadays both churches seem to be working well, but there is a minimum of contact between them. The fact is that Adventism remains of high importance in villagers' lives in California. Every Saturday (the Adventist holy day) villagers belonging to this group come together over the whole day and make their space real through interaction. Mainly they read and interpret their Bibles. Those interpretations are used to rule their individual behaviour. Moreover, once in a while, both chapels participate in different events outside the village, but in an independent way.

Leadership: During the period of an undivided Adventist church there was only a leader supported by a small board. Nowadays, each of the two chapels has a leader serving as local pastor. The two leaders are supported by a board of two or three people. Both leaders have being trained by different Adventist churches in the municipality of Villa Flores. They are in charge of maintaining the religious cohesion of their followers. In 2005, the pastor and leader of the first settled Adventist church was María del Socorro Sánchez Bautista (36). The pastor and leader of the second settled churched was Isidro Sánchez Hernández (32). They look to encourage regular good relations with similar churches outside the village.

6.11- The Pentecostal church

Origins: The origins and history of the Pentecostal church in California is similar to that of the Adventist church. The Pentecostal church also first appeared in the public life of the village in 1985 as result of a group of people meeting to practice that religion. In 1995 the group built its first chapel.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: Since its origins this actor has provided a space for villagers where beliefs in spirit forces are practised under religious precepts. As a local space for action, the Pentecostal church was 'planted' by a brother church in the highlands of Chiapas, from where a section of the California congregation hailed. Over the years, the California congregation has begun to carve out and shape its own terrain. The power exercised by this actor is comparable with that exercised by the Adventists. Again the source of its power (which believers will say comes from the Holy Spirit) is not transparent to ordinary villagers and non-believers.

Participants: Nowadays, 40 % of the villagers (c. 320 people, including children) practice the Pentecostal religion.

Functions and implications: As well as the other churches, this religious actor brings the people together once per week (this time on Sundays) where the Bible is read and interpreted according to local facts and lives. This church has also brought a kind of brotherhood to the village, where respect for both similarities and difference is inculcated in the followers. Pentecostalism (with its emphasis on spirit forces) adapts itself well to older elements of indigenous religion in the region, and is tolerant in its approach to different manifestations of the spirit. For instance, indigenous people believe in the spirits from the forest, water and wind. Their power and manifestations are accepted to exist and well rooted locally. The Pentecostals seem not to suffer the problems of fission experienced by the tightly doctrinally bound Adventists.

Leadership: The leader is Bernabé Sánchez Camilo (30). Like leaders from the other churches, he doubles the role of pastor and farmer, and is assisted by three other villagers. He was trained outside the village about 10 years ago. Nowadays he participates in meetings with other pastors to discuss *'how to keep the village in the right track'* (according to his opinion). Furthermore he also tries to engage as many people as possible in his church. Once a year, they get support for transport and go to attend events in fellow churches in surrounding villages or in Villa Flores city. The main duty of the leader is to keep his followers together, to show respect for the entire village, and to maintain friendship and supportive relations with other local churches.

6.12- The Catholic church

Origins: It was mentioned in workshops that despite the affinity of some of the first settlers for Catholicism this faith was never publicly expressed or manifested. However, there was an influx of Catholic families in California in the late 1980s, and the idea of having a place to meet arose. The necessity for a chapel also reinforced the interest of the main Catholic church in the municipality. By 1990 a small house was constructed, and the group worked on a proper church until the late 1990s. Later on Catholicism in California entered into a kind of standby situation, due to many of the faithful, and the leader himself emigrating.

Type of actor, space and power exercised: This actor also serves villagers' spiritual needs within its own locally created space. Nowadays, Catholics attend Mass in the main church at Villa Flores on a monthly basis. Any power exercised within the group space marked out by the Catholics is intangible, not to say residual.

Participants: Nowadays, no more than 10 % of the population of California is said to practice Catholicism. This is about 80 people, including children.

Box 6.12 (Continued)…

Functions and implications: Since most of the village population has very low levels of education, the feeling of belonging to a religious congregation helps strengthen beliefs and group commitments without overt reliance on more than very basic doctrine. From talking to some of the few remaining Catholics, they mentioned that their religion is different from other religions in the village. They claim that its norms are different, but what they may mean is that Catholicism (more than Bible-based Protestantism) works through ritual action. Worship and prayer has a community-wide function, in that it keeps the village united in the face of all local problems villagers struggle with.

Leadership: There is no regular priest in California. The Catholic group is served by a farmer. He was trained outside the village as an acolyte with the basics to reinforce the local church. His name is Lázaro Rodríguez López (66). He has been living in Monterrey City (North Mexico) since 2001. The local Catholics are waiting for his permanent returns (he comes sporadically) in order to meet as before. At the moment María Elena Lázaro Palacios (60) tries to keep the group united by calling meetings once in a while or going together to meet another Catholic group in the neighbouring village of Los Angeles.

6.13– The bean growers

Origins: This actor emerged in 2003, during the first participatory workshops conducted in the village as part of the overall research activity. It was formed as a working group in order to get access to funds from governmental programmes of the Chiapas State. In their local reflections, villagers identified the necessity to start a working group for men. The idea of the group was also to bring together all men in the village with interest in cropping commercial beans. They initially asked the research team for support in order to get more information about the government assisted programmes, requirements and type of resources to be obtained. Since the initial group stages, a MSc. student participating in this research has been assisting villagers in preparing letters and proposals to be submitted.

Type of actor space and power exercised: Apparently this new actor is still in a phase of consolidation. Its space for action as a productive group has been already created and permanently shaped. However, it was locally seen that the group was taking the initiative very seriously in order to jointly access resources for commercial cropping of beans. The power exercised by this young actor remains to be manifested on a public stage.

Participants: The group is constituted by 15 villagers who had already named a board of three persons, a leader and two more assistants.

Functions and implications: Participants meet informally once per month. In 2006 they became aware of how to deal with official institutions in the searching for funds for productive projects. Apparently, since the privatisation of certain governmental areas like extension services (in 2001), it became necessary for farmers to invest considerable time to re-learn how to deal with changes happening to governmental programmes and institutions. Today (in 2007), villagers have had the idea of constituting a cooperative to crop local beans. The men also expressed the wish to see themselves working actively in ways comparable to the women's working groups, but (being men) occupying a bigger space, evident also at a regional level. At the moment they crop the beans individually but usually take most of their harvest to the city as a group to make a greater commercial impact.

Leadership: The person with the initiative was the former village local Municipal Agent, Vicente Cruz Cruz (63). He was told about a governmental programme that was supposed to provide resources for productive projects, particularly for alternative crops. He then invited other farmers to join him and look for those funds. Nowadays the main role played by the leader is in getting and filling out forms, and taking them to officers for processing. The responsibility for management and distribution of economic and material resources among the members lies with the other board members.

Box 6.14- The bus committee

Origins: This actor also emerged in 2003, during the first workshops conducted in California. It was initially formed as a working group at the end of 2003, in order to work out the idea of having a bus for the village. According to some villagers, the idea of the bus was presented years before to the Village Assembly (VA) and the local authorities but it was never accepted as a village initiative. The VA argued that the idea was a highly risky and would imply the investment of some village money that might easily be lost. Then, during the research workshops, the people became motivated again, and came together to conform an independent committee. Their main task was to look for any type of support and get a bus, federal transport permit and traffic plates. They initially asked the research team members for some support, particularly to find out information about transport offices and legal requirements. They also asked for assistance in writing some letters and to identify potential donors of a second-hand bus. Since then, the same student participating with the bean growers has been assisting this group. At the moment (2007) the group has became a cooperative and they have obtained bus and permits to transport people and local products from the *Sierra* to Villa Flores City or Tuxtla Gutierrez (the Chiapas State capital city). Because of lack in driving skills and time among villagers, they have decided to rent the bus, plates and permits to a particular entrepreneur from Villa Flores city.

Box 6.14 (Continued)...

Type of actor space and power exercised: This new actor has consolidated its own space for action as a productive group outside agriculture. However, the cooperative is taking on a wider local relevance, since the transport facilities serve not only to California villagers but also surrounding villages. As yet, the power exercised by this group has not yet become visible in the recognised structure of village governance.

Participants: The group is comprised of 12 farmers who had already named a board of five persons, two leaders and three assistants. The bus driver is contracted and paid by the renter.

Functions and implications: At the outset of operations, the cooperative members had to get commit to the process and invest about US$ 100 as a pocket money to be used for different trips by the leaders. Currently, participants meet informally once per month. They discuss every issue related to the bus, the service provided by the renter and the profit they make. They say they are learning several things in relation to the responsibility of having a bus, e.g. the need for good maintenance the provision of a good service in the *Sierra*. Their main concern is to take the bus back into their own hands as soon as the contract period ends (2008). One of the villagers is attending some courses to learn about driving and mechanics. The cooperative members often express some fears about the future of this operation because they did not realise how much work they would have to invest in keeping the cooperative alive. They are willing to learn and mobilise themselves, however, in order to make profit out of the bus, which was at the time of writing, providing a good service.

Leadership: From far back the two current leaders, Francisco Zaraus (58) and Eduardo Sánchez (43), have shown interest and motivation in having a bus for the village. Nowadays, the management and distribution of economic benefits from the bus rent is distributed in equal shares among the cooperative members.

2) The main highlights

In California, as well as El Oro, time and trust made possible the identification of non-recognised local actors. In this case, nine came out as non-recognised or validated. They are four religious actors from three different religions, four production related-actors, two women's working groups, a bean growers group and a bus cooperative, together with a political actor from a founder family playing a local adviser role.

By using the multidimensional idea of power proposed by Gaventa (2004), the religious actors can be said to be creating spaces stimulated by inputs from different external churches (Adventist, Pentecostal and Catholic). The type of power exercised is invisible to outsiders, including the analysts, but some useful pointers have been gleaned from the conversations with villagers, and observations on their behaviour. In the case of productive actors all seem to be creating and using their own spaces, though once again the source of the power they possess is not readily apparent. The head of the Martínez family occupies his own gained space and to consolidate his gain wishes to be permanently recognised by the village. This actor's power lies in his ability to deploy behind the scenes, and exercise hidden influence manifested at times in visible actions.

Taking into account the temporality and the spatial relations of actors and their actions, the case of women's working groups may illustrate how different roles are played out beyond the limits of village initiatives. The history of the two groups reveals connections with political parties. Both groups appear to be quietly hoeing a local productive furrow, but they are also imposing a hidden political role on women participants. A history of competition or rivalry between both groups may also be an indication of the hidden hand of political intrigue. Women also exercise influence over husbands and family through daily dialogue. Whether this pressure is effective is hard to say, but some women agree with Paternostro (1998) about the silent power of women.

Religious actors seem to strengthen local beliefs. They aim to have an impact on individual behaviour at village level, and some frame their acts according to the Bible as their standard. Certain villagers from the Adventist churches tended to display strong beliefs, with repercussions for the village in cases of misbehaviour. Members of other churches, however, seemed to maintain a clear separation of their religious life from the other roles they played within the village, as if they lived two lives, one for the village and the other for religion. Pentecostalists tended to think they united various spirit forces within the village, while Catholics prayed on behalf of the entire community, lapsed Catholics and unbelievers alike.

The head of the Martínez family with his history in the village would like to be permanently recognised in public as the founder of a leading village dynasty. Since villagers in California are progressive and oriented to the future, this appeal to history may fall on deaf ears. Because all other village founders are still alive and remain closely related in one way or another, it seems that the Martinez's foundational claims will not be easily accepted as a political myth. In El Oro it was different, since only two families founded the village, prestige and permanent recognition was settled, and regarded as an inherited thing. In this case, time and villagers' decisions will say whether the *'Derecho de Sangre'* mentioned by Rodríguez (2005) will ever be important in California.

The bean growers and the bus cooperative are occupying spaces very recently created. In fact it would be true to say the spaces are still under construction. Full delimitation depends on productive activities fulfilling their potential. These two groups also run the risk of being co-opted by the local power structures as soon as the VA considers them to be of high relevance for the village as a whole. However, due to the local encouragement shown, and the leadership exercised by villagers, these activities may develop an independent cooperative sphere as a framework for local development.

The overall configuration regarding non-recognised actors in California seems to be dynamic and collective. It remains important to assess the role played by external actors, such as political parties or missions. They may be playing an ideological role in seeking to inculcate different mindsets in the people. In a next section in this chapter, an attempt will be made to unwrap this situation.

3) Main implications for the village

Since California's history is recent and quite progressive, people manifested familiarity change agenda in a number of respects, but particularly in the way they looked at and conducted local development. The fact is that non-recognised actors and their spaces have emerged as alternatives for the locals in terms of individual and family needs and interests. Definitely, change agenda were not created under the umbrella of the U&C system, as main power structure, but emerged as alternatives to cover some apparent unattended gaps.

Reasons to participate

Villagers mostly agreed that participating in these alternative spaces was basically for four reasons: a) to achieve personal and family development, including accessing extra monetary resources, b) to learn more about other things and places, c) to have access to smaller more personal spaces where it was possible collectively to discuss a range of issues beyond the local meetings held by the VA, d) to make new contacts and friendships potentially useful in addressing unexpected situations.

Comments were basically related to the local (individual and village) development. They referred to the lack of economic opportunities in small villages such as California, where scarce resources were further limited in their use by punitive laws. Women, especially from the women's working groups, offered comments along these lines: *'Our participation in the group was basically decided with the husbands', 'Our families have many necessities.', 'The group we are participating in does not go against the local rules.', 'We just follow the same strategies as men, to get [those] resources we need to live.', 'Rather than seeking for resources to improve the village infrastructure, we go for those to improve productive activities, family households and children lives'.*

Belisario (56) stated: *'Everywhere you go in the villages surrounding the Sierra you will see, live and smell the poverty. No matter that the whole family, including children, work very hard, we just survive. I guess there must be something wrong somewhere because we cannot even satisfy our basic needs'.*

Francisco (58) definitely made judgements: *'the government and its policies is responsible that our conditions are like this'. 'The price for our maize, milk and cattle are under paid and by contrast, the prices of other basic products are so high.', ' How we can afford such things is a big question'.*

Celia (31) also stressed: *'our solution so far is the migration of our men [husbands and oldest boys] but they risk their lives every time. Fortunately, they always find a job and send us back some green money [U.S.Dollars].'*

A young leader, Lucas (24) commented*: 'we need to find a strategy to survive; therefore we must keep well organised, participative and if necessary go out there to demand and ask for better support or resources.'*

An anonymous informer was more practical: *'There are no jobs for us, at least something has to be facilitated to continue existing or we will get involved in illegal activities in here'... 'Our children deserve a better life than ours, but that is very difficult to achieve nowadays; therefore please do not ask me what I can do because you could be surprised...'*

As in El Oro increase in personal knowledge and village improvement were both desired. Two men working in the bean growers group mentioned: *'Our production is important in order to get something to eat and sell but it is equally important to learn more about progress in other places. [We need to know] how they reached a better situation, because we are mostly illiterate people and need to learn a lot about what is done in other places...' 'Knowing about other places will help us to diminish our ignorance. That is one reason of why anytime outsiders come across we like talking and inquiring [of] them. Over time we can also become friends and support each other when necessary'.*

Role of leadership

Local leadership is built upon two main mechanisms. The first is induction into the governance system of U&C while performing *cargos.* Thus, villagers become acquainted with what is required to fulfil different and more important roles within the village. The second strategy consists in individual engagement in processes or initiatives run by external actors. By making contact to external organisations and institutions, villagers acquire particular skills through training, or sometimes via learning by doing. Instances are provided by the women's groups working closely with the political parties. The spaces to build local leadership also represent a platform for achieving personal and local goals. In California, as well as in El Oro, building leadership capacity can be seen to have an impact on village dynamics and development.

Nevertheless local leaders in California are locally considered and accepted as 'the movers ahead', which they act on problems while acquiring their new leadership skills. This perception comes from the history of California itself. This history is represented as the building of leadership by action, i.e. *learning by doing* - the constructivism mentioned by Freire (1971/2000 & 1998). Thus, local leadership of both recognised and non-recognised activities means that leaders are in charge of conducting and carrying out a series of tasks and processes to which they are appointed. That is their responsibility and contribution to the collective. In the context of non-recognised actors, leadership plays a fundamental role in terms of bringing people together, making alternative spaces work, and shaping these opportunities so that objectives are achieved.

Local leadership in California goes beyond brokerage; it is also the exercise of initiative in relation to the local context and needs. These capacities are built up through both internal and external initiatives. Local leaders need to do more than broker knowledge or opportunities. They need to achieve transformative results. The village and other spaces, in which they work, recognise and validate or reject leaders according to results achieved. It is for this that they are selected, recognised or removed. The main element of validation and recognition is the respect accorded by the population. Moreover, leadership is only exercised within a fixed (and often quite short) period of time. After their time is expired former leaders can play roles in other spaces or just continue being local supporters of other actors. In developing their roles they must avoid going beyond the mandates locally assigned.

Thus, leaders in California play roles as settlers, linkers, motivators, facilitators, negotiators, and so forth. In some cases, their role may be only to link individuals or as actors in relation to the external organisations and institutions. Some may be just playing political roles and others like

religious counsellors stimulate local cohesion and strengthen local beliefs, effective in maintaining social order.

Non-recognised actors have considerable independence to act outside the village and to deal with issues beyond the local power structure. Non-recognised actors attend to issues considered important for villagers, but probably left aside by the governance system; the clearest example is women's working groups and their initiatives in both villages. They bring the women together, go outside the village to get the resources, knowledge or information, and then work together to create and shape their own space. Through being marginalised from U&C women have developed a kind of independence of mind when they finally emerge into the public sphere. This independence is important for the creation and perpetuation of social spaces for collective action; Olivier de Sardan (2005) sees it as the basis for the formation of strategic groups.

Role of knowledge and technology

In California, as in El Oro, villagers largely use traditional technologies in their daily practices. The basic technology for natural resource conversion, for example, was introduced, adopted and adapted along with the settlement of the village. Villagers have large 'generated' or shaped through local innovation processes over the years what they need. In this sense, the main inputs for the local innovation processes are basically three. The first has to do with personal efforts made by every villager through trial and error in order to cope with local production challenges. Sometimes, villagers just copy, modify and try new ideas and knowledge or imitate others.

The second consists of a more or less 'permanent' contact with input sellers mostly based in Villa Flores city. Some villagers visit them once in a while to buy insecticides or medicines for animals. Input sellers often share new knowledge and information on their products. Villagers sometimes get certain recommendations on current innovations and later they just try them.

The third is related to what is facilitated by the external agents and interventions. It was observed that villagers had been sometimes provided with new seeds, insecticides, plants for reforestation, coffee plants, medicines for animals, chicken, sheep, improved breeds of cows, beans and so on. These initiatives are normally brought in the form of 'productive packages' by the political parties or municipal officials with whom the village has contacts. Much of the time these packages contain little or no information concerning correct use. The villagers must find out by themselves.

Thus, all technology in California relies on local innovation processes. Villagers observe and try. Sometimes they copy or imitate strategies followed by other people. Local processes of personal experimentation and adoption are run when necessary. The organised women's and men's working groups try innovations as a group but also individually.

In the process of seeking for better technical options, people from California make use of their personal, family and village development networks. They go out, look at and ask for resources, knowledge and/or technology. Resources are sought by leaders and board members in connection with both recognised and non-recognised activities. Knowledge and information on certain interventions is often personal, and sometimes a leader's achievement. In the case of religious actors, the knowledge (of spiritual technologies) is basically transferred, though then sometimes reconstructed and interpreted according to local beliefs, experiences and local interpretation (e.g. Bible study). In these cases, pastors play the role of masters. They normally receive new knowledge along with certain material resources from fellow churches outside the village, and redistribute received knowledge authoritatively. For the recognised actors and their spaces (see chapter 5), the local power structure settled by the governance system of U&C is a channel for resources, information and knowledge for the whole village. The chiefs and their board are normally in charge of the administration, distribution and correct use of resources and information.

Political parties or governmental agencies see technology as a mean of influencing the village and its productive systems through 'productive packages'. Once 'inside', projects are shaped, modified, adopted and or adapted to conditions and processes by local actors (e.g. members of the women's groups and the bean growers group). The issue of coming together to implement joint projects

allowed these groups to shape a particular technology but at the same time to create their own space for collective action.

Role of interveners

In the case of California, the part played by interveners was clearer than in El Oro. Despite not being physical located these external agents are very present in the village, and enjoy considerable local influence. For instance both women's working groups often talked about the importance of the support received from the political parties. The women also revealed the influence of political party interests by having a certain dependence on them. Guadalupe (39) said: *'... for us it is very important to see "x" candidate (PRI or PRD) seated in the municipal chair. It implies flexible support for our projects'*.

Luvia (33) stated: *'If our candidate does not win the next elections, resources and other benefits for our group will be less than now or definitely stop'*. In this way, women seem to be influenced, and represent captive votes. This mechanism is a good strategy for political parties to influence village political life, not only in California but in several villages in the *Sierra*, municipalities and regions. Bourdieu (1985) terms the phenomenon the *political field* of spaces for social action.

In the case of religion something similar happened, but the effects are more hidden. Some villagers, especially ones with indigenous roots, once they felt really confident to talk, revealed their close attachment to religious beliefs. This was the case of Belisario (56) and Ciesar (40). They found it hard to hide their religious influences and by the end of some interviews made strong references to the Bible in a dogmatic manner. At home, they normally follow and behave according to what they take to be Biblical prescriptions. Both consider the Bible a practical guide for personal life. The extent to which an externally induced dogmatism has penetrated to the core of village power processes is hard to assess. The possibility needs to be borne in mind as a point of reference. A question is whether U&C where a majority of its practitioners are Bible-guided Christians the same as U&C in a situation where the majority have different or no dogmatically-expressed beliefs is worth posing for future work, though we have no means of answering it here.

On the other hand, when asking directly to the people about the importance of external agents for supporting non-recognised actors, they normally took the view that external actors and outsiders in general are mainly sources of training, resources and other support needed for the local action to be empowered. They publicly accepted that local spaces are being created and shaped by the actions taken in accordance to local ideas about how personal and village development needs to be achieved. Meanwhile, certain external actors like political parties or churches act as if they are able deliberately to influence in some way or other peoples' ideologies and village processes. In this battle of local versus external instrumentalities new and less well perceived social attitudes are being formed and new spaces for local as well as regional action are taking shape. The best evidence for this is perhaps the case of women's groups, where there can be no denying the instrumentalisation of political power attempted by the parties, but equally it is clear that village women are gaining skills and confidence to act more independently in the public arena.

Finally, in California as well as in El Oro, it is worth remarking that non-recognised actors do not seem to be struggle against the local power structure of the U&C. A certain kind of parallelism and accommodation has emerged. This avoids any apparent confrontation with the local structure. But an ultimate danger is that the system of U&C eventually becomes a beached whale, with the sea drained around it. The lack of apparent tension and conflict may not be a good sign for future local autonomy and self reliance, especially in a rural world dominated by high levels of out-migration for which non-recognised actors may be quietly laying the mental infrastructure.

4) General considerations

This parallelism is not the entire story; however, the presence of non-recognised actors in California does have some implications for the system of U&C. In the cases of women's working groups, the bean growers and the bus committee these are definitely alternative actors, having created spaces of action without any direct participation by village decision making processes. In the particular case of the women they have started to develop interesting public ideas on how to move

development forward in relation to productive alternatives and with external support. This has forced the VA to pay attention.

Women's power is manifested through collective actions conducted to bring benefits to their households and provide food, health and better education for their children. Men are reluctant to take over family management in these respects, but cannot avoid being interested in what is happening. Women mentioned that from the very beginning their meetings were looked on suspiciously by the men. Men expressed in an ironic manner that women seemed to be rebelling in mass.

Rubinoy (28) said: '*in the beginning it was very strange because our women were asking us for permission to meet [among] themselves. When they were asked what they wanted to talk about, they could not give a clear answer'.*

Manuel Gómez (38) - Celia's husband – added: *'…My wife just replied me they wanted to chat about women's problems. Then, as soon as we accepted, they started working very hard with small things, [and] later on with more productive projects and now they really bring money to our households'*.

Thus, women have demonstrated strong convictions and responsibility and joint commitments. Through the effectiveness of what they have achieved they have gained some perhaps reluctant social sympathy from their husbands. Two of them who spoke anonymously mentioned: '*you know what?, a part of our hard work in the group, we also have an infallible power that our men can not resist or dealt with; it is a power exercised in our intimate moments, in our beds when among other things we spend time talking'. 'In that particular moment, we can convince them of almost anything'.*

Beyond this sexist perception, the change is more profound. Women mentioned that since 2004 or so, some of them had individually begun actively to participate in decision-making in the village. Apart from having their own responsibilities within their groups, some of them now participate in the activities of the recognised actors. Some have joined different committees, like the education, health and water. Here, like in El Oro, they have not yet been appointed leaders of such committees, nor to any important representative position on the bigger executive committees (authorities). Nevertheless, the fact that men have started to accept women's presence in the political sphere seems to represent an important change in local contexts.

One of the drivers of this change is out-migration, since this sets local problems for both recognised and non-recognised actors. In California about 80 % of the adults have experienced some form of temporary emigration to the U.S.A. Nowadays about 30 % of the villagers have lived a substantial period of their life abroad and about 5 % have permanently settled in the U.S.A. The impact of national and global policies such as free trade apparently drives migration as a poverty escape strategy. In this case migration has also contributed to the social fragmentation of the local spaces, and the disintegration of some working groups or families, as seen in the women's case, but also in men's organisations.

In the case of men performing duties at the local committees, as soon as they emigrate they enter into a dilemma and the remaining people need to cope with this. Nowadays, men abroad started to ask or even pay someone to perform their duties within the *cargos* but sometimes they appoint their wives to play their roles. Locally this is not well regarded since some duties are considered high risk activities for women, such as being on the oversight council or serving as police. The concept 'police woman' does not exist in the local organisational language, so that where a woman performs such duty she is (clumsily) called: *'the policeman … represented by the wife…'.* The role of leaders of committees must be performed only by the appointed person.

The fact is that out-migration is enabling women (left behind) to find an opportunity to occupy positions within the U&C structure. Women are rather quickly beginning to climb the ladder, even if in the first instances this is more because of the lack of men to perform their duties rather than for

the real recognition of women's capacities. But as the case of women's groups shows, male attitudes more through *de facto* recognition of competence than through argument around principles of gender equality.

This local phenomenon of women's *de facto* emancipation as men continue to migrate signifies the possibility of rapid change. The fact is that the U&C seems to be evolving in response to the dynamics of social change. New types of power relations incorporating women at the highest levels may be anticipated. This may be one of the reasons why in both California and El Oro there is no overt sign of non-recognised actors struggling against the local power structure represented by the U&C. Everyone senses change is about to happen.

6.3 Final remarks

Power and social spaces for collective action

The history of both villages has been elaborated through complex social processes and considerable conflict. However, both have a similar history in terms of constituting local organisations and institutions, power exercises and relations. Both villages share the local governance system of U&C. However, El Oro seemed to present a more traditional and rigid system practised over almost a century. California presents an apparently more progressive and mixed manner of governance because of its villagers' diverse cultures and origins. Nevertheless current actions taken by both recognised and non-recognised actors in both villages are definitely shaping local life, including the human patterns and development processes of both villages. These actors and the spaces in which they operate are very diverse, ranging political to productive, from environmental to religious, and play important roles in social cohesion and local visions on development. On superficial acquaintance it seems that rural governance in Profound Mexico is a matter of traditional authority and modern institutions developing along parallel tracks, much as envisaged by the British colonial legislator, Lord Lugard, in his book the *Dual Mandate* (Lugard 1965). But closer examination reveals profound change, driven by migration and globalisation. The system of U&C is versatile and adaptive because it represents a profound commitment by local people to their own autonomy. There is no overt struggle between traditional and modernity apparent at the local level, because rapid change is happening in any case. From tracing the case of non-recognised actors in the two villages, and following the issue of gender more closely, it can be anticipated that women will rapidly attain *de facto* greater emancipation within the rural power structure, and transform the system of U&C from within. Local names will then have to be found for 'female police'.

Returning to the theoretical level, concerning participation, this implies that perceptions, actions and power exercises go beyond those postulated by Gaventa (2004) in relation to the current location and fixed status of power sources and their manifestations. The spatial connotation of power (exercises, relations and manifestations) should be looked at from a more dynamic perspective, by including temporality of actions taken, roles played and positions occupied by village agents within a given space. Power exercises and relations of today may be severally influenced by the actions taken by new agents, and tomorrow's spaces, relations and manifestations of power may be totally different.

Here we have analysed how actors in both villages are gaining important domains within the complex social configuration and dynamics of the case-study villages. This is not only through actions taken but because of the combination of large-scale factors and phenomena such as out-migration and external interventions implemented. However, equally important seems to be the fact that villagers themselves are very present in these processes and giving recognition to their own actions and efforts in addressing local concerns. Women will only transform U&C from within, for example, if they are conscious of their own actions in strategising to adapt to a changing global milieu. Here, concepts related to power like empowerment, emancipation, scaling-up and development take on stronger connotations and implications. How this happens is a topic discussed in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 7

GOVERNANCE, POWER AND NATURAL RESOURCES:
Clash of ruling frameworks and rise of individual and collective dilemmas in small villages of Southern Mexico

Abstract

This chapter continues to explore and analyse the social *back stage* aspects of the small villages studied. The chapter particularly addresses individual actions and behaviour in relation to use of local natural resources. The present analysis uses the two main governance systems of rural Mexico - as described in chapter four - as its main entry points. This is done in order to understand how these ruling mechanisms – ostensibly aimed at ensuring social order – also serve as resources in the decision-making of a range of local actors. Local conflicts of interests and dilemmas are highlighted in the case studies here presented. Bottlenecks, confrontations and consequences for individuals, village social life and local development are pointed out. Furthermore, an attempt is made to unwrap some of the reasons of why certain management practices and local sanctions constitute sensitive issues, most of the time locally hidden. By using the concepts of force fields, as proposed by Nuijten (2003 & 2005), and *front-and-back* social stages (Murphy 1981 & 1990, following Goffman 1959 & 1966), the analysis of cases is linked to earlier discussions of political power perspectives. The methods used were participatory workshops and semi-structured interviews. Local verbal expressions, personal statements and certain observed patterns of social behaviour are also taken into consideration as evidence.

7.1 Introduction

As seen in chapter four, the Mexican villages studied are supposed to be ruled under two parallel governance systems - the national jurisprudential framework composed of laws and rules, as backed by the constitution, and the system of *usos y costumbres,* related to local traditions of village self-regulation, justice management and administration of natural resources.

On the one hand, the nation-wide jurisprudential system for governance comprises numerous federal laws applicable to every Mexican administrative level: states, municipalities and small villages. It is a top- down system imposing a legal framework of *'should be'* laws. Federal laws to a large extent define the rules at various levels of the Mexican society, but are basically designed at the top of the Mexican governmental system, far from the local realities. As a consequence, they are often not well-tuned to local situations. There are, for example, multiple examples of environmental or rural development laws that conflict with local strategies of resource exploitation endorsed by the customary local governance system practised by thousand of villages. While these federal-level formulated laws are designed to protect, preserve, prohibit and even punish every 'mal-use' of resources, they are often a source of conflict at local level (Concheiro y Grajales 2005, Crespo 2000, Leff and Carabias 1993, Richards 1997).

On the other hand, 'customary' villages also have the right to use and administer the natural resources present in their territories. For the villages - mostly populated by indigenes – natural resources are often regarded as common assets. It is one of the purposes of the system of *usos y costumbres* (U&C) to regulate common resources such as forest, soil and water. As seen in chapter four, U&C is a system of self-governance based on local values and usage, sanctioned by tradition. It also represents a mechanism around which people organise their expressions of collectivity, their use of natural resources, and their political life and decision making processes. The fact that village entities have been recognised by the Mexican Constitution as users of natural resources entitles village communities to self-regulation up to a point (Cámara de Diputados 2006, INI 2001). Village rights in land, water, forest and wildlife are clearly explicit in Article 27. This clause of the constitution recognises villages as rightful social entities in regard to the use, management and regulation of natural resources within the territories each village encompasses (Cámara de Diputados 2006, INI 2001, SEGOB 2004).

It is thus somewhat paradoxical that the U&C system, as practised by thousands of villages, it is not actually recognised within the Mexican Constitution, even though practised for more than 500 years. U&C is only tolerated by the state and its power structures[50] and does not receive any official validation within national or regional laws, with the exception of the Constitution of Oaxaca state, which includes U&C in the articles 25, 29 and 98[51] (SEGOB, 2004). In practice, the U&C system gives rights to all who participate actively in the social life of a village, provided they

[50] Principles and fundamentals are covered in the 2nd article of the Mexican Constitution which among other things states that indigenous people and all the rural population in general are entitled to organise themselves, rule their lives, manifest their traditions, and carry out other necessary practices to give them autonomy in their social, economic, political and cultural life *but* always framed within the precepts of the constitution.

[51] This recognition was made during the reforms to the local constitution in 1997. There are 418 municipalities in the Oaxaca State ruled under this system (out of 570). However, the Mexican Constitution does not explicitly recognise U&C as a mode of governance.

respect the rules and perform their civic duties adequately. The rights implied by village participation basically concern participation in village political life, and (perhaps most importantly) in village institutions through which access to local natural resources and services is granted.

The fact is that small villages exhibit a *practical jurisprudence* constituting the back-bone of local political life. This practical jurisprudence includes selection of authorities and specific modalities for the use and administration of natural resources, including the role of religion and associated festivities in dealing with local conflicts and coping with interventions. For researchers like Blas (2007) and Vallejo (2006), the presence of these strongly localised traditions, and the part played by the villagers in their enactment, places many small villages outside the federal and state legislative system. But this fails to take full account of the complexity of the local-national political field within which villages are immersed (Warman 1979 & 2001, Lombardo-Toledano 1973, Rivera-Salgado 2005). Furthermore, Mexican villages cannot be readily represented by a simple portrait, mainly because of the huge cultural diversity and the many specific social manifestations that emerge from the contexts and practices in which they are immersed.

The gap in the top-down Mexican legislative system, identified above, leaves ample space to municipalities and villages to pursue their own regulatory strategies and implement locally devised rules for the management of land and other resources. One could even claim that this plethora of local rules and strategies reflects the absence of good communication and full integration into the national system. As a result, in many villages, the governance of resources reflects the presence of parallel systems in which interaction is often unpredictable.

It is to bring out some of this unpredictable complexity that this chapter will consider concrete evidence concerning contradictions, local dilemmas, conflicts and problems apparently rooted in the clash of ruling systems. Here, an attempt will be made to describe how villagers deal with both ruling frameworks in regard to use of local natural resources. In analysing the two case study villages stress will be placed both on *front* (public) and *back* (hidden) stage social action, as proposed by Murphy (1981 & 1990, cf. Silverman 1965 and Wilson 1990), and on the utility of the concept of force fields (Nuijten 2003 & 2005). Field work was undertaken in 2003-2005 using ethnographic methods (see chapter 2 and Appendix 2 for details on the semi-structured interviews). The chapter particularly addresses research question three in relation to the implications of village individual and collective action on the use of natural resources.

7.2 Findings: two case studies

Case A: El Oro, Oaxaca State

During the participatory workshops in El Oro, participants talked openly about certain problems in the village. They mentioned low agricultural productivity, lack of economic opportunities and difficulties over water supply as the main local problems. However, once the researcher-facilitators asked about possible causes of the problems, participants clammed up and ceased communicating. For instance, when the issue of the best way to manage the forest was mentioned, the workshop facilitator had to make use of illustrative games and integration dynamics in order to keep them participating. However, villagers tried to turn the dynamics towards village history when they felt discussions were leading to certain sensitive points. The message was clear, in public the villagers were trying to disguise certain issues, as seems normal in many other villages, to judge by the African cases described by Murphy (1981 & 1990). Therefore, alternative methods and tools to probe hidden or secret information were necessary.

The fact is that during another workshop on causes of the declining fertility of soils, Adolfo (54) commented: *'Yes, we no longer have good soils to continue producing but we also need more water to irrigate our vegetables in the home gardens. We have less water than other years, our brooks are getting dry and the rainy season is shorter. Since we do not have enough water for production we have to migrate and work outside the village more often'.*

When the workshop facilitator raised a question for the rest of the participants in relation to causes, Adolfo himself replied: *'We should better discuss our history from the village foundation onward, and we will to get to know more and find the reason, probably we have settled in the*

wrong place… what do the other people say?'. There followed a total silence, for more than three minutes, during which time people turned their heads to look at each other. This attitude made the workshop facilitators think there was local tension in relation to talking in public about the environmental causes of the village's problems.

Sarahí (31) is a single mother and the person who prepared our meals during our stays in the village. She has a little place to sell food and sodas. There, she normally supplies food for the *topiles* (policemen) and for visitors. Since her place is a public space, there were some opportunities to approach people informally and chat to them later on. She also became an important key informant.

Once, while having dinner, Sarahí nervously asked if, during the workshop, the authorities had mentioned something about the sanction they had decided to impose regarding misuse of the forest. The research team was surprised because nothing had been mentioned about that. She also added: '*the authorities got a fine due to other people's fault'.* Despite our insistence that she might talk more about it, she refused. She seemed to be very afraid and asked us to keep that information secret. Next day, back in the workshop, one of the participants, Tito (33), spontaneously brought the issue out: *'Yes, we have all those problems in the village, but to me, the most important is the economic sanction we received from the government. I think we must not pay because it was not our fault'…*He added: '*… but I think our lack of projects depends on the fact that the municipality and the government officers are watching us closely and at the same time blocking our access to federal support'*.

Apparently, a penalty was imposed on the village due to illegal extraction of wood, as sanctioned by the federal law on forest management. This fine provided an entry point for looking deeper into the village problems through alternative research methods; but it was also the first and the last time any person talked about the issue in public. In the workshops thereafter Tito never brought the issue out again. Sometimes, while giving his opinion, some people watched him carefully, as if they were waiting for the moment in which he might break an internal agreement.

Tito[52] was the only person who dared to raise in public the possible causes of a local problem. Nevertheless, the statement was clear: there was something hidden regarding a fine imposed in relation to forest management. Sarahí and Tito were thus our initial key informants in accessing the *back stage* of village politics. Sarahí signalled 'there is something more happening' and Tito was brave enough to bring it out in public. During the following workshops, consciously or not, people were trying to avoid talking about this sort of problem.

In private and far from other people, Tito was willing to talk more on the matter. He provided valuable information, but also names about other possible informants open to talk. He even suggested Sarahí. Because according to him, she could overhear many conversations in her place and would probably have more information.

Later, the research-facilitators interviewed another eleven people in the village in addition to Tito and Sarahí, in order to probe the hidden aspects of El Oro. However, only seven were willing to talk about the federal sanction and its details. The seven interviewed talked under the condition of anonymity because of possible actions that might be taken against them.

[52] It was strange that Tito brought the issue out because he is the son of one of the oldest leaders in the village – the one who apparently holds a hidden type of power (see previous chapter). His father is Tito Lopez Sr., and has some unclear relation to an illegal wood buyer locally called 'the Spanish man'. The reason why Tito talked, and therefore affected somehow his own father, was never clear. However, there are two assumptions. The first is that Tito is not in direct line to inherit his father's status and power, privileges, etc. This will be his oldest bother Alabán. The second assumption has to do with local leaderships. In several interactions with Tito, he showed himself to be very committed to the village, with high potential to become an effective leader.

Bottlenecks and perceptions in the village

The forest: legal implications, local rules and conflicts of interests

The state of Oaxaca and the municipality of Santo Domingo Nuxaá are, by law, in charge of the administration of the natural resources in their territory (Art. 2nd, 27 and 73 of the Mexican Constitution). This means that El Oro also depends on the management decisions made by the municipal council for common goods (*Concejo Municipal de Bienes Comunales*). However, by the Mexican Constitution (also articles 2nd, 27, 73 and 123) and associated laws[53], El Oro also has the right to decide internally who, how and when to use the resources, as stated in constitutional article 27. Jurisprudentially, the constitution represents the last word but does not clearly indicate the limits on each of the stakeholders. Therefore, the constitution and laws can easily be misinterpreted, or used according to each party's interests and interpretation, creating a force field, and leading to local conflicts, as suggested by Bourdieu (1985), Nuijten (2003 & 2005). However, villagers do not know details about this external legal framework, and in daily life they continue to apply their own norms and rules.

Nevertheless, to avoid conflicts between village and the municipality the parties seem to use a pragmatic strategy. They respect each other's autonomy to a certain degree. However, the municipality and the village have different ways to use, manage, distribute or offer concessions on their forests. The fact is that not all municipalities or villages respect such agreements, and therefore conflicts or tensions are easily created. Mexico is full of stories like this.

Furthermore, administratively - as seen in chapter four - the municipalities are in charge of delivering federal resources through specific programmes and projects to the villages under their territorial demarcation. This represents a potential 'hidden political weapon' in terms of power to push villages into accepting municipal interests. At the same time, villages can block and/or interfere in municipal and federal projects by mobilising their population against municipal authorities, federal programmes and projects implemented in their territories and beyond.

The problem – getting at the truth

Apparently, there is an externally-related factor in the problem concerning the forest in El Oro. This is the way the political and economic interests at municipality level interact with local business interests (and one businessman in particular). This affects relations between municipality and village, and demands caution in the way El Oro approaches the municipality in regard to its own local demands or concerns. According to the people interviewed, the history is as follows: the municipality of Nuxaá has been trying to make more decisions than allowed, specifically in relation to the use of the 4,500-5,000 ha of forest in El Oro. Informants said the current municipal authority of Nuxaá wants to take advantage of its political position and federal competence.

The original forest of Nuxaá was composed of 14,500 ha, excluding El Oro's forest. However, Nuxaá has overexploited its forest over the last century and cannot satisfy local commercial demands for wood. Environmental federal law, Nuxaá requires to keep intact - for conservation purposes – an additional 800 ha. High demand for timber and charcoal in Nuxaá then exerts pressure over El Oro's forest.

Villagers believe that the current high demand is focused by the role of an external partner. According to them, the municipal authorities negotiate, 'undersell' and concession Nuxaá's forest resources to a 'Spanish man'. This individual, they said, has been running a large company to extract wood from villages throughout Oaxaca, Chiapas and Guerrero States. The Spanish man has also been pushing Nuxaá authorities to use their political power, and force the El Oro authorities to make a deal with him.

