

# **Negotiating agricultural development:**

**Entanglements of bureaucrats and rural producers in Western Mexico**

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Agricultural University



**Wageningen**

1993

ISBN = 506 340

*To Manuel and Adriana, my parents,  
and to Andrés, Daniel and Cecilia*

**CIP-GEGEVENS KONINKLIJKE BIBLIOTHEEK, DEN HAAG**

Arce, Alberto

Negotiating agricultural development : entanglements of  
bureaucrats and rural producers in Western Mexico /  
Alberto Arce. – Wageningen : Agricultural University. –  
(Wageningen studies in sociology, ISSN 0923-4365; 34)  
ISBN 90-6754-283-0

Trefw.: regionale economie ; West-Mexico /  
landbouwbeleid ; West-Mexico.

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Printed in the Netherlands

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## FOREWORD

From its inception, social anthropology has struggled theoretically and politically with questions concerning the encounter between contrasting and often opposing life-worlds. This concern arose in part from the fact that anthropology was born out of the moral dilemmas and inherent social contradictions of colonial expansion and the westernization of non-European societies. It also reflected the tension between the idea of 'science' as an organised system of thought in search of universal laws or principles of organisation, and the equally meaningful 'practical' ways in which people of diverse cultures gave meaning to their own life experiences.

This fascination with cultural and social difference and how to deal with it analytically has remained a central theme in anthropological work. Yet only recently have anthropologists turned their ethnographic spotlight on the critical interfaces where life-worlds in fact intersect and accommodate to each other. The neglect of this obvious, though complex, issue is due, it seems, to two factors: the prevalence of structuralist and culturalist explanations of social phenomena which tend to underscore the separation and coherence, rather than the interpenetration and heterogeneity, of cultural and social worlds; and the methodological difficulties of studying such multiplex and dynamic situations.

In the present book, Dr. Alberto Arce makes an audacious attempt to break through this theoretical and methodological impasse. He does so by turning away from the well-trod paths of anthropological enquiry - the peasant community, ethnic group and urban neighbourhood - by focusing upon an area of social life that has been the preoccupation of other social scientists such as political scientists, public administrators and rural development specialists. His focus of attention is state intervention in the peasant sector and what he calls 'the social life of development projects'.

This enables him to explore the intricacies of the workings of the Mexican agricultural bureaucracy and the encounters of frontline government personnel with local peasant actors. But, unlike most studies of state-sponsored agricultural intervention, he avoids the rather crass judgements of 'who benefits' and whether the project has 'failed' or 'succeeded', and replaces them instead with an analysis of the ongoing socially-contested and socially-negotiated nature of the intervention process. This involves a detailed ethnographic account of the perceptions, expectations and strategies of the main participants in the drama and an actor-oriented interpretation of the social construction of the project as it unfolds over time.

This facilitates an empirically-based critique of existing models of planned intervention and theories of the state. It also places in centre stage the agency, discourses and social practices of the various participants, and documents how the institutional, personal and political life-experiences of the intervenors shape frontline strategies and outcomes. Throughout the account Dr. Arce takes great care to build his analysis on the everyday life conditions and subjectivities of the particular social

actors rather than on an aggregated picture of their assumed structural locations and dispositions. This enables him to demonstrate the diversity of social responses, manoeuvres and skills that exist among bureaucrats and peasants alike, and to reveal the ways in which they accommodate to, challenge, and subvert each others' interests and understandings. In this manner he constructs a picture of the struggles and interfaces embedded in and generated by the Mexican Food System (SAM) and the transformations it undergoes during its so-called policy formulation and implementation phases.

The result is a rich and sensitive analysis of the encounter between different cultural traditions, both within the Ministry of Agriculture, where agronomic and technocratic schools of thought vied against each other, and within the local political and social arena. In examining these conflicts and alliances, Dr. Arce draws upon the testimonies and interpretations of key protagonists, and describes how he himself gains access to their representations, images and assessments. In this way, he carries the reader along with him so that he or she might also taste something of the excitement of this anthropological journey of discovery.

Although essentially an ethnographic work, the construction of the text is bold and provocative in theoretical terms. In fact, even if Dr. Arce dislikes his brainchild being baptised as such, his study is undoubtedly a product of the postmodern era. It rejects totalising theory, builds its 'structures' and 'anti-structures' from below - amidst the discordance and flux of 'contingencies' and 'multiple realities'- and strives to find a way out of the dichotomies of external/internal, actor/structure, and beliefs/actions. It also, fruitfully, hangs much of its theoretical argument on issues of knowledge, power and discretion. In short, it whets the appetite for a new anthropology of policy intervention founded upon the study of the everyday life of administrative practice and development projects, which accords serious attention to the analysis of political, institutional and cultural interfaces. Only in this direction can anthropology truly demonstrate its intellectual strengths and live up to its claim to cast important light on issues of cultural diversity and the interpenetration of people's life-worlds.

It is a great pleasure for me to launch this book and to know that Dr. Arce's work is, in no small measure, a product of the Wageningen group of social scientists working on rural development. The book is especially rewarding since it does not distance itself from issues of development practice. Instead, the author jumps in where other anthropologists have feared to tread, while at the same time securing his safety belt to sound theoretical foundations.

Norman Long,

Wageningen, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1993.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book took a long time to materialise. While it is based on the findings of my doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Manchester (1986), in many ways it is a different intellectual venture. The fieldwork material of my first Mexican experience has been analyzed and worked over, in and out of my lectures, seminars and with my colleagues here at Wageningen University during this last year. The first touches of this book were laid down at the University of Hull, England, where a lively and provocative debate took place among my students about the relevance of the actor-oriented approach. I want to single out for special mention Andrew Hanson, who read and commented on earlier draft chapters of this book.

Any progress I have made in integrating an anthropological perspective to relevant issues in rural sociology have been due to the patience of several friends and people who have listened to my ideas and made suggestions. Their criticisms and suggestions are a major intellectual contribution to this book. Among these are Professor Norman Long, whom I know and have had the privilege to work with for some years, and Professor Bryan Roberts who gave me the possibility of working on rural development and state intervention issues for my Ph.D at Manchester. I am particularly grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council of the United Kingdom that financed my fieldwork period in Mexico.

In Mexico where I was fortunate to work, my style of doing research produced more than one ironic or highly charged political comment. I owe debts to the staff and *tecnicos* of the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SARH) and with the rural producers of Jalisco. Having lived among them, I remain surprised by the knowledge and kindness with which they received social anthropologists, such as myself, into their homes and everyday life. They shared with me their experiences and life-worlds. I hope I have protected myself enough against my admiration of Mexico and its people in the writing and interpretation of my data. My critical view at times during this book should not obscure my support for the staff and fieldworkers working in SARH.