Informants consistently repeated that the 'Spanish man' has been trying to 'buy consciousness' from the authorities, at both municipal and village levels. *'He has also been getting our wood illegally and for lower prices than in 1982 or 1983. He has cheated on some individuals and used*

[53] These include the Sustainable Forest Management law, the Agrarian law, Sustainable Rural Development law, and the General Law for Ecological Equilibrium and Environment Protection, among others.

his money and political connections to protect himself', one anonymous informant said. However, some villagers have also been trying to convince the rest to negotiate with 'the Spaniard'. They have raised the issue in the monthly meetings of the VA and have at times used the argument of a possible sawmill in the village as a source of jobs. So far, those villagers have failed because the village's collective decision has been in favour of retaining freedom over their own use of the forest. Nevertheless, apparently some villagers have individually negotiated deals amounting to illegal extraction. Among villagers mentioned to be involved in such practices Tito López López Sr. (68) and Aarón López Sánchez (75) are two of the oldest persons and former leaders of the village.

Villagers said that since the early 1980's Nuxaá started to put pressure on village authorities (MABC) to persuade the VA to accept 'the Spaniard's' propositions, basically the setting up of a sawmill in El Oro. The communal area and other surrounding villages would be the source of tree supply. Many villagers were against the idea, mainly because they have developed a certain environmental awareness since the intervention of the NGO *AMEXTRA,* now *Misión Integral*. In addition, some villagers do not like people being 'bought' or manipulated into a hidden deal solely because of money reasons. They say these people have been opportunistically taking advantage of the situation. According to them, history has repeated itself for more than twenty years already, which may indicate a kind of obsession on the part of the municipal authorities of Nuxaá, but also some kind of entrenched social resistance by villagers. Probably other conflicts are involved in this troubled relationship between the municipality and El Oro over timber resources. Perhaps they have to do with historical religious issues involved in the founding of El Oro. But further information on this was not uncovered during the research period.

According to the people interviewed, things took a turn for the worse when, in 1998, federal inspectors from the national agency for the environment protection (PROFEPA) came together with the municipal *Concejo Municipal de Bienes Comunales* of Nuxaá to inform villagers about a federal economic sanction to be imposed due to forest mis-management. The fine was about US$ 5,000. It was some weeks later when the local authorities of El Oro got to know more about the issues behind the sanction.

Since the village does not have resources to pay lawyers, and because of the confidence the agency enjoys in matters related to forestry, facilitators from *Misión Integral* were asked to attend the inquiry in Oaxaca City. Some lawyers provided copies of laws related to the use and management of forests. The laws on Ecological Equilibrium and the Environment Protection and Sustainable Development of Forests were studied by the facilitators of *Misión Integral*. Later, the agency gave detailed explanations and spelled out the implications of both laws to the villagers. It was at this point that El Oro villagers realised two important things.

First, the law obliges the municipality to ensure the sustainable management of the forests under its entire geographical jurisdiction. Second, the sanctions must only be imposed when a person or group is apprehended while committing an infraction. Therefore, it was first demanded that the municipality name the villagers who were caught in the action in question, because the laws are clear in that respect. Among other things, articles 170 to 175 of the law on ecological equilibrium and environment protection and articles 160 to 167 of the law on sustainable development of forests (based on the 20 and 21 of the Mexican Constitution) state that in order to impose fines, forest primary goods (wood) must be confiscated from people flagrantly engaged in the transgressive act[54].

Federal inspectors and municipal officers showed pictures of people downing trees in the urban area designated for public use in El Oro, but none from the communal forest. Villagers believe the penalty was illegal and a juridical invention. First, the photos were made in a place where the village was installing a water supply. Second, trees were cut to do the work and not extracted for

[54] See the laws for the Ecological Equilibrium and Environment Protection at: http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/leyinfo/doc/148.doc and for Sustainable Forest Development at: http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/leyinfo/pdf/259.pdf (accessed on 15th May 2007).

commercial sale. According to them, the trees are allowed to be cut according to local rules, and the plan to do so was locally approved that year by the VA. Informants agreed that villagers were not breaking any rule at all. However, inspectors and municipal agents argued that people from El Oro broke the law and must pay. Officers accused villagers without real proof, and then implicated the three persons who happened to be the strongest opponents of the idea of a sawmill. One of them was Tito.

The next implications for the village were the rejection of proposals to access federal funds managed by the municipality. That implied the denial of federal support (in cash or material terms) for forest or agriculture related projects administered by municipal officers. Villagers also commented that they had seen reduced funds coming from the State of Oaxaca supposed to be used for different local projects. Besides, the reputation of the village went down in the *Mixteca* Region and the state in general, with certain economic and environmental implications. Timber buyers were recommended to avoid any contact with El Oro. This situation caused some local reactions from villagers, who then deliberately and openly abused wood extraction rules in acts of civil disobedience. The timber was sold in the village to a person with a furniture factory in Oaxaca City. According to local versions, this was done just to remind the officers and municipal authorities that the villagers can do what they want on their territory. Municipal and federal agents were powerless to act. The fact is that in El Oro the forest had begun to take on the role of shock absorber of a wider conflict over sovereignty, and its regeneration capacity was reduced by the actions taken. The relevance and importance of the forest nursery founded in 2000 now increased.

In relation to the fine and the accusations against three villagers, the locals were even more convinced that this intervention was probably supported by bribes from the 'Spanish man' in the hope of provoking an internal division of people in El Oro. According to one of the informants*: 'the situation could allow him to act in the middle of an internal conflict and raise again the idea on the sawmill'*. However, the threat against the villagers remains real, since illegal wood extraction is a federal criminal act punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment. Tito and the other two can still be taken to jail. The NGO, *Misión Integral,* helped them to gain temporary legal protection against possible arrest. In 2003, new municipal officers offered the option to pay the fine instead of jail, promising that the charges would be changed or dropped if opinion swung towards the establishment of a sawmill in El Oro. At the time of writing, the three have refused all offers from municipal officers and the El Oro authorities remain highly sympathetic to and supportive of the accused.

Those we interviewed recognised Tito's capacities and his encouragement to fight against the accusation levelled at all three accused. According to these accounts, he went on his own to the main public library in Oaxaca City and read all the possible laws just in order to make notes and learn about his rights. This would allow him to take on the defence of all three if and when it might prove necessary. His father, however, refused to give any interview to the research team members.

The other side of the picture

The complexity of the conflict increases when considering the status of the forest and its local management strategies. On the one hand, all villagers are allowed to extract wood according to an annual collective agreement that the local authorities approve, as endorsed by the VA every year. According to the terms of this agreement, who extracts wood and how is decided, whether for own use or commercial reasons. The trees are mainly used for timber or to make charcoal. The commercialisation of timber and charcoal is normally done in Oaxaca City, Nuxaá or Nochixtlán. In the period 2003-2005 the maximum number of trees allowed per *comunero* with valid rights was up to 15 trees per month. The areas where trees can be cut are identified by the MABC committee. The identification is made on the basis of the forest extraction history, but it does not take into account technical management issues. Villagers said that 25 years ago the number of trees allocated to each family was based on needs (assuming eight members per average family). They could not say how many trees were actually allowed to be cut. At that time, some locals also started to extract more than needed. This forced the authorities and the VA to change the rules. It was at this time that some families manifestly became wealthier than others, but the amount of water coming through the brooks started to diminish. Later on, 20 trees per month were allowed,

but since 2002 - due to water problems – the number was reduced to only 15. It was anyhow alleged that some villagers 'steal trees' from unutilised areas – these are normally the areas ready to be used the next year. Sarahí was explicit: *'Those people [stealers] normally cover themselves by the darkness of night and extract the wood in complicity with buyers. They normally do not act alone'*.

Nowadays, many villagers complain in private that 15 trees are not enough to sustain their families and therefore they are forced to migrate to gain income outside the village. Some villagers never come back, settling permanently in, e.g., Mexico City, the boundary cities in the North, or the U.S.A.

In El Oro, technical studies on the forest have never been conducted and villagers have no information on its carrying capacity. Compared with 25 years ago, the local population has doubled and the pressure on the forest has increased accordingly. However, villagers seem to lack more precise views on the dynamics of forest change.

When talking individually and in private to some of them about local problems, it was agreed that water availability, soil degradation and forest mass reduction were the most important issues. Some causes were recognised to be rooted locally, but with external forces playing an important role. Some people also said that the U&C system is no longer working as might have been hoped since villagers can no longer meet their basic needs from the subsistence resource base. They strongly criticise the passive attitude taken by some current local authorities (2003-2005) in the face of these local resource problems. Finally they also agreed that they had been seriously affected by the conflict involving the municipality and 'the Spaniard'.

Diverse opinions and questions

Informants mentioned that Tito's father is a powerful person who has been manipulating people, leaders and certain authorities to some extent in order to defend his own interests. However, villagers in general never openly talk about him. Many times references to him were made in a very respectful and polite manner. The only person who dares talking about him was Tito, his second son. He also claimed that authorities did not act upon some of his father's manipulations. Apparently, years before, some villagers proposed to expel his father from the village, reflecting his actions in the past. However, the proposal was rejected by the VA. People in favour of Tito's father offered different reasons: that he is a progressive man with a good vision for the development of the village. Others agreed he has many contacts at state offices and private companies. Furthermore, he is the oldest grandson of one of the founder's of the village. He has also occupied all the *cargos* at the U&C. These historical, political and cultural aspects seem to make him highly respected in the village, and almost being untouchable. Thus people prefer to allow the man *'do his thing,'* according to the son, Tito.

One of the oldest informants in El Oro mentioned, between laughs, *'he is like me, too old to act more than we did already. What he really wants is just to get the attention of people and give an idea of [the] power around him; hopefully, like me, he will leave this life soon'.*

Tito added: *'One of our main problems in El Oro is that our current authorities do not take the U&C seriously. In order to properly function, the internal norms must be applied without exceptions…' 'The U&C provides those people with a certain power that they actually use for their own personal interests. They even sometimes try to control the VA before or during our meetings'…*

Abel (42) said: *'The authorities give too much room for manoeuvre to the oldest leaders, rather than just giving them a voice to advise us. We should not let them affect us as they do; they have the same rights as we have. This means that something is going wrong with the equality of our norms'.*

Sarahí spoke: *'The system [U&C] may be our only remnant of cultural tradition, but what should we think when sometimes our 'village' is making wrong decisions? By making wrong consultations they let themselves be convinced by external influences'.*

Tito turned to talk again about the problem with the federal institutions and the municipally. *'[On the contrary], so far the local authorities have not been able to address the village's problem regarding the federal sanction, which definitely has to do with a conspiracy by 'the Spaniard' and the municipality against us. As villagers, we have struggled for so long with marginalization while some others are continuing illegally to overexploit our forest. There has not been effective representation and defence of our interest to the outside. For instance, it is well known that PRONARE[55] has resources for projects on reforestation, not only for pines but fruit trees as well. But such resources have never arrived because Nuxaá decides which villages deserve them'.*

Nevertheless, talking to some youngsters in the village, it was obvious that they were aware of the situation, but at the same time unsure about the future. They accepted the idea of the possible extinction of the forest. This idea has grown over time and some young villagers mentioned that *'the forest nursery is not monitoring the care given to the trees properly'.* They also said: *'we know in advance that the forest will decline up to some point and then we will be forced to leave the village; only the elderly will probably remain'.* When they were asked why they do not act in order to keep the forest in good condition, one of them replied*: 'You know what? We are too young; the older ones do not listen to us at all. At this moment we just aspire to be "topiles'' [policemen]. At this moment, we are only allowed to provide our service to the village and that is it'.*

Indeed, most of above arguments were related to the persons in charge of the Executive Committee of the village (MABC) and their capacities, rather than the system itself. Despite the fact that the system has been socially constructed, the youngsters were the only ones who criticised the way it works and the roles played by some villagers in it. In the version of the young a wish is expressed to change the direction of local governance and leadership. This could be considered part of the process of transformation in which the villagers, their structures, and local dynamics, will become engaged in coming years.

Escape strategies

In order to face local difficulties, three main strategies were identified in the village: migration, illegal wood extraction, and participation in local projects.

Migration

Out-migration (national and international) has played an important role for decades, but especially in the *Mixteca* region. Since villagers do not have many options locally, so they have sought for alternative strategies outside. Some have migrated temporarily to different cities in Mexico or abroad (mainly to Canada and the U.S.A.), where they have spent various periods ranging from a few months up to two or three years. This emigration is often temporary, because as soon as they are appointed to a duty by the VA they are obliged to come back and perform it[56].

When they were asked about reasons to emigrate, Abelardo (47) mentioned: '*Sometimes we feel like we cannot do so much for our future in the village because we need to satisfy our daily needs'.* Israel (64) explained: *'We must attend our family needs in the short term, whatever is coming later will be attended when it happens'.*

Teenagers also mentioned about their dreams of living in a city elsewhere, where better things are waiting to be discovered. Thus, some are anxiously waiting for the moment to finish the elementary school and migrate to find a job. They said they want to work until they are appointed for a *cargo*. Thus migration has become an escape strategy locally assimilated.

Illegal wood extraction

Another strategy has been illegal involvement in wood extraction. Timber is sold underground and provides extra income. Only a few interviewed replied to the questions related to this issue: *'You*

[55] PRONARE: *Programa Nacional de Reforestación* (National Programme for Reforestation) depending on the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT).
[56] According to the U&C system, a man has to fulfil his appointed duties; otherwise he will lose rights gained in the village.

know? It is very difficult to answer but I will tell you what I have seen and even done myself. Please make sure not to mention my name because I do not want to get in trouble…. Once, I really needed some money, because the maize and wheat harvests were scarce, my family was in real hunger, and to make things worse, we also had a very sick son. I had to borrow some cash from someone but it was not enough, I did what is, obviously, illegal; and I am sure you know what I mean'. He clearly stated the situation was a way out to overcome extreme hunger and health problems.

Therefore it can be said that on the one hand, cutting trees illegally seems to be morally accepted when it is practiced by individuals under difficult situations or hard pressure. On the other hand it is socially condemned when the individual's act has been driven only by economic aspirations. The fact is that both types of situations have been placed beyond the local regulations concerning management of the commons. These facts are normally denied, since they are socially condemned in public because of the public moral code in the village. Thus it is not surprising that a part of the population continues taking the risks of cutting trees illegally. The forest will provide them with wood until symptoms of degradation and collapse force them to look for other strategies.

Apparently some villagers have also tried to forget the demands from and the legal status of the village by *'just letting the things happen'.* Adolfo commented: *'the government will get tired of waiting for our payment, we will never pay something we [as villagers] didn't deserve [referring to the fine] and [in any case], these are our resources and we decide what to do with them. We understand laws are important but they need to be applied in a fair way, for all, not for some. If they want to take us to jail, they will get us, and then, for sure they shall also get to know more about our people'.* This was definitely understood as a threat to the federal and municipal officers.

Participation in local projects

The last escape strategy identified seems to be involvement in local development projects launched by *Misión Integral's* facilitators. Villagers agreed that those projects have brought some moral and economic support, as well as teaching them about small investments. Blanca (48) mentioned that *'since the beginning with AMEXTRA [the previous name of the NGO] we thought of the possibilities to get something new for our families but for the village too. In the very beginning we thought it was just an initiative for men, but when they [the facilitators] asked us to get involved we were quite happy'.* Elda (44) added: *'At least we do not need to buy many vegetables anymore'.* Hortencia (37) commented that 'our *husbands have been learning more about the forest and the ways its use can be improved. Besides, we have started also to get fruits from our lands'.* Eufrosina (42) also mentioned: *'Now we cannot say we are rich but at least we are trying new things and most important, our voices are somehow counting'…* They also agree that new information and knowledge are being brought to the village. Tito clearly expressed the view that *'they [the NGO facilitators] are opening our eyes in many senses, but unfortunately our current authorities do not take them seriously'*.

Some of the NGO facilitators shared more information. Azalea (29) said: *'this has been a very difficult village but at the same time it is a very original one. They have many important aspects in their daily life that need to be brought out and reflected on in order to show and make them aware of their own potentialities. Unfortunately, it is a very long process with very small steps because of the limited financial support we have. That is actually not enough locally to operate all the projects needed…'* Carlos (30) added: *'there is also certain inertia manifested in mechanical facts and attitudes which need to be analysed by the people themselves; especially their feeling of inferiority and the paternalistic attitudes shown to them because of the fact of being indigenous. We try our best with them in the identification of new ideas and things that could be jointly done…'* Raul (32) also mentioned: *'El Oro is just only one of our target villages in this area; the others normally face similar problems'.*

The fact is that an important sector of the village approves the efforts made so far by the NGO facilitators. Apparently, more than technologies, the ideas and collective and reflective exercises

are very important in making the people aware of their potentialities and the way they can mobilise themselves to make better use of local resources and to face local problems.

Reasons to keep issues hidden: the *back stage* social region

During the long conversations with different informants, important insights emerged for keeping the conflicts hidden from foreigners. Most informants mentioned the feelings of guilt and shame they have. But some more were highlighted, as will now be discussed.

Cultural acceptance: or a matter of fatalism

Most interviewees felt they cannot do much about the conflict over wood logging since 'the Spaniard' has a lot of money and contacts. They said they feel intimidated and prefer to keep a distance between themselves and any powerful person. Someone said *'only God will punish him'*. Another person mentioned: *'this is the life God demanded us to live because he put us in this place'.* This feeling was deeply rooted in many villagers' minds, and also came out when talking about other problems. Some interviewees made statements like *'we only have one life and it is much easier to let the things happen because they can not be forced anyway. This is our destiny and the Lord commanded us to live like this'.*

Looking at the origins of this attitude, and cultural acceptance of such a situation, authors like Bonfil-Batalla (1990), Dalton (1990) and De Mente (1998) mention the role played by religion and landlordism in Mexico during the Spanish ascendancy (1510-1810). Religious teaching was seen as a way of making people passive and accepting of their poverty, on the basis of the belief that it was God's will and that acceptance would be rewarded with paradise after death.

According to Humboldt (1811 [1990]), writing about the *Mixteca* region, *Dominicos* (Dominican friars) were in charge of spreading and imposing the Catholicism among this ethnic group during the XVIth Century. The introduction of Catholicism, by force, came with the imposition of a package of values and associated behaviours (De León 2001). The result of this process was that indigenous populations and marginalised *mestizo* (mixed blood) groups came to accept the presence and control exercised by landlords and the Catholic church (Gurría 1973). Both landlords and church imposed a regime of punishment on the population as a way of reinforcing domination and control. The *Mixtecos* were also forced to do away with most of their traditions. Local religious ideas and language, in particular, were a target for the *Dominicos* and almost disappeared (Belmar 1905). Local populations suffered many injustices and were treated at times more as slaves than serfs (Ortíz and Ortíz 2001).

Historically, El Oro villagers moved out from a Catholic place, the municipality of Santo Domingo Nuxaá, and they looked for their own territory to settle. They associated Catholicism with many centuries of oppression and embraced the protestant religion as a sign of freedom. They were actually expelled from the municipality for their religious beliefs. Beneath the fines imposed for alleged infringements of forest conservation laws it is not hard to detect an older, deeper struggle between municipality and village rooted in religion and competing claims over religious discipline and freedom of worship.

Ignorance: or a lack of Information

Some villagers did not even realise the conflict they have been struggling with, in relation to the forest, is a legal, political and economic conflict. Because villagers do not know many details about the laws imposed over them they also felt themselves powerless, to the extent that they also fear arbitrary repercussions. Therefore some of the hidden talk in which they engaged only caused confusion and distortion of information.

Some of them think the reason why the authorities do not dare to openly discuss the matter in the monthly meetings of the VA is that *'our local authorities felt trapped between two walls'*. One informant said: '*they [the VA] seem to be afraid of acting against the economic interest of the "Spanish man" and the municipal authorities; they feel weak. At the same time, they are also afraid to discuss because it may open a local bottle of conflicts. They can easily make the people*

angry; they are actually afraid of causing a big mess locally and make the conflict worse, which could lead to external police interventions'.

Some of those interviewed mentioned that they would like to organise a meeting with a small group to discuss possible solutions but they are afraid of making the authorities feel disrespected. They are also afraid some people could make use of the situation and place the establishment of a sawmill back on the agenda.

On the issue of federal sanction many villagers do not understand how federal law can demand an amount of money they do not have, and even worse, for something that never happened. Somebody said: *'if the government does not provide us economic opportunities how is it possible that they are asking money from us? That is ridiculous'.* Another person added: *'we are just using our only resource, the forest, under our own logic and knowledge. The forest is the only one source of income we have here, and it is for surviving. We do not know about laws, we do not understand about external rules, we only know and understand we need to eat, we feel it [hunger] as something impossible to avoid'.*

They could easily identify a bottleneck when expressing the thought that *'the government throughout all its complicated laws wants money that we do not have. We do not have money because the government does not provide us better opportunities; we have to look for them outside our own villages, in the cities or even across the borders exposing our family security and our own lives'.*

Comments also made clear that villagers would like to know more about these laws, but especially the ones that might benefit them via legal actions to demand their rights. An informant mentioned *'we have seen on the TV that we as indigenous people have rights, but we do not even know which rights they are talking about. Besides, nobody comes here to the village and explains to us about the Mexican Constitution and laws regarding our own development. Outsiders normally come here to study us or to run projects that we do not know if they will stop next year or after election periods. The only ones coming frequently to the village over a long time are these guys from Misión Integral. They support our nursery and the small working groups and sometimes they bring us some information we need*'.

There were also less fatalist perceptions in the village on how to respond to local problems. One of the most progressive persons mentioned: *'maybe we as villagers should play more active roles, but we need more knowledge and information, local validation and recognition. Most important, we need the space for manoeuvre and not be limited by the mechanics of our traditional systems or the state's laws'.* Other villagers were even more active in thinking of how to prepare themselves for the coming years. Somebody said: *'we need and want to act, but we are not allowed to do so as village. Maybe we need to wait until more conscious people are ready to take over the powerful positions in our village; hopefully that will not be too late. In the meantime we can only work as small groups on specific productive concerns and projects with the guys of Misión Integral.*

Shyness: a joint social constructed feeling

Many women, youth and elderly were very shy to talk about problems in public, especially to outsiders. Women hardly talked to the males of the research team. *'In our culture it is seen as a weakness to talk openly in public about our problems',* a woman told to the females involved in the research team.

According to an old man *'[talking about problems in public] makes the village vulnerable because important information can be taken out of here or misunderstood'.* Jorge (58), the chief of the village, put it clearly - *'asking the people to talk openly would make them feel embarrassed'.* He meant that villagers are not used to talk in public so openly. Later on he further explained *'you had probably realised when you came along to the village for the first time; active participation in the workshops was a serious and difficult issue. No matter the strategy to invite the people to come, participate and talk, they always need to be personally asked. It is part of our culture'*.

This was also the experience of the research team during the first workshops. In the beginning it was difficult to make youth and women talk in the presence of elderly. The presence of foreigners prevents women from talking too. It led us to see how in El Oro, participation is both culturally and socially constructed, framed and codified in terms of gender, age and social status (power positions).

Shame or pride: the village's public image

There is also the wish of villagers to have an impeccable external image for the village. No matter the difference in personal beliefs and interests, they always stress this point. They like to please visitors while visiting them in their public buildings and homes. They try to show as much as possible all the good things of the village by making efforts to offer a good drink, a seat or a bed. Hospitality for them is a very high and shared value. An informant stressed *'it is for us very important to show all of you that we are nice people and make on you a very good impression of how we are, how we live'*. He also pointed out *'we would not like to hear somewhere out there that you felt our village is not a nice one. We would feel very ashamed. But despite all our problems we feel very proud of our village and of ourselves as well'*.

Indeed, the public image of the village was always a point of pride for the villagers. They liked to be referred to their origins, especially if they go to the city and someone asks them about their village. They like to hear that people positively recognise their home village. Once, when they were asked about how the conflict with the municipal and federal officers and 'the Spanish man' was affecting them personally, they replied automatically that there are rumours and lies being spread, affecting the village in general. One said *'it is so sad because some people in the city [Oaxaca] have started talking about our village as one with conflictive people. They are calling us thieves who steal the forest while this is totally false. Besides, they are hesitant to buy our charcoal and other products'.*

Brief analysis

El Oro has been shaped since its origins by the different daily practices and relationships among the villagers. However, the forest seems to be the main natural resource which integrates the village as a social and productive entity, but which also serves as one of the main causes of local conflicts and dilemmas affecting internal and external actors.

There are definitely certain force fields which emerge out of the local interactions and conflictive situations. These force fields are expanded or limited by the tensions generated by different situations and the means adopted to cope with these moments. No matter if those tensions are rooted in economic or political factors, force fields change according to people's actions and local social feelings, as suggested by Bourdieu (1985), Nuijten (2003 & 2005), and Nuijten *et. al.* (2005). Furthermore, quite a few of these force fields are internal to the village and the overall mosaic of local practices, mostly framed by the local governance system and the use and administration of local resources.

Nevertheless, there are also externally-related actions impinging on village life. For instance, the issue of economic interest in the forest is actually played out in a political force field which is not openly addressed by the village. Only some local people recognise it and have more or less got into that field in two manners. The first is by fighting against it and struggling with externally imposed conditions that affect social life in El Oro. The second is by aligning with the external interests focusing on the forest, thereby gaining economic benefits, but automatically also contributing to the internal conflicts as well.

In this case, political and economic power is exercised by the municipality and federal institutions but also through the influence enjoyed by 'the Spanish man', who seems to have enough money and connections to reach right to the top level of the government. This agrees with Lukes (1974) who holds a three-dimensional view of power that goes beyond the human interactions and relations between individuals. He highlights the potential and latent problems that could emerge through the functioning of social forces and institutional practices. According to him, but also Perrés (1995), these types of problems are not clearly manifested in the short term since they are somehow deliberately skipped. In this case, the manifestations are driven by the jurisprudential

resources tapped by official institutions and often exercised unconsciously through officers acting out an institutional requirement. El Oro has already struggled with and resisted the challenge imposed by externalities of power for more than 20 years; automatically this has created and affected certain internal aspects of social and political life. In short, it is the externalities that cause a good number of the local conflicts among the villagers.

The evidence showings certain villagers extracting wood illegally from the forest contributes to the longer-term radicalisation of the forest resource conflict. Even worse, water is no longer sufficient for domestic use, soils are infertile and difficult to improve, and the forest's potential is being drastically diminished despite local efforts at reforestation. These are some of the reasons for out-migration and disintegration of families. Some villagers also showed evidence of lost motivation and values such as solidarity and honesty. These issues are certainly turning into social problems somehow 'absorbed' by the forest issue, since the forest is the only substantial local resource capable of sustaining livelihoods beyond the peasant smallholding. Given that it appears reforestation efforts are less than the pressure for the forest to be cleared a common pool resource, from political and economic perspectives, is being put at permanent stake. Villagers do not want to air this issue publicly (it is too momentous and thus dangerous) so they prefer to keep it hidden from outsiders, and seek to struggle against malign forces in their own way.

However, certain social or cultural agreements are internally negotiated and then hidden in reflection of a desire for things to move naturally without much apparent action by inside actors. Thus, the public image or *front stage* of the village is maintained in as presentable a way as possible. Finally, federal legislation rules the overall national context, but is also placed over the village system as a rigid legal framework to be imposed at will by those who know how to use it as a resource. It is unfortunate, from the perspective of longer-term, sustainable development that this legal resource from above is interpreted and used according to the narrow requirements of certain economic or ecological interests. Conflict in El Oro manifests itself as disagreements among villagers, but in reality the varied issues and elements discussed above are what translate into conflict at the local level.

Case B: California, Chiapas State

Differently from El Oro, villagers in California talked openly about general problems[57] during the workshops conducted in order to delineate the village *front stage*. However, while searching for the *back stage*, villagers felt uncomfortable in talking about any 'legal situation'. It came out later that they also had a problem with the top-down governmental system, and one basically related to environmental law. The problem was a 'legal demand' to the village, in the form of a fine from PROFEPA[58]. During the workshops there were some people who insisted in discussing the issue, and some of them took strong positions regarding the cause of the problem.

On one occasion, a workshop became highly emotional, and certain aggressive reactions came out. For instance, Ciesar (40) stressed his position clearly: *'It is true, our legal demand is something that is affecting our cohabitation as villagers, but it is actually not a village [collective] problem, it is due to the actions of irresponsible people. The causes of the penalty have name and surnames and we know who they are…'* Then others reacted: *'that is not true; the penalty was imposed on the village, not on some specific persons. What you mention had happened when a person was caught, but he was imprisoned and also had to pay in cash; but that is already over'.*

[57] In California, during previous participatory workshops for the analysis of 'internal' problems, people identified similar problems as in El Oro. For the villagers, the most important local problem had to do with the lack of a better village organisation. They said they were not as well organised to attend to village problems as previously, because many original leaders are gone. They accept and recognise that they are well organised in small workings groups but not as a village anymore. They also mentioned that the low production levels and the lack of economic opportunities affected their lives. Here, they did not considered the water supply a problem since there are still many water sources. What they found a problem was the issue of temperature. They said that the climate has become warmer in recent years, which affects both their animals and plants. They related the presence of more pest and diseases in their fields to the rise in temperature.

[58] National Agency for the Environment Protection.

The discussion turned as sensitive as putting the pressure cooker on the fire. The research team therefore decided to avoid dealing with it in public. However, the issue was already opened up, and going deeper into was a delicate task, which demanded the use of alternative research methods and tools. Later, through the semi-structured interviews, more information was gathered and even more sensitive issues came out. However, some of the interviewees demanded anonymity; therefore some names are changed in the following account.

Francisco Zaraus (58) was very open and assertive in his comments. He was one of the first settlers in the village and very actively contributed to social integration in California. He was always open to talk, but only in his house or outside the village. Whenever he was approached on the streets or in public buildings, he never reacted openly, but became shy and serious. When this was inquired about, he pointed out *'I need to take care of what I say; I would not like to be misunderstood; the less I talk and do in public, the fewer problems I get involved in. I consider myself a very honest person, and I need to maintain that line. I always try to act according to what I think and feel. Because of that, I respect everyone in this village, especially from the time we settled this land, when we were at risk of losing our lives…'* He also manifested a very high degree of respect for the village authorities, the village and the people in general. He added *'I normally say what I know, but you better talk to the Comisariado Ejidal [Ejido Commissioner or village chief] because he may have better and fresher information'*. He also stressed *'the only thing I can tell you about the PROFEPA fine is that the fire we used on our fields jumped over to an area within the natural protected area and about 10 ha of jungle was burnt'*. He admitted he knew more, but preferred to talk after the researchers had had a conversation with the village chief. In addition, he also recommended other informants to be approached. He said *'you need to talk to Carlos and Belisario who were part of the initial settling committee to take this land. You should also approach the church leaders who actually play very important roles here'.*

Francisco, Carlos (62), Belisario (56), Dominga (59), Vicente (63), Rubinoy (28), Celia (31) and Eduardo (43) were later interviewed in relation to the sensitive issue of the PROFEPA fine. It was obvious that people were reluctant to talk, especially in the presence of other villagers.

Bottlenecks and village perceptions

Village constitution and federal natural protected area decree

The village was founded around 1975 by settlers from different places in the state of Chiapas. Many came from areas with social conflicts or affected by big hydroelectric national projects. They first met in Los Angeles, a nearby village, where they used to work as farm-labourers. There they heard about a rich man who abandoned part of his property in the area nearby. About 20 people met secretly for some months and planned an invasion of the abandoned ranch (see Table 2.2). According to a nation-wide tradition of land invasion in Mexico[59], they first set up plastic shelters under the trees to serve as houses. Then the place started to look like a social gathering or refugee camp. From 1975 to 1980 other families joined them. It was in 1981 that California began to take on the appearance of a formal village with the building of the first wooden houses. In the meantime, settlers cropped small areas surrounding the houses. The main crops were maize, beans, chilli peppers and pumpkins. At the same time, they also decided to use the 1,222 hectares of tropical forest belonging to the former ranch. Simultaneously, a commission of seven settlers regularly visited both the municipality of Villa Flores and the Ministry of the Agrarian Reform offices to officially negotiate the use of the land. They began to claim the right to be recognised as a communal village or *ejido* congregation. The owner of the former ranch took steps to legally defend his land.

The negotiations took almost 15 years until California was officially accepted as a village and the former owner indemnified by the Mexican government. California was then officially recognised as

[59] From the time of the big land reform undertaken between 1938 and 1941 in Mexico many people without land took it as a right to claim abandoned or non-used lands in the countryside, although those lands might belong to somebody. A popular expression, used by President Lázaro Cardenas, was *'la tierra es de quién la trabaja',* which literally means the land belongs to those who work it. As result, many villages were settled. Later on they became *ejidos* or communal villages. People in California said they were just using that 'right' when they planned their invasion.

a collective *ejido*. It was made such by a presidential decree in which the land was officially authorised to be used by the settlers under two forms of land tenure: individual and collective land holding. Individual lands were basically assigned for cropping and collective areas for livestock and forest activities[60]. The official decree and federal certificate of right holders were personally handled to the village chief by the president Ernesto Zedillo (in office from 1994 to 2000) in August 1995. The president initially took the opportunity to deliver some federal resources in a public act, since the *Sierra* region was declared a national disaster area after being badly affected by hurricane *Herminia*. However, villagers did not know that Zedillo – at the same time - had also approved a national protected area which also included most of the village territory. In fact on 5th June 1995 the president decreed the biosphere reserve of *La Sepultura.* California and other villages of the *Sierra* of Villa Flores and Villa Corzo municipalities, like Tres Picos and Los Angeles, were included in the buffer zone of the reserve (CONANP 2006). Being part of the buffer zone implied that many changes and restrictions in relation to the use and management of the natural resources were about to come to California.

Apparently, the president delivered some implicit messages to the region with his presence and actions; the first was support for the locality (i.e. affected villages) after the hurricane. He provided some construction materials to villagers to erect new houses. Second, he gave an official blessing to local practices and rights of villagers, through the certificates of occupancy he awarded. This gave the villagers the certitude of being right-holders in a unique territory after the invasion. The third message was political and symbolic; in order to inform to the top level political actors that the region was going to be part of a national natural protected area (henceforth nature reserve).

According to local versions, villagers were never informed about the presidential decree regarding the nature reserve in which they and their territories were included without consultation. It was not until late in 1995 and early in 1996 that a permanent camp was built a kilometre away from the village, along the road. Officers from the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) began to invite people from California, Tres Picos and Los Angeles to a series of informative meetings about the nature reserve. The meetings were meant to explain the reasons and implications of decreeing a nature reserve and the justification for building the camp near to the village. Not many people attended the meetings, only the local village authorities of the *Ejido* Commissary (EC) and the local Municipal Agent (MA). According to those who attended, they felt like the whole thing was imposed on them and officers just wanted to sign off the local acceptation.

Vicente (63) said *'the officers began their talks by expressing themselves nicely about the region, the nature and their mission as part of a federal institution. They approached us with confidence, even without knowing anything about us. Indeed, that was the first time we saw them'*. Francisco (58) pointed out *'as soon as they did not see any reaction from us, they switched their attitudes and language, and repeatedly stressed the point of sanctions as a way to warn us. I think they tried to intimidate us. We were sure not to be breaking any law at all but they highlighted all the consequences, if we were to do so'... 'After two or three meetings they vanished, we never saw them again in the area until an anti-fire brigade came to extinguish a fire in the nature reserve area, in the territories of Tres Picos. Then new officers showed up and often slept in the camp'.*

The meetings with the nature reserve officers gave to Francisco two main impressions. The first was that villagers in general were cheated and 'officially' brought into the scheme with the federal certificate of rights. They said they felt a game was being played by federal, state and municipal institutions without the villagers' realisation. The second impression was that many quick changes would happen in the village due the new legal and geographical status of California.

[60] Since the villagers began to live together they defined a governance system to rule their life and administer the invaded resources. They decided to use U&C as the main ruling system (even though at that stage they had no actual uses or customs). In 1980, the first extraordinary meeting in the village was held and the *Village Assembly* (VA) and the *Ejido* Commissary were constituted (see Table 2.2).

Ciesar (40) said '*we just let things happen because we did not know what to do…' '[Then] we decided to continue living as usual until any complaint appears'.*

Since their settlement in California, villagers have only had the land and other natural resources to supply their main means of livelihood. They always decided collectively on how to use their commons. For instance, they agreed to only use about 2-4 hectares under the shifting cultivation system for basic crops and about 2-4 hectares in the middle of the forest for pasturing cows. Some forest areas are used to extract firewood, and timber for the houses and the making of some family furniture. Wood is not authorised to be commercialised.

The agricultural and pasture lands have been more or less a permanent portion internally distributed per person. The areas must be rotated in terms of management and can be used again for the same purpose between six to eight years later. The common forest on the mountain hillsides has only been used according family needs, respecting the local agreements on intensity of usage. Villagers said that more than half of the forest territory has been kept as natural forest because they cannot manage to go and come back in a day. They said they were very proud to be holding these resources after a long legal process. Besides, the far, natural forest has been kept as a permanent reserve for themselves, to be used when necessary in the future. Nevertheless, because of the federal decree as nature reserve, they feel angry and at the same time confused because of the restrictions imposed on its use. Dominga (59) confided that *'now we do not know where our limits are, or what our real rights are in terms of forest use. Whether we can continue to live as before or not is a big question, because anytime police officers can come and arrest us'.* Some of the implications of being part of the nature reserve have already affected the way of living of villagers, both in practices of natural resource use, but also in terms of their identity as right–holders too. Some of the implications for the villagers - after the decree - were clearly stated in a brochure widely distributed among the villages after the meetings by the CONANP officers. These are: a) the restriction on and penalties for the use and mismanagement of fire in agricultural and cattle-rearing activities; b) the intensification of agricultural areas instead of shifting cultivation; c) prohibition of grazing in forest areas; d) prohibition of wildlife hunting for any purpose and e) prohibition on cutting trees or the extraction of wood from the nature reserve without permission from CONANP or PROFEPA.

According to the villagers, these implications result in their no longer being able to use their resources. The situation has forced some villagers to change almost their entire livelihood and local production strategies. They expressed themselves in simple words: *'we have rights over land, forest, water and wildlife but can do nothing with them. We cannot eat the certificate. We were better in illegality [without certificates*[61]*], so perhaps we should turn to illegality again. We want our real rights back'*. There was no immediate information on alternative options to cope with this situation.

For villagers, Zedillo was validating and providing them full rights over their territory through the federal certificate. In other words, the village as well as individuals had gained legal access to the land and the resources contained therein, and nobody could snatch it away from them. Eduardo (43) said *'we have been honestly working here for years; we founded our village in the Sierra but most important, we have been respecting all the laws and rules of our closest institution, the municipality'.*

Actually, the municipality had somehow quietly validated their settlement since the invasion. Furthermore, by becoming part of Mexican jurisprudence through a federal certificate and being part of a municipality, they also claim the right to govern their own natural resources. On the other hand, the federal government used its right to decree the area as a nature reserve for conservation and research on biodiversity[62], while at the same time imposing a decree over the natural resources and local inhabitants of the *Sierra*.

[61] See in next paragraphs how this illegality was initially accepted by the municipal authorities.
[62] This right is also clearly stated in the Mexican Constitution and the General Law for the Ecological Equilibrium and Environment Protection.

Reasons to use fire: problems first appear

It was mentioned that villagers came from different ethnic groups and regions, but mostly from the state of Chiapas. During California's formation they also brought with them diverse customs and traditions regarding the use and management of natural resources. The use of fire is one of those practices they brought with them. They collectively agreed on the advantages of using fire, to clear trash and fertilise soil. Among other things this helped them to prepare both new and old plots for cropping. Fire also leads to quick regeneration of young natural grass for the cattle. Fire is an integral element in local use of natural resources developed through a long process of assimilation and appropriation under local norms and rules.

Vicente said *'fire helps a lot to eliminate the basura [litter] and the layer of mulch formed from old plants. Because of fire, the basura is turned to ashes which gives the soil fuerza [energy] for our crops [it helps release phosphorus in particular]. But the most important reason for using fire is because it kills [mata] all the pests, diseases and weeds from the soil before the sowing. Thus, our crops will grow up healthy'*. In the case of livestock, Belisario stated *'it helps the old and dry grass to get easily burned; then the offshoots emerge stronger and more nutritive for our animals'.*

The issue of using fire became a very sensitive subject to discuss because of the PROFEPA fine mentioned above. But villagers agreed that any fire mis-management is dangerous and can cause many problems. However, they also said that controlling a fire once it jumped on to a mass of vegetation is very dangerous. According to them, fire is usually used during the driest season (May and June) which coincides with the hardest winds in the highlands, just before the first rains. The drought and wind make fire management something one needs to have experience with. Some villagers have a lot of experience and handle fire properly. Others, in particular those from regions where burning of vegetation is a less common practice, are less experienced and may take irresponsible risks. It is with those who take such risks that some conflicts have emerged in California.

Local agreements 'versus' the legal framework

Villagers also mentioned that as soon as they had the first problems with fire management they agreed on a local regulation that includes prevention and sanctions. Regarding prevention villagers stressed the importance of making certain arrangements before starting the burn. *'Clearing as much as possible all the peripheral area throughout a cleaned band, mobilising a number of people needed for a fire session [never alone], taking into account the best time [hours] to burn and check the wind direction, Later, we need to make sure that nothing remains burning in the plot..'* they also said *'together, these elements are necessary to control the blaze'*.

Sanctions in the case of blazes out of control are usually defined on the basis of the damage they cause. Rubinoy said *'sanctions are usually fines, local arrest or providing free services to the village,; the taking-away of local rights to use resources, prevention of participation in social events and even expelling the responsible parties from the village'.* These types of regulations are actually supported by the article 27 of the Mexican Constitution and the Agrarian Reform law which authorise villages to locally regulate their activities for the proper use of natural resources.