I am especially grateful for the close reading, criticisms, and assistance in the rewriting of the material by Thea Hilhorst. With her constant encouragement and enthusiasm for this material, she insisted that I should publish this book for my students. I hope that the time and energy she has given so generously to bring this book to finition has been worthwhile and that we will continue the collaborative, intellectually challenging experience. I extend my admiration to her for her tenacity and commitment in the production of this book and I thank her for her friendship.

This book would have not been completed without the meticulous work of Ann Long. She deserves a very special mention for both her feeling for what constitutes 'sound English' and for her critical perception of what should constitute an anthropological analysis. Ann's respect for authors' ideas, as well as her editorial revisions and suggestions, have made her an indispensable actor for the coherence of the arguments and case presentations in this book.

Finally I want to express my gratitude to Jos Michel who processed the text and

the camera ready-copy of the manuscript. She was always there to accept editorial and page changes even minutes before she was ready to leave for her holidays. I thank my colleague Berry Lekanne and the other members of the editorial committee of the Wageningen Studies in Sociology. They made it possible that this book was published under pressure in record time.

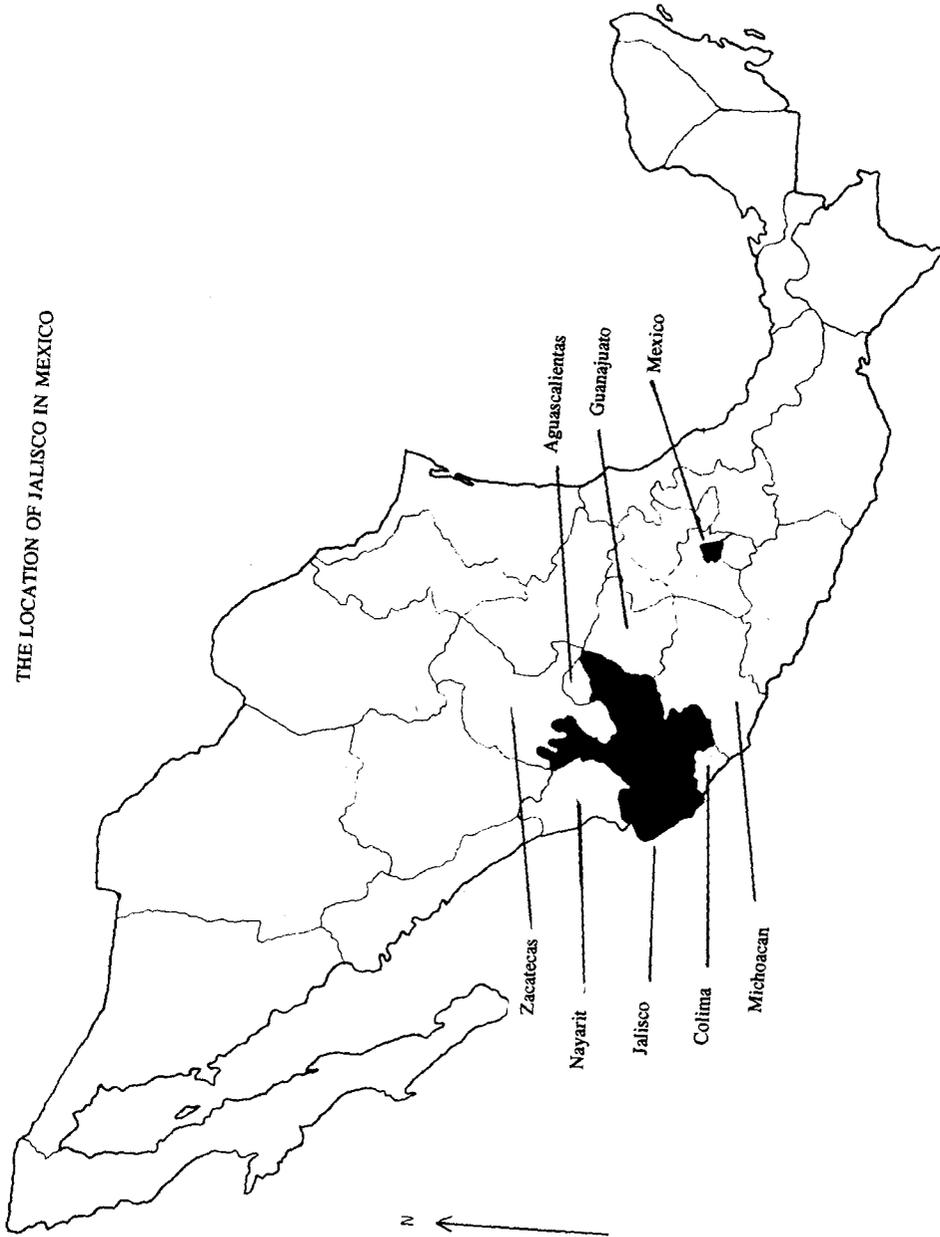
In short, the writing of this book has been a rewarding collective experience. The support from friends and colleagues have improved the presentation of my ideas and made the text more readable. The errors or questionable interpretations which still remain in the book are my responsibility.

Last, but not least, I would also like to express my gratitude to my family for their support. Cecilia has provided in so many ways the stimulus, encouragement and environment to finish this book, to which I am more than grateful.

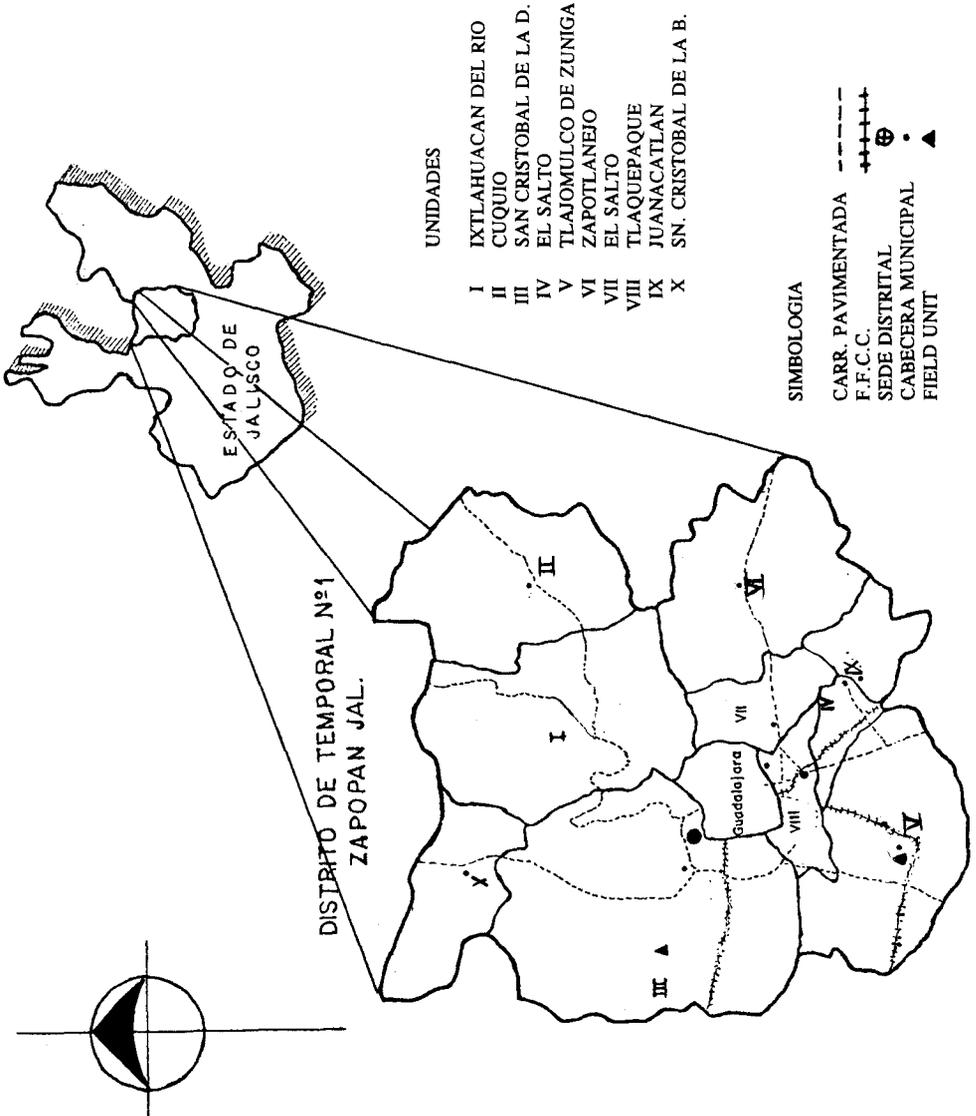
Alberto Arce

Wageningen, 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1993.

THE LOCATION OF JALISCO IN MEXICO



UNITS IN DISTRICT NO. 1



# 1. PROBLEMATIZING RURAL STATE INTERVENTION

This book sets out to be an anthropology of rural state intervention. For the anthropologist, the process of rural development intervention provides an ethnographic field for study. It has its own discourse, symbolic marks, interfaces of systems of knowledge, and political choices among bureaucrats and rural producers. The anthropological focus of the study is mainly concerned with describing and examining the everyday practices and interactions of these actors.

For development practitioners (project designers, managers, policy makers, technical experts) anthropology has recently assumed a 'new value' (Cernea, 1991). It has begun to be recognised that knowledge emerging from social anthropological studies that analyze the cultural variables of policies and projects is important in rural development. The implication of this is that applied social anthropology is increasingly seen as a 'tool' to be used by practitioners in the implementation of projects and policies.

The reasons for re-valuing social anthropological knowledge and the sociology of people's responses to planned rural development are not difficult to ascertain. Most rural practitioners now accept that 'putting people first' is an imperative to induce development and project effectiveness (Cernea, 1991: 7). We have finally realised that the rural development practitioner, often a technical or economic expert, encounters in 'real life' rural producers with perceptions of development, agricultural knowledge, state intervention and policy implementation that differ radically from his/her own.

As contributions from anthropology began to identify these issues, it became clear that there was, as Long argues, "a need to develop a more adequate analytical approach to understanding the relationships between policy, implementation and outcomes. The tendency in much existing work [conventional approaches] is to conceptualize the relationship between policy objectives, the means of implementation and the outcomes as essentially linear in nature, implying a kind of step-by-step deterministic process whereby a policy is formulated, implemented and then certain results follow" (1989: 3).

Indeed, by the 1980's and 1990's the re-valuation of the social knowledge that originated in the analysis of social processes in rural development was at the core of a challenge to the western scientific paradigm of progress and modernisation in contemporary society (e.g. Ortiz, 1973; Chambers, 1983; Richards, 1985; Box, 1987).

Although this theoretical challenge has forced a rethinking of the whole process of intervention, we have to agree with Cernea (1991) that projects have remained the main instruments of development intervention. Despite the recurrent debates in rural development, project implementors are still the actors at the interface between western rural development values and the values of local rural producers. This book therefore primarily intends to focus on the social life of

project implementors, in order to contribute to a better understanding of their own institutional culture and interface with rural producers.

This approach, however, is not without pitfalls. We have now a large trans-cultural position in rural development that recognises the limitations of western expert knowledge and has re-valued local knowledge as containing important 'indigenous skills'. Contributions from this position have added to knowledge about local rural producers among practitioners, and contributed to their understanding of rural social life. In doing so, what is now referred to as 'interface' methodology has been developed. This approach has become the main body of research that focuses on the socio-cultural context and its implications for rural development.

And here lies the problem. It is by now a truism that social anthropology must engage in the identification and articulation of different knowledge networks in rural development. According to Box (1989: 67), the science of agronomy needs to recognise the practical value of cultivators' knowledge and their innovations in order to produce effective solutions to problems. However, knowledge, as an expression of culture, appears from this position to be an infinitely manipulable concept. The question we need to address is whether such identification and articulation of knowledge networks helps the implementor to provide a better service, or whether it provides him/her with the power to label and socially control the rural producer.

In order to address this question, we have to critically evaluate projects and policies according to the 'fate' of the rural producers rather than follow some abstract notion of development (Barnett, 1981). This book argues that it is also necessary to include rural field implementors in the ethnography, i.e. their discourses and practices as well as the language and responses of rural producers during the process of policy implementation. The end product is a social construction of the world views of actors in rural intervention based on the close observation of these actors. Rather than offering an anthropology as a tool for development practitioners, this study hopes to enlarge our understanding of people, including these practitioners, in processes of rural intervention.

## **Two Realms: Science and Power**

It becomes more and more clear that rural policies have used two distinct realms to organise rural intervention. The first is the scientific and technocratic realm: a realm which is organised by experts constantly searching for 'truth' within the 'objective reality' of rural development. Agents and agencies organise intervention as a process to change the 'natural' properties of rural underdevelopment. That is to say, they search for quantified indices of phenomena, rather than looking for the socio-cultural context and practices of the actors' actions that surround and shape underdevelopment.