Nevertheless, there are also implications from other federal laws. According to the law for Environmental Protection[63] and the law for Sustainable Forest Management[64] and their associated specific regulations[65], PROFEPA is the entity in charge of supervision, enforcing compliance with

[63] It means the General Law for the Ecological Equilibrium and Environment Protection. http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/leyinfo/doc/148.doc (accessed on 15th May 2007). This law includes an extensive regulation for every productive activity. Thus, all villages and cities must follow and respect it.
[64] See also articles 13, 55, 122, 163 and many others in the general law for Sustainable Forest Development. http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/leyinfo/pdf/259.pdf (accessed on 15th May 2007).
[65] See the articles 62. 68, 87, 105 and 135 in the regulation for the protection of natural areas http://www.conanp.gob.mx/anp/legal/ANP.pdf and article 27 of the regulation for the prevention and control of atmosphere pollution http://www.profepa.gob.mx/NR/rdonlyres/84142613-CF26-4223-B7E9-38BE4AEB0C96/2320/Reglamento_LGEEPA_enmateriadePrevenci%C3%B3nyControldel.doc (accessed on 15th May 2007).

rules and imposition of sanctions. The CONANP[66] is in charge of monitoring and investigations in protected natural areas. Thus according to the Mexican top-down governmental system, fire sanctions can only be defined by the first institution, while fire extinction is in the hands of the second entity. However, both of them suggest not using fire in agricultural activities because of the high risks involved. When needed, they request that villagers submit a letter to the PROFEPA and get an official approval to use fire. At the same time, they both provide regulations on how to use fire as well as possible sanctions for mis-management. Mis-management of fire can result in sanctions on individuals and/or whole villages. These can be economic fines and/or the imprisoning of villagers for various periods.

Fire problems: local 'accidents'

In 1998 thousands of hectares of rainforest, desert vegetation and temperate forest were burned in Mexico due to a long dry season and uncontrolled fires (Sosa Cedillo 1998). The international community pointed to the global consequences and accused the Mexican government of having inadequate policies on fire prevention. The national government declared that the main cause of fires was human agricultural activities. In 1999, the government issued a national regulation to update and apply more strictly the anti-burning laws. A national fast-track programme to stop the use of fire was also launched. The programme was called *'the productive switch of slash and burn areas'*[67]*.* It included an aggressive extension strategy for the transfer of green manure and cover crop technologies by research centres and NGO's to thousands of small villages (Narváez *et. al.* 2001). All these technologies were expected to automatically contribute to a sedentarisation and intensification of shifting farming systems (Guevara *et. al.* 2000). The programme since its origins was incorporated into the national research and extension system agenda for 1999 and 2000 (Narváez and Guevara 1999 & 2000, Narváez *et. al.* 2001). Moreover, PROFEPA officers became stricter and more alert to observe fires in rural areas.

In California, where burning had long been normal practice, villagers continued to use fire to clear plots and renew pasture land, legal restrictions notwithstanding. They have decided to take the risk despite the potential adverse personal and environmental consequences. Thus it occurred that in April 2000, the driest month of the year, a first accident took place. Villagers collectively decided to clean by slashing and burning the areas around village houses for sanitary and safety reasons. They justified the use of fire because of the high incidence of mosquito, scorpions and snakes, which scared and threatened children and women. Suddenly, while burning, the wind changed direction and the blaze jumped into the forest. About one hectare of forest was burned and villagers did not think about the consequences at all.

Eduardo mentioned *'we did not deliberately set fire to the forest; we were just trying to protect our families but that day was very strange. Wind changed suddenly and a spark jumped out of the fire area. We did try to extinguish the fire but unfortunately a hectare could not be saved. We did our best and authorities cannot punish us for that'*. However, forest guards and the anti-fire brigade of CONANP were in the area and immediately noticed the smoke in the air. When they got the village, the fire was already out. After talking to some villagers they left. A month later the municipal officers demanded the village authorities' presence in their offices in Villa Flores.

They notified the village authorities of a federal fine of US$ 2,000 to be charged to the village. Initially the chief tried to explain the situation, but municipal officers insisted that any clarification or cancellation was not their responsibility because the sanction was imposed by PROFEPA, a federal institution. The village authorities immediately went to the village and announced an urgent and extraordinary village meeting to inform the people and decide on next steps. The VA decided that *'the fine was not supposed to be paid because California did what they could in order to protect its population but also in terms of fire management. The fire was an accident just as other accidents happen in life'.* The chiefs travelled back to the municipality some days later and expressed their position, verbally and in writing. To avoid problems between village, municipality

[66] CONANP is the National Commission for Protection of Natural Areas (Nature Reserves). The CONANP and PROFEPA also depend in one way or another on the SEMARNAT.
[67] *Programa de Reconversión Productiva de las Áreas de Roza-Tumba-Quema*.

and federal institutions, the municipal officers proceeded to negotiate[68] with PROFEPA and the CONANP officers and finally arrived at an agreement. The municipality would cover 10 % of the fine but an effort at reforestation in the *Sierra* had to be made. Thus, the municipality included a series of activities within its rural development programme to be carried out in the nature reserve. Thousands of young tropical trees and coffee plants were distributed and planted throughout the *Sierra* during 2001-2002. However, villagers were never informed about this agreement between municipality, PROFEPA and CONANP officers.

According to local versions, villagers received the plants as part of a municipal programme being implemented to reforest and diversify local lands. Nowadays, villagers sometimes still think and talk about the 'penalty and debt to be paid' to the federal institutions. The municipality sometimes 'refreshes their minds' as well. They insist on making the villagers aware of the importance of not using fire. It seems that political reasons and interests between municipality and federal agencies overlap or are hidden.

During 2002 and later in 2003 a second and third accident happened. Some people continued using fire to clean their plots or to renew the grass fields, despite efforts made by the village authorities to stop this traditional practice. In 2002, two people who wanted to get more grass for their enlarged cow herds lost the control over a fire in the common forest area. Sparks jumped and more than 10 hectares of grass and forest went up in flames, including some cows. The two people were arrested by village police-men and forced to pay damages according to local assessments and decisions made by the VA. Grass and cows were paid for, but trees were not considered. In addition, the miscreants had to pay fines from PROFEPA, specifically intended as a sanction for the lost trees. The two persons were not able to pay. They were arrested and put in jail for about three months. They were later released but had to sign a document in which they promised not to use fire anymore for their agricultural activities. However, their release was greatly helped by the supporting action of the village authorities.

Vicente commented 'the *Ejido commissioner and I [Municipal Agent] went to the municipality and asked them for their support to get our villagers back because their families were so concerned about their safety while in jail. The municipality provided us with legal advice on how to go about it'*. According to local versions, both men paid their local penalties before being taken to jail. For the villagers, those persons were not guilty any longer and they hoped they had learned an important lesson by being prisoners. Nevertheless, for the PROFEPA and CONANP they continue to be guilty. The *Ejido* Commissioner said: *'they must to go the jail once in a month and sign for their conditional freedom otherwise can be re-arrested. They do not even know when will be totally free'.*

A third accident happened in May 2003, during one of the participatory workshop for this research. During the session, a number of children of participants came in and alerted their parents. Everybody left the hall and mixed with the others who had come out of their houses and everybody talked about the fire. Eduardo, the *Ejido* Commissioner immediately got publicly furious and alerted us: *'you see what really happens in this village, here there are still many irresponsible villagers but we will punish them. I am sorry about you. You make a lot of efforts coming from far away in order to help us in looking for better horizons for our village but in this way nothing can be done. At this moment I will be resigning the appointed position of Ejido Commissioner. But first of all, I need to attend to this emergency. It is very dangerous and only if you are experienced in fire fighting you are welcome to participate in trying to extinguish the fire.* He also extended the invitation to all the villagers via the village alert system, which is an old record player, a microphone and a big speaker tied up on a 10 m stick.

[68] This information about the negotiation between the municipal officers and the federal officers of PROFEPA and CONANP was provided by an ex-municipal officer who once worked as coordinator of productive projects in Villa Flores municipality. He asked for anonymity because of safety reasons. He also wanted to avoid informing the villagers about the village's real status. It was said that the officers preferred to play a political game and continue to make villagers afraid, and thus more conscious and aware of the need to avoid fire in their activities.

After three hours of intensive work by more than 70 people, including the research team, the fire in the three hectare forest plot was controlled. Nobody was arrested that day by the village's police men. Many rumours and versions started to circulate among villagers about those who had caused the blaze. Nobody saw the responsible(s) persons and the tension grew. Two days later the research team was politely asked by Eduardo to leave the village for some days in order to let him resolve the problem. A couple of weeks later the team went back to the village and was welcomed by Eduardo. He continued being chief. The VA did not accept his resignation.

Once the research team approached his home, he continued apologising about the situation we had encountered some weeks before. He started talking about the incident: *'Blame was automatically placed on the person who had the rights over that area. But he denied everything and his participation in the workshop being conducted by you made him automatically innocent. The suspicion went then directly to one of his sons who wanted to crop beans*[69]*in that area. The son is very young [18] and made a mistake. He did not follow his father's recommendations and that caused the blaze to get out of his control. We have forgiven him but he needs to carry out duties in the village to compensate for his mistake. He has to provide several "tequios" [periods of unpaid service] to our village. We, as authorities, decide on his tasks once per week. We also try to avoid his penalty by PROFEPA and CONANP officers by saying that nobody saw anybody and that the fire just happened while we were meeting you in the village public building. However, they do not believe the story and as a village we are now on the "black list". They can come any moment with the municipal police officers and arrest one of us. Then we are now trying to behave properly'*

During later discussion, Eduardo was also asked why he got so annoyed over the fire incident. He said *'the first reason was because just a week before the accident, together with the rest of the village authorities we had a meeting with the VA to prevent accidents with fire this cropping season. We shared information that the municipality had given us about the expected extreme high temperatures, the strange behaviour of winds and the implications for and risks of fire. The second reason is because I was very embarrassed, with you being present here. I was concerned about the image you have got of California. We already have a bad reputation in the region, but we are not worse than other villages, you know that. We are not assassins as many people out there think'.*

Out of these examples, two things can be highlighted. The first is the importance of fire for villagers' activities. Change is being enforced through different means. One is the strict legal repercussions on fire users. Those repercussions are mainly imposed by the federal governance system. However, for the villagers, the punishment on fire accidents seems to be more flexible within their local system of regulation. The second relates to local perceptions and the given value of natural assets and restricted areas. Villagers assign more value to the grass, crops and cows than the forest and its wildlife, whereas for the officers of federal agencies it is the other way around. This difference in perception is a crucial element in local development.

These examples also bring out the existence of certain force fields created around the use and management of fire and its implications for the nature reserve. Villagers and officers from the federal and municipal governments struggle against each other over this issue. Villagers want to continue using their commons in established ways with a minimum of change in order to continue getting what they need. Officers only apply the laws in fulfilling their appointed duties towards forest and wildlife protection. However, in practice natural resources are being contested.

Looking at the root of local and historical problems

Local perceptions and legal confrontations

Apparently, some of the external causes of problems in California have to do with the decree constituting the nature reserve. Since villagers first learnt about the reserve, they have been under pressure from federal agencies and also the municipality. A type of political power as held by the official institutions is being exercised over the village. Villagers have now realised there are many limits on using their commons. Their former perceptions and practices are thus forced to change.

[69] The young man is a member of the bean growers group described in the previous chapter.

The fact is that they live under permanent pressure not to be caught in actions considered illegal by the authorities.

In this sense, external pressure grants them few alternatives. Villagers consider the reserve decree only makes their life more complicated. One said *'we can only "enjoy" nature but cannot eat anything. Our aspirations for personal and local development are being suppressed. Whatever we do is legally prohibited and externally sanctioned. Unfortunately, we no longer have control over our own lives or our resources'*. Some other opinions were directed towards illegality. *'For sure, if we do not have anything to eat, we will hunt wild animals and will do whatever is necessary to get an income for our families and satisfy our necessities, no matter what the officers say. We have many needs but also our own rules which need to be respected as well'*. However, the roots of problems seem to go much beyond the nature reserve.

Since the village's foundation, Californians believed that what they were doing was right. They took many risks, and over the years succeeded in their efforts, even though much of what they did was technically illegal. The invasion of the abandoned ranch on which they had settled was already punishable by law. That illegal step was actually supported by the municipal authorities, who tolerated their acts. The municipality never sought to stop them. On the contrary, the villagers were encouraged by the granting of the support demanded. Initially, the municipality helped by giving legal advice to sort out the establishment of the settlement. Later, villagers also received materials from the municipality for constructing their homes. In this way, they received municipal approbation without any apparent restriction on their activities.

Colonisation policy and the settlement of new villages

During the early 1970s, apart from the agrarian reform and the petroleum boom, there was a Mexican programme aimed at populating the south of the country (Toledo *et. al.* 1985). Federal government authorised the opening of virgin tropical forest areas for human settlement. Groups of people were stimulated to clear large areas of rainforest and settle. They were called colonisers. Thousand of new villages and municipalities were founded and recognised by the federal government. These people were invited to joint the colonisation programme. Many moved from different states into the new areas. Veracruz, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Oaxaca and Chiapas States were the most successful in populating their territories. The bigger the municipality the more financial resources it received from the federal government. In this process, some colonisers confused indigenous territories and private properties with the federal territories supposed to be colonised. They took over many territories already held by original settlers and thus severe agrarian conflicts emerged.

In this context, the municipality of Villa Flores also allowed the settlement of new villages, especially in the marginalised areas of the *Sierra* (highlands). All that villagers demanded at this time was granted by municipal officers. The municipality allowed them self-regulation, according to the local governance system of U&C, as widely practiced in rural Mexico. In return, the municipality gained the benefits of a rising population from California and other villages. Beyond the yearly grant of federal funds, the municipality found it easier to keep the peace in the *Sierra* villages by providing them with minimal support. This way, local villages kept quiet at moments of national social unrest. Thus, regional peace was maintained for a number of years. Another benefit was that villages represented potential votes for the ruling political party (PRI). Every election period, politicians and their subordinates visited the village to 'demand' the needed votes. They helped villagers remember all the support they had received from the municipality. And new promises were often made. People initially agreed, and for many years gave their votes only to the PRI. Rubinoy recalled that *'politicians come to our village and promise us many things, but we know that after the elections they will be forgotten. They only come to request our votes and we are supposed to please the municipality for all the favours made for us'.*

However, after the PRI failed to win two consecutive elections, the PRD began to provide more resources to women's groups in the village than before (see previous chapter). Thus, more materials for house construction arrived, but also seeds and tools for agriculture. The two women's groups in the village developed, and began to compete with each other, to show who got more.

Celia pointed out *'you know, the election times are also good for us; we get free t-shirts, shopping bags, key rings, pens, caps, food, drinks and materials for our houses. In public events we just wear our t-shirts with the colour of the political parties' symbols; that is all it is'.* This suggests that people in California have found a strategy to cope with politicians while also gathering some local and personal benefits.

The municipality receives another benefit from the villages. Since the nature reserve was decreed, inhabitants complain about their limited access to and use of natural resources. The municipality tried to get them in favour of the reserve, including the conservation of its wildlife and forest. Thus, six years ago, the municipality asked the village to appoint a person to be involved in CONANP activities. A villager was to be appointed to support the regional anti-fire brigade activities of the federal institution. Francisco noted that *'we also wanted to please the municipality and discussed the advantages of doing so, but at the same time we prepared a new request for them. It was actually more credits for productive projects and support to get federal transport plates for a rural bus. Then, we appointed Rubinoy'.* He is actually one of the most active young men in the village. In this way, the village extracted a local and moral commitment from the municipality. In return for this favour, they then engaged to some extent with the reserve interests. It apparently had an emotional implication for the villagers. The fact that a local person would be risking his life when a fire breaks out makes them feel committed. The CONANP authorities and municipal officers expected that this could locally reduce the use of fire. Rubinoy receives a monthly allowance of US$ 100 from the CONANP during the driest months of the year (from February to June). During that time he must follow the training on fire control. His main duty is to be part of a regional anti-fire brigade during the dry season.

The other side of the coin

Looking for a ruling system

Because the first villagers came from different regions and cultural backgrounds, all brought their perceptions and practices on how to live in the community and how it was to be organised. These ideas and traditions were integrated and where necessary adapted to an agro-ecological and social context new to all of them. Thus, at the time of California's establishment, the initial founders spent hours of discussion in order to agree on local regulations on how the village would be ruled. They began with the basics, a chief (initially a Municipal Agent) and a small supporting committee. A year later, they built and shaped the system with the VA and the EC. Over the years, different committees were appointed with different duties. Francisco proudly mentioned *'initially it was quite difficult because some indigenous people could not properly communicate in Spanish, the most generally spoken language. Later on, the discussions became hard to manage. I can remember many cases, but let me tell you about Belisario and his brother. You may already know they are Tzotziles from Los Altos [an ethnic group from nearby San Cristobal de las Casas]. The point is that initially they had very inflexible positions and wanted to impose all that they had practiced in their place of origin. For instance, they were in favour of not letting the young girls go to school or to buy young women. We of course disagreed because our daughters are not cows! Finally they accepted our disapproval.*

New settlers' acceptance

According to two informants *'the acceptance of avencidados [incomers or new settlers] often implies local risks for the village because many bring in unfamiliar habits. Then, detailed explanations of local rules are needed to make clear how life is organised in California…'*
'Sometimes the process takes long before new inhabitants get totally integrated into the village. During that process, accidents with the use of fire can happen, wildlife hunting and so on. This sometimes has created conflicts among us… [But] because new incomers usually have relatives here, many villagers are in favour of letting new people come and settle. But some others are also against it because of the problems others have caused in the past'.

Ciesar noted that *'sometimes new incomers are proposed by the villagers; other times, they come and talk directly to the local authorities. When new incomers are proposed by villagers, it is usually because of friendships or family ties. Later on, no matter the people, we bring the issue to the VA and there they are introduced. An explanation of their reasons for settling here is then requested.*

The villagers can raise questions and give opinions. Finally we make a decision according to our assessments in the VA. Sometimes people are not accepted because we get to hear in advance about their misbehaviour in other villages'.

Belisario added: *'In the case they are accepted, we provide them a period of integration, to live in the village and respect everything that is done here. At the same time, they are granted a piece of land to start cropping and we see how they progress and participate. We normally monitor all their activities, to figure out how well they do in their new life. Villagers give attention to everything they do or fail to do. Thus, normally, after two or three years they are totally accepted and fully granted the same rights as all.*

A first village social division

Apparently it happened at one point that some villagers wanted to have more cows than family members, contrary to the local agreement was a family could have as many cows as the number of family members. It was late in 1999 when villagers started to complain about some people possessing more cows than agreed. The problem was that those people who had more cows were using more common grass than they were entitled to. This was most problematic during the dry season when grass availability is limited. This situation resulted in heated discussions about the use of the common grazing. Finally, the VA agreed to avoid the pasturing of the herds in the natural forest-grass areas. However, from that moment some people began to buy rights over land abandoned by out-migrants. A sector of the population disagreed with this option because they considered the livestock a source of social and environmental problems that need to be sorted out in the short term. They believed that more animals in the village would increase the risks of pests and diseases for both human and crops. Francisco observed *'since there are more cows and lambs in the village, the need to use pesticides is higher. Otherwise, cows' internal and external parasites cannot be controlled. Animals also bring more pests and diseases to our crops'.* Ciesar mentioned *'cows also bring lice to the head of our kids. Furthermore, since we have opened up more land for pasture, the temperature is going up every year. I guess that also brings pest and diseases to our crops'*.

When they were asked why it was important to have more cows, villagers supplied economic reasons. Belisario said *'cows are like money in a bank, you know you have some but you hardly see it until a problem or need comes out'.* For many villagers cows are only used as a local saving strategy, for the moment they need extra money. For others it was a question of social status in the village. Eduardo was very clear in this aspect: '*when we were children, the boss [a landlord] used to have thousands of cows and was the richest man in our village; he was respected and admired by everyone. He could get whatever he wanted from whoever he wished'*.

This issue of social status in California seems to be a replication of behaviour associated with the valley lands of the municipality. The *ejidos* in the valley are flat lands along the river and characterised by having the best soils. These conditions allow the pasturing of huge cattle herds. These cattle owners often show off their economic wealth in Villa Flores. Thus, the idea of a good and rich farmer in the *Sierra* is measured by the capacity to own and manage cows. Nowadays, the strategy of buying rights on abandoned lands to provide grazing is increasing.

A second village social division

In private Eduardo acknowledged that at the beginning of his first period as *Ejido* Commissioner in 2000, he was afraid of village tension. He said he was first elected for an interim period of 16 months, because of an incident in the village. He said he was appointed during an extraordinary meeting because the former *Ejido* Commissioner was kicked out of the village that same day (see chapter 4). He added *'the former chief was misbehaving in the village and did not take his duties seriously. But he was also seen to be drunk very often, something that is never permitted for a chief'*[70]*'.* Worse still *'he was extracting wood illegally from the forest. When the village realised his*

[70] Drinking in general is not allowed in California. People can drink anywhere else but not in the village. Once they come back drunk to the village they must behave properly while on the streets and at home. Otherwise, they are taken to the

faults, the VA called for an extraordinary meeting to remove him from his position. During the meeting, he denied all accusations and offended some villagers with his words. Villagers came to the decision to kick him out. Then he started threatening us. Suddenly a villager directly confronted him and stabbed him with a knife in the back. The former chief was taken to the rural hospital and never came back. From that moment, we have been seen as violent people out there in the valley'.

According to other informants, some villagers felt guilty about the former chief's fate. They feared he might die. But also they felt bad because they never punished the aggressor. When asking about the aggressor's name, always an evasive answer was given. The name was in effect a village's secret. Over time, two villagers mentioned that, secretly, some villagers had agreed to tackle the former *Ejido* Commissioner, just to make him afraid, and then to appoint someone to replace him. They never expected the matter to go beyond threats. Apparently the situation turned aggressive during the meeting and the aggressor became overexcited. After this event, informants said, the village became more closely involved in religion. People continued to have different views about how things could have best been solved. Later, attempts were made to erase the incident from the village's background.

Losing and missing leadership

Due to out-migration, two of the most active women leaders have left the village. The first is Praxedis (45), locally considered one of the most active, reliable and honest woman leaders. She had to emigrate because of economic reasons and her husband's health problems. She and her husband got into debt and were forced to sell their house to pay the loan and mortgage. The fact is that she was the leader of the biggest women's working group in California over many years (see previous chapter). According to participants in the group, her departure was a big blow, and the group felt it had lost its head. Local women's projects stopped for a while until demands by the women themselves led to the appointment of a new coordinator. The new leader, Luvia (33), applied some previous knowledge but mainly learnt by doing. She said *'at the beginning it was difficult for me. Praxedis [the previous leader] was more active and had better communication and negotiation skills than me. Her main characteristic is the capacity to make effective contacts out there, especially with politicians. We are still learning but would desire things to happen differently and more smoothly'.* Nowadays, the group still struggles to finding its direction without Praxedis. Celia mentioned *'there is good coordination but leadership still missing because the external contacts and influences have been reduced by the group's lack of activism. Negotiation to get things for our productive projects is missing as well, but we will overcome on this point'.*

Another very similar case is the leader of the other working group who emigrated to the U.S.A. because of personal interests (see previous chapter). Mary Cruz (30) was also a very active young leader. She established many contacts with the PRD (political party) and its organisations in other villagers. Since the women's group got to know about her trip plans, they nominated two persons to take over Mary Cruz's former duties; Guadalupe Alegría (39) and Ana Luz (33). They have mostly built their leadership capacities by doing. During a talk Guadalupe was clear: *'it was good to know in advance about Mary Cruz's plans, we had enough time to prepare ourselves. We have realised the titanic job Mary Cruz was doing. It is sometimes very hard and we need still to learn many things, especially how to solve little misunderstandings among us; but also how to keep effective communication with the PRD and other external contacts, because resources for our projects have declined.'*

The same situation also occurs with the men. Some leaders have emigrated and others have settled temporarily elsewhere. However, the remaining leaders claim it does not represent a big problem since there are more men who can play those roles. If necessary, the out-migrated leaders are called to return because they are appointed to a particular duty. According to them, they have identified future good leaders over the years and pursue their capacity building through the *cargos* that lead them towards the governance system of U&C. Ciesar commented that *'we pay much attention to our kids while in the school and later on in their lives after marriage, how they perform*

---

local jail (a cage that also works as a toilet during the village meetings). Furthermore, selling alcoholic drinks in the village attracts large penalties.

in games, in the family, but also in the village's duties. Thus, we begin by appointing them every time to more complicated duties'. Francisco added *'we also take into account their efforts made while outside the village, the people who emigrate inform us about their behaviour and commitment'.*

Escape strategies

Since the villagers no longer have many options to freely use their natural resources, they seem to be forced to deal with the legality and the illegality of their actions. It is actually affecting their own social dynamics and relations as a village. Different escape strategies have been tried.

Migration to 'the North'

According to villagers, out-migration, since the federal nature reserve decree, has become constant. Some informants mentioned that before the decree there were only two out-migrants. One lived permanently in Phoenix (Arizona, U.S.A.) and other had resided at intermittent periods in Ciudad Juárez (North Mexico). They said that because of the inflexible rules governing the nature reserve about 30 % of the men in the village have out-migrated. Initially, they only went for some weeks to the capital city of the state, Tuxtla Gutierrez. Because of low salaries, some went further, even crossing international boundaries. Nowadays, every family has at least one member living abroad. Typically, they stay away for two or three years and then come back to visit families or fulfil any appointed duty. Others let their wives perform the village duties; pay someone else to do so, or just rent out their rights over land. The migration is basically to Phoenix and Tucson in the U.S.A. There they are also well organised, live in the same neighbourhood and support and protect each other, especially the new out-migrants. According to local estimations, more than a hundred villagers live there and the rate of out-migration is rising. While talking to some 10-12 year-old boys and girls about their future plans, several one replied in these terms: *'we just want to finish with the basic school and go to "el Norte" and join my father [cousin, uncle or other relative]'.* Local accounts often accuse the federal government for the restrictions imposed on the nature reserve, as a cause of family disintegration.

However, there was another reason to leave. According to the youngest group, this was the enchantment awakened by migrants concerning money, the exciting life in the cities, good quality cloths and shoes and fancy pick ups. This is called in Mexico, *el sueño Americano* (the American dream). When migrants succeed, the members of families left behind (women and their children) can receive at least 150-200 dollars per month. The money is spent on food supplies, phone calls, clothes and when possible saved to buy electronic devices. The women, the elderly, children and non-migrant men continue produce the basic food of the village.

How much is enough? Just a bit more…

In the case of the villagers who remain, an increasingly elderly group who cannot afford the trip and crossing costs continue living as usual. They keep the village alive and maintain the local traditions. They base their activities on the use of the common local resources to make a living. However, the migration 'model' seems to be pushing many to acquire what others have left behind in the village. The apparent pressure removed from local resources by out-migration is restored by new demands from villagers left behind.

Many of the remaining villagers want to reach the same living standards observed in the families with out-migrants, and as a result they are forced to exploit the natural resources as much as possible. The strategy is as follows. About 30% of families in California have been selling adult cows with two main objectives. The first is to rent or buy the land rights of out-migrants. The second is to get young cows, increase herd sizes and intensify the cattle production system. The fact is that some migrants also take the opportunity to stay abroad longer in order to rent their rights over land to a remaining villager for a maximum of up to three years. In this way, the wife is not forced to perform any duty in the minor committees of the village. These duties have to be assumed by the rights renter or buyer. Thus, migrants get an extra income to be locally paid to the wife. In the meantime, migrants also save some dollars by avoiding the monthly remittance to their families. In this way, they can afford more things in the U.S., like a pick up truck or electronic devices normally bought in time for the long journey back to California.

Meanwhile, the rights renter or buyer gets more land areas for grazing. When some of them were asked about how many animals they would like to have, one replied *'just a bit more, only as much as I could manage'*. Another replied *'as many as I need to make sure I can afford a real house and also a pick up truck'.* Thus, the cycle of putting pressure on common resources has so foreseeable end.

Clandestine natural resource exploitation: hidden social agreements

The years 2003 and 2005 brought challenges to the women's working groups in the village. They had to look after their own representation and leadership. The departure of former leaders affected them in several ways. They felt affected emotionally but also lost encouraged to run existing projects or get new resources. For instance, some women stopped their little enterprises. Availability of eggs, bread, food colorants, chicken, pork and beef meat, garden fruits, etc. was considerably reduced. During this period, more money was needed to buy those products outside the village. Blanca (63) stated *'local production stop and prices went up; we needed money to buy all our food supplies anywhere else. Of course the husbands felt a bit stressed by the limitation on our shopping capacity'.* Alegría added *'some had to sell a cow, go to the city and offer beans and maize, or do something else that I cannot tell you*'. By something else she meant hunting in the reserve or secret logging of highly demanded tropical wood. This implied claim was crosschecked as true with a second key informant.

Reasons to keep hidden issues: the *back stage*

According to the villagers interviewed, there are different reasons to keep certain issues hidden, but most have to do with fear of the Mexican legal system, lack of local information and opportunities to discuss, and the feeling of being pointed out as a problematic village.

A fear of Mexican laws

The fear is rooted in the unknown norms and rules imposed by Mexican jurisprudence limiting villagers' real rights in use of the natural resources of the village. Villagers often make reference to this issue and manifest fear of being arrested for doing something that is locally accepted or seen as normal. They also said that problematic issues like the use of fire or the hunting of wildlife life for local consumption are almost prohibited issues in talking to outsiders because problems can then easily come to the village. Thus there are social and unwritten agreements about matters that constitute village secrets. One of them concerns the story related above about how long it took the team to find out about the former *Ejido* Commissioner.

Villagers are also afraid of the insistence placed by federal institutions on potential financial penalties to be paid for breaking laws regarding the nature reserve. According to villagers, these newly discovered federal laws have rendered their rights to rule their own lives and resources diminished if not useless. Eduardo said *'we know almost nothing about laws and "the educated" [officers and lawyers] can easily deceive us'*. Another person mentioned *'there is a permanent pressure and fear on some of us and on occasions we are forced to do illegal things because options are lacking. We are respectful of laws but we must eat and be respected as well'.*

Lack of information

The fact that municipality and federal institutions maintain an information gap between themselves and the village seems to create an empty space in the relations between villagers and officers. The payment of village penalties by the municipal officers is just an example. Lack of transparency over important information serves as pressure to accept external laws and objectives. Villagers deny that there have ever been negotiations or consultations about how to manage the nature reserve and other parts of their territory. They also feel that goodwill is missing on the side of the officers. They expressed the need for more information about programmes and projects in order to look at the nature reserve as a source of opportunities rather than as a burden over their territories.

The demand for information and real attention was clear, as stated by some who asked to remain anonymous: *'the nature reserve, in the way it is, represents a burden for us. We guess about the good intentions behind the area, but what and where are the intentions for us? Are we considered*

part of this area or just an obstacle to the officers' objectives? We would like to hear honest accounts and real proposals for the reserve, rather than just looking at it as an untouchable area. Otherwise, we will continue looking at the officers and the area itself as enemies, and in consequence being forced to fight against it'.

The fact is that anytime outsiders visit California, villagers ask about how things are in other places. They always like asking about programmes or projects that might be suitable for this village. But they also want outsiders' views on California's productive situation.

Shame and pride: the village's image and mutual support

In California, as well as in El Oro, pride in the village is very often manifested by the villagers. They feel California is the source of their willingness to make things move forward. They always please visitors with good food and soft drinks. Hospitality is clearly and daily manifested by all villagers. Politeness and respect are some of their main characteristics. They always talk and act properly in front of those locally considered to be good outsiders. Thus, while talking to them two important elements came out. The first had to do with the image of the village spread some years ago by the incident with the former *Ejido* Commissioner. Certain villages even beyond the municipality began to identify the *Sierra,* and specifically California, as a dangerous place, where villagers over-react to minimum provocation. Vicente said *'we are still concerned about that accident and avoid talking about it and other sensitive issues to outsiders. The progressive image they had of our village went down just because of that incident'.* Eduardo added *whenever we go down to the valley, it is always hard to say we are from California, we feel ashamed of that image. Now, you are seeing that we are neither aggressive nor dangerous, you have proof of it by living here with us. That will be kind of you if you just tell the truth to other people out there. Let them know we are very proud of our village, our efforts and our peace'.*

The second element was regarding the mutual support they expect at any given moment. Carlos commented *'we like to please visitors because we never know what could happen. We travel very often to the cities [Villa Flores and Tuxtla Gutierrez]. Just in case, if any time we have a problem out there and if we meet, I am sure you will assist me. From here onwards we build a friendship and we can talk about whatever you like. But please, while in the village do not talk about sensitive issues to anyone; be careful of approaching the right people, just to protect yourself and colleagues'.*

7.3 Final remarks

The federal nature reserve in California is called *La Sepultura* - ironically 'the grave'. Villagers ridicule the name, often saying *'the nature reserve is at the same time our grave'*. This chapter has illustrated that both in El Oro and California environmental management is a key site where the local system of governance through custom comes into conflict with the top-down power of the federal Mexican state. Top-down political power over natural resources is creating permanent and dangerous force fields in which the village as social congregation and the villagers as individuals struggle in a game in which they have become automatically enmeshed and about which they know little. Their resistance and struggle is manifested in several forms – in over-grazing, in uncontrolled use of fire, in abuse of wildlife hunting and in illegal wood extraction. The force field created by the political or institutional power seems to be a key cause of local conflicts and dilemmas relating to the management of local natural resources. Accelerated out-migration, abuse of certain activities such as livestock management, and slow social disintegration of village and family life seem to be among the issues arising.

This chapter brings us to a basic methodological conclusion about participation, as a methodology of rural development. Standard methods of discursive participation are unlikely to lead to the frank discussion of key problems. Village communities protect themselves through careful management of *back stage* issues. Vital matters are regarded as community secrets. An ethnographic approach, it has been shown, is useful in bringing to light some of these hidden or *back stage* areas. Building the trust was definitely the most important aspect of this ethnographic effort. Only after a long time of interaction, did villagers feel confident enough to confide key information. Care has been

taken to present this in suitably anonymous ways, and to show that what villagers may fear to be disreputable can be presented in a constructive light. Nevertheless, sensitive issues will always be complicated to grasp and present adequately. Extractive tools and methods have been scrupulously avoided. Flexibility and openness for gathering information were crucial throughout the research. Emphasis was placed on letting people talk and explore their own minds in an environment in which both interviewers and interviewed felt relaxed and secure.

Another important element was the making of binding agreements between interviewed and interviewer. Some interviewees demanded anonymity. It was then necessary to promise that nobody else would know her/his real names when the information was presented inside or outside the village. A worthwhile recommendation given by informants themselves was to never talk about local and sensitive issues with more than one villager at a same time. In this way, local values, fears and beliefs were respected.

In relation to the findings, the commons (communal natural resources) have been shown to be in both villages the shock absorber for cultural practices associated with the governance systems practised at village level. On the one hand, the top-down system and its federal laws imposed several restrictions and penalties. On the other hand, the U&C system stimulated certain culturally-rooted local practices that defined the manner and intensity of management of the natural resources.

In the context of legality, there was a bottleneck that causes a clash between the two ruling frameworks translated into local force fields. The laws of the top-down system are *based on the individual* level of proper behaviour to ensure social order at the upper levels of society. This is focused on the individualisation of such rights. On the contrary, U&C is mostly based on *collectivism practised* in daily life in both villages investigated. This is the *practical jurisprudence* proposed by Aristotle. Some consequences emergent from the force fields observed at village level were massive emigration, illegal wood extraction, mis-management of soils and water (for the livestock and agricultural activities), increased use of chemicals (to maintain crop and animal production levels), and pollution of water and soils. These consequences may need urgent technical attention in the short term.

The small villages investigated had a weak relation to the state and its federal institutions in general. Apparently, villagers do not respect national laws, but at issue is the degree to which such laws are really known, useful and clear at the village level. In the cases examined, villagers made decisions based on local priorities. Therefore, a clash between two perceptions of legality must be stressed. The closest connection of both villages to the state is still through the municipality - the lowest level of the Mexican jurisprudential system. However, the roles assigned to and played by the municipalities in these cases were as simple operators of federal policies or laws and administrators of governmental programmes. This perhaps represents a change to an earlier period when municipalities had a direct interest in the founding of new villages.

Although fear, conflicts and other sensitive issues were kept secret by the villagers, there is a similar pattern in both villages. Both villages have an important *back* stage area that plays a crucial role in local political processes, particularly for the collective management of natural resources and the local development in general (see next chapter). The fact is that the use and management of common natural resources was not an isolated aspect, separate from the economic, cultural and political fields. Political power, ignorance and economic pressures and interests were key elements in understanding how common resources are used and disputed.

Definitely, the intimidatory character of federal laws, the routines imposed by U&C, and the lack of local productive opportunities and options have put natural resources at risk and created dangerous social tensions. These tensions are also influenced by the needs and aspirations of many villagers. It is not surprising, therefore, to find an apparent rise in illegal use of commons and the breaking of environmental laws in both case studies.

In this line, some local values seem to be evolving too. One of them is related to the importance given to the family and the village. Mostly the elderly commented that in past times, village integration and respect for collective decisions were on at the top of the local scale of values. An old leader expressed the logic as '*if the village is good, the rest is too'*. They supposed that they worked altogether in order to make an excellent village and provide them with necessities. Nowadays, some people feel that the most important area of social life is the family, with the village perhaps a poor second. One man mentioned that *'ensuring the family subsistence is the priority, no matter the personal implications to achieve it because the village can wait, but my family cannot'*. It is this divergence of individual and collective perceptions concerning personal and village empowerment and development that will be addressed in the next and last chapter.

A final comment may be in order to the function of laws. It does not seem that coercive laws to regulate individual acts are the best route to be followed in managing common property, as proposed by Hardin (1968, 1998) and Hardin and Baden (1977) in a well-known neo-liberal theory of the fate (tragedy) of the commons. It can be agreed that there is first a need to carry out technical and social studies to figure out the real status of the natural resources (quality, quantity, carrying capacity, renovation rates, etc.) *vis a vis* actual local needs, processes and social phenomena. The best ways to act and stimulate a better use, management and conservation of the commons may then be to take the route of local engagement. This would imply not only consultation – apparently denied the two case study villages so far – but also collective analysis, in which all the stakeholders devise ways to work together to perform their duties properly, beyond the scope of rigid institutional frameworks. The system of U&C may yet acquire a new and useful role in providing a framework for collective management of environmental resources in rural Mexico.

Chapter 8

LOCAL INSIGHTS ON EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:
Perceptions and assessment efforts in small villages of Southern Mexico

Abstract

This chapter examines evidence on what is locally understood by or interpreted as empowerment and development. Collective and individual exercises were stimulated through a series of workshops and the use of semi-structured interviews as part of an approach blending participatory and ethnographic methods. Local language expressions and people's accounts are interpreted. In addition, a series of criteria, areas and indicators are identified and framed as an assessment tool. Indicators are also scored and ranked according to different components (criteria and areas). The framework is used to convey a picture of both collective and individual notions of empowerment and development in two small villages in Southern Mexico.

8.1 Introduction

The term empowerment has adopted as a key notion among workers in rural development, especially to make reference to the impact on target groups of diverse initiatives, policies, programmes and research oriented development interventions. So far, two main implications of the term have been identified for its conceptualisation and understanding. The first is empowerment used in the sense of *a means to*, i.e. capacity to achieve impacts as *an end*. The second is related to the sense of *process,* which implies a long term human path for learning and acting, very closely related to the notion of personal and collective development as understood by Freire (1971/2000), McWhirther (1991) and Mosse (1998 & 2005).

During the last decade, empowerment has also become a buzz word, especially in the context of international aid politics. Its use is now so widespread that it is abused as a fashionable concept. Mexico has not been an exception, and people from research, development and political organisations and institutions use it in daily discourse. It has been adopted as a Latinised Anglicism as *'empoderamiento',* although definitions are as yet lacking in Spanish dictionaries. Seemingly the closest dictionary word is '*emancipación' (emancipation)* widely used in the feminist approach to gender studies, e.g. Meza *et. al.* (2002), Oxaal and Baden (1997) and Rowlands (1997). Additionally, some Mexican researchers (e.g. Mata 1998 & 1999) prefer to use the term '*apoderamiento'* which literally means appropriation. Unfortunately, a mighty sense of academic rhetoric beyond its original use has also given to the term a kind of magic appeal. Many of these linguistic connotations seem to be biasing its meaning away from the original intentions of early "empowerment" researchers and activists.

Nonetheless, the term is necessarily linked to notions of power, and its basic usage still implies efforts to encourage and equip people to act upon their concerns (McWhirther 1991, Page and Czuba 1999). A question is if empowerment has become so important within development contexts, as both 'means' and 'process', what does it locally represent, and how can it be studied and/or assessed in local contexts. What, if anything, does the term mean to the people targeted by development initiatives? Apparently, some perceptions have been biased by the activism and enthusiasm of interveners. Others have deviated into a more theoretical analysis of approaches. Nowadays, there is a lack of flexible research frameworks to be used for empirical study of empowerment, particularly in the rapidly changing contexts in which interventions are implemented and peoples' acts are adjusted to local needs.

The fact is that empowerment represents a relative and dynamic concept and therefore fixed definitions may be unhelpful. Seemingly, it is close related to both personal and collective development but also to the exercise of power and its manifestations. Here we take the view that evidence concerning the scope and potential for human actions – and how this scope is conceptualised and expressed locally - could contribute usefully to a better understanding of actual processes of empowerment. In particular it seems relevant to try and understand what empowerment means for the rural poor of Southern Mexico (as exemplified by the two case study villages in this thesis) at both individual and collective levels.

Previous chapters have shown how villages are run and ruled, by focusing on both visible institutions and overt self images (*front stage* aspects) and on covert intrigue and conflict (*back stage* aspects). Participatory methods have been useful in accessing *front stage* aspects and ethnographic methods have helped open up *back stage* aspects. Out of the vast amount of information thus gathered, it was possible to identify preliminary insights into empowerment and development as inseparable processes. These two processes are here addressed. This chapter

looks for more elements to analyse empowerment in the two villages. Previous evidence from other studies of Mexican villages is also considered. Empowerment is here studied from both the descriptive (functional) and analytical (comparative) perspective. Local terms and linguistic expression(s) and opinions are examined, and the use of a simple projective tool is explored. The research was conducted between June 2004 and June 2005.