However, social factors are not waiting 'out there' in 'objective reality' to be captured as natural objects. Human intentions cannot be reduced to natural properties of objects, but are a constitutive part of rural development. Therefore, we cannot but criticize this abstract view of intervention. This is especially important when we consider that scientific knowledge has been one of the most important factors in making projects respectable and legitimate in the eyes of the public at large.

The second realm is power: We have to recognise that every rural development project always includes a political dimension. Hence, we have to look at political actions occurring around and within rural development projects. This means that we have to analyze the practices of rural policy implementation, since this allows us to understand how everyday institutional practices reorganise the presence of the state at local level. Furthermore, it can show how local actors are capable of operating within the grid of the institutional environment: resisting, manipulating and creating new social spaces for themselves. We need to see how, in the dynamics of everyday practices, actors re-organise the objectives of policy formulation and planning while at the same time re-creating culture. The active participation of actors in policy (re)definition challenges any ideology or definition of 'truth', 'rationality' and 'meaning' as used by experts. Everyday practices show us, on the one hand, the strength or weakness of experts' power in organising rural transformations, and on the other, how the so-called project beneficiaries can exercise their capacity to pursue specific aims and interests within the framework of the institutional environment.

If we want to approach rural development, then, the first step is to abandon the traditional dichotomy that maintains that the scientific approach is about 'truth' and the political approach is about power (Callon, Law and Rip, 1986). In this context, a critical view of the science of agronomy and the importance of power in development would provide a more sophisticated connection between truth and power. This may eventually transform our entire perception of rural development.

## **Social Science and Knowledge**

By focusing on actors' practices and interactions we can develop a social knowledge of rural development based on people's responses to institutional environments, their social construction of development alternatives and the meanings they attribute to their social struggles.

In this sense, I believe with Cernea (1991) that rural sociology can contribute to the creation of an alternative and revelatory form of social information that could provide a different interpretation of the constitution of rural development projects and the value of local knowledges in practice. By connecting concepts such as 'truth' and 'power', we can reassess important theoretical issues on rural development practices.

By now, we recognize that people's mutual knowledge (Giddens, 1984) and everyday practices (de Certeau, 1988) should be analyzed in situations of policy implementation. Indeed, it is realized today that local knowledge constitutes 'indigenous skills' that must be used in development action (see Chambers, 1983; Richards, 1985; Arce and Long, 1987; Chambers, 1989). Nevertheless, substantial differences still exist in how to conceptualise and analyze local knowledge in different agrarian cultural contexts.

Chambers and Richards have provided the foundations for a 'rethinking' of rural development intervention. They have nurtured a movement which is known as *Farmers First*. This movement is dedicated to a twofold objective: firstly, to translate science for the people, and secondly, to increase peasant political participation. In their methodology, we can find a synthesis of the analytical methods of the influential phenomenological sociology of Berger (1977) and the empiricist epistemology of Lipton (1977) in development studies. Chambers' book, *Rural Development: putting the last first* (1983), is an expression of this synthesis. In this book Chambers first employs scientifically valid criteria (such as lack of access to education, health and technology) in order to show that poverty is an objective reality in the world. The solution he then proposes to alleviate such poverty is a radical transformation in the values of technocrats and other development practitioners. He provides a check-list for practitioners willing to understand the 'other half of reality'. For example, he argues they should not only visit communities in summer, but also in the rainy season, when roads are cut off and poverty-related problems become truly manifest.

Chambers' phenomenological position leads him to identify a change in experts' values as the basic requirement for rural development reconstruction. However, the question is how Chambers can induce rural experts and professionals to adopt his goodwill morality. Apparently, he believes that practitioners can change, if only they get access to better scientific insights. This means that in his view science is portrayed as somehow neutral and devoid of issues of power. In his perspective, the adoption of a new morality is left to the judgement of the scientific experts. Rural sociology is consigned to become the critical consciousness of the scientific community in a functional partnership with the technical sciences.

This surrogate solution is derived from a pluralist framework of complementary knowledges where rural producers, social anthropologists, extensionists, administrators and technical experts all come together to make sense of rural development. Supposedly, they should be able to achieve this by combining their different individual experiences and specialisations, which suggests the feasibility of functional solutions. The solution proposed by Chambers is surrogate because it builds on a world constituted of goodwill and is totally devoid of concepts like truth and power. It overlooks the fact that not every problem can be solved by experts and that some of the experts' solutions, in spite of their good intentions, may be carriers of a negative morality brought about by the intended or unintended consequences of their interventions.

Paul Richards' study on Sierra Leone builds on the same approach (1985). It argues that by using the techniques of ecological particularism it is possible to reconstruct the relationship between science and development *in situ*. He leads us to distinguish sharply between scientific universal principles (that are true for all times and places) and the particularities of the ecological relationships at the level of the locality. According to him, it is only in the local practices of producers that effective responses to highly specific local problems can be found. In order to mobilize peoples' local knowledge in micro-situations, Richards argues for the application of participatory research and development. This would allow local skills and resources to adapt themselves to the universal principles of scientific agriculture. This approach suggests that Richards perceives knowledge, culture and power as unproblematic analytical dimensions in social change.

Richards' emphasis on rural action research as a new instrument of intervention aims at re-valuing local culture and knowledge in order to ameliorate farmers' existing lower material standards, which will eventually achieve a more balanced rural development. However, this perspective does not take into account the impacts that participatory interventions have on people's quality of life and culture. It presupposes that intervention, because it is participatory, can only produce good results. So again, this perspective overlooks the problematic issues of power and the emergent properties at the interface of different systems of knowledge. As a result, it ends up supporting a naive fusion of agronomic science and local knowledge as a solution to rural development problems.

The views I shall develop in this book are different from those above. My ideas have their point of origin in what I call a multiple perspective approach to the social life of policy implementation. According to this approach, the social life of policy implementation is constituted by actions motivated by different interpretations, values and meanings of those actors involved in the process. These differential responses generate the particularities of the economic, political and social outcomes of policy implementation. Multiple perspective analysis first identifies the differential perceptions of the different actors. Then it follows how actors, on the basis of these different perceptions, interact, conflict, cooperate and negotiate the conditions of rural development. This approach allows us to assess the nature of the discontinuities involved in rural development intervention. I shall argue that, before jumping to solutions, it is necessary to analyze what rural intervention actually is, as well as diagnosing its consequences for truth and power in rural development contexts.

My approach demands a critical view of some of the existing positions in rural development, especially those advocating that science is a value-free system that can be enriched by the complementary insights of social scientists. Because of the limited views on science, culture and power in their epistemological orientation to 'truth', these positions on development cannot enhance the understanding of the realities of rural development interventions.

It is by now evident that success or failure of a project cannot be defined as a matter of truth. The objective evaluation of the outcomes of projects vis-à-vis the

lives of the people is never assured. Therefore, a sociological study of the implementation process becomes central in order to follow how intervention affects peoples' ability to organise everyday life through their current political, economic and cultural local interactions. Such a study will show the significance of their interpretations of the allocation of resources and their capabilities to struggle for the control of their future. This last point leads me to suggest that we cannot understand the effect of rural policies or projects without looking into the social interface of state representatives and local producers in rural development.

### **Local Knowledge and Rural Intervention**

Local knowledge as an important social and cultural factor in state rural intervention emerged out of critiques of principles advocated by rural technocratic interventionists. Early indications of this disquiet are evident in Long's theoretical dissatisfaction with the notion of external determination (Long, 1984: 2). In his paper, *Creating Space for Change* (1984), Long is concerned with the problem of how to analyze interventions in the existing life-worlds of individuals and groups, and suggests that "external factors are both mediated and transformed by internal structures" (p.2). However innocent this proposition may appear, it marks a considerable departure from the doctrine of social change based on the determination of external factors. According to Long, for the understanding of the interaction between external and internal factors, one must not only know what external forces encapsulate, but also what situations are excluded. One can only understand what is precluded in a situation if one understands the actors' room for manoeuvre through their capability (agency) to re-construct their relationships. All actors are entangled in the process of change, although the properties that emerge from particular actors' agencies and interactions accord them different degrees of influence, power or authority.<sup>1)</sup> In this thinking, it is not external factors (culture, markets or state intervention) which are put against local reality to understand social change, but the whole social field of interactions and strategies. These interactions and strategies are the outcome of people's reproduction processes in their everyday life.

In conclusion, we can say that the acceptance of change does not depend upon a force emanating from centres of power (state, powerful economic and political groups, international institutions), but upon its resonance within established local practices and the interpretation of external influences by different actors within the local community. No external force is able to dismantle totally a set of local social relationships and to reconstruct an environment out of pure external factors. In this book, I argue that the implementation of a Mexican food policy (*Sistema Alimentario Mexicano*, SAM) depended upon both the institutional and cultural realities of the Ministry's fieldworkers and Jalisco's rural producers.

One consequence of Long's critique is that the status of outside forces, either as the ultimate conveyor of significance for explaining local social change or as the absolute foundation of power and knowledge, is radically undermined. It is clear that in no circumstance can outside forces be considered in complete isolation from actors' interpretations and the whole local social field of interactions and strategies. It is in this field that external forces acquire meaning through a process wherein local knowledge interprets, internalizes and re-shapes their interventions. This is not to deny that external social processes are important in people's lives. However, the way in which these processes intertwine with each other, and the way in which people respond to them and shape their character in the process, is so contingent that their actual impact is never fixed in space or time, and thus generates differential outcomes. This contingency of both the context and actors' responses implies that an understanding of state intervention can only be acquired through a situational analysis in combination with the study of the life experiences of the actors involved.

### **Local Knowledge and External Forces**

The critique of external forces as the ultimate conveyor of significance to explain social change was closely connected with a more general reconsideration of the nature of interaction in development analysis.

It was through the analysis of knowledge and social interfaces that the social meaning of knowledge in development studies was recognized (Arce and Long, 1987, 1992). Arce and Long challenge the notion of equating knowledge with some professional, specialized or esoteric set of data or ideas, and question the 'objectivist' view of the world as composed of facts which knowledge provides a literal account of (see also Knorr-Cetina, 1981). Thus, Arce and Long suggest that a body of knowledge emerges out of the interface involving a number of actors vis-à-vis social, situational, cultural and institutional factors. Second, if we accept that a body of knowledge emerges out of social processes, we also have to acknowledge power and authority as components in shaping bodies of knowledge.

A body of knowledge is not an accumulation of facts, but a way in which people construct their world. Alongside the study of expert knowledge, we need to take into account the existence of other knowledges and the connection between the social character of knowledge and the actors' life-worlds. If their actions are not based on the recognition of these 'other' knowledges, administrators will not be successful implementors, no matter how efficient they are or how many resources they have to popularise science, technology or policies. In practice, the linkage between knowledge and life-worlds as manifest in the personal experiences of actors, defines the boundaries of the interface between the administration and rural producers<sup>2</sup>). This interface thus becomes the window on studying actors' agency. Hence a study of administrative

techniques in rural development would probably reveal links among interests, resources, knowledge and levels of power.

Chapter 2 illustrates this part of the analysis. Focusing on the personal knowledge and dynamic character of bureaucratic conflicts in a senior regional office in the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture, this chapter highlights the contradictions surrounding the dynamic of governability and presents a picture of the highly heterogeneous social character of the administrative culture within the Mexican State.

The case presented in this book underlines the scepticism concerning the merits of policy implementation and the translation of agricultural science for people. Rural sociology can contribute to understanding social change by clarifying how agricultural knowledge is actually used by bureaucrats and *ejidatarios*<sup>3</sup> in their social, cultural and everyday practices (Arce and Mitra, 1991). This was the experience of the case of the SAM within the Mexican institutional environment.

### **Is the Concept of Local Knowledge Enough?**

As we stressed earlier, local knowledge is an important theme in the discussion of rural development. For authors, such as Ortiz (1973), Scott (1976) and Richards (1985), there is the assumption that all forms of local knowledge are intrinsically the same, since they represent isolated pictures of specific local realities. However, it is clear that this assumption of a single characteristic common to all significant local knowledge is another *a priori* assumption made by the researchers looking at their ethnographic material from without.

Local knowledge is not something that can be simply subsumed under what anthropologists might call a 'traditional system of knowledge'. Perhaps what we have to realise is that local knowledge does not constitute a common, homogeneous body of knowledge at all. People are able to use their local knowledge in different ways. If, by criticising science, rural sociology has advanced in abandoning the notion of scientific validation embedded in expert knowledge, it is necessary to argue by the same token that at local level we have many forms of knowledge. Hence, a new agenda of research should look at how different forms of local knowledge relate to one another. A detailed ethnographic analysis of local interactions would present the complex networks of these different persisting and ephemeral 'local knowledges' (see Arce and Long, 1987: 16-19).

Local knowledge as an analytical concept does not have a rigid boundary, nevertheless it remains a usable concept. The lack of commonality in the concept local knowledge means that there are many different 'local rationales' in constructing a reality. This reality may mean many things at the same time to different people, but somehow these things are related to one another in different ways. It is these interactions that we call local knowledge. In this book I look at

local knowledge interfaces in a political-institutional environment. Leaving behind a theory of universals, and analyzing specific interfaces of knowledge, we are able to understand how state intervention re-organises, and is re-organized by, our everyday life.