8.2 Context

During the past two decades many countries have begun to focus on alternative approaches to rural development, aiming basically to a) generate and recover rural peoples' self-confidence, b) strengthen their knowledge base, c) build and enhance local capacities, d) facilitate and stimulate local innovation processes, e) increase diffusion of technologies and knowledge, f) address leadership, social capital formation, human attitudes and behavioural patterns, g) strengthen interactions among stakeholders, and f) contribute to the alleviation of rural problems (Ashby *et. al.* 1987, Braun *et. al.* 2000, Bunch and López 1999, Chambers *et. al.* 1993, Hagmann *et. al.* 1998, Hagmann 1999, Scoones and Thompson 1994). This has been considered empowerment. It has also been mentioned that empowerment does not rely uniquely on particular skills or abilities but on holistic views. Interventions therefore may only represent entry points to engage people in learning processes, in which personal consciousness and awareness are raised (Freire 1971/2000 & 1998).

In Mexico, different actors have also responded to this international trend and different approaches and initiatives have been attempted in the rural sector, including a focus on target villages and well-organised groups. For instance, many NGOs have promoted agro-eco technologies and trained farmers as community promoters (Martínez and Ramírez 1999, Ramos 1998). Other initiatives have been taken by the Mexican Government (SAGARPA 2001, Zermeño and Domínguez 2000); the Catholic Church (Bautista 1996, Martínez and Ramírez 1999) and even well-organised villages and/or farmer organisations acting in their own interest (Chapela 1999, Pérezgrovas *et. al.* 1997, Santos *et. al.* 1998). Some researchers have also launched efforts of their own (Alemán 1998, Jiménez *et. al.* 1997, Mata 1998 & 1999). Unfortunately, many interventions have shown only localised impact. According to Kraemer (1993), this is because several interveners only focused on technologies and skills. Some misused or misunderstood the word empowerment, and also the local contexts in which their initiatives were run. Others seem to be just following along a path apparently mapped out by a fashionable term demanded by donor agencies.

The earlier chapters of this thesis have analysed how villages are configured and run, and how development interventions are tackled in local contexts. Those chapters also highlighted actions taken by villagers to meet their needs, and govern their lives, but also the strategies they used in pursuing their own development. In other words, the evidence has shown how people frame actions to address local priorities. Those chapters also showed that village configurations and dynamics depended very much on systems of social order. Insights on daily practices helped identify local power sources, relations and manifestations, but also provided an initial glimpse of empowerment and development processes at work.

Basically two main empowerment processes were implicitly identified in the two villages: *individual* and *collective* empowerment. Both were shaped by the type of actors, actions, relations and rules that prevail locally. The *individual* empowerment process is basically related to personal capacities to act upon individual and/or family needs or aspirations. The sources of this type of empowerment may be diverse but mostly depend on how people engage with different local initiatives. The *collective* empowerment process has to do with a sense of communality cohesion. This is manifested in capacities to act as a group, through local organisations capable of moving the villages forward. The main mechanism for this type of empowerment (it has been argued) is the governance system of *Usos y Costumbres* (U&C).

Nevertheless, both empowerment processes allowed people to engage with local power structures or in the creation and shaping of alternative spaces for collective action (see chapters 4-6). Beyond preliminary identification of these empowerment processes, empowerment begins to come into

focus when people engage in personal or collective development activities. This is called by Freire (1971/2000 & 1998) 'emancipation' or empowerment for individual development.

The present chapter attempts to map local visions of empowerment and development in terms of *importance*, *current situation* and *capacities* of both individuals and villages. The basic idea was to let people provide flexible answers, but at the same time to group viewpoints for analysis. Then, the workshops were conducted and different semi-structured interviews designed in order to blend participatory and socio-anthropological methods and tools (further details on the procedure see chapter 2 and Appendices 1 & 3). This way allowed the inclusion of information from both *front* and *back* stages into the assessment exercises.

The participatory workshops helped out to analyse local problems and to identify the local versions on empowerment-development and its indicators[71].The semi-structured interviews were conducted as soon as the areas and indicators of empowerment and were worked out. Answers from the semi-structured interviews were scaled as indicated in Table 8.1. This information was then used to graph and interpret individual and village views on empowerment.

Table 8.1. Scale or range of values for the codification of answers.

0	Bad	Null	Nothing	Bad
1	Regular	Weak	A few/little	Enough
2	Good	Important	Enough/sufficient	Well
3	Very good	Very important	Very Much	Very well
4	Excellent	Fundamental	Crucial	Excellent

8.3 Findings

Analysing local notions of empowerment: a participatory exercise

Initially, it was found necessary to look at the concept of empowerment in the Spanish language. The closest was *emancipación* (emancipation) but this was mostly used and understood by literate people. In villages with high numbers of illiterates and language barriers we needed to find out the closest local word(s) and expression(s) to empowerment.

During an analysis of local language and discourse, three main concepts emerged as related to the notion of empowerment in the villages investigated. The first was *capacidades,* which includes capacities, abilities and skills to act over problems. The second, *mejores condiciones de vida,* means to achieve a better condition of life, locally called *progreso* (progression, improvement or development). Finally *felicidad en paz* means happiness in peace. This set of terms seems to confirm that empowerment in local use shows a connection with the notion of development.

Taking into account *capacidades, progreso* and *felicidad* as the main related concepts underpinning discourses of empowerment and development, a series of three workshops was conducted in order to figure out village accounts (see chapter 2, section on workshop implementation). Alongside the workshops informal interviews with villagers suggested that progreso[72] was something to do with a personal or collective process in which capacities are built to meet local needs, address problems and achieve aspirations.

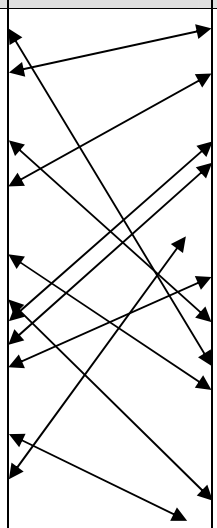
However, during the workshops some particular expressions emerged to reinforce the link in local usage between progress, empowerment and development. The most frequently mentioned notions were scored and ranked, and are shown in Table 8.2. During the workshops some tough discussions took place, especially when emotions or personal interests were apparently touched. Although different words emerged and were ranked differently in the two villages, all basically

[71] The identification was done as follows: *listing* as the identification of elements or ideas from a brain storm. *Clustering* as the defining small groups or bunch out of a big list of elements. *Scoring* as the number of points or votes given to each element of a group. *Ranking* as the process of positioning (placing) items such as individuals, groups or businesses on an ordinal scale in relation to others. A list arranged in this way is said to be in rank order

[72] Rather than use the word *empoderamiento* (empowerment) during the workshops, the people were asked how to achieve their development (*como lograr el progreso*).

remain closely related to the idea of personal and collective growth. *Capacities, improvement, happiness* and *dignity* were commonly mentioned words relating to the field of empowerment. In general, a picture of empowerment emerges as a process in which people look to gain new knowledge, abilities and competences for personal and collective growing in order to deal with local concerns and build their lives and destinies. This agrees with the idea of empowerment proposed by Freire (1971/2000) and the notion of emancipation as advocated within the framework of liberation theology, stressing adult education as a mean to move forward in peoples' lives.

Table 8.2. Meanings and expressions associated with *progreso* as an 'empowerment-development' process at village level.

El Oro		California
• *'Have enough health, food, love and money to be happy'* • *'Know how to achieve our progreso as village and individuals'* • *'Respect everything what is surrounding us'* • *'Be and act united because union makes us stronger'* • *'Show with actions what we are capable to do for ourselves and villages'* • *'Make our dreams come true'* • *'Stop being ignorant'* • *'Know how to look for better horizons'* • *'Learn from other people and interact with equality'* • *'Live and face life with wisdom, intelligence and dignity'* • *'Try to be better everyday'*		• *'Know how to reach our goals as village and individuals'* • *'Act united because in that way we are stronger'* • *'Avoid being ignorant'* • *'Know how to turn our heads to other directions and find better horizons'* • *'Be better than yesterday and much better in future'* • *'See more abut the world and learn from others with dignity'* • *'Practice the respect for everything what is around us'* • *'Have good health, food, plenty of love'* • *'Being capable to act upon our necessities and build our destiny as a big family (village)'* • *'Be happy"* • *'Make our dreams a reality'* • *'Fight battles of life with intelligence and dignity'*

Nevertheless, in addition to the previous expressions, during the workshops there were also some critical voices from both villages. Tito (33) argued that *'...our progreso can be achieved only if nobody puts tricky legal or economic obstacles in our lives'. 'If we really belong to often mentioned Mexican nation, we must be then respected and taken into account at least for the initiatives affecting our lives...'* Alabán (39) added *'we can also contribute to the improvement of our conditions. We are also Mexicans with something to say...'* Eufrosina (42) stated that *'our capacities can always be improved but [it] depends on what we want and on how the government wants us to be integrated...'*

Eduardo (43) from California commented *'...the local resources are only ours and because they were gained under threats, we must be able to defend them at any cost, anytime'.* Francisco (58) explained *'we and our organisations need to be respected. If there is something wrong to the outsiders' eyes, let's analyse it but at the same level...' '[Of course] we need resources and information, but we also demand respect for our rights and lives...' 'Those resources need to be put at the right place and allow us to construct our destiny.'* Rubinoy (28) said *'we cannot be happy if we cannot meet our basic needs...'*

These comments have a strong charge of criticism. Criticism as well as reflection is important if we are to understand empowerment as village process. In general, these critical comments also relate to *local capacities, knowledge, information and resources needed for personal and local development*. But they also implicitly express the notion that capacities without actions lead nowhere and that goals and dreams need to be actually achieved. Nevertheless, a common word often used by the villagers mentioned above was *'dignity', and this* represents a key concept in the analysis. Dignity was described by critical people such as Tito in the following terms: '*the demand is for respect for us, our villages, natural resources, identity, lives and values, but always keeping our feet on ground as a collective*.' This introduces what might then be called *collective dignity*.

On the other hand, an old person from California mentioned *'... some people have come across to our village with several intentions. Some came with a "suitcase" of projects; others with a "package" of political discourses. Unfortunately some have tried to cheat, buy or offend us, [and undermine] our will. I preferred to close myself to those people'.* He also added: *'I am an illiterate person but let me tell you that if you accept a price for your will, you also sell your dignity. My dignity is priceless. I know some people who got paid and, honestly, they cannot look at me directly in the eyes, because deeply in their hearts they are broken. Hopefully, they know that'.*
Another old person from El Oro was basically putting the finger on the boundary with his comment: *'If our life is to be affected by others, those who push us to live in poverty, then we must learn to face it with dignity and be proud of ourselves. God will punish those affecting us but a person without dignity is always vulnerable to be corrupted and misbehave anywhere. I always say that one must die with dignity and God will reward you in heaven'.*

These last examples clearly bring out the importance of *personal dignity* and control over one's life, however difficult, as an aspect of personal empowerment. The issue seems to be deeply important in both villages. Interviewed villagers often stated their requirement for respect and honour in village life. According to them the reason lies in the system of *usos y costumbres* (U&C) that demands from them much personal engagement. Thus U&C establishes or frames the space within such local values are reinforced. Therefore U&C is not only regulatory but establishes certain social values and patterns of behaviour deserving of honour and dignity. These values are publicly enacted and reinforced through the rituals of daily life. However, local religious beliefs also seem to play a crucial role in establishing norms of respectability, as seen in chapters five and six.

In this sense, *collective and individual progreso can* be interpreted as a life-long social and human process through which the actions of villagers meet group and individual aspirations. An old man from El Oro stated that 'it *is very important to feel like we have achieved all what we wanted in our lives because sooner or later we have to pass away. At that moment, the most important issue is the feeling of leaving this world in peace, and [for that] you must be proud of yourself. I would not like to die feeling frustrated or regretful about my life and my acts'*. Therefore, it is important to point out again that empowerment and development need to be understood from the perspective of the (autonomous) life trajectories of both the people and the villages in which they are immersed.

Criteria, areas and indicators

Once the meaning of empowerment-development as something highly related to local life trajectories was figured out, the workshops - conducted to analyse local problems and actions taken to address them – then allowed identification of criteria, areas and indicators to assess degrees of empowerment or disempowerment. These data are presented in Table 8.3.

The process of getting these indicators was as follows. During the workshops, the villagers were invited to identify and discuss all the local problems and actions to solve those problems. The workshop facilitator used invited the villagers to rank the problems. To this end a matrix was used in which each problem was weighed against the other problems (*confrontar los problemas*, see Geilfus 1997 and Pretty *et. al.* 1995). Later on, they were asked to reflect on the way of solving the problems. They identified areas which they considered could 'reflect' the success of the actions taken to solve the total of problems. Within each of these areas they then identified indicators. As soon as the large list of indicators was developed (see Table 8.3), again, villagers were asked to rank these indicators, using the same method as used to rank the problems. Thus, the most repetitive and thereby the most important indicators resulted. In the end, the list of indicators per area was polished according to the number of repetitions during the ranking (from the matrix). The final result was the table as presented in table 8.3.

The table shows the main (if rather minimal) differences between the two villages are to be found in the listing, scoring and ranking of indicators; 115 indicators were identified, listed and discussed in El Oro and (coincidentally) 116 in California. Most of them are related to the social and environmental criteria, which suggest that locals look at the villages and their development first in terms of social dimensions - 33 and 35 indicators respectively for El Oro and California respectively

- and environmentally - 33 indicators per village. These areas take precedence over economic-productive or political and cultural criteria.

Table 8.3. Components of local empowerment-development identified with the villagers of El Oro and California (grouped in order of importance for the villagers).

Criteria	Area	Indicator El Oro	Indicator California
Social	Health	• Knowledge on how to manage illnesses • Attention given (& care) • # of local illnesses • Most frequent illnesses • Availability of medications • Presence of Infrastructure • Presence of doctor • Distance to reach the closest medical centre	• Presence of doctor • Presence of Infrastructure • Most frequent illnesses • # of local illnesses • Availability of medications • Attention given (& care) • Knowledge on how to manage illnesses • Distance to reach the closest medical centre
	Education	• Presence & # of teachers • Presence of infrastructure • Learning of children • # graduates/year • # of students in the different school levels • # of people holding an university degree	• Presence & # of teachers • Presence of infrastructure • # of students in the different school levels • # graduates/year • Learning of children
	Services	• Availability & # of houses with water • Availability & # of houses with electricity • Availability & # of tel. • # TV & radios at the village & per family • Availability & km of sewers • Paved road (km) • Transport (own, village, rented or public)	• Transport (own, village, rented or public) • Road in good conditions (km) • Availability & # of tel. • Availability & km of sewers • Availability & # of houses with water • # TV & radios at the village & per family • Availability & # of houses with electricity • Availability of Internet (# of people with access to
	Migration	• Type (temporary or permanent) • Benefits • Other disadvantages • # of migrants • Main destinies • # families disintegrated • Working areas • Salaries	• $ get per family • Other benefits • # of migrants • # families disintegrated • Other disadvantages • Working areas • Salaries • Type (temporary or permanent) • Main destinies (# of cities and # of people per place)
	Leadership	• # of local leaders recognised, • Honesty • Efficiency & efficacy, • Transparency	• # of local leaders recognised, • Transparency • Honesty • Efficiency & efficacy • Openness
Economic-Productive	Production systems	• # & efficiency of farming systems (agriculture, livestock, forestry, others) • Handicrafts • # small family business • # species managed &/or recollected per family	• # & efficiency of farming systems (agriculture, livestock, forestry, others) • # species managed &/or recollected per family • # small family business
	Local organisation for joint productive activities	• # Cooperatives • # Working groups • # Other organisations	• # Working groups • # Cooperatives • # Other local organisations (SPR, triple S), etc
	Technology development	• # of local innovations & innovators • # of experiments & experimenters • # of techniques locally adopted or adapted	• # of experiments & experimenters • # of techniques locally adopted or adapted • # of local innovations & innovators
	Market	• # products produced *vs* sold • Difficulty of access to the market • Competition for selling products • Availability of storage places • Prices received at the market *vs* the local prices	• # products produced *vs* the sold • Prices received at the market *vs* the local prices • Availability of storage places • Difficulty of access to the market • Competition for selling products
	Resources	• Access to credits (#, amount, sources) • Technical assistance (type, frequency, usefulness) • Information (type, #, relevance) • Subsidies received (type, amount)	• Technical assistance (type, frequency, usefulness) • Subsidies received (type, amount) • Access to credits (#, amount, sources) • Information (type, #, relevance)

Table 8.3 (Continued)

Political	Local governance	• Efficacy of local governance committees & chiefs • Justice administration • Capacity to play different roles • Efficacy of local development committees	• Efficacy of local development committees • Justice administration • Efficacy of local governance committee & chiefs • Capacity to play different roles
	Other local political organisations	• # or presence of political groups or organisations • # of political parties present • # of people affiliated to	• # or presence of political groups or organisations • # of people affiliated to • # of political parties present
Cultural	Religion	• # religions, • Presence or # of leaders • # of followers, • # & type of relations between (non)followers	• # religions, • # of followers, • # & type of relations between (non)followers • Presence or # of leaders
	Festivities & celebrations	• # local festivities • # of other cultural celebrations or events	• # local festivities • # of other cultural celebrations or events
	Communal work for the village	• # *Tequios* (social & communal work) • # people who participate • # of tasks carried per year • Willingness of people	• # *Tequios* (social & communal work) • Willingness of people • # people who participate • # of tasks carried out per year
Environmental	Soil	• Fertility • Erosion • # conservation works • Productivity • # local regulations & sanctions	• Productivity • Fertility • Erosion • # local regulations & sanctions • # conservation works
	Water	• Supply (amount) • Local regulations & sanctions • Costs for bringing • Quality • Sanitarian management • # conservation efforts & works	• # conservation efforts & works • Local regulations & sanctions • Supply (amount) • Costs for bringing • Quality • Sanitarian management
	Forest	• # conservation efforts • Use (type & intensity) • Management (# commercial species) • Local regulations & sanctions	• Management (# commercial species) • Use (type & intensity) • Local regulations & sanctions • # conservation efforts
	Climate	• Presence & variation of rain along the years • Variation in temperature along the years • Presence & frequency of disasters • Presence & frequency of hurricanes • Presence & variation of wind along the years	• Presence & variation of rain along the years • Presence & frequency of hurricanes • Presence & frequency of disasters • Variation in temperature along the years • Presence & variation of wind along the years
	Wildlife	• # plants & animals of local use (food) • # of plants & animals for joy	• # plants & animals of local use (food) • # of plants & animals for joy
	Garbage & other rubbish materials (agro-chemicals, plastics, etc)	• # local regulations & sanctions • Type of garbage • # deposits (dumps) in the village • Presence of pits	• Type of garbage • # deposits (dumps) in the village • Presence of pits • # local regulations & sanctions
	Pest & diseases	• # & main pest & diseases • Cycles of presence • # & type of controls	• # & main pest & diseases • # & type of controls • Cycles of presence
	Use of fire in productive activities	• # people who use fire • # blazes/year • Local regulations • # sanctions	• # people who use fire • # blazes/year • Local regulations • # sanctions
Psychological	Local values	• Respect • Honour • Solidarity • Collectivism • Transparency • Honesty • Trust	• Respect • Transparency • Honesty • Collectivism • Solidarity • Honour • Trust
	Local behaviours & attitudes	• Source of acquisition or learning • Implications for village life • Type of local relations • # local social problems & conflicts • # aggressive/trouble-maker people • # people with good will	• # local social problems & conflicts • # people with good will • # aggressive people • Implications for village life • Source of acquisition or learning • Type of local relations

Some particular differences are worth noting. For instance in El Oro, the educational area includes an extra indicator, namely *'number of people holding a university degree'.* Another difference is in

production systems, in terms of where the indicator *'number of species managed and/or collected per family'* is placed. In the case of California there were also some extra indicators particularly in the services area (*'availability of internet'*), migration (*'main destinies'*) and leadership (*'openness'*). The balance of indicators is then more or less the same across the villages. The only differences were basically in their naming and placing in the village context in terms of the importance.

Table 8.3 also confirms that empowerment and development cannot be easily separated in terms of areas and indicators. This came out particularly during the discussions on problem analysis, actions taken and capacities for achieving local development. However, where there are differences these seem to reflect the varying local capacities to deal with needs and aspirations associated with those areas and indicators. Given these inputs semi-structured interviews were then designed (see Appendix 3). For reasons of relevance, time and funds it seemed better to conduct the assessment of empowerment-development by areas rather than going indicator by indicator.

8.4 Case A. El Oro, Oaxaca State

Village (collective) empowerment-development

This part of the assessment was conducted through the conduction of different semi-structured interviews and informal talks to the villagers. Then, Figure 8.1 illustrates three dimensions of local perceptions concerning collective empowerment - 'importance given to', 'current situation of' and 'capacities' to effect changes to specific areas of life in El Oro. Analysis takes into account the issue of power and its exercise (as seen in previous chapters), sources of empowerment and local perceptions on *progreso* (empowerment-development).

Importance

The 'importance given to' relates to the importance villagers assign to various areas of village development. Figure 8.1a shows that social and environmental criteria are considered the most important for El Oro's development. These are followed by economic-productive, political and cultural criteria. Water, forest, education and local governance are considered the four areas of highest important for local development. They are followed by local behaviour and attitudes and local values. The lowest are local political organisations, use of fire in productive activities and pest and diseases.

Current situation

The 'current situation' is related to how the village is seen by the villagers during the research period. Figure 8.1b shows that leadership, local governance, communal work and local values are considered to be the areas in the best situation in El Oro. The less favourably assessed are other political organisations, religion and use of fire.

Capacities-empowerment

The indices relating to 'capacities-empowerment' offer a picture of how villagers consider their village in terms of local abilities, knowledge, skills, information and other local resources, i.e. in terms of *collective empowerment*. Figure 8.1c shows that the areas of El Oro with the highest capacities are those addressing services, followed by health, leadership, forests, garbage management, local behaviour and attitudes, and finally communal work, local governance and local values. Low ranked issues concern out-migration, followed by resources (poor access to), climate (poor disaster management) and pest and diseases (lack of proper control). These low ranks can be considered evidence of where villagers think local development initiatives might pay most attention.

Overlapping the amoebas (Figure 8.1d) suggests that people evaluate local capacity somewhat higher than actual village development, suggesting untapped potential in El Oro. Explanation of this apparent sense of under-performance can be found in examples cited in chapters six and seven. In particular, local conflicts (internal and externally related), arbitrary exercise of power, and conflicting perceptions on development might be held to blame.

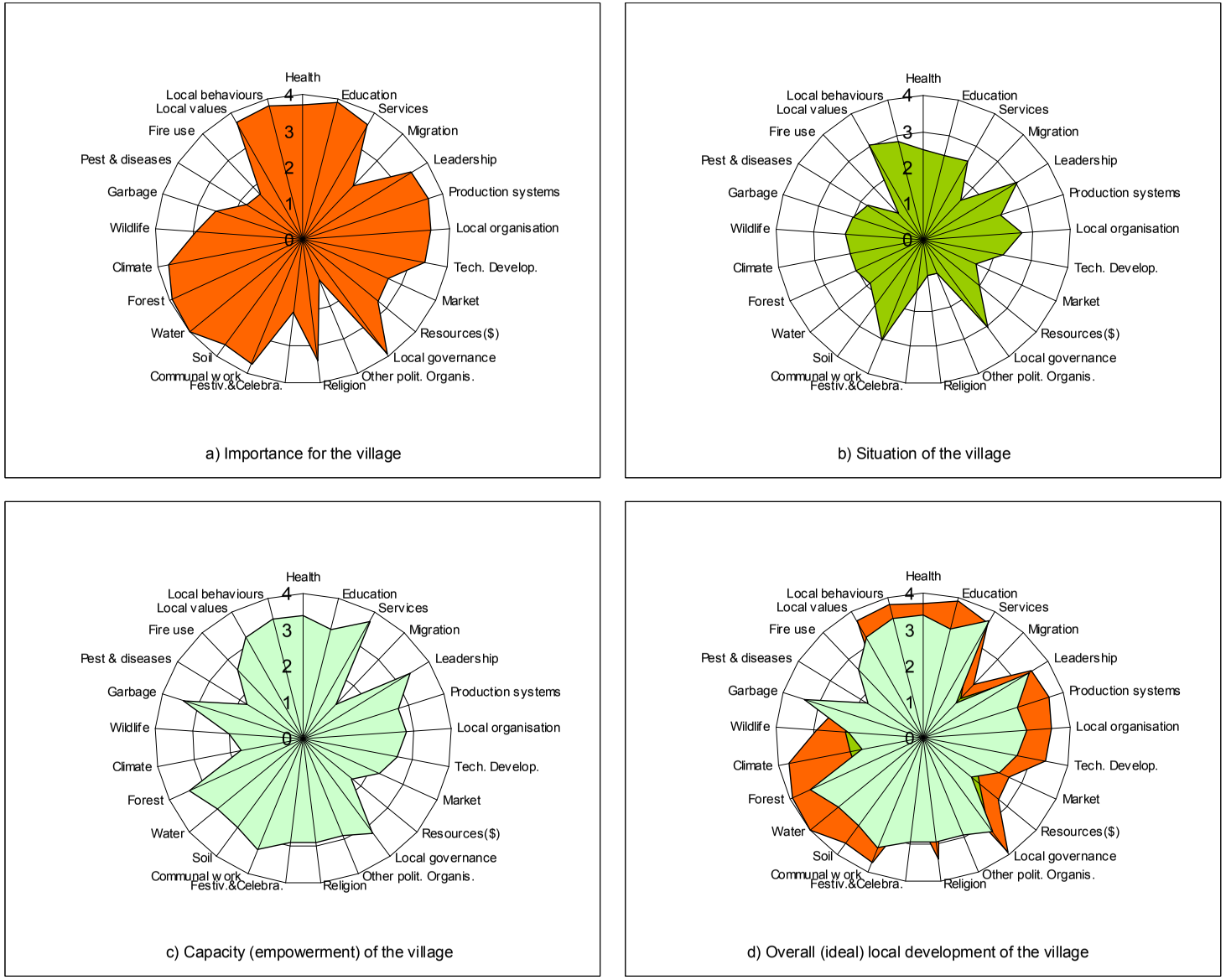


Figure 8.1. 'Amoebas' picturing collective *progreso* (empowerment-development) in El Oro.

Individual (personal) empowerment-development

Figure 8.2 offers the same kind of graphical representation of the importance 'given to' various factors and capacity-empowerment assessments for each of the main areas of personal development, as understood by El Oro villagers.

Importance

In this case, the 'importance given to' is related to villagers' visions of how various aspects of personal (or family) development should perform. Figure 8.2a shows that the key areas are local organisation for joint productive activities, water and forest, followed by local governance, communal work, leadership, local values and local behaviours and attitudes. Less important are other political organisations, use of fire, migration and education.

Capacities-empowerment

In this case, capacities relate to abilities, knowledge, skills, information and other resources villagers need to deal with personal problems, meet livelihood requirements and to pursue aspirations on the level of *personal empowerment*. Figure 8.2b shows that villagers place most emphasis on areas of communal work and management of garbage and rubbish; followed by local governance and leadership, forest issues and education. The lowest are basically wildlife management, followed by other political organisations, technology development and climate (disaster management), with soil management (fertility) last. Again, it seems to be implied that the low ranked areas are the ones with which villagers need most assistance.

Figure 8.2c once more overlaps the previous graphics. Here it seems that villagers assess their personal capabilities as lower than the *importance given to* various development areas. But in some cases villagers seem more *empowered* than the problem (as assessed by personal *importance given to* the area in question) warrants. This is true, for example, of education, migration, assessment of other political organisations, use of fire, and access to resources. Local accounts mentioned that it depends on efforts made individually and by the collective will. Indeed, local village committees and interventions were mentioned as the main sources of empowerment for development. Factors which impede e empowerment were linked to lack of opportunities and to local conflicts. Both types of factors have been extensively analysed in the previous chapters.

Some particular villager cases

This section presents specific information regarding four particular cases, based on individual assessments. These were selected out of the 30 interviewees, and show the pattern of ranks for the highest and the lowest empowered-developed men and women using the above set of indicators. Figures 8.3 and 8.4 show values for answers codified according to Table 8.1.

Importance

Figure 8.3 shows the personal answers on *importance given to* development areas. Looking at the details in the graphs, important areas for personal development are again local governance, local organisation, water and forest. Other political organisations and the use of fire are considered less important. This may mean either that women and men do not have any interest on these areas or that they can already deal with them. Men and women manifested considerable concern for personal development beyond mere economic aspects. Men had similar opinions about local values and behaviour, climate, communal work, and migration; women, by contrast, agree that the most important areas are leadership and religion.

Capacities-empowerment

According to Figure 8.4 there are some differences in the areas where villagers feel most empowered. In the case of women, they felt highly empowered to get access to resources, but disempowered in areas like technology and innovation development, control of crop pest and diseases and management of soils.

ESC – it might be noted – seems overall more empowered than SLL. This difference, in their own words, has to do with personal motivation and involvement in local initiatives, access to relevant local opportunities, and the need to ask permission from husbands to participate in local projects.

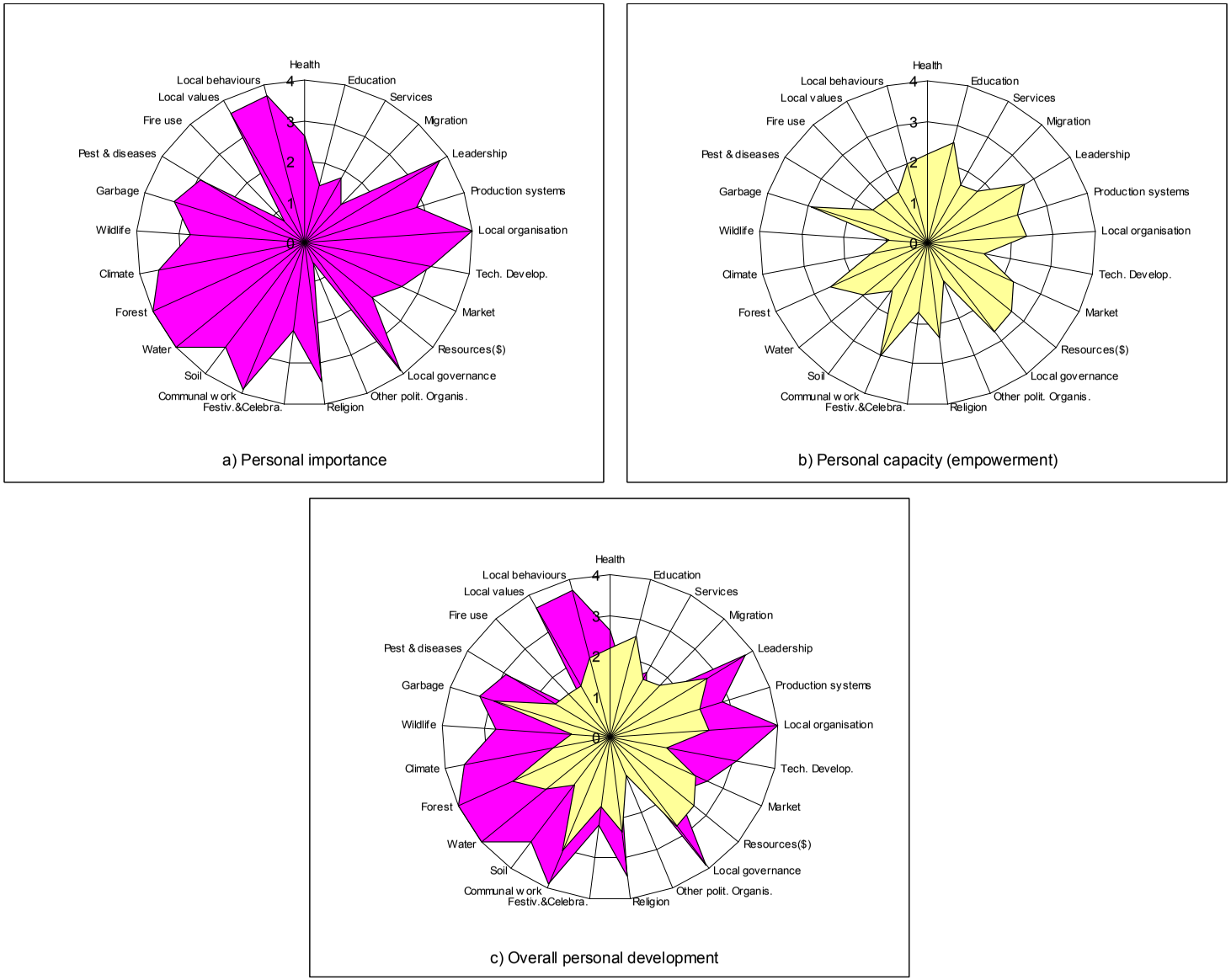


Figure 8.2. 'Amoebas' picturing personal *progreso* (empowerment-development) for villagers in El Oro

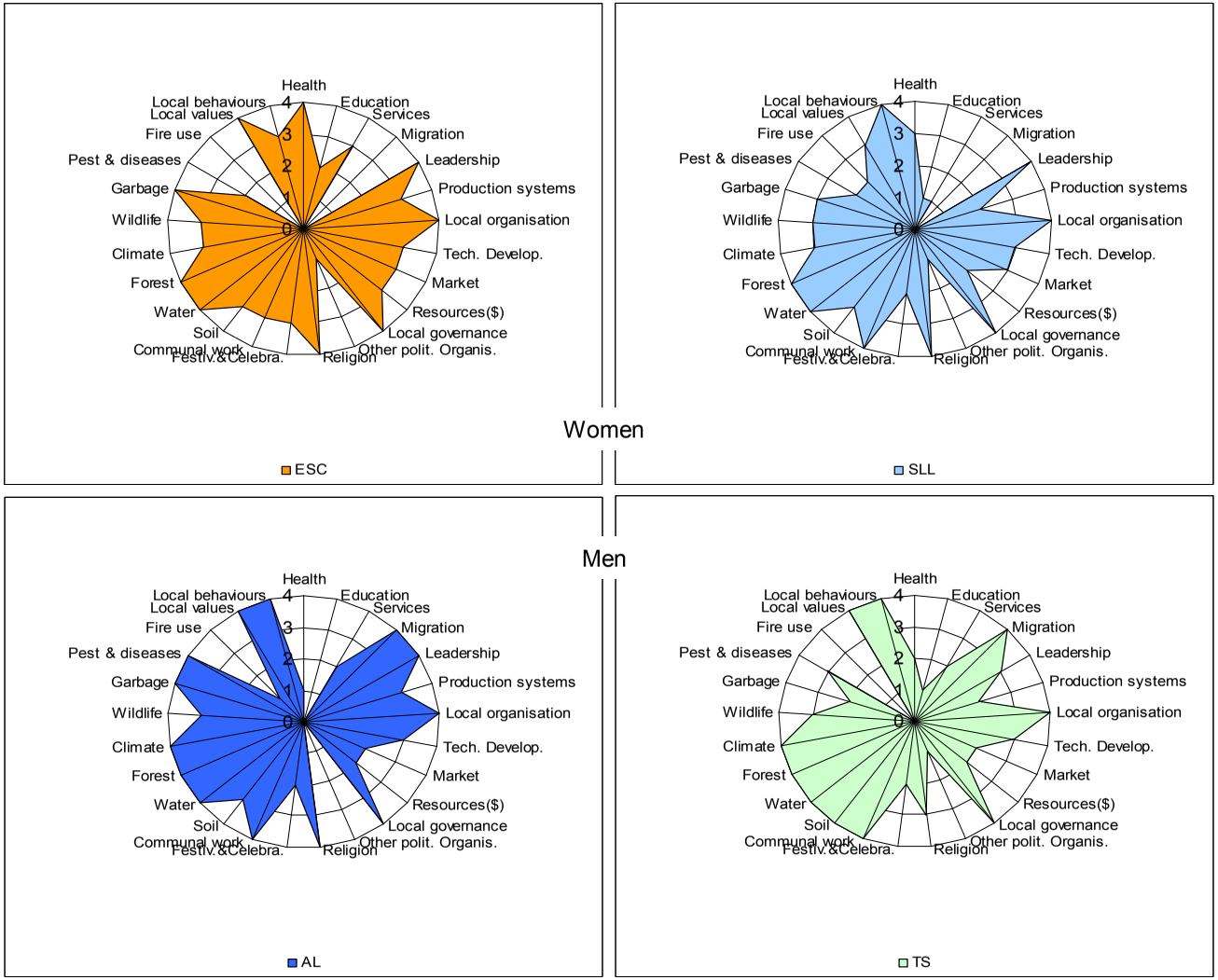


Figure 8.3. Personal *importance given to* the local development areas by four persons from El Oro.

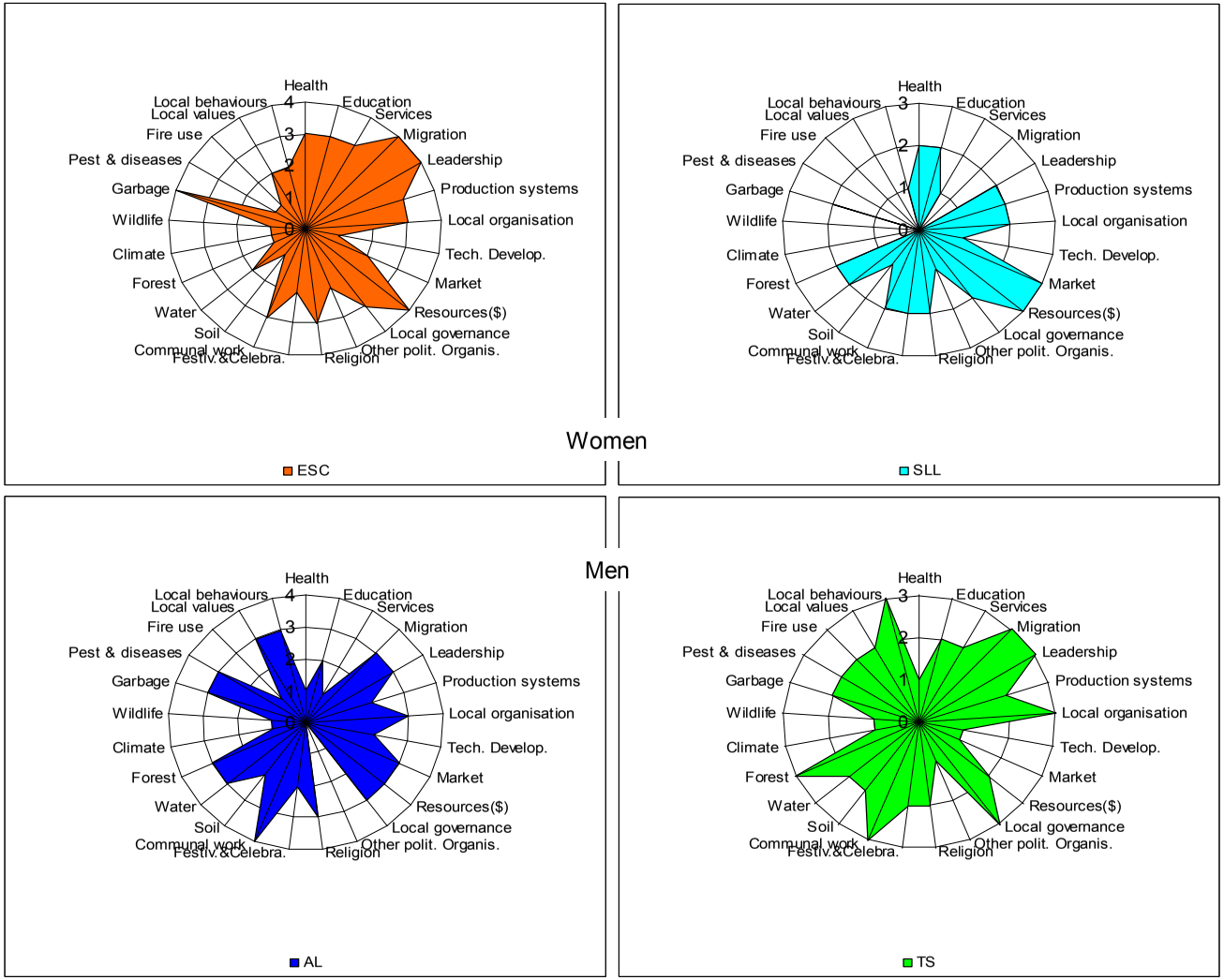


Figure 8.4. Personal *capacities-empowerment* of four persons from El Oro.

In the case of men, they feel highly empowered to deal with communal work activities and much less empowered to deal with other political organisations beyond the village governance issues, health, climate (disaster management), wildlife (management) and use of fire. AL seems marginally better empowered than TS. The reasons may reflect slightly varying levels of engagement in local processes and initiatives.

What do these villagers do to be or feel empowered?

The researchers then tried to probe these apparent differences in personal *empowerment-development through* interviewing the women and men considered in these four cases. ESC has been directly involved in a long-term training programme to be a village health promoter. Such training is given in Oaxaca City by officers of the programme *Oportunidades*. The training is meant for people from different villages. In ESC's opinion, her participation in the training, but also in village activities, has contributed to an increase in her personal confidence, skills and awareness of how to look for 'better horizons'. On the contrary, SLL does not participate in any local initiative and she is a single mother with two small children, which forces her to work very hard in her own small enterprise. The *Misión Integral* initiative granted her micro credit and some training to encourage her in running a small business in the village. In the case of men, they said they actively participated in the U&C system including local committees. In addition, AL is a local religious leader and TS has participated in different initiatives run by *Misión Integral* facilitators.

8.5 Case B: California, Chiapas State

Village (collective) empowerment-development

This part of the assessment was also conducted through the conduction of different semi-structured interviews and informal talks to the villagers. Then, Figure 8.5 illustrates the 'importance given to', 'current situation of' and 'capacities-empowerment' of the key areas recognised as important for development in California.

Importance

Figure 8.5a shows that water, forest, education and local governance are the four most important areas for the village's collective development. Lesser importance is assigned to management of garbage and agrochemical residues, pest and diseases (management) and other political organisations.