### **The Meaning of the Concept of State**

The concern with policy implementation points us to the concept traditionally associated with the maximum expression of institutional power: the state. The concept of state underpins the analytical contributions of both modernisation and neo-marxist traditions. Initially, modernisation perspectives argued that Third World societies could transform - if only their cultures were able to change - from societies based on mechanical solidarity to societies based on organic solidarity. What was really required was the emergence of a pragmatic rationality that could conjure up the spirit of capitalism. The failure of Third World countries to build up successful administrative state machines or to achieve progress was attributed to the unfortunate persistence of non-Western traditional values or to the economic backwardness of these societies. Obstacles to modernisation were identified as cultural, economic and political, while the unstable situation of Third World states was used as an illustration of these explanations.

Contrary to this perspective, the neo-Marxist dependency tradition has taken the view from the 'other' and has argued that the causes of Third World conditions have their historical roots within the international economic order. A few European and American nations were able to impose unequal trade patterns on the majority of countries in the Third World. In this interpretation, the South is seen as economically subject to the imperialistic North. The state in this tradition is seen as the motor of capitalist development that solves crises and ensures the reproduction of the dominant social relations within society.

In these interpretations, the meaning of the concept of state is associated with different views on the empirical constitution of nation states in Western Europe, and is influenced by the post World War II experience that envisaged the reconstruction of Europe through application of planning technologies and the diffusion of these techniques into the developing nations. The practices of centralised planning agencies (Hardiman and Midgley, 1982) created combined social and economic effects which confirmed and reinforced different existing theoretical models about the state. They created a debate over the 'true role' of the state and each of them sought for a universal theory of the state. Instead of looking at how the state was constituted and how it operated within different contexts, a universal concept of the state was used to move the stock of ideas about the state from one continent to the next. What did not move, however, was the meaning of the state in local contexts.

This point was brilliantly demonstrated by B. Moore (1966) in his classic book about the historical origins of political styles of governability. His separation of the concept of state from the meaning of state indicates that universal concepts are not very useful in interpreting the world outside us. Thus, universal notions associated with state policy formulation may not have a real bearing on practical situations such as state policy implementation.

With these ideas in mind, it is important to note that an abstract concept of the state cannot characterise the social world of state intervention. Choosing to analyze rural development as if it were a system of centralised planning techniques aimed at increasing agricultural production may be important. But it is a different matter to argue that the social world of intervention is just a system of planning techniques.

The universal concept of the state is not empirically founded, but the meaning of state intervention in local rural development is. In other words, we have to study the practices of implementing a rural policy, rather than attempting to use a pre-packed model of state authority and power. From the critique of modernisation and neo-marxist traditions emerges an alternative approach to the state, which is not insensitive to the impact of societal forces on state intervention. This point will be elaborated in Chapter 2.

### **The Nature of the Approach**

To articulate an approach to local knowledge and state intervention, it is necessary to examine the nature of the core ideas upon which such an approach is built. In this section, five theoretical bases for the approach will be presented. The presentation is brief, just sufficient to make sense of the field data that follow in the next chapters.

### **Policy Implementation and Administrative Practices**

The approach to policy implementation which underlines everyday administrative practices establishes a close connection between the meaning of a rural policy and its use. In the book *Room for Manoeuvre* Schaffer (1984) argues that policies can make a difference in developing countries and that the process and practice of government activities is a fundamental area for social research. This research is aimed at acquiring information on the intentions and outcomes of state intervention. It focuses on the degree of political will, levels of trained woman- and man-power, and the analysis of professional groups in policy making, and considers policy as something different from a rational exercise in resource allocation. Schaffer formulates this connection by stressing that institutional procedures and the social practices of bureaucracy in implementing policies are more significant than the 'established theoretical models of policy practice' which

are considered more rational. Some of these issues are illustrated in Chapter 3 of this book.

Two practical issues are central to this perspective. The first is the analysis of the style of policy and the discourse of the actors. It is here that the selection and linking of aspects of development policy are made. The second issue is whether 'technical policy' can handle the highly political and institutionally contaminated nature of 'social life' surrounding policy practice.

Schaffer's position signals the need for studies about the actual everyday practice of policy making and implementation. This perspective suggests that, while some rural policies may indeed have a meaning in accordance with state policy documents, we cannot presume that all everyday policy practices have a meaning in reference to such documents. A policy practice depends on the way in which different actors participating in the implementation of a policy use the policy document to shape, influence and affect the general direction of that policy. Hence we can argue that the meaning of a rural policy is to be found in actors' everyday use of the rural policy document and in the recognition that a rural policy document can be used in various ways in particular situations. One of the aims behind this perspective is to identify openings and possibilities within public policies, i.e. the intermediate field that connects the choices generated by the state and the existing opportunities shared by everyday practices among the actors participating in the development process. The field material of this book tends to agree with Schaffer's position.

### **Praxeology and Everyday Practices**

Praxeology is the perspective that highlights the need to study the local stock of people's knowledge. This perspective can be traced back on the one hand to the work of Malinowski (1935), and on the other, to the substantive issues recognised by Wittgenstein (1969) in the tradition of ordinary language philosophy.

Reality is expressed in people's disconnected pieces of everyday knowledge and practices, i.e. diversionary tactics, modalities of action, local discourses, proverbs, games, tales and speech-acts. These are signposts of local constitutive conventions that organize a network of knowledge, which provides meaning to acts of local actors. The signposts provide a sense of direction to people. They are used to discern the complexities involved in everyday practices and to construct the specialised local style of practices.

Praxeology is thus the study of people's arts of thought and action, an appreciation of how to live in interaction with the other. The first to use this approach in rural development was van Lier (1979). He highlighted that rural change was a situation constituted first by social discontinuity, and second, by the pragmatic action of people's knowledge.

Embedded in the concept of local knowledge are various kinds of people's practice, and because of this, these have no single knowledge characteristic in common: there is no single essence to the organisation of local knowledge. The success or failure of an agricultural policy will depend upon how people define and play out their interactions with the representatives of the state in a particular situation.

From this it follows that a rural policy is implemented within a network of meanings that is activated and constructed within everyday human activity. Praxeology, then, highlights the point that policy implementation is part and parcel of the discontinuity of social life. The emphasis on everyday practices in rural development means that we can no longer sustain a division between institutional and cultural environments. These two environments are fields of activity that reinforce each other. In general, these social fields point to a local social history, in which rural policies no longer just appear as normative frameworks to achieve modernisation. They also feature as rules or conventions that can be internalised and used by actors who are in the process of changing their values and life-styles. Chapter 3 shows how cultural factors affect the meaning of the interaction between bureaucrats and *ejidatarios* in Jalisco. This study of policy implementation links personal experiences to the multiplicity of daily activities that rural policy generates at the point of implementation. The approach gives central importance to the bureaucrats' experiences and actions, since it eradicates the separation between the 'public' and 'private' spheres in policy analysis.