Situation

Figure 8.5b shows that the highest rated areas for collective engagement are local governance and communal work followed by migration, leadership, production systems, pest and diseases (management) and local values. Lesser significance is assigned to religion and garbage, followed by health, market and festivities and celebrations. The low score assigned to the current situation in regard to religion (while religion is rated as overall as very important for village life) points to the existence of internal and hidden problems relating to religious life in California.

Capacities-empowerment

Assessments of *collective capacities-empowerment* are shown in Figure 8.5c. The highest ranks address areas such as communal work, local governance, (dealing with) fire, production systems and leadership. The lowest ranks are assigned to climate (disasters), migration and the market. Low rankings seemingly indicate priority areas for strengthening group capacities at village level.

By overlapping aggregate rankings of *importance given to*, *current situation* and *capacities-empowerment,* Figure 8.5d conveys a picture of overall village development. The capacities-empowerment ranks seem higher than the current situation, which suggests a degree of under-performance in fact. In other words, certain necessary actions may be absent even though local capacities exist. Reasons can be found in earlier chapters in relation local social phenomena such as migration.

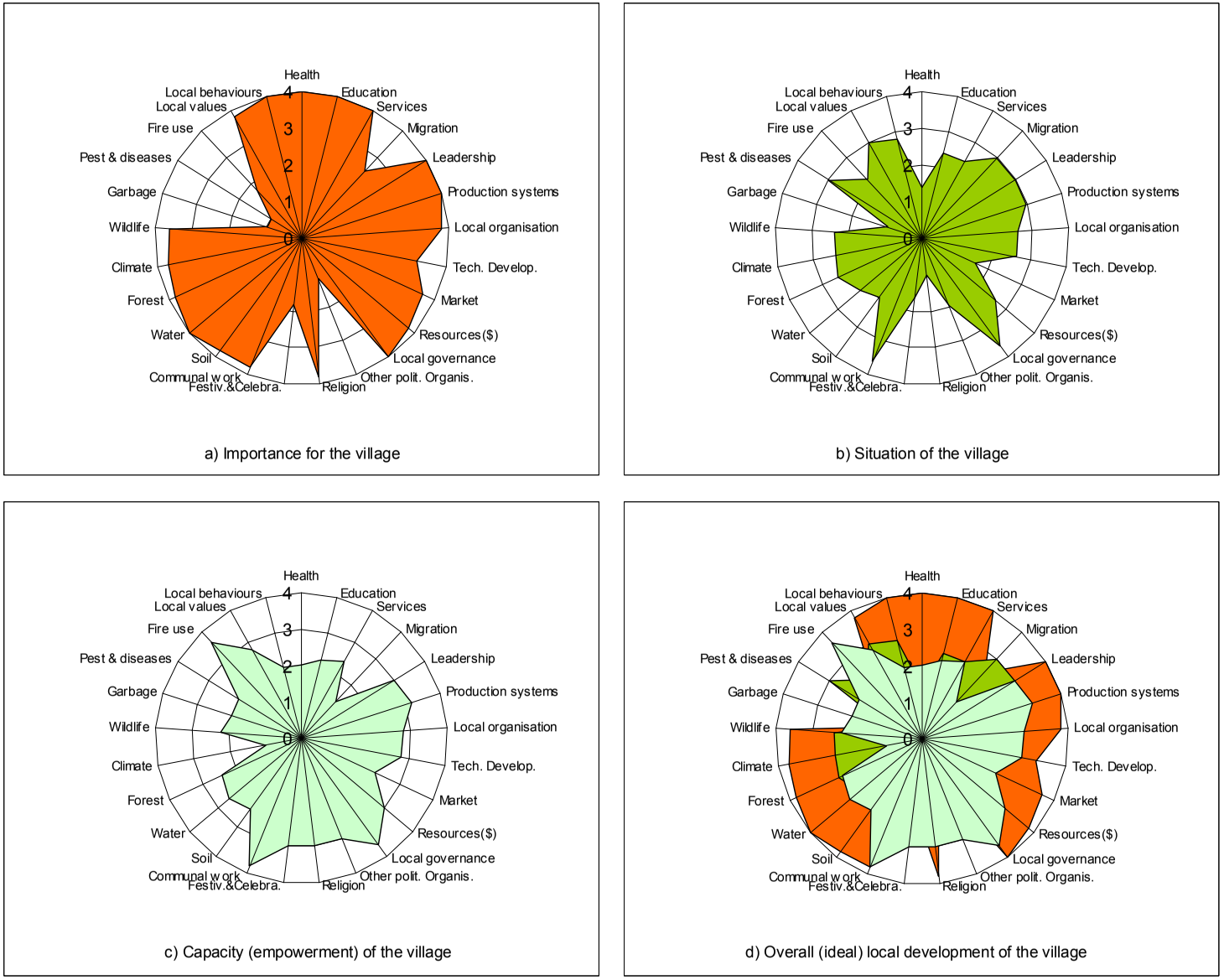


Figure 8.5. 'Amoebas' picturing collective *progreso* (empowerment-development) in California.

Individual (personal) empowerment-development

Figure 8.6 gives a graphical representation of 'importance given to' and capacities-empowerment for each area of personal development recognised in California.

Importance

Again, the 'importance given to' represents the value given by the villagers to different areas for the personal development (*progreso*). Figure 8.6a shows the highest rankings for areas such as water and local behaviour, communal work, climate (disasters), and local values. The areas with lesser personal importance are other political organisations, use of fire and education.

Capacities-empowerment

This is considered as *personal empowerment* to deal with local problems, meet livelihood needs and pursue aspirations. Figure 8.6b shows that villagers in California feel highly empowered in areas like communal work, access to resources, leadership and local organisations. They consider themselves to be less empowered to deal with other political organisations, local values and pest and diseases (management) and climate (disasters).

There seems a gap between the ideal development of villagers (*importance given to*) and the assessment of personal capacities. The reasons for this gap are diverse, as seen in earlier chapters. According to local accounts, some lack opportunities, or are blocked in fulfilling personal aspirations. Interventions by churches, municipal programmes, political parties and the local governance system were earlier seen to be the main sources of personal empowerment. These programmes tend to be particularistic (they benefit some but not all).

Figure 8.6c shows the overlapping of both graphics, revealing that the *capacities-empowerment* of California villagers is rated lower than *the importance given to* various development areas. In short, villagers lack the capacity to deliver all they aspire to. However villagers consider themselves relatively more highly empowered in education, services, use of fire and access to resources. The reasons may be found in the different efforts made individually, or as a result of collective action undertaken by local organisations.

Some particular villager cases

Here we also present four particular cases on individual assessments. Again, as with the El Oro set, these are the highest and the lowest empowered-developed men and women. Figures 8.7 and 8.8 show values for answers codified according to Table 8.1.

Importance

Figure 8.7 shows personal answers on the *importance given to* the various development areas. The women consider all areas to be 'important' (BJZO) or 'very important' (GAM) for their individual development. The same pattern is observed in the diagrams for the two men ('important' for LPG and 'very important' for FZM). However, by looking at the details in the graphs, the various visions overlap most closely - for both men and women – on the areas of water, forests and local behaviour. Education, other political organisations and the use of fire are considered less important.

Both the men share similar opinions about soil, water, forest, climate, pest and diseases and local behaviour as being the most important for them. The women agree on religion, communal work, water, forest, local values and behaviour as the most important for them. In general both men and women manifest high concern for personal and family development.

Capacities-empowerment

According to Figure 8.8 there are some differences in the individual cases in terms of *capacities-empowerment.* The two women - according to each area covered in the graphic - differ markedly from the men in capacities-empowerment. Although the women felt empowered on religious aspects, they also felt less empowered in dealing with other local organisations, political organisations, and crop pests and diseases (management). GAM seems better empowered than BJZO.

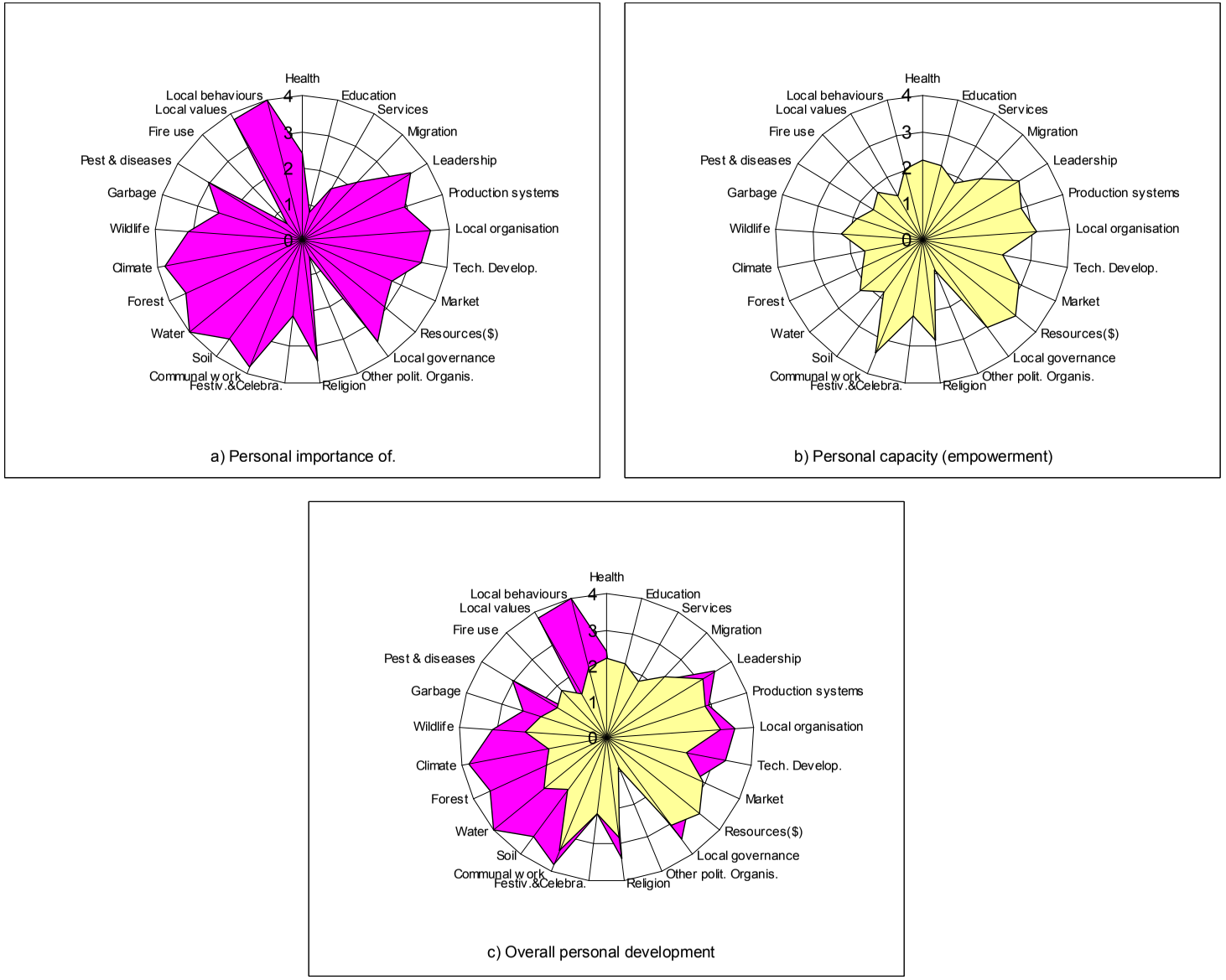


Figure 8.6. 'Amoebas' picturing personal *progreso* (empowerment-development) for villagers in California.

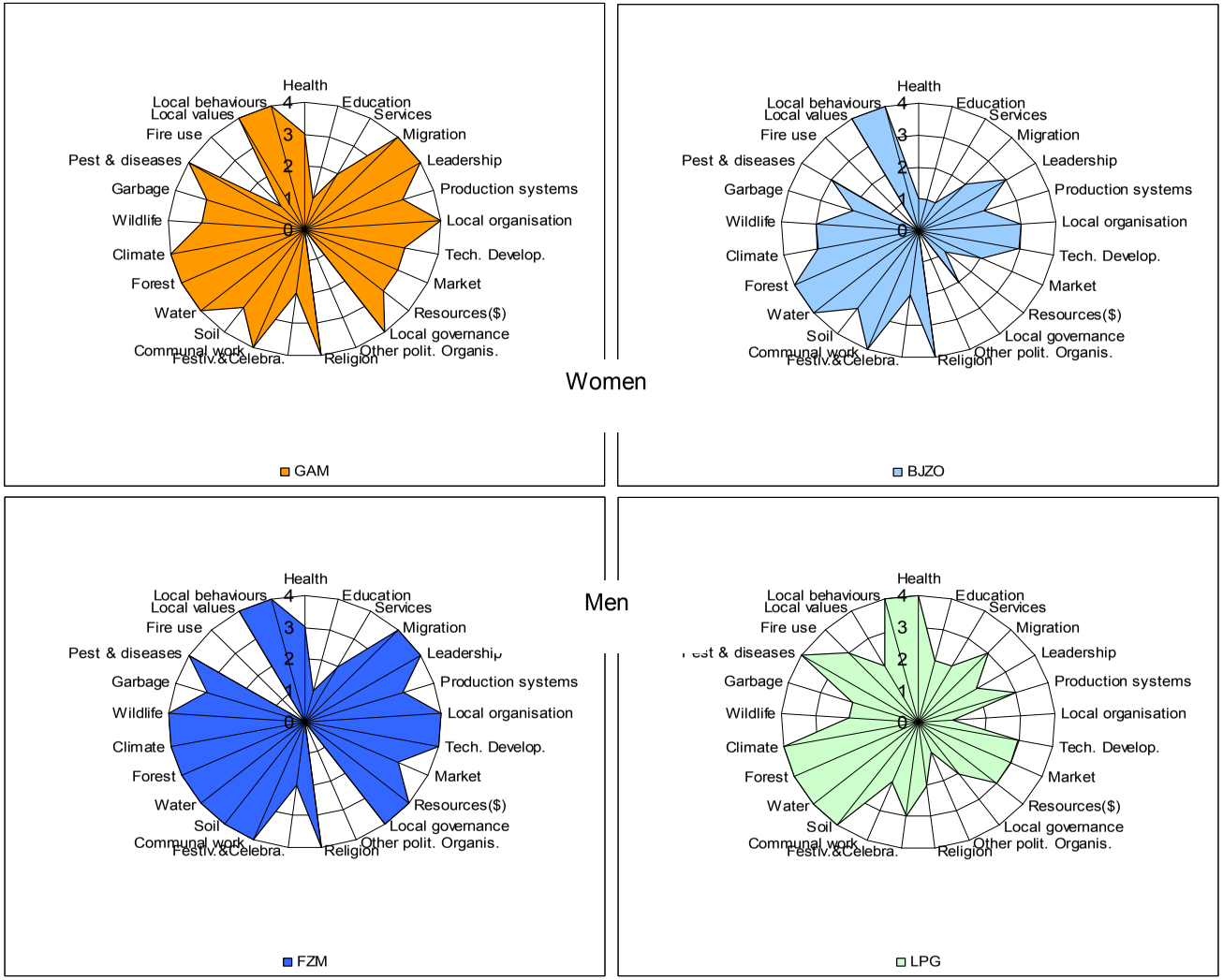


Figure 8.7. Personal *importance given to* the local development areas by four persons from California.

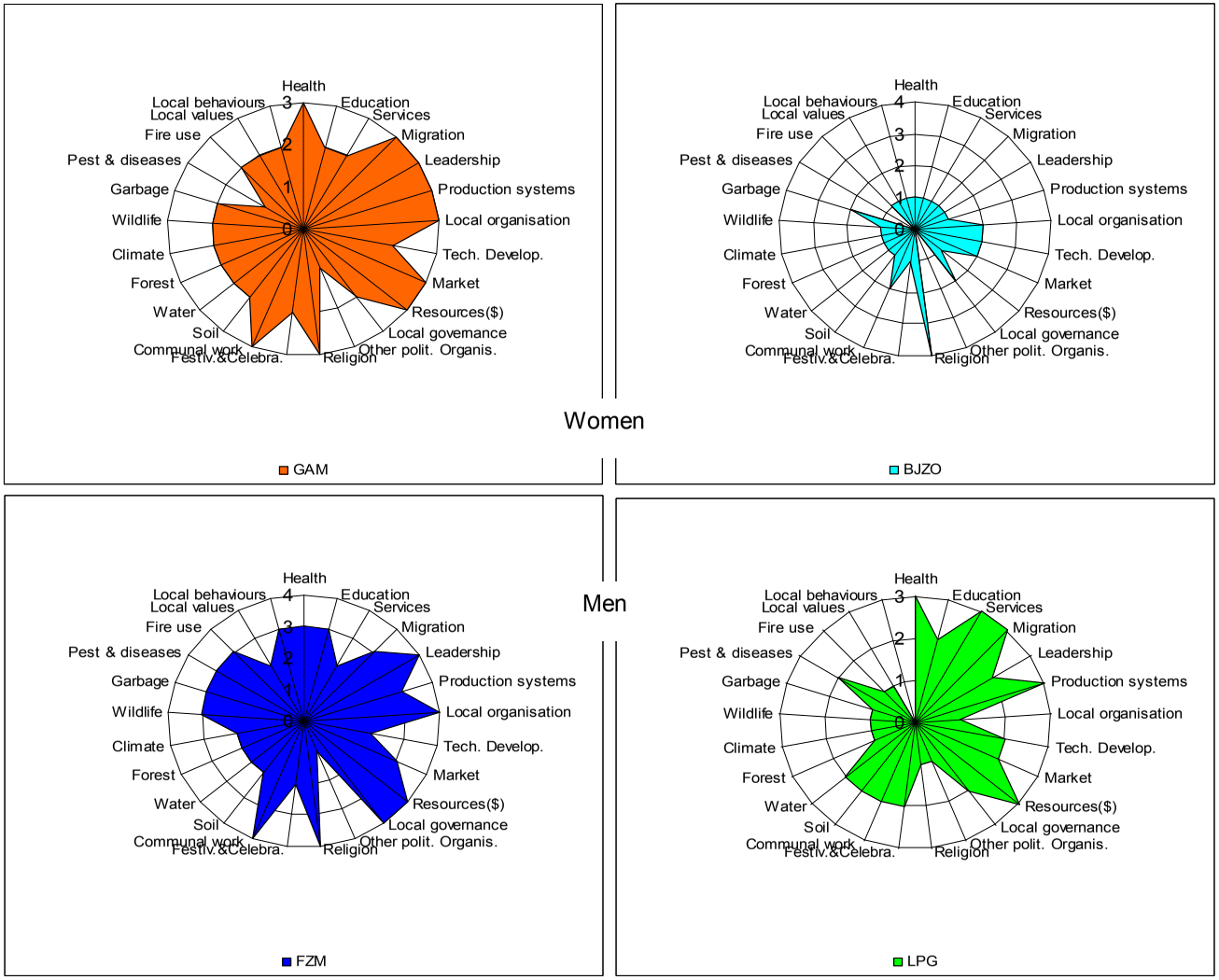


Figure 8.8. Personal *capacities-empowerment* of four persons from California.

In the case of men, as individuals they feel well empowered to deal with access to resources and less empowered to deal with other political organisations beyond the local governance system. FZM seems better empowered than LPG. According to their own interpretations, the reason reflects experience and age. LPG (24) is just starting his journey up the ladder of responsibilities within the U&C system while FZM (58) has been a very active local leader for a long time. However, local opportunities for men seem to be more available locally than for women.

FZM (man) and GAM (woman) both occupy a higher level of empowerment (according to their own rankings) than the two less empowered persons (LPG and BJZO). Nevertheless, the man seems more empowered than the woman, confirming the issue of gender and opportunities for women, as discussed in chapters five and six.

What do these villagers do to be or feel empowered?
More explanations were sought through informal interviews with the women and men considered in this study. It came out that GAM is the wife of a local religious leader from the Adventist church. She currently co-leads certain activities at the church. Besides this, she also co-leads a women's working group in the village. According to her, being part of the women's working group and assisting in church activities are very important opportunities. She sees involvement into different local activities of this sort as a way of building her own capacities.

On the other hand, BJZO has always been a housewife. According to her, this has made her dependent on what her husband says and does. She is very shy, and lacks confidence, even though she is kind to everyone. She says she believes in God very much. She also has two small extra sources of income beyond her domestic responsibilities. One is the transformation - once a year - of the *annatto* seeds (*Bixa orellana*) - she holds two small trees - into a red paste called *Achiote*. The paste is in high demand everywhere but is mainly sold locally and occasionally outside the village. It is used as a condiment in some typical Mexican dishes. Her other income source is as a baker. She makes weekly sweet bread to be sold in California. According to her, the knowledge on these activities is 'a heritage' from her mother. She has never participated in any local project-based productive intervention.

In the case of men, FZM is a local leader but also one of the most respected persons in the village. He has also performed in all the power positions in California. According to him, participating in all the village's *cargos*, and travelling and meeting people as a consequence, is one of the most important things for learning and acquiring different personal capacities. Additionally, he never mentioned it at all, but it came out that he is one of the 'hidden' religious leaders of the Pentecostal group.

Finally, LPG is apparently less empowered than FZM. He said he was just returning from the U.S. in order to perform the *cargo* as head of the Municipal Agency (MA) committee. He says he is totally willing to learn more about his village. He was more than five years abroad. According to him, he learns mainly by consulting others and trying out things. He also mentioned that productive ideas gained in the U.S.A. are difficult to adopt in California because village conditions are quite different from those he has experienced abroad. Currently he has been invited to participate in eventual meetings at the municipality in Villa Flores where he explains the local problems of California to the municipal officers, but also negotiates certain resources to be transferred to the *Ejido* Commissary (EC).

8.6 Overall similarities and differences: El Oro and California compared

Table 8.4 and 8.5 summarise the main highlights of empowerment-development in terms of the areas assessed by both groups of villagers. Table 8.4 illustrates that conditions vary in terms of *importance given to*, *current situation* and *capacities-empowerment*. The fact is that certain areas seem more and less relevant when the two villages are compared, as apparent in the table.

Table 8.4. Areas of local development with highest and lowest rankings.

		El Oro		California	
Level	**Condition**	**Highest/best**	**Lowest/less**	**Highest/best**	**Lowest/less**
Collective	Importance	• Water • Forest • Education • Local governance	• Other pol. org. • Use of fire • Facing pest & disease.	• Water • Forest • Education • Local governance	• Management of garbage • Facing pest & disease • Other pol. org.
	Situation	• Leadership • Local governance • Communal work • Local values	• Other pol. org. • Religion • Use of fire	• Local governance • Communal work • Migration • leadership	• Religion • Management of garbage • Health • Market
	Capacities-Empowerment	• Services • Health • Leadership • Forest	• Facing migration • Access to resources • Facing disasters (climate) • Facing pest & disease.	• Communal work • Local governance • Dealing with fire • Leadership	• Facing disasters (climate) • Migration • Market
Individual	Importance	• Local organisation • Water • Forest • Local governance	• Other pol. org. • Use of fire • Migration • Education	• Water • Local behaviours • Communal work • Facing disasters (climate)	• Other pol. org. • Dealing with fire • Education
	Situation*	• Open to new knowledge • Respectful for others • Environmental consciousness	• Being rich • Curiosity • Trust in 'others'	• Being respectful • Solidarity • Curiosity • Committed	• Being rich • Trust in others • Being healthy
	Empowerment	• Communal work • Management of garbage • Local governance • Forest	• Wildlife management • Other pol. org. • Technology development • Facing disasters (climate)	• Communal work • Access to resources • Leadership • Local organisation	• Other pol. org. • Local values • Facing pest & disease • Facing disasters (climate)

Thus it is clear there is no common or fixed pattern across the two villages. This has to do with local context at the moment of research moment, and type of questions asked, etc. Villages therefore might be better seen as complex social entities with high variation from case to case. Local development basically depends on many conditions, situations and perceptions, and scaling up of local development solutions benefits more from a flexible methodology capable of bringing out and contextualising variation (as attempted in this thesis) rather than any "one size fits all" approach.

Finally, it should be reported that local actors were very interested in having the 'pictures' presented in this chapter as feedback to them. In fact, preliminary results have already been presented, leading to some actions taken in line with the profiles presented. The Table 8.5 represents aggregate 'scores' per area by village for the various axes represented in the amoeba diagrams. It should be understood that these are merely indications of the relative strengths assigned to these axes, as a guide for local discussion and action. No calibration or standardisation has been yet attempted to show what (if anything) the numbers measure in terms of either collective or individual commitment.

Table 8.5. Values of most relevant areas in terms of empowerment-development by village.

Level	Condition	El Oro	California
Collective	Importance	3.1	3.3
(village)	Situation	2.1	2.4
	Empowerment	2.7	2.6
Individual	Importance	2.8	2.8
	Situation	2.4	2.4
	Empowerment	2.0	2.2
Overall total	***Progreso***	***2.5***	***2.6***

Table 8.5 offers a snapshot of the collective *importance given to* the various development areas in the two villages. Both villages consider overall development to be 'very important' (cf. Table 8.1). Something very similar occurs in relation to the collective view on *current situation*. Both California and El Oro rate the situation as 'good' or 'well'. In terms of *capacities-empowerment* El Oro sees itself as a little more empowered than California. Both villages rate themselves close to 'very good'. In terms of individual assessments there is little if any difference between the two villages. In regard to *current situation* people considered their individual position as 'good' in both villages.

The people from both villages rated themselves as 'good' in terms of *capacity-empowerment.* However, it was observed that people from California are in general more activist and encouraged to engage in different and new initiatives, but that they also seek, ask and find what they consider to be important for their village. In this sense, villagers from El Oro seem to be somehow more passive and concerned about what happens locally, rather than searching for external support. California's origins as a land occupation movement may be the key to this apparent difference.

Nevertheless, both villages return higher *collective empowerment* ranks than their people do individually. This indicates that a sense of collectivism is still stronger than individualism. This situation seems to be sustained in part by the system of *usos y costumbres* (U&C) and the stimulus this gives to collective action on behalf of village concerns. The issue was extensively discussed in chapters four and five.

8.7 Final remarks

In simple terms, *empowerment* may be summarised *as the individual and collective process to build human capacities, increase willingness and ability, and to engage in action for both personal and local community development.* This implies that local development is a long-term matter, and probably never-ending process. It would be a mistake to try and capture the process within too restricted a spatial or temporal frame.

California and El Oro, despite being remote villages, have both engaged in their own development processes and have built capacities to that end over decades. Governmental, religious or political interventions should turn their sights more to what is happening locally, and outside their initiatives, to make better use of these capacities. This seems to call for participation to stress joint initiatives.

Despite villager self-assessments rating development as 'good' in both villages, there were certain areas where the assessment exercise pointed to particular weaknesses needing attention. Probably interveners from the governmental programmes (i.e. *Oportunidades* and *Procampo*) and facilitators from the NGO *Misión Integral* should pay close attention to the outcomes of these village self-assessments in order to guide future actions, especially where looking to help strengthen the weak areas identified. However, it is also important to point out that increasing village or individual capacities would not necessarily, by itself, lead automatically to effective local development. Capacities need to be engaged in a fruitful institutional (including political) environment. A top-down state apparatus intent on buying votes cannot be a healthy basis for building on local self-empowerment.

Finally, the assessment itself proved to be an effective exercise in encouraging people to think about their own villages and themselves in a critical light. It was in fact a major result that both groups of villagers were so keen to receive and scrutinise the results of the self-assessment here reported. But the real development is what people thought or felt about the answers given. This indicates that the 'ideal development' as process may be very relative and might vary from time to time and from village to village. This is actually part of the complexity of village life in 'Profound' Mexico, as it collates the individual aspirations, mindsets, perceptions and actions, which eventually play a crucial role in shaping collectivism of both villages. Therefore, the picture here presented is no more than a passing image of those contexts and realities of villages and their inhabitants. Deep understanding of rural complexity – including self-understanding - will continue to be a difficult but exciting task and endeavour for all who struggle to eliminate rural poverty.

Chapter 9

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Abstract
This chapter brings together some main points that emerged from the study. The chapter comprises final reflections on the findings, and sustains an overall set of conclusions, lessons and recommendations.

9.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined how participation performs when local actors and their respective actions meet outside interventions, in two Mexican villages. The chapters have focused, in particular, on *Usos y Costumbres* (U&C) as a system of local governance*,* both as it regulates the daily life of the villagers and interferes, complements or clashes with the national governance system. An attempt has also been made to portray how the local governance system forms local leadership, regulates the decision-making processes and addresses village development issues. This analysis allowed recognition of different types of actors at village level, here labelled locally recognised and non-recognised. The thesis has also shown aspects of what we have termed, following Murphy (following Goffman) the *front stage* and *back stage* of local governance*. Front* stage analysis presents an image of the village as an integrated social system, and is the way villagers hope and intend outsiders to see it. The second aspect, adding to the local complexity of actions and interactions of actors, implies the existence of a part of the social system that is difficult to access and analyse. A basic point made by the present study is that these intricacies cannot be accessed through the application of 'quick-and-dirty' participatory methods alone. Penetrating to these darker regions requires a theory-guided ethnographic approach. Here participant observation and in-depth interviewing of key informants has been buttressed by some reference to Durkheimian and post-Durkheimian social theory (i.e. Douglas, Goffman, Stedman-Jones, etc.) to bring out the complexity of small-scale villages in their organisational aspects. The overall aim has been to use a socio-anthropological framework to complement action-research oriented work. The combination of approaches, it has been shown, helps to identify, frame and analyse the local complexity of the two villages, as well as to facilitate the identification of opportunities and goals by villagers themselves.

This concluding chapter integrates the main findings of the previous chapters. The importance of understanding the *front* and *back stages* in village life is related to research approaches and development strategies.

9.2 Small villages as social systems

The study shows that the two villages - El Oro in Oaxaca and California in Chiapas- are complex social entities. As social entities, the villages do not have any fixed or rigid form. They are better regarded as zones of dynamism within which a series of context specific environmental, cultural, social, economic and political elements clash and combine in shaping the overall social morphology. The villages serve to include and exclude potential members while also opening spaces for a variety of forms of social action and participation.

The U&C system is an important mechanism through which village dynamics take shape. It forms the backbone of the structure and functioning of the villages and binds the people into something resembling a system. Typical for small villages (Hunter 1953, Lowry 1965), U&C accommodates multiple functions that generate their own distinctive patterns, as villagers search for consensus and compromise. This is for example obvious when the Village Assembly (VA) and local organisations in the form of committees come together to discuss problems, development aims and the performance in the *cargos* (chapters 4 & 5).

Usos y Costumbres:

An administrative system reflecting local values

U&C is associated with a strong sense of communality (collectivism) in the villages – as was obvious from information given on shared values concerning behaviour in relation to village well-being. The role of the U&C in enforcing collectivism was also observed in the way performance of *cargos* is subject to strong moral sanctions, etc.

It is also important to note the role of U&C in the administration and use of local natural resources, including imposition of norms and conditions for access. Agreements are specified and policed on

how the woodland, wildlife and other resources must be used - i.e. the number of trees that can yearly be extracted and how pastureland is to be managed and utilised. To a certain extent, the regulatory and decision-making power is decentralised through the various committees, but always oversight from the VA. In practice, if someone goes against these local agreements, his/her rights are abrogated, and the family is dishonoured. In general, villagers still highly value and respect nature and the resources therein represented, even while acknowledging new economic pressures to exploit (see chapter 8). National laws seem to be adding to these pressures, pushing individuals in different directions and into different actions (chapter 7).

A political system with spaces for dialogue

The present thesis has shown local governance through the U&C to be the backbone of political life in the two villages studied, and that this governance structure is quite strikingly democratic, especially through its emphasis on inclusion in performing tasks of governance. It brings people together in the various committees and the VA, for dialogue, deliberations, collective conflict resolution and other decision-making activities, mostly based on consensus rather than on voting. The various committees and VA are the 'spaces' in which people interact with and balance out local power plays in internal conflicts between individuals or families, such as those concerning woodland or religious issues (chapters 6 & 7). The U&C also provides the space - in particular through the VA - where people collectively decide and thus shape the power to act against outside interference, particularly concerning the federal government and its various legal restrictions (chapter 7). The U&C – it has been shown - is the most important power structure since it serves as an umbrella for many local organisations and institutions in which sharing and distribution of collective power is realised and links between *community and communality* are forged.

The U&C also represents a system of diverse communication channels linking the people (via the VA) to the authorities and to the various local committees. The VA and other committees allow the villagers to use a range of types of language and symbolism to expose their personal concerns without fear since respect for every opinion is the principle. In the VA and the various committees, people have equal rights and treat others as having such rights; if these rights are treated with disrespect, the VA can punish anyone. This has created horizontal communication channels in which transparency is a high value, stimulates a type of participation to make collective decisions and gives people a sense of joint responsibility and cohesion. It thus constitutes a social mechanism to which there is widespread commitment and adherence (chapters 4 & 5). This same commitment and respect re-shapes and enforces norms and rules through which the existence of the village is safeguarded.

U&C as a capacity building mechanism

Capacity building and empowerment are closely linked. Empowerment is not possible without capacity building and it is both a very personal and collective process, related to the local development process. Local governance is one of the mechanisms through which personal and collective empowerment can be achieved through capacity building (chapter 8). People being appointed with different *cargos* during their life within the village contribute to the building of local leadership and other personal capacities (chapters 4, 5 & 8).

Empowerment was also visible in the two villages in form of opening of new spaces for action. This is clearly illustrated in the case of the local working groups (women's and men) that transformed from non-recognised internal actors into prosperous initiatives and/or recognised actors, i.e. groups that had a say in the VA, through which later they became active participants in the governance system. Organising women's and other working groups as part of an empowerment process created and occupied new spaces and opportunities for individuals and groups to frame their individual and collective actions. This has begun to challenge local structures, norms, traditions and local village roles (chapter 6). This in turn renews the local system by demanding that it change and adapt. It is no longer uncommon to see women actively participating by mandate, or representing their husbands, within the governance system. This seems an important beginning point for greater social recognition of women in a world dominated by male values (*machismo*) in Mexico. This capacity for institutional renewal and progress underpins the conclusion that self-governance (via U&C) is not necessarily a reactionary force in rural Mexico.

External actors, using a participatory approach, can sometimes protect new spaces for action; but a lesson of this thesis is that scope for outsiders to empower villagers is rather limited. The very idea of empowerment is undermined by outside intervention. Almost by definition, it is something that villagers must do for themselves. The thesis has made clear that villagers are indeed active in this process of self-empowerment, but often face daunting obstacles. Outsiders can then best facilitate local empowerment by helping prise and keep open emerging spaces for local action. This offers a different philosophy of development, as an attempt to strengthen and facilitate those local conditions and resources most likely to be efficacious in enabling people to shape their own lives. The villagers in this study have evidenced considerable and admirable ability to look out for the necessary resources to support their own initiatives. Development agencies need to be better at 'reading' these initiatives and in aligning their support accordingly. This is perhaps especially true in villages like California that have literally, from the beginning, carved out their own livelihood space.

Social cohesion of the villages

Inclusion and exclusion in the social system

Every villager plays a role in daily life and thus is part of the village as a social system. However, the U&C is characterised by its exclusion of important elements in the village. Historically the U&C did not give rights to women, *avecindados* (incomers or new-settlers) and non-married youth. Its strength lies in being a system of performative rather than discursive participation (Richards 2006 & 2007) but its weakness is that it grants opportunities for performative participation only to local married men (*comuneros* or *ejidatarios).* Only they partake in rights to use of natural resources, and in the obligations and rights of regulation of village life (i.e. participation in *cargos* and committees). The excluded take no direct part in local decision making processes and are asked to follow and respect the decisions of rights holders. Nor are they entitled to land and natural resources. Vallejo (2006) particularly points to the gender element: the exclusion of women, noting that women are relegated to domestic and farm activities without any right to share in exercise of power at the village level.

The present research confirms that this is broadly true, but also adds the finding that some of exclusionary tendencies are weakening or being challenged due to rapid changes triggered by external factors. Especially the youth feels relegated and excluded from issues that directly affect them, like for example educational issues and facilities for local sports. Being excluded, (male) youth find few opportunities for future realisation of their life plans in El Oro and California; they make up the major share of the migrants. Women find other solutions: they more often create their own local spaces for action. In California and even in El Oro some women have already been appointed to perform certain *cargos* on behalf of their absent, migrated menfolk. Others have been directly asked to perform certain duties on minor local committees. The participation of women is largely a result of their own initiative and encouragement via creation and shaping of their own social spaces for action (chapters 6 & 8). If there is further inclusion of women, this might give a new lease of life to U&C as an instrument of local self-governance.

Social cohesion and the back stage

The governance system of customary laws or U&C binds the villagers in a social system with common values, norm and practices. This 'embodied citizenship' represents social cohesion among villagers that becomes apparent when individuals act against the local norms and rules. When an individual chooses not to participate or abuses rules, the VA forces the individual to align his or her behaviour with collective values.

Social cohesion and a strong sense of communality becomes apparent when outside actors interfere with local norms, values and practices, such as the intervention of national government in the use of natural resources. For villagers the image of the village as a strong, cohesive unit is extremely important. This importance has likely grown under the pressure of national government policy, which considers the villages (rather than individual villagers) as units over which it 'exerts' power. Sanctions on villages for abuse of woodland or use of fire in productive activities are a concern to all villagers, and villagers typically feel national government laws as something directed against them as community. This has undoubtedly strengthened an 'us-against-them' feeling,

further reinforcing local identity and social cohesion. Villagers' concern for image also helps explain how social *front* and *back stage* issues are locally constituted. Whatever can damage image – eventually leading to unfavourable government measures – is automatically part of the village *back stage*.

The U&C also permits a *back stage* as part of its flexibility. It is a space where local conflicts are played out hidden from or not easily visible to outsiders. This way certain sensitive or embarrassing issues are kept hidden, such as conflicts with national environmental laws (chapter 7). Hiding these internal-external conflicts allows some people to look for a solution to their problems individually, thus breaking some social agreements. These sensitive issues were normally not touched upon in collective meetings or participatory workshops organised by the research team.

Lack of future orientation

In both villages, it was striking that villagers seemed to lack any joint future vision binding them together in a development process. Despite all the historical and local values represented within the U&C system, and its relative efficacy in dealing with urgent needs and collective tasks, it fails when pointing out future directions and strategies to strengthen village development. The two villages seem to lack of common projects to bring all the population together in the pursuit of a future goal contributing to development. Villagers seem to be more concerned about the proper performance of their daily duties and the perpetuation of villages' schemes, codes and traditions via present actions. The experiences of the villages and their interactions with the national governance system over the use of natural resources show that the imposition of a constraining national regulation can at least partly explain this lack of future direction, and the tendency of villagers to become inward looking. When conflicts with national regulations arise, the tendency is to seek to solve local conflicts on a short-term basis rather than focusing energy on exploring new long-term opportunities.

Cracks in the system

Conditioned participation and social discomfort

According to some villagers, despite their commitment to their village, they participate in the local governance structures because it gives them rights to access to local goods, services and resources. In such cases, participation is no longer unconditional but influenced by personal and family needs rather than commitment to the collective. Some people complained that the U&C is a slave system – in particular at moments when other personal priorities are at stake. Some villagers disagree with fulfilling duties, participating in non-paid activities and the endless meetings, especially where they lack (as they do) the means to measure the benefit of participation. Because of out-migration, people have also gained different perceptions, interests, motivation and influences, now manifested somehow in local social discomfort towards the U&C system. According to Blas (2007), the social dynamic of the U&C system now faces a critical discourse reflecting a changing village reality. At root, is an issue about power and the way it is exercised by certain villagers who may become part of local elites. This situation may lead to the loss of social cohesion. We see no reason from the data here presented to doubt this scenario. The implication is that the U&C must evolve and adapt, or break down and disappear entirely. We have offered limited evidence (in relation to gender issues) that U&C is flexible enough to adapt, but wider analysis (over time, and geographically) will now be needed to assess this favourable prognosis.

'Back stage' events and flexibility

The U&C system also shows flexibility. As mentioned above, it can open up new committees, and women are slowly creating their space within it. The U&C allows space for personal solutions to particular problems and at times allows villagers to act in conflict with collective agreements and interests. Examples include the cases of the old leaders in El Oro who secretly met with the Spanish entrepreneur to commercialise lumber, and those fined for mis-management of fire in California (chapter 7). These were cases in which villagers looked out for own benefits and considered collectivism only a second circumstance. The agendas and roles of those villagers were difficult to study since the flexibility of the system in such cases covered their tracks.

Adaptation and resilience of the system

From this study, it emerges that U&C is now confronted with a more rigorous national governance system than heretofore, that now seeks to impose itself on the local governance system, possibly provoking stronger confrontations. This may create a power-vacuum at the village level, with the latent possibility of creating more local conflicts, social fragmentation of villages and greater mis-management of natural resources (chapter 7). To continue to remain relevant, U&C needs to adjust swiftly to the changing local context. Gender issues, youth inclusion, a clearer role for the elderly, out-migration, paternalistic attitudes and individualistic behaviour are some of the most challenges it needs to address.

Our conclusion on when and why we find vigorous U&C in rural Mexico is that it forms a resilient local administrative system in a situation where the state neglects isolated and often indigenous and/or remote villages. The situation is replete with certain strengths and weaknesses. The U&C results in a high level of reliance and resilience when demanded. Reliance was manifested in California in particular, where villagers had invented a hybrid system capable of incorporating in-migrants and squatters in the same space and far-sightedly offered the opportunity to gain local rights to everyone. The renting of rights over land of out-migrants represents a resilience that allows some people space to attend to certain short-term responsibilities with others given the opportunity to work with their assets meanwhile. Women seem to be benefiting nowadays from both reliance and resilience opportunities.

Another reality is that the sense of communality is beginning to dwindle even though it has been crucial as a mechanism of village integration and social cohesion. This is also putting some common natural resources at stake through unsustainable management and regeneration. The 'cracks' that have appeared in the social fabric have allowed some external interventions to play an important role, but not always to the general benefit of the village. These include: a) challenging local structures, b) settling new relationships, but also, c) stirring up new 'hidden' conflicts among villagers and families (chapter 6). The fact is that NGOs and churches try to bridge certain local gaps by acting on 'urgent issues' and focusing on very local impacts. This keeps them away from regional and national contexts, and this represents a limitation in terms of thinking about opportunities for scaling up.

Nevertheless, the system of U&C will become increasingly ineffective if larger and larger sections of the rural population lose interest in it (and prepare to out-migrate) or actively oppose to it. However, if this suggests the U&C system is in crisis, it is also relevant to note that there are also opportunities. Evidence from both villages indicate that women, children (including youth) and elderly - the left behind – can be the sources of new and reshaped local leadership The new image incorporates new elements - e.g. more flexibility, progressive opportunities, inclusive and better direction for development - in any future sense, and these may contribute to better development of the villages. This may mean the perpetuation of a system that addresses local interests not only at village level but also in terms of family and individual needs.

Therefore, local efforts to reflect upon context but also to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the system will be necessary if there is any prospect for a revised and revitalised U&C becoming part of long term local futures. A first attempt was made to assess this issue during the current research period by paying attention to principle of entry points. In the light of the current attention for local governance systems and importance of democratic citizenship, the U&C system definitely offers some scope to look beyond a one sided-story and to enter into the intricacies of power, participation, governance and local development as human and socially constructed processes giving real social meaning to life in remote Mexican villages.

9.3 Local development as a process

The situation as described for the two villages in this study shows that rural problems are far from being solved or addressed properly. National researchers agree that the problem is a lack of importance given to rural sector development by the national policies (Alemán 1997 & 1998, Mata 1998 & 1999 and Nahmad 2004). This combines with a rapidly changing international context to make the situation even worse. An imbalance in monetary resources destined to solve

problems in rural sector development is an actual concern. Additionally, these scarce resources allocated often seem to become trapped at the bureaucrat level of institutions and programmes. The main concern of governmental agencies, political parties, agricultural and development offices is the proper 'delivery' of financial resources, ideologies or applications of laws, but they do not 'engage' with the village level as such. Therefore, rural sector initiatives are often rapidly translated into paternalistic support programmes (chapter 3), however well conceived, which then results in the maintenance of apathetic and conformist attitudes at village level.

In accordance with Mosse (2005, 2004 & 1998) and Seers (1969) cited by Mair (1984), this thesis concludes that interveners still need to understand that development is a long term process driven and thought through by human beings for human purposes, rather than being a set of technologies, policies or projects. The rigid implementation of governmental policies and laws was observed to be automatically imposed and constraining upon local people. Their needs were being dressed rather than attended. This is one of the reasons for the abundance of misunderstandings, contradictions, failures and lack of interconnections among stakeholders in the investigated villages. State interventions – framed within cash injection or technology transfer programmes and policies - created paternalistic, apathetic and conformist attitudes in some villagers. *Providing the fish rather than training people for fishing* seems to paralyse local empowerment and development of people and their villages. Villages and inhabitants do not identify with such government initiatives and only look at them as short-term opportunities, rather than utilising them for the integration and enhancing of their own local processes. Reasons seem to be rooted in the way initiatives are framed and run. Even when it is not the intention of the government, the programme officers often understand the measures in top-down policy terms. This top-down mode of implementation leaves possible spaces for discussion and negotiation unused, or has them used as electoral hooks to attract votes for the next elections.

The lack of interest to look more closely at rural sector problems in specific detail represents a situation of disconnectedness between the national government and the world of villages. Thus, political or economic interests are imposed and often result in contra-productive local, regional or rural development initiatives. Consequently, actions are often misread, and even lead to local confrontations between villagers and outsiders (chapter 7), thereby consuming human capacity in local governance system to solve conflicts rather than the resources to create opportunities for development.

According to the chapters here presented, this disconnectedness is one of the main weaknesses in rural development policy in Mexico. This study also shows, however, that a strategy of interventions for local development, in combination with analytical research, can lead to identification of joint development actions to be taken. This helps confirm that there is indeed scope to for local organisations and villages to take forward their own development process.

9.4 Implications for practitioners and interventions

Development as meaning and process: two development directions

Considering alternative approaches for local development, based on the experiences in this study, shows that such approaches need to be further inserted into existing and/or newly designed democratic structures with better horizontal communication and dialogue channels, in order to assure socio-economic and political sustainability and impacts.

The reconsideration of the villages as social entities and the villagers as social constructors may be important for the targeting of local development activities. In relation to this, there are then two identified development directions. One - including actions framed locally via village committees, family actions, etc. - goes from the bottom (production systems) up to higher levels (village, and municipality). This can be called bottom-up or endogenous local development, and flows from the very local to the more general levels. This type of development process seems to be immersed inside the black box of local levels of development, and is not easily seen, studied or considered (Figure 9.1). Understanding better what happens inside the box - the empowerment of villagers - then becomes a means of moving the development process forward.

The other direction goes from the national down to the municipal level, but then tends to peter out, only reaching the local levels through specific (and somewhat haphazard) intervention processes - as seen in chapters three, six and seven. This can be called the state-driven top-down development process. Nevertheless, both development processes are placed in national and local contexts by particular policies and interventions in which diverse perceptions and ideas may clash when the actual level of implementation (from village downwards) is examined.

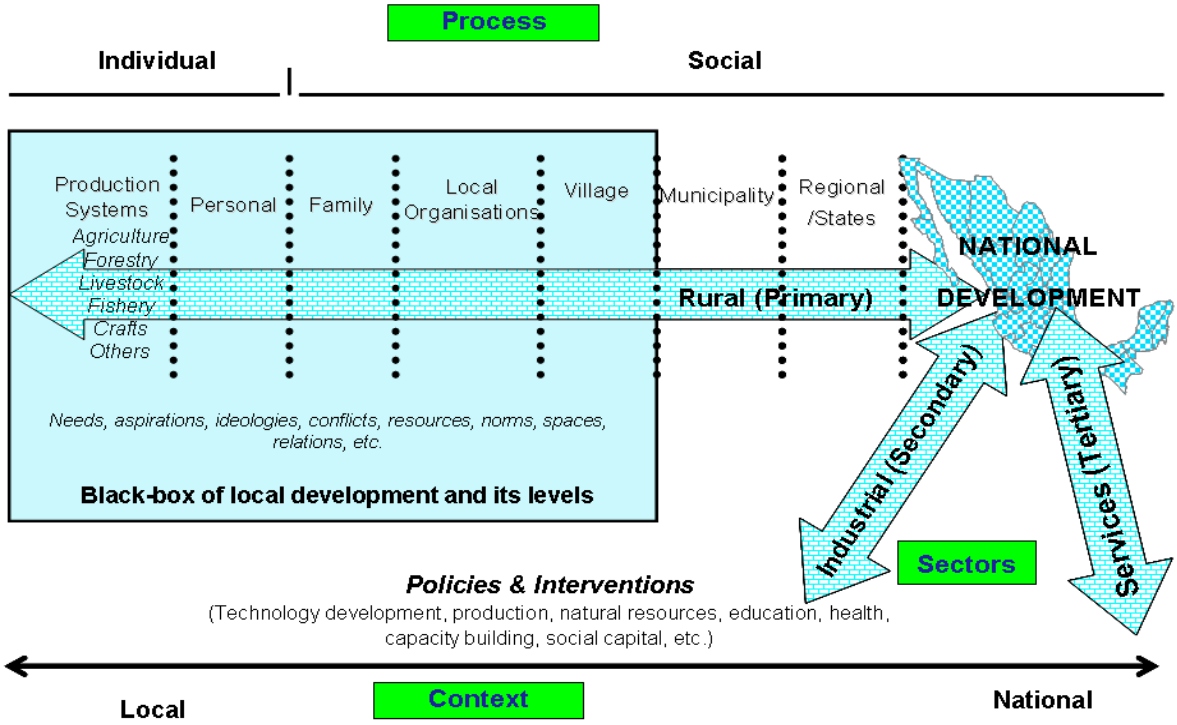


Figure 9.1. Decoding and projection of the *black box* of local development as process into the Mexican context.

Methodological aspects

An important message from this study is on the methodological approach and its usefulness to development strategies. It shows how action-oriented research on its own was not enough to arrive at a significant impact on local development in terms of empowerment of villagers and their village institutions. The discovery that the *back stage* remained invisible when participatory tools and methods are exclusively used shows the shortcomings of these approaches as implemented by outsiders. What the study also shows, however, is that the efficacy of participatory methods of analysis improves markedly when they are used in combination with conventional and more analytical research tools.

The research team involved in the study aimed to be more responsive to local interests and ambitions in the development process. The participatory methods and tools created an important and effective entry point, but then the village *black box* was encountered, representing an important layer of invisible complexity that could not be ignored. This resulted in a three-year process of collective reflection and enquiry, triggered by the initial participatory intervention. The action-oriented approach created little impact in the short term. However, in the medium and long term its results were more fruitful. It was useful in providing warnings about federal laws, ideas on local projects and fresh information about governmental programmes to villagers. Villagers also articulated a series of local needs that had not been previously identified, and new actors stood up in the course of the process. Finally, villagers organised themselves into different initiatives. For instance, there were the cases of the running of a local museum in El Oro, and the organisation of the bean growers and bus committees in California (chapter 6). In both cases, the research team assisted the villagers with requests to prepare letters to be sent to different institutions and organisations outside the villages. The research team also assisted in searching out information

about municipal, state and federal programmes from where some resources could be obtained to further develop and implement local ideas.

PAR: an opportunity for blending participatory and anthropological approaches

Participatory Action Research (PAR) with socio-anthropological perspectives was a type of intervention in which people from both villages easily engaged voluntarily during the research period. However, PAR may be more useful in one case than in another, or it may seem irrelevant to villagers. This depends on research objectives, researchers' willingness and openness to work in a team and to learn with villagers, but above all it depends on the entry point into the village, and how well this entry point serves to engage the local energy and enthusiasm. Underlying is the basic realisation of the importance of listening, observing and respecting local procedures and perspectives. In this study, the research team sought to align with these ambitions and considered the resulting cycles of interaction as a process of information exchange and collective learning. However, while conducting PAR, false expectations in the villages can be raised. Therefore, objectives, activities and agenda have to be clarified from the beginning to everyone. Otherwise, misunderstandings and conspiracies could make researchers struggle during the field research. Further details on the lessons gained in the conduct of this type research are presented in the Appendix 4.

One of the central lessons of this study is that participatory methods in the PRA (participatory rural appraisal) tradition only do half the job - the are often effective in encompassing the *front stage* of village life. Nevertheless, sensitive issues - e.g. conflicts between villagers- are problematic and it is dangerous to bring them out 'in public' before strangers during workshops. Nevertheless, the *back stage* of village life is as important as the *front stage*, and to access it requires some use of establishing and painstaking ethnographic methods often rejected by PRA researchers as too labour-intensive and time consuming. The image and interests of the village *vs* the imposition of government laws and outsiders were topics that often dominated these *back stage* investigations. For this case, extensive semi-structured interviews, informal talks and participant observation with key informants proved very worthwhile in elucidating both sides of the story. After long interaction with villagers, part of the *back stage* of village life became visible to the research team.

The present thesis has tried to show how essential were both sides of the story in understanding how villagers construct their own regulatory system but also how they exploited opportunities represented by the top-down national system at the municipal or state levels. Therefore, the combination of the two sets of methods and tools became useful in both making explicit how things worked but also in engaging local interest in making things work better. This helped bridge a gap between pure academic social analysis on the one hand and a pure activism on the other, and thus opened up opportunities for villagers to develop their own self-understanding of critical issues, and to contribute to their own empowerment and development process.

Nevertheless, the fact that this methodology worked and gave similar results in two distinct villages in rural Mexico suggests that it may be broadly applicable in other similar contexts in rural Mexico. The methodology recognises the potential of using a combination of PAR combined with conventional anthropological research to strengthen local organisation and capacity for development.

9.5 Final considerations

What does this thesis contribute with respect to the needs of those who are committed to intervene?

Doing development differently?

Activists working to support village development may want to consider the following points emerging from this research.

- People always make decisions based on local priorities because the local is more tangible than the global. If there is no a local project, people will act upon personal urgent and daily needs. What this thesis shows is that national programmes and interests are rarely appropriated as

intended. Paradoxical outcomes and unintended consequences abound. This is especially clear in the realm of environmental legislation.

- From this follows a need for identification of common visions and goals, framed into a shared project with mid- or long-term goals. Otherwise, development remains a meaningless word for the local people, and nothing changes.
- Isolation or remoteness may represent a geographical barrier for bringing villagers and other stakeholders together. This has somehow contributed to the social exclusion of villages over many decades. There is need for some meeting ground to enable villages and governmental institutions to discuss and analyse courses to be followed, but also to enable the building of trust and to create a sense of unity in common and collective projects.
  On the other hand, it is also important to assist villages to develop their own personalities, culture and knowledge appropriate to local development needs. The emergence of effective and meaningful governance via the system of usos y costumbres offers evidence of local capacity, and this should not be trampled under foot in asserting top-down control. What is now needed is more knowledge of the varieties and functionality of U&C in Mexico, and a thorough critique of its strengths and limitations.
- History and culture represent both a barrier and a source of learning. Many remote villages share a similar history in terms of constitution and development. This kind of history (of pioneering new land, or squatting on abandoned land) needs to be taken into account at the regional, state and national levels when figuring out a vision for the future. Examining these histories, as this thesis has shown, is a moment when villagers might begin to build up trust in a shared wider future. At this precise moment, the first scaling-up of participatory actions, approaches and initiatives might then be thought through.

A checklist for local development through participation

- Respect for, correct identification of, and evidence-based understanding of local contexts are crucial entry points
- Creation of a common vision and trust on what and how every step is going to be taken is essential
- Assure real understanding among stakeholders
- Define ruling principles and responsibilities of the game but debate and include the sanctions necessary to attain goals.
- Facilitate the necessary training and research on topics locally demanded and needed
- Set up platform(s) for permanent discussion of ideas
- Keep in touch as much as possible via different communication channels
- Undertake local and if possible individual assessments every time a step is attempted
- Draw all the lessons gained on lived experience
- Reflect on and share knowledge and information on successful and failure experiences
- Give recognition to the ones who deserve it at every stage
- Investigate permanently what is being done and the feasibility to continue along the same path in order to suggest necessary changes or identify better routes along the way

The overall aim should not be for outsiders to fulfil their own dreams (including the dream of poverty alleviation) but to strengthen local social capacities and networks so that all stakeholders are empowered fully to contribute to local development.

REFERENCES

Abbot, J. 1996. **Notes on participatory learning and action**. PLA Notes. Number 26. IIED. 73 pp.

Aiken, M. and P. E. Mott. (eds). 1970. **The structure of community power.** Random House. N.Y. U.S.A. 540 p.

Alemán, S. T. 1998. **Investigación participativa para el desarrollo rural: la experiencia de Ecosur en los Altos de Chiapas***.* Serie Estudios de Caso de la Red de Gestión de Recursos Naturales. Fundación Rockefeller. México, D.F. 159 p.

Alemán, S. T. 1997. **La extensión agrícola en México: sus aportes y limitantes conceptuales. *En:*** Argumedo, M. A.; J. Márquez, J. y N. Pérez R (Coords.). *Memoria del Primer Simposio Regional en Extensión Rural México-Guatemala*. Celebrado del 25 al 29 de marzo de 1996. ITC, Plan Comitán del CP y Centro Universitario de Noroccidente de la Universidad de San Carlos Guatemala. Comitán Chiapas, México. Pp. 59-66.

Alexander, J. C. (Ed.) 1988. **Durkheimian sociology: cultural studies.** Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, U.K. 227 p.

Alighieri, D. 1992. **Monarquía.** Tecnos. Madrid España. 126 p.

Almekinders, C. and J. Hagmann. 2002. **Facilitating change in up-scaling of participatory approaches: building personal mastery and organisational capacities.** Outcomes of a workshop held at Boxmeer, The Netherlands. 92 p.

Almekinders, C. and J. Hagmann. 2003. **Learning in PAU: linking participation with personal development**. Workshop outcomes. held at Held at Kasteel De Berckt,Baarlo, The Netherlands 1-4 November. 54 p.

Álvarez, F. E. 2006. **Monitoreo de programas sociales en contextos electorales: uso de los recursos públicos durante los procesos electorales- seguimiento de prensa.** Fundar: Centro de Análisis e Investigación. México, D.F. 39 p.

Arce, A. and N. Long. 1992. **The dynamics of knowledge: interfaces between bureaucrats and peasants. *In:*** Long, n. and A. Long 1992. Battlefields of knowledge: the interlocking of theory and practice in social research and development. Routledge. London, U.K. Pp. 211-246.

Arce A. y Long N. 1988. **The dynamics of knowledge interfaces between Mexican agricultural bureaucrats and peasants: a case study from Jalisco*. En:*** Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe. No. 43. Dic. Pp. 5-30.

Ashby, J. A.; C. A. Quirós y M. Rivera. 1987. **Participación del agricultor en ensayos de variedades en campos de agricultores: informe del trabajo en Progreso**. Documento de Trabajo No. 4. IPRA-CIAT. Cali, Colombia. 39 p.

Balboa, J. 2007. **Evítense la tentación de intervenir en elecciones: senadores a Zavala Peniche**. ***En:*** La Jornada. 12 April. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2007/04/12/index.php?section=politica&article=010n1pol .Accessed on April 12, 2007.

Barkin, D. 1994. **El sector social al rescate de México. *En:*** Martínez, T. S.; J. Trujillo A. and F. Bejarano G. (Eds.) 1994. Agricultura campesina: orientaciones agrobiológicas y agronómicas sobre bases sociales tradicionales *vs* Tratado de Libre Comercio. Colegio de Postgraduados. Montecillo, México. Pp. 19-36.

Bass, S; B. Dalal-Clayton and J. Pretty. 1995. **Participation in strategies for sustainable development.** International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). London, U.K. 118 p.

Bautista, Z. F. 1996. **La capacitación agroecológica campesina en Yucatán: una estrategia contra la pobreza extrema. *En:*** Revista Red Gestión de Recursos Naturales. Segunda época No. 5. Fundación Rockefeller. México, D.F. Pp. 4-11.

Behrman, J. R. and E. Skoufias. 2006. **Mitigating myths about policy effectiveness: Evaluation of Mexico's antipoverty and human resource investment program. *In:*** The ANNALS of American Academy of Political and Social Science. 606: 244-275.

Behrman, J. R.; S. W. Parker and P. E. Todd. 2004. **Medium-term effects of the Oportunidades program package, including nutrition, on education of rural children age 0-8 in 1997.** Technical document No. 9 on the evaluation of Oportunidades 2004. Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública. Mexico City. 58 p.

Bell, S. 1999. **Finding out rapidly: a soft systems approach to training needs analysis in Thailand. *In:*** Development in practice. 9(1). Pp. 18-32.

Belmar, F. 1905. **Las lenguas indígenas de México**. Imprenta particular. México, D.F. 374 p.

Berumen B., M. E. 2003. **Geografía Económica de Oaxaca: los polos de desarrollo y zonas de mayor marginación y pobreza**. http://www.eumed.net/cursecon/libreria/mebb/. Accessed Oct. 03, 2006.

Blanco, R. J. L. 1997. **El Proyecto Sierra de Santa Marta: experimentación participativa para el uso adecuado de los recursos genéticos maiceros.** Serie Estudios de Caso de la Red de Gestión de Recursos Naturales. Fundación Rockefeller. México, D.F. 86 pp.

Blas, L. C. 2007. **Oaxaca ínsula de rezagos: crítica a sus gobiernos de razón y de costumbres.** En Marcha, realidad Municipal de Oaxaca. Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca.

Bobio, N. 1985. **Diccionario político**. Vol. 1. Siglo XXI. México, D.F. P 330.

Bonfil-Batalla, G. 1990. **México profundo: una civilización negada**. Grijalbo y Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes. México, D.F. 250 p.

Bonnis, G and W. Legg. 1997. **The opening of Mexican agriculture.** ***In:*** The OECD Observer. No. 206: 35-38.

Bourdieu, P. 1985. **The social space and the genesis of groups**. ***In:*** Theory and Society. 14(6):723-744.

Braun, A. R.; G. Thiele and M. Fernández. 2000. **Farmer field schools and local agricultural research committees: complementary platforms for integrated decision-making in sustainable agriculture.** Agricultural Research & Extension Network (AgREN-ODI). Network Paper No. 105. 16 p.

Brinkerhoff, D. W. and A. Goldsmith, A. 1992. **Promoting the sustainability of development institutions: a framework for strategy.** *In:* World Development. **20:** 369–383

Brubaker, R. 1984. **The limits of rationality: and essay on the social and moral thought of Max Weber.** George Allen & Unwin. London, U.K.119 p.

Buck, P. S. 1984. **Tell the people: talks with James Yen about the mass education movement.** International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR). Silang, Cavite. The Philippines, 41 p.

Bunch R. and G. López. 1999. **Soil recuperation in Central America: how innovation was sustained after project intervention.** ***In:*** F. Hinchcliffe *et al.* Fertile Ground. Pp. 32-41.

Calva, J. L. 1994. **Modernización de los campesinos y crisis agrícola y alimentaria en México**. ***En:*** Martínez, T. S.; J. Trujillo A. and F. Bejarano G. (Eds.) 1994. Agricultura campesina: orientaciones agrobiológicas y agronómicas sobre bases sociales tradicionales *vs* Tratado de Libre Comercio. Colegio de Postgraduados. Montecillo, México. Pp. 273- 289.

Cámara de Diputados, 2006. **Constitución Política de los Estados unidos Mexicanos**. Cámara de Diputados LIX Legislatura del H. Congreso de la Unión. México, D.F. 125 p.

Carlsen, L. 1999. **Autonomía indígena: la innovación de la tradición.** ***En:*** Revista Chiapas No 7. ERA-IIEC. México. Pp 14-31.

Castellanos, A. 2000. **Cepal: el modelo neoliberal no ha detenido la pobreza.** ***En:*** La Jornada. 3 April. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2000/04/03/eco4.html. Accessed on Oct. 17, 2006.

Cepeda, N. A. 2006. **La pobreza atraviesa todo el país: revueltas civiles por miseria.** ***En:*** Noticias. October 20. Also available at: http://www.noticias-oax.com.mx/articulos.php?id_sec=5&id_art=47941&id_ejemplar=1258. Accessed on Oct. 20, 2006.

Chambers, R. 1999. **Rural development: putting the last first**. Longman Publications. England, United Kingdom. 246 p.

Chambers, R. 1994. **Participatory rural appraisal (PRA): analysis of experience.** ***In:*** World Development 22: 1253-1268.

Chambers, R.; A. Pacey and L. A. Thrupp (eds).1993. **Farmer first: farmer innovation and agricultural research**. Intermediate Technology Publications. London, Great Britain. 219 p.

Chapela, M. F. 1999. **Silvicultura Comunitaria en la Sierra Norte de Oaxaca: el caso de la Unión Zapoteca-Chinanteca.** Serie Estudios de Caso de la Red de Gestión de Recursos Naturales. Fundación Rockefeller. México, D.F. 110 p.

Chevalier, J. M. and D. Buckles. 1995. **A land without Gods: Process theory, maldevelopment and the Mexican Nahuas.** ZED books. London, U.K. 374 p.

CIA, 2006. **The world fact book: Mexico**.https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mx.html. Accessed on Oct. 18 2006.

COCOPA, 1996. **Acuerdos de San Andrés**. Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación. México, D.F. 48 p.

Collier, G.A. with E, Lowery Q. 1994. **Basta! Land and the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas.** A Food First Book. Oakland, California, U.S.A. 281 p.

CONANP. 2006. **Programa de Conservación y Manejo de la Reserva de la Biósfera de la Sepultura-México**. Serie didáctica. Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas. SEMARNAT. 23 p.

CONAPO, 2006. **Índices sociodemográficos de México**. Consejo Nacional de Población. Secretaría de Gobernación. México, D.F. http://www.conapo.gob.mx/publicaciones/inicios/004.htm Accessed on Oct. 17, 2006.

Concheiro B., L. y S. Grajales V. 2005. **Movimientos campesinos e indígenas en México: la lucha por la tierra.** ***En:*** OSAL año VI (16): 47-58.

Crespo, J. N. 2000. **Naturaleza y singularidades de la transición mexicana.** ***En:*** Elizondo, C. y L. Maira (Eds.). 2000. Chile-México: dos transiciones frente a frente. México, D.F. CIDE-Grijalbo-PROCHILE, p. 68.

Crozier, M and E. Friedberg. 1980. **Actors and Systems.** University of Chicago Press. Chicago, U.S. 392 p.

Dalton, M. 1990. **El Paisaje de los seres humanos del estado de Oaxaca.** ***En:*** Dalton, M. (Ed.) 1990. Oaxaca: textos de su historia I. Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luís Mora y Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca. México, D.F. Pp. 7-25.

De la Garza T. E. 2001. **Las transiciones políticas en América Latina, entre el corporativismo sindical y la pérdida de imaginarios colectivos.** ***En:*** De la Garza T. E.(Comp.). 2001. Los sindicatos frente a los procesos de transición política. Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO) y Agencia Sueca de Desarrollo Internacional (ASDI). Buenos Aires, Argentina. Pp 9-24.

De León P., L. 2001. **Costumbres, leyes y movimiento indio en Oaxaca y Chiapas**. CIESAS-Porrua. México, D.F. 327 p.

De Mente, B. L. 1998. **There is a world for it in Mexico: the complete guide to Mexican thought and culture**. Passport books/NTC contemporary publishing group. New Cork, U.S.A. 336 p.

Delgado, A. 2006. **Abascal: mitad monje, mitad soldado**. ***En:*** Proceso. November, 1. Also available at:http://www.proceso.com.mx/anapol.html?aid=45426. Accessed on Nov. 01, 2006.

DeWalt, B. R. 1979. **Modernization in a Mexican Ejido: a study in economic adaptation.** Cambridge University Press. London, U.K. 303 pp.

Douglas, M. 1986. **How institutions think**. Syracuse University Press. Syracuse, N.Y., U.S.A.146 p.

Duch-Gary, J. (ed.) 1985. **Xolocotzia: Obras de Efraín Hernández Xolocotzi.** Revista de Geografía Agrícola. Tomos I y II. Subdirección de Centros Regionales-UACh. Chapingo, México. 428 p.

Durkheim, E. 1912 [1954]. **The elementary forms of the religious life**. Glencoe, Ill. Free Press. N.Y., U.S. 456 p.

Durkheim, E. 1893 [1997]. **The division of labor in society.** The Free Press. N.Y., U.S. 352 p.

Eckstein, S. 1978. **El ejido colectivo en México**. 2da. Reimpresión. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Mexico D.F. México. 511 pp.

Engels, F. 1971. **Dialectics of nature.** International Publishers. New York, U.S.A. 383 p.

Engels, F. 1986. **El Papel del trabajo en la transformación del mono en hombre**. Publicaciones Cruz. Mexico, D.F. 13 p.

Esteva, G. 2003**. Sin maíz no hay país: páginas de una exposición.** Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares y Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes. Mexico, D.F. 63 p.

Esteva, G. 1994. **El mito del desarrollo y la agricultura campesina**. ***En:*** Martínez, T. S.; J. Trujillo A. and F. Bejarano G. (Eds.) 1994. Agricultura campesina: orientaciones agrobiológicas y agronómicas sobre bases sociales tradicionales *vs* Tratado de Libre Comercio. Colegio de Postgraduados. Montecillo, México. Pp. 5-17.

Esteva, G. and C. Pérez. 2001. **The meaning and scope of the struggle for autonomy.** ***In:*** Latin American Perspectives. 28(2): 120-148.

Feeny, D.; S Hanna and A. F. McEvoy. 1996. **Questioning the assumptions of the "tragedy of the commons" model of fisheries.** ***In:*** Land Economics. 72(2):187.

Financiero. 2006. **Señala la SHCP que gasto social de este gobierno es el más alto de la historia.** ***En:*** El Financiero en línea. October 15. Available at: http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/ElFinanciero/Portal/cfpages/contentmgr.cfm?docId=24812&docTipo=1&orderby=docid&sortby=ASC Accessed on Oct. 15, 2006.

Fink, A. 2004. **La cultura como punto de partida para la comprensión de los problemas políticos de América Latina.** ***En:*** Colección 10(15): 97-124.

Foucault, M. 1983. **Power, sovereignty and discipline**. ***In:*** Held, D. and M. Robertson. 1983. States and societies. Blackwell Publishers. Oxford, England. Pp. 306-313.

Frade, C. 2003. **Polanyi's social construction of personal knowledge and the theories of situated learning.** ***In:*** Philosophy of Mathematics Education Journal. University of Exeter. UK. v. 17. 5 p.

Freeman, L. C. 1968. **Patterns of local community leadership**. The Bobbs-Merril Company Inc. New York,, U.S.A. 138 p.

Freire, P. 1971. **Pedagogy of the oppressed**. London, Harmondsworth: Penguin. London, Great Britain. 153 p.

Freire, P. 1998. **¿Extensión o comunicación?: La concientización en el medio rural.** 21ª edición. Siglo Veintiuno editores. México D.F. 108 p.

Freire, P. 2000. **Pedagogía del oprimido.** 53ª edición. Siglo Veintiuno editores. México D.F. 245 p.

Fundación Arias. 1997. **Memoria del Taller Regional de Capacitación en incidencia.** Fundación Arias para la Paz y el Progreso Humano. Documento elaborado del Proyecto "La Formación de una Cultura Democrática en Centroamérica". Cooperación de la Unión Europea. San José, Costa Rica. 40 pp.

García de León, A. 2002. **Fronteras interiores: Chiapas, una modernidad particular.** Océano, el ojo infalible. México, D.F. 337 p.

García, J. P. E. 2002. **Los Herederos de Zapata no han desaparecido.** ***En:*** Regiones y desarrollo sustentable. Año II (2) Pp. 219-226.

García, Z. R. 1997. **La agricultura en el laberinto de la modernidad.** Ediciones Facultad de Economía-UAZ. Zacatecas, México. 172 p.

Gaventa, J. 2004. **Towards participatory local governance: assessing the transformative possibilities**. ***In:*** Hickey, S. and Mohan, G. (Eds.). Participation: from tyranny to transformation, exploring new approaches to participation in development. ZED Books. London. Pp. 25-41.

Gay, J. A. **Antecedentes sociales a la insurgencia.** ***En:*** Dalton, M. (Ed.) 1990. Oaxaca: textos de su historia I. Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luís Mora y Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca. México, D.F. Pp. 313- 326.

Geilfus, F. 1997. **80 Herramientas para el desarrollo participativo: diagnóstico, planificación, monitoreo, evaluación.** IICA y GTZ. San Salvador, El Salvador. 208 p.

Giddens A. and M. Doneier. 2000. **Introduction to sociology**. Third edition. W.W. Norton and Company Inc. London, U.K. 603 p.

Giddens, A. 1982a. **Profiles and critiques in social theory**. The Macmillan Press Ltd. London, UK. 239 p.

Giddens, A. 1982b. **Sociology: a brief but critical introduction.** The Macmillan Press Ltd. London, U.K. 182 p.

Giddens, A. 1979 . **Central problems in social theory: action, structure and contradiction in social analyses**. Macmillan. London, U.K. 294 p.

Giddens, A. 1978. **Durkheim**. Fontana/Collins. Glasgow, Great Britain. 125 p.

Gledhill, J. 2005. **The rights of the rich versus the rights of the poor.** A document of the Global Poverty Research Group. Economic and Social Research Council. 33 p.

Gledhill, J. 2002. **Una nueva orientación para el laberinto: la transformación del estado mexicano y el verdadero Chiapas.** ***En:*** Relaciones. Revista del Colegio de Michoacán. 23(90): 201-258

Gledhill, J. 2000. **Power and its disguises: anthropological perspectives on politics**. 2nd edition. Pluto Press. London, U.K. 272 p.

Gledhill, 1991. **Casi nada: a study on agrarian reform in the homeland of Cardenismo.** Institute of Mesoamerican Studies. The University at Albany-State University of New York. Vol. 4. Albany, New york. U.S.A. 420 p.

Goffman, E. 1966. **Behavior in public places.** New York: The Free Press.

Goffman, E. 1959. **The presentation of self in everyday life.** New York: Doubleday.

Goldsmith, A. A. 1992. **Institutions and Planned Socioeconomic Change: Four Approaches**. ***In:*** *Public Administration Review*. 52 (6): 582-587

González, A. R.; A. E. Muñoz and J. Avilés. 2006. **El padrón de Oportunidades, al servicio de Felipe calderón.** ***En:*** La Jornada. June. 20. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/06/20/003n1pol.php. Accessed on Oct. 27, 2006.

Govers, C. 2006. **Performing the community: representation, ritual and reciprocity in the Totonac highlands of Mexico.** PhD Thesis. University of Amsterdam. 328 p.

Grindle, M.S. 1996. **Challenging the state: Crisis and innovation in Latin America and Africa.** Cambridge Studies in comparative politics. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, U.K. 243 p.

Groot, A. E. 2002. **Demystifying facilitation of multi-actor learning processes**. Doctoral Dissertation. Wageningen Agricultural University. Wageningen, The Netherlands. 216 p.

Guardiola, C and L. Guerrero S. 2002. **Castilla-Aragón en la Edad Media**. http://www.elauladejc.net/jcl5.htm. Accessed on Oct. 03, 2006

Guevara, H. F. 2002. **Formación de facilitadores para la innovación tecnológica en la agricultura campesina de México: base para la generación y difusión de conocimiento con un enfoque de escuelas de campo.** ***En:*** Mata, B. (ed.) 2002. La participación campesina en la innovación tecnológica. Memoria de los seminarios anuales 2001 y 2002 de INTECAP. Chapingo, Edo. de México. Pp. 79-93

Guevara H. F., T. Carranza, R. Puentes y C. E. González E. 2000. **La sustentabilidad de sistemas maíz-mucuna en el Sureste de México: primer ciclo de evaluación.** ***En:*** Masera O. y S. López-Ridaura. 2000. Sustentabilidad y sistemas campesinos: cinco experiencias de evaluación en el México rural. Mundi-Prensa/Programa Universitario de Medio Ambiente e Instituto de Ecología-UNAM/Gira, A.C. México, D.F. Pp. 207-269.

Guijt, I. 1995. **Notes on participatory learning and Action: critical reflections from practice.** PLA Notes. Number 24. IIED. 90 pp.

Gurría, L. J. 1973. **Intinerario de Hernán Cortés: Itinerary of Hernan Cortes**. EURAM: Ediciones Euromamericanas. México D.F. 179 p.

Gutiérrez, N. R. 2003. **Introducción al estudio del derecho ambiental.** Quinta edición corregida y aumentada. Editorial Porrúa. México D.F. 601 p.

Guzmán, G.; A. Alonso; Y. Pouliquen; and E. Sevilla. 1996. **Las metodologías participativas de investigación: un aporte al desarrollo local endógeno.** ***En:*** Agricultura Ecológica y Desarrollo Rural. Segundo Congreso de la Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica. Pamplona-Iruña. España. Pp. 301-316.

Hagmann, J. 1999. **Learning together for change: facilitating innovation in natural resource management through learning process approaches in rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe**. Margraf Verlag. Weirkershein, Germany. 310 p.

Hagmann, J. and C. Almekinders. 2003. **Developing 'soft skills' in higher education.** ***In:*** PLA notes. No. 28. December. Pp. 21-25.

Hagmann, J. with Chuma; K. Murwira and M. Conolly. 1999. **Putting process into practice: operationalising participatory extension**. Agricultural Research and Extension Network (AgREN). Network Paper No. 94. 20 p.

Hagmann, J.; E. Chuma; M. Conolly and K. Murwira. 1998. **Client-driven change and institutional reform in agricultural extension: an action learning experience from Zimbabwe.** Agricultural Research and Extension Network (AgREN). Network Paper No. 78. 13 p.

Hamilton, N. A. 1995. **Learning to learn with farmers: a case study of an adult learning extension project conducted in Queesland, Australia 1990-1995**. Doctoral Dissertation. Wageningen Agricultural University. Wageningen, The Netherlands. 196 p.

Hardin, G. 1998. **Essays on science and society: extensions of "the tragedy of the commons".** ***In:*** Science. 280(5364): 682-683.

Hardin, G. 1968. **The tragedy of the commons.** ***In:*** Science. 162(13):1243-1248

Hardin, G. and Baden, J. 1977. **Managing the Commons**. W. H. Freeman and Co. San Francisco, U.S.A.

Haverkort, B. 1999. **Towards appreciation of different powers.** ***In:*** Compas Newsletter. Frebuary issue. Pp. 38-40.

Hernández X, E. 1980. **Agricultura tradicional y desarrollo.** ***En:*** Duch Gary (Ed.), 1985. *Xolocotzia*. Obras de Efraín Hernández Xolocotzi. Revista de Geografía Agrícola. Tomo I. Subdirección de Centros Regionales-UACH. Chapingo, México. Pp. 419-422.

Hickey, S. and G. Mohan. 2004. **Participation from tyranny to transformation?: exploring new approaches to participation in development.** ZED Books. London, U.K. 292 p.

Humboldt, A de. 1811 [1990]. **Ensayo político sobre el reino de la Nueva España.** ***En:*** Dalton, M. (Ed.) 1990. Oaxaca: textos de su historia I. Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luís Mora y Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca. México, D.F. Pp. 265-273.

Hunter, F. 1953. **Community power structure: a study on decision makers**. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill. North Carolina, U.S.A. 297 p.

Hunter, G. (ed). 1978. **Agricultural development and the poor: declaration of policy and guidelines for action**. Overseas Development Institute. London, U.K. 113 pp.

INEGI. 2006a. **Información geográfica de México**. Instituto nacional de estadística, geografía e informática. Available at: http://www.inegi.gob.mx/geo/default.asp. Accessed on Oct. 27, 2006.

INEGI. 2006b. **Información estadística de México**. Instituto nacional de estadística, geografía e informática. Available at: http://www.inegi.gob.mx/est/default.asp. Accessed on Oct. 27, 2006.

INEGI, 2006c. **Resultados definitivos del II conteo de población y vivienda 2005**. Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática. Aguascalientes, México. 8 p. Also available at: http://www.inegi.gob.mx/est/default.asp?c=6789. Accessed on July 09, 2006.

INEGI, 2006d. **Anuario de estadísticas por entidad federativa**. Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática. Aguascalientes, México. 286 p. Also available at: http://www.inegi.gob.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/integracion/pais/aepef/2006/Aepef_2006_Archivo_1.pdf. Accessed on July 09, 2006.

INFDM. 2002. **Enciclopedia de los Municipios de México: Estado de Oaxaca. Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca.** http://www.e-local.gob.mx/work/templates/enciclo/oaxaca/. Accessed on Oct. 03, 2006.

INFDM. 2003. **Enciclopedia de los Municipios de México: Estado de Chiapas. Instituto Nacional para el Federalismo y el Desarrollo Municipal. Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas.** http://www.e-local.gob.mx/work/templates/enciclo/chiapas/. Accessed on Oct. 03, 2006

INI, 2001. **Derechos de los pueblos y comunidades indígenas en la Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos: en Español y Zapoteco.** Instituto Nacional Indigenista. México, D.F. 30 p.

Jáquez, A. 2005. **Raúl Salinas: el hermano incómodo.** ***En:*** Proceso. June 10. Mexico D.F. 11 P.

Jennings, M. K. 1964. **Community influentials: the elites of Atlanta.** Free Press of Glencoe, a division of Macmillan Company. New York, U.S.A. 212 pp.

Jiménez, O. J. J.; M. Kak Moo; I. Sohn L.; A. López P.; F. Ancona B.; A. Mendoza E.; F. J. Xuluc T.; R. Cámara S. y K. Nelson. 1997. **Investigación en Sahcabá, Yucatán: la experiencia de PROTROPICO-FMVZ-UADY**. Serie Estudios de Caso de la Red de Gestión de Recursos Naturales. Fundación Rockefeller. México, D.F. 124 p.

Jiménez, S. L. 1997. **La extensión rural en el contexto global contemporáneo*. En:*** Argumedo, M. A.; J. Márquez, J. y N. Pérez R (Coords.). *Memoria del Primer Simposio Regional en Extensión Rural México-Guatemala*. Celebrado del 25 al 29 de marzo de 1996. ITC, Plan Comitán del CP y Centro Universitario de Noroccidente de la Universidad de San Carlos Guatemala. Comitán Chiapas, México. Pp. 2-20.

Kabeer, N. 1999. **Resources, agency, achievements: reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. In:** Development and Change 30. Pp. 435-464.

Kaner, S. 1996. **Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making**. New Society Publishers. Gabriola Island, BC. Canada.

Kaufman, R. R. and G. Trejo. 1997. **Regionalism, regime transformation, and PRONASOL: the politics of the national solidarity programs in four Mexican states.** ***In:*** Journal of Latin American Studies. 29(3): 717-745.

Kay, P. 2003. **Trying on the Emperor's new clothes? Concertación, corporatism and neoliberal restructuring in the semiperiphery.** ***In:*** Bulleting of Latin American Research. 22(3): 291-318.

Kepleis, P. and K. Vance. 2003. **Neoliberal Policy and Deforestation in Southeastern Mexico: An Assessment of the PROCAMPO Program.** ***In:*** Economic Geography. 79(3): 221-240.

Keune, L. and B. Boog. 2000. **Investigación acción ejemplar: conceptos y aplicaciones.** DEI. San José, Costa Rica. 270 pp.

Kostner, J. 1994. **Virtual leadership: secrets from the round table for the multi-site manager.** Warner Books. New York, N.Y. U.S.A. 178 p.

Kraemer, B. G. 1993. **Utopía en el agro mexicano: cuarenta proyectos de desarrollo en áreas marginadas**. Difusión Cultural, UACh. Chapingo, México. 582 p.

Kramer, R. M. and M. B. Brewer. 1984. **Effects of group identity on resource use in a simulated commons dilemma**. ***In:*** J. Pers. Soc. Psychol. 46(5):1044-1057.

Law, J. 1991. **Power, discretion and strategy.** ***In:*** Law, J. (Ed.) 1991. A sociology of monsters: essays on power, technology and domination. Sociological review monograph 38. Routledge London U.K. Pp. 165-191 p.

Layton, R. 1997. **An introduction to theory in anthropology.** Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, U.K. 241 p.

Leeuwis, C and A. van den Ban. 2004. **Communication for rural innovation: rethinking agricultural extension.** 3rd ed. Blackwell Science. Oxford, U.K. 412 p.