### **Social Rules and Conventions**

In contrast to the structural view that sees the significance of administrative action as dependent upon its technical and logical form alone, the focus on everyday practices regards the enactment of a meaningful action as a convention or rule that directs activity to achieve cultural preferences and choices in rural development (see Holy and Stuchlik, 1983).

The process of agrarian development is not a dynamic which moves around different abstract models or rationalities, but a social construction of actors who, by linking different interactional settings and social zones, make practical use of government rules and conventions. In so doing they generate a specific common ground, i.e. a network whereby actors try to define their demands, negotiations and solutions vis-à-vis government officials within the everyday practices of rural development. One of the objectives of this process is to try to influence the allocation of resources (money, knowledge, power) so as to create new opportunities for the actors.

Because of this, policy implementation cannot be predetermined in advance. The rural producers know that government officials, in order to implement a rural policy, have to organise a social situation which allows them to perform

their task-oriented activities among the diverse membership of the *ejido*. On the other hand, the government officials know that the possibility of implementing rural policy depends on organising an institutional environment at the local level, where officials can demonstrate the relevance of their institutional and personal repertoires to the producers (cf. Barth, 1981). These cultural interactions constitute the rules or social conventions of the rural development process, depicting the organisational bases for policy implementation. Social rules and conventions provide the network wherein rural development processes take place. To understand the significance of everyday practices one needs to see how state bureaucrats and rural producers in their contacts and interactions negotiate the properties, rules and conventions of state-rural society.

### Interface and Evidence

The concept of interface is commonly used to establish the relations between the diverse and different meanings of a rural policy on the one hand, and the actors' situational rules on the other. To explain the meaning of a rural policy is to elucidate the rules of its implementation and use. This means that we have to clarify the central features that constitute the interface theoretically in order to justify the application of this concept. The interface concept involves a strong commitment to an actor-orientated analysis of agrarian change, based on the notion that social change generates different local variations, adaptations and responses within agrarian populations. The differentiated nature of social change, of organisational forms and cultural patterns, has to be explored situationally, identifying the different practices by which actors deal with problematic situations and accommodate themselves to other's interests and designs for living (Long, 1989).

Interface analysis recognises that 'the subject' in rural change is knowledgeable and active. The subjects in rural policy (i.e. government officials and rural producers) problematize situations, process information and strategize in their dealings with others (Long, 1989: 222). This conceptualisation of the subject of rural policy leads to an analytical approach that sees patterns and paths of agrarian change as social outcomes that result from 'the interactions, negotiations, and social and cognitive struggles that take place between specific social actors' (Long, 1989: 222). In the present study, the meaning of the Mexican Food Policy (SAM) is given by the interaction between producers and government officials. The characteristics of the interface are presented in practice through the implementation of the SAM policy and justified by appealing to the empirical evidence from the case studies. However, we need to remain aware that interface encounters are non-fixed situations that can be quite different through time and are affected by contingencies such as the conditions of political and economic stability, patterns of events, circumstances, resources and actors' expressions and feelings. For example, policy implementation in Mexico during

the SAM period changed from a political to a technocratic style of administration. This provides a criterion which helps to explain the interface between officials and rural producers in that period. However, this should not suggest that, in the past or in the future, the relation between politics and technology will always assume the same role in interactions between officials and rural producers. The present interface is simply a translation of fragments of actors' past experiences and future aspirations.

The concept of interface links modalities of practices with the characteristics of actors' everyday life, connecting the way in which they individually internalise rural policy with the way they use their institutional environment. Therefore, interface analysis is an approach that goes beyond the dichotomies of the individual versus collectivity, and social action versus structure. In fact, the notion of human agency implicitly attributes to the individual actor the capacity of superimposing his/her own images and interests of rural development on those of the government. Through this, actors can create for themselves a social space in which they can find ways of using the institutional order of the state.

Within any institutional environment local actors are able to establish a degree of choice and creativity. Human agency, by creating these sorts of social spaces, draws unexpected outcomes from processes of state intervention. The implementation of rural policy cannot therefore be perceived as an integrative system regulated by the state's supreme rules and integrative authority, which is based on some overarching rationality or planning.

In this way, actors' practices within the social life of policy implementation should not be seen as idiosyncratic peculiarities of individuals, but as forming part of a social construction that includes local knowledge, processes of interpretation and choices about actors' life-worlds. This capacity of the actors means that the content of social interaction is partly influenced by the mode in which these individual actors' consume their history (time and space) and associate themselves with different present and past levels of realities and courses of action in their localities.

Interfaces do not merely obey existing 'traditional laws' of the community, since rules and social conventions cannot be defined or identified by any abstract notion of collectivity. On the other hand, an interface is not just the product of an 'official' and technocratic rural policy that seeks to create national networks according to abstract models of development. The sociological uniqueness of interface centres around one feature in particular, i.e. the relationship between the social actors and the contours of a specific institutional and local social environment.

Actors are able to produce, tabulate and impose strategies, to manoeuvre, to different degrees, rural policy implementation. This is not to say that individual actions take place in an institutional vacuum, or that they can directly manipulate or divert state interventions. On the contrary, it is the local network of actors within a specific institutional environment which creates local social space. We have to differentiate interface from other types of interactions between rural

producers and intervenors. An interface becomes regulated in the processes of speaking, communicating, organising, and using official policy. Thus we can view the interface as a situational encounter, a critical point where actors through their interactions simultaneously deconstruct and reconstruct a 'project of society'. At the point of the interface, a local translation takes place in the state intervention process. Therefore, it is through the study of these interfaces that we can find the empirical evidence to assess the relevance of rural policy implementation.

*interface  
/ translation*

## Anthropology and Development

Let us return to one of the opening questions of this chapter: what might be the role of anthropology for rural development? One clear contribution of anthropology has been the questioning of theoretical models relating to development. The traditional reductionist analysis of development economics that assumes rural underdevelopment is directly associated with local ignorance, political passivity or just lack of economic resources, is one such model that has been questioned (Hill, 1986). Conceptualisations of development, either as a progressive process towards modern forms of technology and institutions, or as a reformative process with the purpose of satisfying the demands of the world capitalist economy, have also been criticized for denying the significance of ordinary actors in shaping development (Long, 1984; E.P. Thompson, 1979).