Leff, E., and J. Carabias, (Coord.). 1993. **Cultura y manejo sustentable de los recursos naturales**. Volumen I y II. CIIH-UNAM. Editorial Miguel Porrúa México, D.F.

Lévi-Strauss, C. 1963. **Structural Anthropology.** Basic Books. New York, U.S.A. 410 p.

Lewis, J. 1975. **Max Weber and value-free sociology: a Marxist critique**. Lawrence and Wishart. London, England. 192 p.

Leyva, S. X. 2003. **Regional, communal and organisational transformtions in Las Cañadas.** ***In:*** Rus, J. R.A. Hernández C and S. L. Mattiace. 2003. Mayan lives, mayan utopias: the indigenous peoples of Chiapas and the Zapatista rebellion. Rowman & littlefield publishers, INC. Oxford, U.K. Pp. 161:183

Lisbona, G. M. (Ed). 2005. **La comunidad a debate: reflexiones sobre el concepto de comunidad en el México contemporáneo.** El Colegio de Michoacán-Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas. México, D.F. 312 p.

Lombardo-Toledano, 1973. **El problema del Indio**. SEP-Setentas. México, D.F. 207 p.

Long, N. 2001. **Development Sociology: Actor perspectives.** Routledge. London, U.K. 294 p.

Long, N. and Long, A. 1992. B**attlefields of Knowledge: the and interlocking of theory and practice in social research and development.** Routledge. London, U.K. 306 p.

Long, N. and M. Villareal. 1994. **The interweaving of knowledge and power in development interfaces.** ***In:*** Scoones, I. and J. Thompson (eds). 1994. Beyond farmers first: rural people's knowledge, agricultural research and extension practice. Intermediate Technology Publications. London, Great Britain. Pp. 41-52.

Lopez-Ridaura, S.; O. Masera and M. Astier. 2000. **Evaluating the sustainability of integrated peasantry systems: The MESMIS framework**. ***In:*** ILEIA Newsletter 16(4), pp. 28-30.

Lowry, R. P. 1965. **Who's running this town: community, leadership and social change.** Harper and Row. New York, U.S.A. 250 p.

Lugard, F.D. 1965. **The dual mandate in British tropical Africa.** 5th ed. London, U.K. 643 p.

Lukes, S. 1978. **Essays in social theory.** The Macmillan Press LTD. London, U.k. 226 p.

Lukes, S. 1974. **Power: a radical view**. Studies in Sociology Macmillan Press Ltd. London, Great Britain. 63 p.

Macdonald, I. and D. Hearle. 1984. **Communication skills for rural development**. Evans Brothers Limited. London, England. 119 pp.

Mair, L. 1984. **Anthropology and development**. Macmillan press. London, U.K. 146 p.

Maldonado, A. B. 2002. **Autonomía y comunalidad india: enfoques y propuestas desde Oaxaca.** CONACULTA; IHNAH. Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca. 174 p.

Martínez, C. E. 2006. **México seguirá como el primer receptor de remesas en AL, dice el BID.** ***En:*** La Jornada. October 19. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/19/029n1eco.php Accessed on Oct. 19, 2006.

Martínez-Soriano, F. 2006. **Antidemocracia, militarismo y prefacismo**. ***En:*** Noticias. December 26. Also available at: http://www.noticias-oax.com.mx/articulos.php?id_sec=5&id_art=49960&id_ejemplar=1315. Accessed on Dec. 26, 2006.

Martínez V. L. y J. A. Ramírez G. 1999. **El Centro de Educación Campesina de la Unión de Comunidades Indígenas de la Región del Istmo (UCIRI): una opción del desarrollo**

alternativo agroecológico. ***En:*** Red Gestión de Recursos Naturales No 16. Segunda época. Julio-Septiembre México. D.F. Pp. 11-18.

Masera O. y S. López-Ridaura. 2000. **Sustentabilidad y sistemas campesinos: cinco experiencias de evaluación en el México rural**. Mundi-Prensa/Programa Universitario de Medio Ambiente e Instituto de Ecología-UNAM/Gira, A.C. México, D.F.

Masera, O.; M. Astier y S. López. 1999. **Sustentabilidad y manejo de recursos naturales: el marco de evaluación MESMIS.** Mundiprensa, GIRA, Instituto de Ecologia-UNAM.México, D.F. 109 p.

Mata, G. B. 1999. **Desarrollo Rural en México: una propuesta centrada en los pobres del campo**. Tesis de Doctorado. Departamento de Sociología Rural. Universidad Autónoma Chapingo. Chapingo, México. 285 p.

Mata, G. B. 1998. **Hacia "otro" desarrollo rural.** ***En:*** Mata, G. B. (coord.) Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural Compatible. Programa de Investigación y Servicio en Regionalización Agrícola y Desarrollo Sustentable. UACh. Chapingo, México. Pp. 66-84.

Matias-Cruz, L. R. 2007. **Repression and Rebellions in Southern Mexico: The Search for a Political Economy of Dignity.** Doctoral thesis. Vrije Universiteit. Amsterdam, The Netherlands. 337 p.

Maza, E. 2006. **La turbulencia en México.** ***En:*** Proceso análisis político. October 30. Also available at: http://www.proceso.com.mx/anapol.html?aid=45377 Accessed on Oct. 26, 2006.

McAllister, K. and R. Vernooy. 1999. **Action and reflection: A guide for monitoring and evaluating participatory research**. IDRC: CBNRM, Programs Branch. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. 104 pp

McKee, K. M. (Ed). 1993. **Y.C. James Yen's thought on mass education and rural reconstruction: China and beyond, an international retrospective.** International Institute of Rural Reconstruction.(IIRR). New York, U.S.A. 200 p.

McWhirter, E.H. 1991. **Empowerment in counselling.** *In:* Journal of Counselling and Development. 69: 222-227.

Medina N. I. 1995. **Sindicalismo y estado en la modernización económica de México.** ***En:*** Espiral, Estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad. Vol. II(4): 189-205.

Mello-Farrera, F. 2002. **La diversidad local frente a la globalización.** ***En:*** **La relación de las organizaciones civiles y gobiernos locales.** Memoria del Encuentro 2001. CESEN; Transparencia; Idear; PADS. Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca. Pp 14-19.

Merrill, T. M and R. Miró (Eds.). 1997. **Mexico: a country study**. 4th edition. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. Washington, D.C. U.S.A. 414 p.

Meyer, L. 2005. **Nuestras elites: México uno de los países más inequitativos del mundo.** ***En:*** Noticias. Septembers 06. Also available at: http://www.noticias-oax.com.mx/articulos.php?id_sec=5&id_art=34897 Accessed on Sept. 15, 2005.

Meza, O. A.; E. Tuñón P.; D. E. Ramos M.; y E. Kauffer M. 2002. "**Pogresa" y el empoderamiento de las mujeres: estudio de caso en Vista Hermosa, Chiapas.** ***En:*** Papeles de Población. Enero-Marzo No. 031. Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Mexico. Pp. 67-93.

Michener, V. J. 1998. **The participatory approach: contradiction and co-option in Burkina Faso**. ***In:*** World Development. 26(12): 2105-2118.

Miranda, B. 2001. **Técnicas que facilitan el trabajo en equipo**. IICA-PROLANCHO. San Salvador, El Salvador. C.A. 92 p.

Miranda, B. 2000. **Negociación y colaboración para mejorar el desempeño institucional.** ICCA Holanda-Laderas and GTZ. San Salvador, El Salvador C.A. 194 p.

Molyneux, M. 2006. **Mothers at the service of the new poverty agenda: Progresa/Oportunidades, Mexico's conditional transfer programme.** ***In:*** Social Policy and Administration. 40(4): 425-449.

Mosse, D. 2005. **Cultivating development: an ethnography of aid policy and practice**. Pluto Press. London, U.K. 315 p.

Mosse, D. 2004. **Is good policy unimplementable?: reflections on the ethnography of aid policy and practice.** ***In:*** Development and change 35(4): 639-671.

Mosse, D. 1999. **Colonial and contemporary ideologies of 'community management': the case of thank irrigation development in South India.** ***In:*** Modern Asian Studies 33(2): 303-338.

Mosse, D. 1998. **Process-oriented approaches to development practice and social research.** *In:* Mosse, D.; J. Farrington and A. Rew (Eds.) 1998. **Development as a process: concepts and methods for working with complexity.** Routledge-ODI. London U.K. Pp. 3-30.

Mosse, D.; J. Farrington and A. Rew (Eds.) 1998. **Development as a process: concepts and methods for working with complexity.** Routledge-ODI. London U.K. 202. p.

Muntzel, C. M. and Pérez, G. B. 1987. **México: panorama general de las lenguas indígenas.** ***En:*** América Indígena 47(4): 572-605.

Muñoz, R. P. 2000. **Hay más pobres que antes de la apertura.** ***En:*** La Jornada. 10 March. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2000/03/10/eco3.html Accessed on Oct. 17, 2006.

Muñoz, A. E. 2006. **Aumentó el número de pobres en el país durante el gobierno de Fox.** ***En:*** La Jornada. 30 Nov. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/03/048n1soc.php. Accessed on Nov. 30, 2007.

Muro, B. P. 1994. **Alternativas y métodos de la sociología rural.** ***En:*** Martínez, T. S.; J. Trujillo A. and F. Bejarano G. (Eds.) 1994. Agricultura campesina: orientaciones agrobiológicas y agronómicas sobre bases sociales tradicionales *vs* Tratado de Libre Comercio. Colegio de Postgraduados. Montecillo, México. Pp. 243-261.

Murphy, W. P. 1990. **Creating the appearance of consensus in Mende political discourse.** ***In:*** American Anthropologist 92(1): 24-41.

Murphy, W. P. 1981. **The rhetorical management of dangerous knowledge in Kpelle brokerage.** ***In:*** American Ethnological Society. 8(4): 667-685.

Murphy, W. P. 1980. **Secret knowledge as property and power in Kpelle society: elders versus youth.** ***In:*** Africa 50: 193-207.

Nahmad, S. 2004. **Los acuerdos y los compromisos rotos y no cumplidos con los pueblos indígenas de México.** ***En:*** Hernández, *et al.,* 2004. El Estado y los indígenas en tiempos del PAN. Cámara de Diputados/CIESAS/Porrúa. Pp. 88-113

Narvaéz C, G.; F. Martínez H.; and J. F. Ortega. 2001. **La Agricultura y sus alternativas**. ***En:*** CHIMALAPAS: la última oportunidad. World Wildlife Found Program (WWF). Secretaría de Medio Ambiente Recursos Naturales y Pesca (SEMARNAP). Pp.139-155.

Narváez C., G. and F. Guevara H. 1999. **Sistemas de abonos verdes y cultivos de cobertura: algunos ejemplos en México**. RED/Grupo Agricultura de Cobertura (gac) y Fundación Rockfeller;. Oaxaca de Juárez, México. 75 p.

Narváez C., G. and F. Guevara H. 2000. **¿Qué hacer para iniciar el uso de la pica-pica mansa?.** Folleto Técnico. Fundación Rockefeller/Centros Regionales-UACH/RED-gac. Oaxaca de Juárez, México. 12 p.

Nigh, R. and N.J. Rodríguez. 1995. **Territorios violados: indios, medio ambiente y desarrollo en América Latina**. Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/Instituto Nacional Indigenista. México D.F. 228 p.

Nolasco, M. 1990. **Lo indio no es un problema racial.** ***En:*** Dalton, M. (Ed.) 1990. Oaxaca: textos de su historia I. Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luís Mora y Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca. México, D.F. Pp. 27- 44.

Notimex. 2007. **Carlos Slim superó a Buffet como segundo hombre más rico del mundo.** ***En:*** La Jornada, 12 April. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2007/04/12/index.php?section=economia&article=023n1eco. Accessed on April 12, 2007.

Nuijten, M. 2005. **Power in practice: a force field approach to natural resource management.** ***In:*** The Journal of Transdisciplinary Environmental Studies (TES). 4(2):3-14.

Nuijten, M. 2003. **Power, community and the state: the political anthropology of organisation in Mexico.** Pluto Press London, U.K. 227 p.

Nuijten, M. 1992. **Local organization as organizing practices: rethinking rural institutions.** ***In:*** Long, n. and A. Long 1992. Battlefields of knowledge: the interlocking of theory and practice in social research and development. Routledge. London, U.K. Pp. 189-207.

Nuijten, M.; D. Lorenzo R. and P. de Vries. 2005. **Property relationships and the dialectic of an Andean peasant *Comunidad*.** Paper presented at the rural poverty network workshop. 29-30 April. Berlin, Germany. 14 p.

Odena, G. L. 1995. **Obras escogidas de Guillermo Bonfil**. INI; CIESAS; INAH; CULTURAS POPULARES; SRA. México, D.F. 420 p.

Odum, E. P. 1953. **Fundamentals of Ecology**. Saunders. Philadelphia, U.S.A. 384 p.

Olivier de Sardan, J.P. 2005. **Anthropology and development: understanding contemporary social change**. Zed Books. London, U.K. 243 p.

Ortíz, E, R. and I. Ortíz C (eds.). 2001. **Presencias de la cultura Mixteca**. Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca. Huajuapan de León, Oaxaca. 109. p.

Oxaal, Z. and S. Baden. 1997. **Gender and empowerment: definitions, approaches and implications for policy**. Report No. 40 Bridge Developmente-Gender. Institute of Development Studies; University of Sussex. Brighton, UK. 34 p.

Pacheco, M. G. 2003. **Democratización y pluralización y cambios en el sistema de partidos en México, 1991-2000.** ***En:*** Revista Mexicana de Sociología. 65(3): 523-564.

Page, N. and Czuba C. E. 1999. **Empowerment: what is it?.** ***In:*** Journal of Extension. 37(5), 8 p.

Parking, F. 1982. **Max Weber.** Ellis Horwood Limited Publishers. Chichester, Sussex. England. 123 p.

Paternostro, S. 1998. **In the land of god and man: a Latin woman's journey**. Plume-Penguin Group. New York, U.S.A. 326 p.

Pérez, U.A. 2006. **El queso foxista.** ***En:*** Proceso. September 28. Also available at: http://www.proceso.com.mx/anapol.html?aid=44475#. **Accessed on Sept. 28, 2006.**

Pérezgrovas, G. V., M. López V., W. Anzueto A., F. Rodríguez L. y E. Gómez H. 1997. **El cultivo de café en la unión Majomut**. Serie Estudios de Caso de la Red de Gestión de Recursos Naturales, Fundación Rockefeller. México, D.F. 64 p.

Perrés, J. 1995. **El poder: las relaciones de poder y los mecanismos de poder institucionales: algunas reflexiones teórico-epistemológicas.** Departamento de Educación y Comunicación. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Xochimilco.95 p.

Peterson, J. D.1999. **La lucha por el ciudadano: movimientos sociales, Pronasol y la teoría de nuevos movimientos sociales en Guadalajara.** ***En:*** Espiral, estudios sobre estado y sociedad. 5(15): 109-131.

Polanyi, M. 1969. **Personal knowledge: towards a post-critical philosophy.** London, U.K. 428 p.

Posada, G. M. 2006a. **México: ejemplo de liberación comercial pese a la gran pobreza.** ***En:*** La Jornada. October 24. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/24/024n1eco.php. Accessed on Oct. 24, 2006.

Posada, G. M. 2006b. **Es necesario superar la agricultura de subsistencia: entrevista con Sergio García de Alba, Secretario de Economía**. ***En:*** La jornada. October, 19. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/19/031e1eco.php. Acceded on Oct. 19, 2006.

Pretty, J. N. 1995. **Participatory learning for sustainable agriculture.** ***In:*** World Development. 23(8):1247-1263.

Pretty, J. N., I. Guijt, J. Thompson, and I. Scoones. 1995. **Participatory Learning and Action: A trainer's guide**. London, IIED. 270 pp.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 1952. **Structure and Function in Primitive Society: essays and addresses.** Cohen & West. London, U.K. 219 p.

Ramírez-Cuevas, J. 2003. **Movimiento campesino: las razones de la furia. México, una radiografía de las organizaciones agrarias contra el ALCA.** ***En:*** Rebelión: movimientos sociales. 11 de Febrero. Also availabe at: http://www.rebelion.org/sociales/cuevas110203.htm. Accessed on Jul. 09, 2006.

Ramos, S. F. J. 1998. **Grupo Vicente Guerrero de Españíta, Tlaxcala: dos décadas de promoción de campesino a campesino.** Serie Estudios de Caso de la Red de Gestión de Recursos Naturales, Fundación Rockefeller. México, D.F. 111 p.

Rawls, A. 2003. **Conflict as a Foundation for Consensus: contradictions of Industrial Capitalism in Book III of Durkheim's Division of Labor**. *Critical Sociology* 29(3): 295-335.

Richards, M. 1997. **Tragedy of the commons for community-based forest management in Latin America?.** ***In:*** Natural resource perspectives-Overseas Development Institute. Number 22. 14 p.

Richards, 2007. **How does participation work?: deliberation and performance in African food security** IDS Bulletin Special Issue, Science, Participation and Development. 15 p.

Richards, P. 2006. **Against discursive participation: authority and performance in African rural technology development.** Paper presented at the European Association for Studies of Science and Technology, Lausanne Conference, August 2006, Session: Approaching Participation. 9 p.

Richards, P. 1995. **Participatory Rural Appraisal: A Quick and Dirty Critique**. *PLA Notes*, Issue No. 24, pp. 13-16.

Ricks, F. 2003. **The paradox: research as practice and practice as research.** Paper presented at the 2nd National Research Symposium on the Voluntary Sector. Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. 22 p.

Riva-Palacio, R. 2006. **Huele a Salinas.** ***En:*** El Universal: estrictamente personal. October 18. Also available at: http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/columnas/61286.html. Accessed on Oct. 18, 2006.

Rivas, A. C. A. 1997. **Enfoques teóricos y conceptuales para realizar extensionismo rural en áreas con agricultura de subsistencia.** ***En:*** Argumedo, M. A.; J. Márquez, J. y N. Pérez R (Coords.). *Memoria del Primer Simposio Regional en Extensión Rural México-Guatemala*. Celebrado del 25 al 29 de marzo de 1996. ITC, Plan Comitán del CP y Centro Universitario de Noroccidente de la Universidad de San Carlos Guatemala. Comitán Chiapas, México. Pp. 52-58.

Rivera-Salgado. G. 2005. **Marginalised populations rarely have a voice as equal partners**. ***In: DevIssues.*** 1(1):16-17.

Roberts, R. S. and J. Emel. 1992. **Uneven development and the tragedy of the commons: competing images for nature-society analysis**. ***In:*** Economic Geography 68(3):249.

Robles, G. R. R. and C. Zarco, M. (Eds.) 2005. **Derechos sociales: Experiencias de desarrollo local en México.** Consejo de Educación de Adultos de América Latina, A.C (CEAAL). México, D.F. 488 p.

Rodríguez, E. D. 2005. **Derecho de sangre: historias familiares del poder público en México**. Grijalbo-Actualidad. México, D.F. 303 p.

Rodríguez, F. 2006. **Justicia política de Aristóteles: justicia democrática.** ***En:*** Noticias. September 06. Also available at: http://www.noticias-oax.com.mx/articulos.php?id_sec=6&id_art=46489&id_ejemplar=1222 Accessed on Sept. 16, 2006.

Roquas, E. 2002**. Stacked law; land, property and conflict in Honduras**. PhD thesis. Wageningen University. The Netherlands. 263 p.

Rose, A. M. 1967. **The power structure: political process in American society.** Oxford University Press. New York, U.S.A. 506 p.

Rossi, P. H. 1970. **Power and community structure.** ***In:*** Aiken, M. and P. E. Mott. (eds). 1970. The structure of community power. Random House. N.Y. U.S.A. Pp. 110-116.

Röling, N. 1996. **Towards an interactive agricultural science.** ***In:*** Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension. 2(4): 35-48.

Rowlands, J. 1997. **Questioning empowerment: working with women in Honduras**. OXFAM publications. Oxford, U.K. 179 p.

Ruíz, A. M.; B. D.; M. Stampini; P. Winters and S. Handa. 2002. **More calories or more diversity?: an economic evaluation of the impact of the Progresa and Procampo transfer programs on food security in rural Mexico**. ***In:*** Paper presented at the V meeting of the Network on Inequality and Poverty (NIP) held in Madrid, Spain. October 11-13. 47 p.

Sadomba, W. Z. 1996. **Retrospective community mapping: a tool for community education.** ***In:*** PLA notes. IIED London Issue 25.. Pp 9-13.

Sadoulet E.; A. Janvry de; and B. Davis. 2001. **Cash transfer programs with income multipliers: Procampo in Mexico.** Discussion paper No. 99 of the Food, Consumption and Nutrition Division. International Food Policy Research Institute. Washington D.C., U.S. 52 p.

SAGARPA. 2001. **Guía normativa del programa de extensionismo y servicios profesionales 2001 (PESPRO).** Secretaria de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación. Subsecretaria de Desarrollo Rural. Coordinación General de Extensionismo y Desarrollo Tecnológico. Documento interno. 40 p.

Salas, G. J. 2000. **Banrural; retoma su misión en el financiamiento del sector agropecuario** ***En:*** Revista Mexicana de Agronegocios. 4(7): 19-26.

Santos, V.; M. Carreón y K. C. Nelson. 1998. **La Organización de la Unión de Ejidos Productores Forestales de la Zona Maya: un proceso de investigación participativa.** Serie Estudios de Caso de la Red de Gestión de Recursos Naturales. Fundación Rockefeller. México, D.F. 129 p.

Schermerhorn, R. A. 1961. **Power and society**. Random House. New York, U.S.A. 114 p.

Scoones, I. and J. Thompson (Eds). 1994. **Beyond farmers first: rural people's knowledge, agricultural research and extension practice**. Intermediate Technology Publications. London, Great Britain. 301 p.

SEGOB. 2004. **Constitución política del estado libre y soberano de Oaxaca**. Gobierno del Estado y Secretaría de Gobernación. 57 p. Also availale at: http://www.e-local.gob.mx/wb2/ELOCAL/ELOC_const_oax. Accessed on Oct. 03, 2006.

Selener, D. 1997. **Participatory action research and social change.** The Cornell Participatory Action Research Network. Cornell University. Ithaca, N.Y. U.S.A. 358 p.

Sen, A. 1985: **Commodities and Capabilities.** Amsterdam (etc): North-Holland. 130 p.

Sen, A. 1999. **Development as Freedom.** Knopf. New York. U.S.A. 366 p.

Senado de la República, 2003. **Boletín de prensa para la ley orgánica de la Financiera Rural y la desaparición del Banrural.** Fechado el 1º de Enero de 2003. 3 p. Also available at: http://www.senado.gob.mx/comunicacion/content/boletines/2003/b01enero.php. Accessed on Oct. 18, 2006.

Sewell, W. H. Jr. 1992. **A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation.** ***In:*** The American Journal of Sociology. 98(1): 1-29.

Shah, P. 1995. **Farmers as analysts, facilitators and decision makers**. ***In:*** Nelson, N. and S. Wright. 1995. Power and participatory development: theory and practice. ITDG Publishing. London, U.K. pp. 83-94.

Silverman, D. 2000. **Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook.** Sage. London, U.K. 316 p.

Silverman, D. 1997. **Qualitative research: theory, method and practice**. Sage. London, U.K. 262 p.

Silverman, M. 1979. **Dependency, mediation and class formation in rural Guyana.** ***In:*** American Ethnologist. 6(3): 466-490.

Silverman, S. F. 1965. **Patronage and community-nation relationships in Central Italy.** ***In:*** Ethnology 4: 172-189.

Simpson, B. M. 1998. **Investing in people: the support of farmer learning, creativity and local social networks in the project pisiculture familiale, Zaire.** ***In:*** Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension. 5(2). Pp. 99-110.

Skoufias, E. and B. McClafferty. 2001. **Is Progresa working?: summary of the results of an evaluation by IFPRI.** Discussion paper No. 118 of the Food, Consumption and Nutrition Division. International Food Policy Research Institute. Washington D.C. U.S., 77 p.

Sosa Cedillo, V. 1998. **Acciones contra incendios forestales de 1998**. XXXIII Sesión ordinaria del CONAF (Consejo Nacional Forestal). SEMARNAP. México, D.F. 15 p.

SRA. 2005. **La SRA adquirió predios en Temapache, Veracruz, para atender demandas campesinas.** Comunicado de Prensa. Unidad de Comunicación Social. Secretaria de la Reforma Agraria. México, D.F. 18 de enero. 2 p. Also available at: http://www.sra.gob.mx/pag/comunicacion_social/UCS/2005/noticias/boletines/BOL003.pdf. Accessed on July 09, 2006.

Stedman-Jones, S. 2001. **Durkheim reconsidered**. Polity Press. Cambridge, U.K. 288 p.

Taylor, J. 1973. **The scientific community.** Oxford University Press. London, U.K. 79 p.

Taylor, M. 1982. **Community, anarchy and liberty**. Cambridge University Press. London, U.K. 184 p.

Therbon, G. 2004. **La ideología del poder y el poder de la ideología.** Editorial de Ciencias Sociales. Instituto Cubano del Libro. La Habana. Cuba. 145 p.

Thompson, K. 1982. **Emile Durkheim**. Ellis Horwood Limited. Chichester. Sussex, England. 179 p.

Toledo, V. M., J. Carabias, C. Mapes y C. Toledo, 1985. **Ecología y autosuficiencia alimentaria.** Siglo XXI, México, D.F. 118 p.

Townsend, J. G.; G. Porter and E. Mawdsley. 2004. **Creating spaces of resistance: Development NGOs and their clients in Ghana, India and Mexico.** ***In:*** Antipode; a radical journal of geography. 36(5):871-889.

Trejo C., M.A. 2002. **El derecho municipal de adscripción.** ***En:*** Provincia (8): 11-120

Trujillo, A. J. 1990. **Desarrollo de una agricultura sustentable en México: el paradigma agroecológico**. ***En:*** Comercio Exterior 40(10):953-958.

Uphoff, N. 1986. **Local institutional development: an analytical source book with cases**. Kumarian Press. 421 p.

UNT. 1998. **La reforma social y democrática del estado mexicano en su vertiente laboral-productiva y la creación de un nuevo proyecto histórico del sindicalismo en México.** Unión Nacional de Trabajadores. México D.F. 6 p. also avaialbe at: http://www.unt.org.mx/docs/reflabprod.htm. Accessed on March 14, 2007.

Vallejo, M. J. 2006. **Mujeres rurales: discriminación por usos y costumbres.** ***En:*** Proceso. 14 de Mayo 2006. Apro. Also available at: http://www.proceso.com.mx/noticia.html?nid=34681&cat=0 . Accessed on May 14, 2006.

van der Haar, G. 2001. **Gaining ground: land reform and the constitution of community in the Tojolabal highlands of Chiapas, Mexico.** PhD Thesis. Wageningen University. 287 p.

Vázquez A. A. 2004. **Democracia en México: transición hacia un corporativismo social.** ***En:*** Espiral, Estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad. Vol. X(29): 11-43.

Vergara, B. R. J. 2000. **Instituciones y políticas de gobierno: Una mirada al caso de las políticas contra la pobreza.** ***En:*** Artículo presentado en el V Congreso Internacional del CLAD sobre la reforma del estado y la administración pública. 24-27 de Octubre. Santo Domingo. República Dominicana. 10 p.

Villareal, M. 1992. **The poverty of practice power, gender and intervention from an actor-oriented perspective.** ***In:*** Long, n. and A. Long 1992. Battlefields of knowledge: the interlocking of theory and practice in social research and development. Routledge. London, U.K. Pp. 247-267.

Waitley, D. and R. B. Tucker. 1989. **Winning the innovation game**. Berkley Books. New York. U.S.A. 218 p.

Wallerstein, I. 2006. **La turbulencia Mexicana: ¿levantamiento o Guerra civil?.** ***En:*** Noticias. December 22. Also available at: http://www.noticias-oax.com.mx/articulos.php?id_sec=6&id_art=49956&id_ejemplar=1315. Accessed on Dec. 22, 2006.

Walton, M. and G. Lopez-Acevedo, G. 2005. **Poverty in Mexico: an assessment of conditions, trends and government strategies.** ***In:*** The World Bank en Breve No. 61. 4 p.

Warman, A. 2001. **El campo mexicano en el siglo XX**. Fondo de Cultura Económica. México, D.F. 262 p.

Warman, A. 1979. **Los campesinos: hijos predilectos del régimen**. 7ª. Edición. Serie los grandes problemas nacionales. Editorial nuestro tiempo. 150 p.

Wells, M.J. 1983. **Mediation, dependency, and the goals of development.** ***In:*** American Ethnologist 10(4): 770-788.

Wilson, T. M. 1990. **From patronage to brokerage in the local politics of Eastern Ireland.** ***In:*** Ethnohistory. 37(2): 158-187 p.

World Bank, 2006. **Poverty in Mexico-Fact Sheet**. http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/MEXICOEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20233967~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:338397,00.html. Accessed on Oct. 18, 2006.

Wright Mills, C. 1967. **Power, politics and people: The collected essays**. Oxford University Press. London. 657 p.

Zepeda P. J. (Ed). 1988. **Las sociedades rurales hoy**. El Colegio de Michoacán. Zamora, Michoacán México. 529 p.

Zermeño, F. and M. Domínguez P. 2000. **Estado y políticas de combate a la pobreza en México; algunas reflexiones para la compresión de Progresa.** ***En:*** El Cotidiano. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana- Azcapotzalco. Pp.13-21

Zuñiga, J. A. 2006a. **La reducción de la pobreza: sueño de *Foxlandia* califica Boltvinik.** ***En:*** La Jornada. October 3. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/03/048n1soc.php Accessed on Oct. 03, 2006.

Zuñiga, J. A. 2006b. **Los Mexicanos más ricos ganan 30 veces más que los más pobres.** ***En:*** La Jornada. Octubre 23. Also available at: http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/10/23/028n1eco.php Accessed on Oct. 23, 2006.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Description of main participatory tools used during the workshops

a) Time line

Time line refers to a systematic recall of critical events and/or changes that may have taken place at the community level or in an individual's life. As the participants recall the major events, these are listed chronologically (i.e. events are arranged in a sequence, according to when they occurred). A time line is a simple method and can be introduced early on in a discussion.
It helps in opening up the participants as they try to recall events that have impacted their lives. This analysis provides an overview of the village's/individual's history and explains how life has been changing for them. It also helps in understanding what types of events are important for the members in the village.

Time lines are used to identify trends or change along periods of time. They can be used for example to describe changes in land uses, in cropping patterns or chronologies of relevant events to local life. It can also be use to reconstruct of the history of the villages. It necessary to have different colour markers, paper cards in different sizes and colours, glue and tape.

The facilitator first starts by asking the group/individual to recall some of the main events and facts that have taken pace at the village level or in an individual's life. Once they mention a few events, these can be plotted on the ground or on paper showing time on one axis, and the events on the other. As events are mentioned, the participants are asked to recall the dates when these occurred, so that these can be plotted in a sequence. Then there are placed into periods of time. The participants can go as far back in time as they can. Sometimes for a village time line, people even go back by a few hundred years (i.e. a time before they were born) if they feel that there was a significant event that changed people's lives. An individual's time line on the other hand, starts from the day s/he was born and continues to the present day. Once the dates and the events have been listed, the participants can be asked to narrate the impact these events had on their lives. This can be recorded next to the events.

The information gathered with this tool is presented in chapter two, in the section of villages studied and Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

b) Venn diagram

This is an excellent visual tool for mapping the inter-relations of different formal and informal institutions and power structures in the villages. Venn diagrams also show the relationships between different elements or institutions represented as overlapping circles of different sizes and forms. They are useful for clarifying the different interest groups, institutions and decision-making patterns.

Using pen and paper, different circles are drawn to represent institutions and individuals with decision-making power. Where the circles are separate there is no contact between them and where they touch, information passes between them. If the circles are drawn overlapping this indicates that there is some cooperation in decision-making. The degree of overlap represents the amount of interaction of cooperation between groups. So, for example, if a village water committee could not take any decision without first getting approval or agreement from a village development committee, then the water committee circle would be drawn inside the village development committee circle. Nevertheless, many variations and adjustments can be done in order to suits it to the local contexts.

Both quantitative and qualitative information can be added to get a good pictorial overview of power relations, levels and patterns of discrimination and so on. For monitoring and evaluation overtime the diagrams can be revisited to assess changes in size of the different circles, changes in boundaries and the reasons for this. The information gathered with this tool is used in chapters five and six.

c) Problem matrix

This tool seeks for the developing in the villagers a critical awareness of their own situation and stimulates the search for solutions to their own problems. Every problem can be seen from different angles so a lot of time may be necessary to fully negotiate the various analyses presented by the village members. At this stage it is important that the outsiders do not get too involved in the analysis. The facilitator should not be too concerned by methods and data but should be concerned with how the village members are analysing their problems.

The tool begins with a brainstorm on all major problems existing within the village. People raise the problems and make comments on them. Then, the list of problems is placed in a two axis matrix and each problem is evaluated against each other. Participants decide which one of the two in comparison is most relevant at the village level. By the end a new list is made out of the most repetitive problems. Every problem is counted in terms of the time they were selected and then ranked. The tool is helps convert qualitative data into quantitative data using evaluation criteria. In such a way the most important problems are collectively identified. Later on the causes and consequences of those problems are discussed with participants and finally actions being taken or opportunities and capacities to address them are also discussed.

The matrix made possible to identify the problems the villages considered the most concerning. However the actions being taken by them or the different local actors were also highlighted. This tool was also used to stimulate the collective identification, description and analysis the collective perceptions on empowerment and development presented in chapter eight.

Appendix 2. Examples of guiding questions used along the ethnography (Mainly included in the semi-structured interviews and informal talks)

a) Theme 1: Information on local and non-recognised actors and alternative spaces for collective action

- Do you have any formal responsibility within the local authority structure?
- Do you consider yourself as part of a group, committee, union or any other local type of organisation in the village?
- If so, how did you come to be part of this group?
- Which group, committee or organisation is that?
- How, when and why was this organisation formed?
- Where did the initiative come from?
- Who is the leader or leaders managing it?
- Where are the ideas and resources to operate the group/organisation coming from?
- What are the main issues being addressed by the group/organisation?
- How do you work in the group or organisation, what is your role?
- How many villagers are participating in the group/organisation?
- What are the main achievements of the group/organisation?
- What are the main linkages you have as a group/organisation?
- Who else is helping or supporting your group/organisation?
- What else would you like to say?

b) Theme 2: Governance, power and natural resources

- What do you personally think are the main problems of your village?
- Do you considerer the problem of …. as a village problem or just the individual problem of someone?
- If so, what do you think about this problem?
- Do you think it is well-known to all the villagers?
- What do you think the causes are rooted in?
- What do you think the roles and responsibilities of local authorities in this problem are?
- What do you think about the responsibility of the rest of the village on this problem? Are they responsible or not?
- Why do you think the problem is kept hidden?
- What do you think are the possible solutions and from where should come?
- How do you see your village in ten years time from now?
- What would be your role in such a situation?

c) Theme 3: observations conducted

- People's body language and facial expression
- Nervousness or confidence while talking
- Voice intensity and coherence
- Way of expressing about other villagers

Appendix 3. Example of semi-structured interviews used along the assessment on empowerment-development

Semi-structured Interview 1. (First pages)

Entrevista semi-estructurada (empoderamiento) para informantes clave: nivel COMUNITARIO.

Nombre:_____ Sexo: F M Edad_____ Escolaridad_____ No. hij@s:_____
Espos@: _____ Cargo_____
Encuestador _____ Fecha:_____

Criterio	Area	Pregunta Planteamiento	Subpreguntas	Respuesta			Pregunta cerrada						OBS
			Orientación	Pasado	Presente	Futuro		Importancia					
								0	1	2	3	4	
Social	**Salud**	Que opina de los servicios de salud en la comunidad	1. Enf. mas frec. 2. Atención 3. Medicinas 4. Infraestructura				1. Cual crees que sea la importancia de los servs de salud 2. Cómo es la salud de la comunidad						
	Educación	Qué opina de la educación en la comunidad	1. Profesores 2. Infraestructura 3. Aprendizaje (cursos, funcionam.)				1. Cual es la importancia de la educación 2. Cómo es la educación en su comunidad						
	Servicios	Qué opina de los servicios de la comunidad	1. Agua 2. Electricidad 3. Teléfono 4. Transporte				1. Cual es la importancia de estos servicios 2. Cómo son esos servs. En la comunidad						
	Migración	Qué opina de la migración de las personas de la comunidad	1. En qué les beneficia 2. No. de inmigrantes 3. Destino de los inmigrantes 4. Áreas de trab 5. Razones/causas 6. Consecuencias 7. Tipo: (temporal o permanente)				1. Cual es la importancia de la migración 2. Cómo es la migración en la comunidad						
	Liderazgo	Qué opina de la	1. Honestidad				1. Cual es la						
Económ. Prod.	**Sist. De prod**	Qué opina de los sistemas de producción que existen en la comunidad	1. Agricultura 2. Ganadería 3. Forestal 4. Recolección 5. Artesanías 6. Comercio 7. Oficios 8. Otros				1. Cual es la importancia de los sistemas de producción que existen? 2. Cómo son o están los sistemas de prod en la com.						
	Org. Para el trabajo	Cómo se organiza la gente de la comunidad para realizar sus actividades (motivos/razones, funcionamiento)	1. Individual 2. Las familias 3. Los G. T. 4. Comunitario				1. Cual es la importancia de la organización para el trabajo 2. Cómo es la organización para el trabajo en su com.						
	Desarrollo tecnológico	Cual es el desarrollo tecnológico de las personas de la comunidad	1. Innovaciones 2. Experimentación				1. Cómo han logrado el desarrollo tecnológico los productores de la comunidad 2. Cual es la importancia del desarrollo tecnológico						
	Mercado	Qué opina de la comercializan de	1. Posibilidades				1. Como comercializan						

Semi-structured Interview 2. (Some pages)

Entrevista semi-estructurada (empoderamiento) para informantes clave: nivel PERSONAL.

Nombre:_____ Sexo: F M Edad_____ Escolaridad_____ No. hij@s:_____
Espos@: _____ Cargo_____
Encuestador _____ Fecha:_____

Criterio	Area	Componente	Pregunta abierta	Clasificación de la respuesta			Pregunta cerrada	Respuesta Importancia					OBS
				Pasado	Presente	Futuro		0	1	2	3	4	
Social	**Salud**	1. Enf. mas frec. 2. Atención 3. Medicinas 4. Infraestructura	Cómo resolvía, resuelve o resolvería los problemas de salud				Cómo califica su capacidad para resolver los problemas de salud?						
	Educación	1. Profesores 2. Infraestructura 3. Aprendizaje (cursos, funcionam.)	Cómo resolvía, resuelve o resolvería los problemas de educación				Cómo califica su capacidad para resolver los problemas de educación?						
	Servicios	4. Agua 1. Electricidad 2. Teléfono 3. Transporte	Cómo resolvía, resuelve o resolvería los problemas de los servicios				Cómo califica su capacidad para resolver los problemas con los servicios?						
	Migración	1. En qué les beneficia 2. No. de inmigrantes 3. Destino de los inmigrantes 4. Áreas de trab 5. Razones 6. Causas 7. Efectos 8. Tipo: (temporal o permanente)	Cómo resolvía, resuelve o resolvería los problemas de migración de la gente de su comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para resolver el problema de migración?						
	Liderazgo	1. Honestidad 2. Transparencia	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar el liderazgo de la gente de su comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar el liderazgo?						
Económ. Prod.	**Sist. De prod**	1. Agricultura 2. Ganadería 3. Forestal 4. Recolección 5. Artesanías 6. Comercio 7. Oficios	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar los sistemas de producción en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar los sistemas de producción en la comunidad						
Político	**Div. política**	1. A. de U. C. 2. A. de A. H. 3. A. de Reserva	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar la división política del ejido				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar la división política del ejido						
	Org. política	1. Com. ejidal 2. Cjo. De vig 3. Agente mpal.	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar la organización política de la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar la organización política de la comunidad						
	Org. local	1. Comites/coop. 2. G. de T. 3. Gpos. Relig. 4. Grupos políticos	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar la organización de la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar la organización de la comunidad						
Cultural	**Religión**	1. Relación entre fieles del mismo grupo 2. Relación entre fieles de dif. grupos	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar el aspecto religioso de la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar el aspecto religiosos de la comunidad						
	Costumbres	1. En las familias 2. En el trabajo 3. En la convivencia comunitaria	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar las costumbres en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar las costumbres en la comunidad						
	Valores locales	1. En la relación familiar 2. En la relación del G. de trabajo.	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar los valores en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar los valores en la						

Ecológico ambiental	**Suelo**	1. Fertilidad 2. Erosión	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar la calidad del suelo en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar la calidad del suelo en la comunidad						
	Agua	1. Abasto 2. Sanidad 3. Reglamento 4. Costo	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar el uso y manejo del agua en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar el uso y manejo del agua en la comunidad						
	Bosque	1. Tipo de uso (aprov. O explot) 2. Reglamento (sanciones)	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar el uso y manejo del bosque en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar el uso y manejo del bosque en la comunidad						
	Clima	1. Temperatura (calor) 2. Lluvia 3. Vientos 4. Ciclos 5. Problemas	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar la situación del clima en su comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar la situación del clima en su comunidad						
	Vida silvestre	1. Plantas 2. Animales	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar la vida silvestre en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar la vida silvestre en los bosques de la comunidad						
	Basura y residuos de agroquímicos	1. Reglamento 2. Basurero 3. Origen	Qué hacía, hace o haría para mejorar el manejo de la basura en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para mejorar el manejo de la basura en la comunidad						
	Plagas y enfermedades	1. Principales plagas y enf. 2. Ciclos 3. Control	Qué hacía, hace o haría para resolver los problemas de plagas y enfermedades en la comunidad				Cómo califica su capacidad para resolver los problemas de plagas y enfermedades en la comunidad						
	Fuego	1. Quema	Qué hacía, hace o haría				Cómo califica su						

Semi-structured Interview 3. (First and last pages)

Entrevista semi-estructurada para empoderamiento personal

1) General
Nombre:
Sexo: h / m
Edad:

2) Unidad familiar
Posición en la familia:
Familiares dentro de la casa:
y jefe:
Familiares fuera de la casa:

3) Educación
preescolar / primaria..... / secundaria ..... / preparatoria ..... / universidad .....

¿Cuál es su opinión sobre la calidad de la educación en la comunidad
Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena
¿Por qué?.....

¿Qué tan importante es la educación?
No importante x x x x x Muy importante
¿Por qué?.....

4) Salud
¿Cómo es su salud?
Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena
(problemas) .....

¿Cómo estaba su salud hace 3, 5 10 años?
(3) Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena
(problemas) .....

(5) Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena
(problemas) .....

(10) Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena
(problemas) .....

¿Cuál es su opinión sobre la calidad de servicio de salud
Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena
¿Por qué?.....

¿Cómo estaba la calidad de servicio de salud hace 3, 5 y 10 años?
(3) Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena
¿Por qué?.....

(5) Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena
¿Por qué?.....

(10) Muy mala x x x x x Muy buena

5) Cargos en la comunidad
¿Ha tenido usted algún cargo? Si No
Ahora: Antes:
Cuantos: Nombre del (los) cargo(s):

¿Cree que es importante tener un cargo?
Nada importante x x x x x Muy importante
¿Por qué?.....

¿Qué aprendió al tener el cargo?

De lo que aprendió ¿qué usa actualmente en su vida cotidiana?

Todo que aprendió le sirve
Nada x x x x x Muchísimo
¿Por qué?.....

6) Participación en grupos
¿Participa en algún grupo u organización? Si No
Ahora: Antes:
En cuantos: Nombre del grupo (s) u organización(es):

¿Tiene o tuvo algún cargo en ese grupo u organización? Si No
Cuantos: Nombre del (los) cargo(s):
Ahora: Antes:

¿Qué tan importante es para usted el actual grupo en que participa?
No importante x x x x x Muy importante
¿Por qué?.....
¿Usted cree que es importante participar en algún grupo?
No importante x x x x x Muy importante
¿Por qué?.....

¿Le gustaría participar en un grupo? Si No
Nada x x x x x Muchísimo
¿Por qué?.....

¿En que grupo le gustaría participar?....
¿Por qué?.....

¿Cómo le gustaría participar en un grupo?

Nombre:
Sexo: h / m
Edad:

Usted como persona se siente:
Saludable
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Inteligente
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Independiente
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Curioso
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Abierto para aprender cosas nuevas
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Útil
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Importante
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Único
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Feliz
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Fuerte
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Rico
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Innovador (con ideas para mejorar)
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Satisfecho con lo que tengo y hago
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Libre
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Comunicativo
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Transparente y honesto
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Respetuoso
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Participativo en mi comunidad o grupo
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Comprometido
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Solidario y cooperativo
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Con confianza en mi mismo(a)
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Con confianza en los demás
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Con conciencia social
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Democrático(a)
Nada x x x x x Mucho

Con conciencia ambiental
Nada x x x x x Mucho

¿Cómo ve su vida, su situación personal y familiar en 3, 5 y 10 años....????
(3) Peor x x x x x Mucho mejor
¿Por qué?.....

(5) Peor x x x x x Mucho mejor
¿Por qué?.....

(10) Peor x x x x x Mucho mejor
¿Por qué?.....

En general, como ve su futuro?

Appendix 4. Methodological lessons

On Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology was appropriated, realistic, fair and respectful while interacting with local actors at the villages. Moreover it was also effective in stimulating participation, bringing the people together to play and perform a role, making the participants exercise a collective reflection on the local context in a public way but also a joint analysis of conditions. In the two villages, people's participation, motivation and encouragement was increased along the moths. For instance, some joint exercises were apparently taken as examples to be used during the meetings of the village assembly (VA) in California. According to local versions, villagers have used visualisations tools - widely used along this research - to encourage more participative discussions are somehow opening new spaces of dialogue and communication among the villagers.

However, preparing the research team with information and facilitation skills for the conduction of PAR are key issues to keep in mind before going to investigate the villages. The experience in using PAR as well as the facilitation skills represents a time consuming endeavour that goes beyond the roles as scientists. PAR brings permanent challenges for dealing with the local contexts, especially when local conflicts come out and reach the research process. Beyond the permanent observation on what is seen and heard one PAR also implies learning on how to play different roles. Not to forget that beyond the enthusiasm for actions carried out, there is also a research process that implies and demand permanent reflection on what is done and what is being shared by the people.

On methods and tools

Participatory methods and tools helped out to bridge the research objectives and local interests. Besides, they also contributed top the setting up of better relations (based on trust, respect and openness) between *researches-researched*. However, there are still some risks while using them. Some risks are related to the high possibility of opening up sensitive issues in public. This can lead or bring out local conflicts with unexpected reactions from the participants. The researcher-facilitators must be well prepared to handle any sign of such a situation. The advice is always avoid any confrontation between the people, especially if they are ready or willing to talk openly in a franc way. Thus proper communication skills, respect and openness are the important elements to take into account.

Team building

In PAR, the team building was a necessity, especially if many objectives are include in the research topic. In Mexico, different participatory methods and tools have been used in extractive ways by so-called *participatory research teams.* Fortunately, villagers have learned to identify this type of researchers. Some villagers made jokes about it and commented how some researchers have been refused to enter their villages.

However, in the conformation of a research team for the conduction of PAR it was necessary to invest a lot of time in building the capacities in the team members. This was because almost everyone member came with different backgrounds, capacities, abilities and openness to learn. It was very important to carefully identify strengthens and weaknesses in all the members before starting with a further training process. Later, developing a curriculum for the research team was useful but always having in mind the objectives and research questions. During the training, the communication and facilitation skills but also the new knowledge on the participatory approaches was necessary top be explored. After three months, all research team members learned and improved their skill and knowledge in the world of participatory approaches. Different roles were played along the training. Mutual support, feedback and permanent encouragement were used to motivate each other.

The inclusion of undergraduate or MSc students in the research team worked very well. Two reasons were behind it. The first, the author's - of this thesis - interest in strengthening the students' capacities throughout their training with a different perspective from the usually done

and learnt in the classrooms. The second had to do with the costs; students result less expensive investments than hiring a couple of research assistants for three years. Thus, they did their practical internships or theses whereas being involved in the research process. By the end, this represented an excellent option for the PhD researcher despite the time invested in their training and supervision. By the end, new human resources with different capacities from their classmates were trained. Most of them are now working with action-oriented approaches within different development organisations or research centres.

Workshops

During the workshops, research team members played different roles. One of them was the *facilitator*, to stimulate the participants to bring and shared data, information, concerns and actions locally taken. The learning cycles (action and reflection) delivered very important information for the collective power mapping but also about concerns and potential future actions. The workshops were the main method to display the *front stage* of the villages. They represented an open and public space to express and agree or disagree on many local facts. Another important role played was the *monitor*. Rather than being the contact person to receive comments from everyone during the workshops; he/she supported the team integration and management. He/she was also in charge of giving feedback to the facilitator about workshop dynamics and people participation. When information came out as an avalanche, the monitor also assisted the *documenter* (systematiser) in placing the information properly. Another monitor task was the identification of types of participants during the sessions. The research team leader always played a role of *observer*, in order to get a whole view of the process, to take detailed notes and to gather other types and sources of information. Peoples' reactions during the workshops were also observed.

During the workshops active participation among team members and local participants was also encouraged in order to make everyone feeling confident. Respect for every opinion, activity and contributions were the basic principles. Furthermore, if a valuable situation unexpectedly appeared out of the workshop plans, especially during the deep analysis, the scheduled activities were adjusted. It helped to make the people feel free to talk. Flexibility became crucial and then some workshops were carried out up to in four sessions within different weeks.

Tools

Since PAR as methodology is not clearly explicit in the methods and tools to be used in the research, it was necessary to include some participatory tools for its implementation. The tools selected were also modified according to the local contexts, needs and vocabulary. Thus, Venn diagram, time line and matrix for problem analysis were necessary to be adjusted into local names and visualisation techniques and materials.

Researching small villages

In the Mexican context, local people may get involved in PAR in relation to their opportunities, motivation and they are initially approached by the researchers. It also depends on the local needs, values, attitudes, beliefs and convictions. The fact is that some villagers are excluded sometimes by themselves (no interest) but others by the way local power structures work. However, if certain villagers are initially excluded by the researchers, then the opportunity to explore other perspectives and gather valuable information to build a more balanced history is lost. Therefore, it is important to take into account other methods that may allow the inclusion of those people. They may have valuable information on what is going on underground. Actually, these villagers represented an important source of key informants (particularly women, youth, elderly and *avecindados*). They provided most of the information used to build the *back stage* of the villages.

Importance of respect for the local

It is important to keep in mind that as an outsider, one also has a charge of values, norms and even some times prejudices as the villagers do; then while investigating the inside of villages and important key principle is the *respect* for everything of the villages, like norms and values even if as external person one disagrees on them. For instance, the issue of approaching with al the due respect to the villages' authorities as the other villagers do. Thus, since the beginning to the end,

the research team was always respectful of every simple aspect of the villages' lives but with an open mind and critical eyes for further analysis.

Blending methods and tools

Inertias of people and villages can be easily identified and challenged while conducting collective reflections as part of the PAR exercises. However very sensitive issues resulted problematic and it was dangerous to be openly analysed in the workshops. Then, alterative methods like semi-structured interviews, informal talks, observations and discourse analysis in order to display the hidden world (*back stage*) had to be used. Especially later on, when the trust between villagers and research team had grown, the informal one-to-one conversations were very useful to obtain and cross check information about *front* and *back stages* of the villages and people.

Then, the socio-anthropological methods and tools were crucial for the study of the *back stage* of villages; especially for the analysis of local conflicts and dilemmas around the use of natural resources, federal laws and villages. Nevertheless, the blending of participatory and socio-anthropological methods and tools were also useful and complementary to each other for the study of local development, empowerment and their assessment.

Besides, their framing into rigid research frameworks may lose an opportunity for exploring innovative manners for conducting research in the social sciences. The combination of both participatory and socio-anthropological approaches within a flexible research methodology (PAR in this case) opened up a window that may demand further explorations in social sciences. This represented just an entry point to discover the different intricacies of Mexican villages.

On local impacts

In social sciences much is said and criticised regarding the role of development practitioners. They are criticised for their high enthusiasm and motivation in doing things without a theoretical framework or the scientific justifications of their facts. However while in the field and wearing a 'scientist suit' resulted quite hard to keep unaffected as human-being, especially when observing and living the hard local conditions that villagers cope with. Expending several months in the villages and acting beyond the 'planned' interaction to achieve the research objectives, was a source of amazing lessons for life. Ethics and humanism in alls senses were crucial to strengthen the daily interactions and build the trust between the villagers and the research team beyond the institutions and the 'suits' we normally wear.

Initially, many doubts, concerns and expectations came out in order to conduct PAR. Beyond the issue of putting in practice a methodology with unknown tools and a lack of experience was actually a well sensed fear. However, the idea of breaking local inertias while researching was initially one of the main concerns. Questions like: Which inertias are we talking about?; What right do we have to arrive at a village and look for local inertias?; How dangerous may result the breaking of such inertias?. Thus, the assumption that learning cycles build and offer a space of collective reflection was crucial. The villagers went far beyond and conducted important joint analysis of their villages and lives but most important help us out to understand where they were placed. They also found the collective sessions for reflections (during the workshops) as an interesting space to analyse their local context and situations. In El Oro, the issue of setting a committee to run a local museum emerged naturally. In California something similar happened during the workshops. The idea of getting a second hand bus to provide a service to the villagers of California and surrounding villages to Villa Flores city was consolidated as well as the idea of constituting a local committee (later a cooperative) for growing commercial beans (see chapter 6).

Summary

The research justification and objectives. Mexico is one of the most natural resource-rich places in the world. However, it is also a country that has shown many contrasts in the use of its resources, human relations and the overall distribution of its richness.

The justification of this research lies in the question why the development of small villages in Mexico has stagnated, despite their richness in natural resources, cultural and political organisation, and the efforts made by (non)governmental agents. Specifically, the role of interveners like researchers and development practitioners in the local processes was an issue for study. In fact, some of these interveners are seen to be doing more or less the same thing in the same villages for decades. They experiment with technology options or other development initiatives without having an effective relation with the villagers themselves and without a deep inquiry of the local problems – putting aside the relevance of understanding the reality of the villages, their actors and the overall way of local organisation. The general objective of the research was to understand this reality, embedded in a national legal and political context. The specific objectives were:

1. To study the local context of two small villages of Southern Mexico in terms of their governance, exercise of power and strategies used to address local development.
2. To illuminate local and informal politics in two Mexican villages through the development of participatory power maps.
3. To identify the bottlenecks in terms of the use of natural resources (NR) and how different actors cope.
4. To identify, understand and assess empowerment at individual and collective levels and seek ways of framing and supporting local development visions.

The approach. This PhD thesis explored an innovative methodology to investigate historical, socio-political, environmental and cultural realities of two villages: it combined action-oriented and socio-anthropological research approaches. The action-oriented approach made the villagers crucial actors in the re-construction, collection and analysis of information. They participated in different workshops and engaged in collective reflection exercises during the period of 2003-2005. This was facilitated by a research team that was previously trained on facilitation skills and participatory methods and tools. Through these exercises the villagers publicly reflected on their village life providing the researchers with an inside perspective. This made the villagers look at themselves as actors in a regional and institutional context. Finally, as a result of the workshop reflections, in both villages the villagers took the initiative for collective projects. By using the conventional socio-anthropological approach the researchers realised that the action-oriented approach had only revealed part of the village reality and that some of the evidences publicly gathered, forcedly needed a cross-checking. In this sense, the socio-anthropological work helped to illuminate and understand the reality that mainly existed of a *front stage* and a *back stage* in every village. Hidden acts and behaviours of inhabitants that were influencing the villages' lives could thereafter be placed in another perspective.

The two approaches produced valuable information for a detailed analysis on the functioning and structuring of the two isolated villages in Oaxaca and Chiapas states. The description of a governance system of customary laws, the so-called '*usos y costumbres',* was used as an entry point of the analysis. This system is considered the ruling and running mechanism through which the villagers construct and reconstruct their social order. The functioning of the system was unravelled by analysing its history and current organisation (mainly the local actors) of the studied villages. Besides, the history of the villages was investigated through a participatory re-construction of important dates. This delivered the most recognised events at each village. This particular information was a first input for the analysis on the current functioning of the governance system and the local actors. In this study, both organisations and individuals with responsibilities in the functioning of the village's life, were defined as local actors. In this way, actions, relations and conflicts over the use of local natural resources were made explicit. This actually pictured the local governance system and how it functions in the context of the national governance framework.

The results from the research are presented in five empirical chapters. They give details on how the villages function: their organisation strategies, their governance and their development ideas; from both collective and individual points of view. The chapters are containing case studies that show the *front* and the *back* stages of the villages and their implications in local development.

The findings. Mexican villages are very complex and permanently (re-)shaped through local logics, daily practices and concerns. This makes them often appear as non-sense entities to certain external actors. The *usos y costumbres* represents a system of practical norms and values, validated and reproduced over time for self-government in small villages. Villagers sometimes even consider the system more important than state law for ensuring local order. Indeed, the system plays a crucial role in the settlement of local power dynamics, the constitution of local actors, the decision making over the use of natural resources and the capacity building, particularly in leadership formation. In this sense, collectivism and communalism are still daily practiced in the villages in order to achieve short-term development goals or addressing personal aspirations. However, one of the reasons the villages remain relegated is because of the current complex context in which they are immersed. For instance, they are faced with state laws and interventions that often conflict with their subsistence logic. Therefore, there is not strange to see how interventions are only utilised by the local actors to address the village's development according to their own local views or to meet their basic needs or personal aspirations. Interveners, on their part, try to influence local dynamics and processes in the search of delivering their messages and mandates. Over time this has resulted in interesting social force fields which are manifested in complex relations between small villages and interveners. In the case of the state law, struggles arise because certain norms and rules represent rigid, non-logic and inhuman frameworks for the locals. This has placed villages and their inhabitants in different dilemmas during the last decade, particularly for the use of their own natural resources.

The fact is that interveners are still looking at the development of small villages as a series of projects and activities within their policies and initiatives rather than a long-term process that is locally conducted and permanently constructed. Actually, this challenges both national and local ruling frameworks since contrasting perceptions, conflicts of interests and local dilemmas have emerged and put natural resources at a permanent risk. The villages' current situation - in terms of the pressure over their natural resources, the lack of a long-term local project, the absence of proper development opportunities for their context and the forces of globalisation- is strongly challenging their communalism and collectivism. This automatically influences their local processes of governance and development but also the relations among the villagers, since the basic needs like food, housing, health and education are more difficult to meet. Breaking federal and top-down laws and out-migration are therefore becoming normal escape strategies.

Finally, this study indicates existing opportunities for a better relation between researched-researcher. This can be achieved by combining different research approaches. In this case, over a period of three years, the on-and-off presence of the researchers in the villages in combination with participatory and action-oriented activities and conventional socio-anthropological fieldwork built a solid trusting relation between researchers and villagers. This also resulted in certain actions that villagers undertook at the village or individual levels.

Resumen

Justificación y objetivos de la investigación. México es uno de los países más ricos del mundo en cuanto a recursos naturales se refiere. Sin embargo, es también un país que presenta muchos contrastes, principalmente en el uso de sus recursos, sus relaciones humanas y en la distribución de su riqueza entre la población.

La justificación de esta investigación se basa en la pregunta clave: ¿porqué el desarrollo de las pequeñas comunidades rurales se encuentra estancado, a pesar de su riqueza en cuanto a recursos naturales, su organización cultural y política y, de los esfuerzos realizados por diferentes sectores de la sociedad, como las instancias gubernamentales y ONG's?. Uno de los principales temas aquí investigados es precisamente el rol desempeñado por diversos interventores - como los investigadores y agentes del desarrollo- sobre los procesos locales. De hecho algunos de estos interventores han implementado proyectos similares durante décadas en las mismas comunidades y sin contacto alguno entre ellos. Así, han experimentado con opciones tecnológicas u otras iniciativas enfocadas al desarrollo. Incluso, esto lo han realizado sin contar con una relación efectiva con los habitantes de las comunidades y sobre todo, sin entender a profundidad los problemas locales. Al mismo tiempo, han subestimado la relevancia de entender la realidad de las comunidades rurales, sus actores y sus formas de organización local. Por lo tanto, el objetivo general de esta investigación fue el entender esa realidad de las comunidades rurales, que está inmersa en un contexto legal y político de índole nacional. Los objetivos específicos fueron:

1. Estudiar el contexto local de dos comunidades rurales del Sureste de México, en términos de sus formas de gobierno, sus ejercicios de poder y las estrategias usadas para dirigir su desarrollo local.
2. Ilustrar la política local e informal de dos comunidades rurales de México a través del desarrollo participativo de mapas de poder.
3. Identificar los principales cuellos de botella en el uso de los recursos naturales y como los actores locales los enfrentan.
4. Identificar, entender y examinar el empoderamiento local tanto al nivel colectivo como individual y al mismo tiempo, buscar las formas de apoyar las visiones del desarrollo local.

El enfoque. Esta tesis doctoral exploró una metodología innovadora para investigar los aspectos históricos, socio-políticos, ambientales y culturales de dos comunidades rurales del Sureste de México. Dicha metodología incluyó una combinación de enfoques socio-antropológicos y de investigación orientada a la acción. El enfoque de investigación orientada a la acción permitió a los habitantes, ser los actores principales en la reconstrucción, colecta y análisis de la información de campo. Su participaron en diferentes talleres participativos les permitió involucrarse en ejercicios de reflexión colectiva durante el periodo de 2003-2005. Esto fue facilitado por un equipo de investigación previamente capacitado en facilitación y métodos y herramientas participativas. A través de dichos ejercicios, los habitantes reflexionaron en público a cerca de su comunidad, lo que permitió a los investigadores, contar con una perspectiva comunitaria desde adentro. Al mismo tiempo, los participantes se miraron a sí mismos como actores locales dentro de un contexto regional e institucional. Finalmente, y como producto de los ejercicios de reflexión, los habitantes de ambas comunidades tomaron la iniciativa de implementar algunos proyectos colectivos. A través del enfoque socio-antropológico convencional, los investigadores participantes descubrieron que la investigación orientada a la acción solo había revelado una parte de la realidad de la comunidad y que algunas evidencias obtenidas en público, necesitaban forzosamente una corroboración. En este sentido, el trabajo socio-antropológico permitió ilustrar y entender mejor que la realidad de las comunidades estudiadas está compuesta principalmente de dos escenarios, uno público y uno oculto. Es entonces cuando ciertos hechos y comportamientos de los habitantes -y que resultaron estar influyendo la vida de las comunidades- pudieron ser puestos en una perspectiva diferente.

Definitivamente, los dos enfoques ayudaron a la obtención de información valiosa, que permitió un análisis detallado del funcionamiento y composición de dos comunidades rurales en los estados de Oaxaca y Chiapas. Uno de los puntos de entrada para dicho análisis fue la descripción del sistema de gobierno local llamado Usos y Costumbres. Este sistema es considerado como el mecanismo principal de regulación a través del cual los habitantes construyen y reconstruyen su orden social. Sin embargo, el funcionamiento de dicho sistema de gobierno fue descifrado a través de un análisis de la historia y la organización actual (sus actores locales) de las comunidades investigadas. Además, la historia de las comunidades fue investigada a través de la reconstrucción participativa de los hechos más importantes. Esto permitió identificar los eventos mas importantes y localmente reconocidos y recordados por los habitantes. Esta información en particular fue un primer insumo para el análisis sobre el actual funcionamiento del sistema de gobierno y los actores locales. En este estudio, todas las organizaciones y/o individuos con ciertas responsabilidades en el funcionamiento de la vida comunitaria son considerados como actores locales. De esta forma, las acciones,

las relaciones y los conflictos sobre el manejo de los recursos naturales fueron explícitamente expresados. Esto, definitivamente ilustró el sistema de gobierno local y su funcionamiento en contraste con el sistema de gobierno nacional.

Los resultados de esta investigación se presentan en cinco capítulos que contienen la información de campo con su respectivo análisis. Estos a su vez, proporcionan evidencias y detalles sobre como las comunidades rurales funcionan actualmente: sus estrategias de organización, su forma de gobierno y su idea del desarrollo; desde una perspectiva colectiva e individual. Los capítulos también incluyen estudios de caso que muestran precisamente los dos escenarios de las comunidades rurales, el público y el oculto, y sus implicaciones en el desarrollo local.

Los resultados. Las comunidades rurales de México son muy complejas y están en una configuración y re-configuración constante a través de lógicas locales, prácticas cotidianas e intereses locales. Para ciertos actores externos, esto las hace parecer entidades sin sentido. Para las comunidades rurales de México, los Usos y Costumbres representan un sistema de normas y valores prácticos, que son validados y reproducidos a través del tiempo, como una forma de autogobierno. Incluso, los habitantes de dichas comunidades consideran este sistema más importante que las leyes implementadas por el estado, en asegurar el orden social en el ámbito local. En efecto, dicho sistema juega un papel crucial en el establecimiento de las dinámicas de poder local, la constitución de actores locales, la toma de decisiones sobre el uso de los recursos naturales, y la construcción de capacidades locales, como los liderazgos. En este sentido, el colectivismo y la comunalidad siguen como práctica cotidiana en las comunidades para lograr las metas de desarrollo de corto plazo o alcanzar aspiraciones personales. Sin embargo, una de las razones del porqué dichas comunidades permanecen relegadas, se debe a la complejidad del contexto en que están actualmente inmersas. Por ejemplo, se enfrentan constantemente a las leyes impuestas por el estado o a las intervenciones que les generan conflictos con sus lógicas de sobrevivencia. Por eso, no es extraño observar que las intervenciones sean únicamente utilizadas para encauzar el desarrollo de dichas comunidades bajo lógicas y percepciones propias, satisfacer las necesidades básicas o alcanzar aspiraciones personales. Los interventores por su parte, intentan influir en las dinámicas y procesos locales con la intención de llevar sus mensajes y mandatos. A través del tiempo, esto ha originado *campos de fuerza* sociales interesantes, manifestados en relaciones complejas entre las comunidades rurales y los interventores. En el caso de las leyes impuestas por el estado, los forcejeos surgen debido a que ciertas normas y reglas representan -para los habitantes rurales- marcos rígidos, sin lógica e inhumanos. Esto ha conllevado a las comunidades y sus habitantes a ciertos dilemas en el uso de sus propios recursos naturales, especialmente durante la última década,

El hecho es que los interventores aun siguen considerando el desarrollo de las comunidades rurales dentro de sus políticas e iniciativas como una serie de proyectos y actividades, en lugar de un proceso de largo plazo que es conducido y permanentemente construido localmente. Ciertamente, esto ha desafiado a los sistemas de gobierno tanto nacional como local, particularmente cuando percepciones contrastantes, conflictos de interés y dilemas locales han surgido y puesto a los recursos naturales en riesgo. Sin embargo, la situación actual de las comunidades estudiadas -en términos de la presión ejercida sobre sus recursos naturales, la falta de un proyecto local de largo plazo, la ausencia de oportunidades de desarrollo apropiadas a su contexto y las fuerzas de la globalización - está desafiando fuertemente su colectivismo y comunalidad. Esto ha influenciado automáticamente los procesos locales como la gobernabilidad y el desarrollo, pero también las relaciones entre sus habitantes, debido a que las necesidades básicas como alimentación, hogar, salud y educación son cada vez más difícil de satisfacer. Por tanto, la violación de las leyes federales -normalmente impuestas desde arriba- así como la emigración, se están convirtiendo en las estrategias de escape 'normales'.

Finalmente, esta investigación señala que si existen oportunidades para una mejor relación entre investigado-investigador. Esto puede lograrse mediante la combinación de diferentes enfoques de investigación. En este caso, en un lapso de tres años de ir, estar y salir de las comunidades, así como la combinación de eventos y actividades participativas y el trabajo de campo con enfoque socio-antropológico, permitieron construir una relación sólida y basada en la confianza entre los habitantes de las comunidades investigadas y los investigadores. Esto también conllevó a que los habitantes realizaran -en cierto momento- una serie de acciones tanto de interés comunitario como individual.

Samenvatting

De verantwoording en doelstellingen van het onderzoek. Wat natuurlijke hulpbronnen betreft is Mexico één van de rijkste landen ter wereld. Het is echter ook een land dat nog steeds veel contrasten kent, voornamelijk op het gebied van menselijke verhoudingen, de verdeling van de rijkdom en het gebruik van natuurlijke hulpbronnen.

De verantwoording van dit onderzoek is gelegen in de vraag waarom de ontwikkeling van kleine dorpen in Mexico gestagneerd is, ondanks de rijkdom in natuurlijke hulpbronnen, culturele en politieke organisatie, en de inspanningen van (non-)gouvernementele organisaties. Er is met name onderzoek gedaan naar de rol van *interveners* (interveniërende partijen), zoals onderzoekers en ontwikkelingswerkers, in de lokale processen. Sommige van deze *interveners* zien we eigenlijk al decennia lang ongeveer hetzelfde doen in dezelfde dorpen. Ze experimenteren met technologische oplossingen of andere ontwikkelingsprojecten zonder een werkelijke relatie te hebben met de dorpelingen zelf en zonder grondig onderzoek te doen naar de lokale problemen, waarmee ze in feite ontkennen dat het relevant is om begrip te hebben van de realiteit van de dorpen, de actoren en de wijze waarop de lokale organisatie in elkaar steekt. De algemene doelstelling van dit onderzoek was om inzicht te krijgen in deze realiteit, die ingebed is in een nationale juridische en politieke context. De specifieke doelstellingen waren:

1. Het onderzoeken van de lokale context van twee kleine dorpen in Zuid-Mexico, op het gebied van bestuur, machtsuitoefening en de strategieën die gevolgd worden voor lokale ontwikkeling.
2. Het belichten van de lokale en informele politiek in twee Mexicaanse dorpen door het maken van participatieve *power maps.*
3. Het identificeren van de knelpunten in het gebruik van natuurlijke hulpbronnen en in de wijze waarop de verschillende actoren het hoofd bieden aan problemen.
4. Het identificeren, begrijpen en evalueren van *empowerment* op individueel en collectief niveau en het zoeken van manieren om lokale visies op ontwikkeling te ondersteunen en er vorm aan te geven.

De onderzoeksmethode. Dit proefschrift is een verkenning van een innovatieve methodologie voor het onderzoeken van historische, socio-politieke, omgevings-, en culturele realiteiten van twee dorpen: actiegerichte en socio-antropologische onderzoeksmethoden werden gecombineerd. Bij de actiegerichte methode waren de dorpelingen cruciale actoren in de reconstructie, verzameling en analyse van informatie. Ze namen deel aan verschillende workshops en waren betrokken bij gezamenlijke reflectieoefeningen tijdens de periode 2003-2005. Dit werd gefaciliteerd door leden van een onderzoeksteam dat vooraf getraind was in facilitatievaardigheden en het gebruik van participatieve methoden. Aan de hand van deze oefeningen gaven de dorpelingen in het openbaar hun kijk weer op hun leven in het dorp, waarmee zij de onderzoekers een perspectief van binnenuit boden. Hierdoor konden de dorpelingen zichzelf als actoren zien binnen een regionale en institutionele context. Tenslotte leidden de reflectieoefingen ertoe dat dorpelingen in beide dorpen het initiatief namen tot gezamenlijke projecten. Door toepassing van de conventionele socio-antropologische methode beseften de onderzoekers dat de actiegerichte methode slechts een deel van de dorpsrealiteit bloot had gelegd, en dat een deel van de informatie die in het openbaar verzameld was, noodzakelijkerwijs nog een keer op een andere manier geverifieerd moest worden. In dit opzicht hielp de socio-antropologische methode bij het belichten en begrijpen van de realiteit die in elk dorp hoofdzakelijk bestond uit een *front stage* en een *back stage*. Verborgen gehouden acties en gedragingen van inwoners die van invloed waren op de dorpslevens konden daarna in een ander perspectief geplaatst worden.

De twee benaderingen leverden waardevolle informatie op voor een gedetailleerde analyse van het functioneren en de organisatie van twee geïsoleerde dorpen in de staten Oaxaca en Chiapas. De beschrijving van een bestuurssysteem van gewoontewetten, het zogenaamde *usos y costumbres*, werd gebruikt als een ingangspunt voor de analyse. Dit systeem wordt beschouwd als het leidende en drijvende mechanisme dat de dorpelingen gebruiken voor het construeren en herconstrueren van hun sociale orde. Het functioneren van het systeem werd ontrafeld door de geschiedenis ervan te analyseren, alsmede de huidige organisatie (met name de lokale actoren) van de onderzochte dorpen. Daarnaast werd de geschiedenis van de dorpen onderzocht door middel van participatieve reconstructie van belangrijke data. Hierdoor konden voor elk dorp de belangrijkste gebeurtenissen

geïdentificeerd worden. Deze specifieke informatie diende als een eerste input voor de analyse van het huidige functioneren van de dorpsstructuur en de lokale actoren. Zowel organisaties als individuen met plichten binnen het dorpsleven, werden gedefinieerd als actoren. Op deze manier werden acties, verhoudingen en conflicten wat betreft het gebruik van de lokale natuurlijke hulpbronnen expliciet gemaakt. Hiermee kon het lokale bestuurssysteem beschreven worden, evenals de werking ervan binnen de context van de nationale bestuursstructuur.

De resultaten van dit onderzoek zijn weergegeven in vijf empirische hoofdstukken. Daarin wordt gedetailleerd beschreven hoe de dorpen functioneren: de organisatiestrategieën, het bestuur and de ideeën die dorpelingen hebben over ontwikkeling. Dit wordt gedaan vanuit zowel collectieve als individuele gezichtspunten. De hoofdstukken bevatten *casestudies* die de *front* en *back stages* van de dorpen laten zien, en de implicaties ervan voor de lokale ontwikkeling.

De onderzoeksresultaten. De Mexicaanse dorpsrealiteit is erg complex en wordt steeds geconstrueerd en geherconstrueerd door lokale logica, de dagelijkse praktijk en dorpsaangelegenheden. Hierdoor worden de dorpen door sommige externe actoren soms gezien als richtingsloos. De *usos y costumbres* representeren een systeem van praktische normen en waarden voor zelfbestuur in kleine dorpen, dat door de tijd heen is gaan gelden en steeds aangepast is. Voor het handhaven van de lokale orde hechten de dorpelingen vaak meer waarde aan dit systeem dan aan de nationale wetten. Het systeem speelt dan ook een cruciale rol bij het vestigen van de lokale machtsdynamiek, bij het aanwijzen van lokale actoren, bij het nemen van beslissingen over het gebruik van de natuurlijke hulpbronnen en bij het kweken van vaardigheden, met name leiderschap. In dit opzicht zijn collectivisme en communalisme nog steeds dagelijkse praktijk in de dorpen voor het bereiken van korte termijn ontwikkelingsdoelen of voor het verwezenlijken van persoonlijke aspiraties. Niettemin blijven de dorpen achtergesteld, onder andere vanwege de huidige ingewikkelde context waarvan zij deel uitmaken. Zo krijgen zij te maken met landelijke wetten en interventies, die vaak in strijd zijn met hun eigen logica die gebaseerd is op zelfvoorziening. Daarom is het niet vreemd dat lokale actoren de interventies enkel en alleen gebruiken om volgens hun eigen lokale ideeën te werken aan de ontwikkeling van het dorp, of om hun eigen behoeftes of aspiraties te vervullen. Op hun beurt proberen de *interveners* de lokale dynamiek en processen te beïnvloeden om hun boodschappen en mandaten kwijt te kunnen. Door de tijd heen heeft dit interessante sociale krachtsvelden opgeleverd, die zich manifesteren in de complexe verhoudingen tussen kleine dorpen en *interveners*. Overheidswetten leiden vaak tot spanningen omdat bepaalde normen en regels structuren scheppen die rigide, onlogisch en onmenselijk zijn voor de dorpelingen. Hierdoor zijn de dorpen en hun inwoners in het laatste decennium voor dilemma's geplaatst, vooral wat betreft het gebruik van hun eigen natuurlijke hulpbronnen.

In feite zien *interveners* lokale ontwikkeling nog steeds als een serie projecten en activiteiten, ingebed in hun eigen beleid, in plaats van als een lange termijnproces dat lokaal geleid en steeds opnieuw vormgegeven wordt. Zowel de nationale als lokale heersende bestuursstructuren staan hier voor een uitdaging, met name op het moment dat verschillende percepties, conflicterende belangen en lokale dilemma's aan de oppervlakte komen en de natuurlijke hulpbronnen permanent onder druk staan. Het communalisme en collectivisme van de dorpen staan onder zware druk als gevolg van de huidige situatie, waarin de natuurlijke bronnen bedreigd worden, waarin lange termijnprojecten en geschikte ontwikkelingsalternatieven ontbreken en waarin de globalisering invloed uitoefent. Als vanzelf beïnvloedt dit de lokale bestuurs- en ontwikkelingsprocessen, maar ook de verhoudingen tussen dorpelingen, aangezien het steeds moeilijker wordt om basale levensbehoeften als voedsel, huisvesting, gezondheid en onderwijs te vervullen. Het breken van federale en van boven af opgelegde wetten en emigratie worden daardoor normale ontsnappingsstrategieën.

Tenslotte beschrijft dit onderzoek alternatieven voor een betere relatie tussen onderzoekers en degenen die door hen onderzocht worden. Dit kan bereikt worden door het combineren van onderzoeksmethoden. In dit geval leidde de steeds terugkerende aanwezigheid van onderzoekers in de dorpen in een periode van drie jaar, in combinatie met de participatieve actiegerichte methoden en conventioneel socio-antropologisch veldwerk, ertoe dat er een solide vertrouwensband ontstond tussen onderzoekers en dorpelingen. Dit heeft daarnaast als resultaat gehad dat dorpelingen initiatieven ontwikkelden op individueel of dorpsniveau.

About the author

Francisco (Paco) Guevara-Hernández was born in a small village along the East coast of the Gulf of Mexico somewhere in the seventies of the last century. His native village, called Vega de Alatorre, in the Veracruz State, is a small-scale farming, livestock and fishing village that gave him the first signs to where to move in life. Since his early years, he showed a lot of interest for nature. His raising parents expected him to finish primary school and then become a farmer, since farming was the family tradition. But he was fascinated by the *ingenieros* from the Ministry of Agriculture and its extension programmes stationed at his village, that were always talking about "agronomy", "forestry" and "university"; far and strange words for a child of that time. At the age of 11, his curiosity for the world outside his village made him decide to continue with secondary education. At the age of 14 he was granted with a federal scholarship for farmers' children to attend the preparatory school of the *Universidad Autónoma Chapingo,* the oldest and biggest agricultural university in Latin America. The university opened up his mind and opportunities, and in 1995 he got a degree as Engineer in Agroecology. During his studies he spent several months in remote villages because of his participation in social service and research projects from the university. That period among the rural people strengthened his commitment to the rural areas and his ideals took root more deeply and became his main *motto* in life.

After his graduation, he was asked to join the Natural Resources Programme in the Mexican office of the Rockefeller Foundation in which he got the opportunity to start a research career within development-oriented projects. In addition, he got enrolled in a MSc programme in the *Colegio de Posgraduados en Ciencias Agricolas*. After completing his Masters studies in 2000, he moved to the state of Oaxaca in Southern Mexico, where he worked as researcher and lecturer at the regional centre of the Autonomous University of Chapingo. The same year, he also took over the leadership of a NGO called *Red de Estudios para el Desarrollo Rural* (RED A.C.), a national network of organisations in charge of conducting action-research and local capacity building for sustainable rural development using different participatory approaches (www.laneta.apc.org/redac). In RED A.C., he also worked as researcher and facilitator at both community and institutional levels. In 2001 he became guest lecturer and advisor for a regional development initiative of the extension office of the Faculty of Agronomy at the University of Chiapas *campus V* Frailesca (Villa Flores). By 2002 he joined the Participatory Approaches and Up-scaling (PAU) Programme of the Technology and Agrarian Development (TAD) Chairgroup of Wageningen University.

Since 2004 he is member of the advisory committee for the Cuban initiative called *"Strengthening local capacities of multi-stakeholders for the running and institutionalisation of rural innovation processes with participatory learning and action-oriented research",* which is led by the *Instituto de Investigaciones Agropecuarias "Jorge Dimitrov",* from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (Bayamo, Granma). In 2006, he began to provide some consultancy work for the Fellowship Programme of the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC), as president of two technical evaluation committees for tailor made training programmes of Colombian organisations. Since that same year, he has also been an external evaluator of papers for the journals of Agricultural Education and Extension (JAEE) and Tailoring Biotechnologies (TBJ). During the past 12 years he has also attended several seminars, courses and conferences in different countries which have given him an international background in research and development (R&D).

Completed training and supervision plan (TSP)

Description	Department/Institute	Month/year	Credits
I. Orientation			
CERES orientation course	Utrecht University	Mar-May 2002	4
Literature review and proposal writing	WUR	Mar-Jul 2002	4
II. Research methods and techniques			
Techniques for scientific writing	Language Centre/WUR	Feb-Mar 2002	2
Methods for field research	RDS/WUR	Jun-Jul 2002	3
III. Scientific and professional skills			
Facilitating chance in up-scaling of participatory approaches: building personal mastery and organisational capacities	PAU Programme-TAD. Boxmeer, THE NETHERLANDS	10-18 Oct 2002	2
Dealing with data from participatory studies	Statistical Service Center/the University of Reading. Reading, U.K.	14-25 Jul 2003	1
Learning in PAU: linking participation with personal development-Competence development	PAU Programme-TAD. Baarlo, THE NETHERLANDS	1-4 Nov 2003	2
Sharing experiences of/on PhD work so far: researching in developing countries with different participatory approaches	PAU Programme-TAD. Malindi, KENYA	13-18 Jun 2004	1
Learning in PAU: Support to analysis and write up of PhD research	PAU Programme-TAD. Jinja, UGANDA	24-28 Jan 2006	1
IV. Presentation of preliminary results			
Poster presented on: *"FFS in Mexico: experiences and lessons"*	CIP-UPWARD-FIELD. Yogyakarta, INDONESIA	21-29 Oct 2002	4
"Análisis de algunas intervenciones para la construcción de capacidades en comunidades rurales de México"	Universidad Autónoma Chapingo. Chapingo, MEXICO	12-13 May 2003	4
"Investigación-acción y construcción de capacidades para el desarrollo rural sustentable"	CIISMER- Universidad Autónoma Chapingo. Chapingo, MEXICO	2-4 Oct 2003	4
"Mapping local power towards the understanding of local conditions in rural Mexico: a participatory analysis in a rural village of Oaxaca"	Graduate School of International Development Studies/Roskilde University. DENMARK	2-4 Jun 2004	4
"Power mapping: an attempt for understanding local realities in rural Mexican Villages"	CERES Summer school-THE NETHERLANDS	28 Jun 2004	4
"Una visión global sobre escuelas de campo y lecciones para en el contexto del desarrollo rural: experiencias importantes en México"	ECOSUR, Unidad Tapachula, MEXICO	6-8 Oct 2004	1
"Construcción de mapas de poder para el análisis de procesos de empoderamiento: una experiencia en investigación-acción y aprendizaje participativo en tres comunidades de México"	Instituto de Investigaciones Agropecuarias "Jorge Dimitrov". Bayamo, Granma, CUBA	29 Nov-5 Dec 2004	1
"Construcción y fortalecimiento de capacidades locales en México: Investigación-Acción, formación de recursos humanos y alianzas estratégicas"	ICRA/CATIE. Turrialba y San José, COSTA RICA	9-21 Apr 2005	4
Total			**46**

Funding

The main financial support for this PhD thesis was received from the Rockefeller Foundation through a grant for the field research in Mexico, and the Participatory Approaches and Up-scaling (PAU) programme –co-ordinated by the Technology and Agrarian Development Chairgroup– of Wageningen University and Research Centre. The author is grateful to these institutions.

Cover design by Author and Conny Almekinders
Photos taken by the author