Earlier we pointed to the need to clarify the ways in which rural policies are internalised and used by actors, and to evidence that when actors use their social conventions to organise interactions, things do not always result as they anticipated. While it is realised that actors become entangled in their own rules and conventions, this situation generates one of the main anthropological problems, namely how to give an account of the contingencies surrounding the interactions that constitute a particular interface?

Besides questioning general theoretical models of development, anthropologists have been able to highlight gaps between intervenors and intervened in specific situations. For example, Hill (1986) has demonstrated the consequences for policy implementation of actions of project officers who only accept their beliefs to be correct and real. Her earlier study of the Gold Coast Cocoa Purchasing Company in Ghana (1952) serves as the empirical basis for her critique of bureaucrats who fail to acknowledge reality to be a social construction of everyday practices. She demonstrates how this failure generated a situation where producers started to use the local cultural relation debtor-creditor to their own advantage. The Company did not discover, until the failure of its development strategy became complete, that the rural producers did not share the Companies' value that debt was 'improper'. In this case, debtor and creditor (in everyday life) were 'commonly friends and never enemies' (Hill, 1986: 3). It is in these sorts of situations that applied anthropology can make discrepancies in

the values of intervenors and intervened explicit (cf. Porter, Allen and Thompson, G, 1991).

The question here is to what extent can applied anthropology indeed contribute to bridging gaps in rural development. Given the contingencies that surround everyday practices, we may wonder whether social research would be able to solve some of the problems encountered in ongoing policy implementation. Is our role solely to criticize intervention ex-post, or can we contribute to better implementation?

The following types of recent contributions can be seen as relevant: research in the field of administration (Checkland and Scholes, 1990), rural sociological studies on adaptive agricultural research (Box, 1989), studies on farmer capacities for sustainable agricultural development (Van der Ploeg, 1990; J. Blauert, 1988), research on the capability of rural producers to use institutional environments in the organisation of projects (Arce, 1989; de Vries, 1990), work on farmer organisations and local adaptation of agricultural science for people (Bebbington, 1991; Paul Richards, 1985).

As promising as all this may be, I want to stress that applied social science should always be based on the relevance of everyday practices and the ways in which actors construct their world using different categories and concepts. The majority of the above mentioned contributions have taken into account the importance of everyday practices and notions of local knowledge, but there are substantial differences in the way people's practices are portrayed in these different approaches. The different representations of people's practices do not seem to stem strictly from empirical evidence, but seem to serve to legitimise particular types of research and/or action. A shortcoming of several of the approaches is, in my view, that they do not base their analysis on the actual description of how people internalise and are affected by external influences in the construction of their world.

None of the above studies actually connects processes arising from the use of contemporary science, state, markets or the international sphere, to the reconstruction of local interactions, where a re-positioning of the actor's knowledge and power takes place.

In order to contribute effectively to policy implementation, anthropology, I suggest, should take the study of everyday practices more seriously. In particular, it needs to take into account the complex and interrelated concepts of knowledge and power. This book attempts to provide such an analysis by focusing on the implementation of the Mexican Food Policy (SAM). The approach adopted aims to bring the life-world of actors back into the centre of the analysis of rural development.

## From an Approach to a Case in Action

This book, then, looks into the formulation and implementation of the Mexican Food Policy (SAM). My account complements other studies of the SAM, but different aspects are emphasised. An interface approach is used to observe and record real-world problems which could in principle be present in any process of rural state intervention.

In the 1980's, debates about the role of the national state tended to focus on the problems of food production for local markets. However, only one Latin American country, Mexico, actually was able to adopt a rural strategy on the provision of food for its population. This *Sistema Alimentario Mexicano* or Mexican Food System (SAM) was introduced in 1980. The main objectives of the policy were to redirect Mexico's rural development towards greater self-sufficiency and to eradicate problems associated with rural poverty in many of the regions of the country.

The agricultural policy of SAM was mainly subsidised by resources from oil revenues (4 billion US\$). This policy was part of a change within the state, which wanted to achieve a more rational approach to the relationship between state administration, rural development and the political issue of local participation. SAM provides an important case study for analyzing the extent to which a rural strategy can be implemented in a country that traditionally had a highly trained bureaucracy of civil servants and planners who used state intervention to promote capitalism in the agricultural sector (see Hewitt de Alcántara, 1978).

The Mexican state has been extensively analyzed. One factor that has been dramatically emphasised in the different theories on the Mexican state is the pernicious influence of corruption within state agencies and the concomitant influence of the personal interests of state leaders (see Grindle, 1977; Redclift, 1980; and Migdal, 1987). This factor has been considered the main obstacle to the implementation of rural policies in Mexico.

The present study assumes a rather different perspective. We argue that the problems of policy formulation and implementation in Mexico must be understood in terms of the actual social construction of the policy and its implementation. Therefore, placing the focus exclusively on the issue of corruption among public servants involved in the SAM in Mexico only reveals one aspect of the complexities involved in the actual policy process. The study claims that the SAM can only be properly assessed if we move away from the intellectual tradition that has merely interpreted state intervention as an action that favours civil servants' individual interests and has as its main objective to diffuse paternalistic relationships among local people in order to manipulate their participation and reproduce the dominant political system.

The objective of this book is not to deny corruption and political manipulation in Mexico. For one thing, we accept that by reforming the administrative structure of the state and providing more room for participation and

accountability at local level, the possibility of achieving the aims of any rural policy will be increased. My main interest here though is to analyze the role of rural producers and government representatives at different levels during the SAM period. In this way we hope to contribute by demystifying the above mentioned 'tunnel vision' of the state.

State authority is needed in rural development to offer resources and legitimate advice to rural producers, but state authority is not the only decisive factor in the outcome of rural development strategies. The implementors of a rural development policy find themselves in situations which are hardly different from those faced by other social groups involved in rural development. Despite the fact that they can depend on state policy documents and administrative guidelines to obtain authority to support their actions, they have to endure and make decisions in everyday practice on the claims and counter-claims concerning the effects of policies on the life of rural producers. In conclusion, we want to argue that the process of state policy implementation cannot terminate or control the existence of social problems or the diversity among rural producers and bureaucrats. These actors are not passive and their actions, strategies and interactions shape the outcome of state policy. Accordingly, state intervention strategy is not the only factor that should be analyzed in rural development. The rural development interfaces that interlock different interests, strategies and thought-styles are also critical.

Rural development interfaces are concerned with analyzing the relations between people, rather than the reified social and economic objectives of a document programme. Through these situations (intervention-in-action) we can understand how the meaning and relevance of a policy like the SAM lost legitimacy within the political community. In the context of SAM, it would be difficult to claim that corruption or political manipulation were the only factors affecting the social behaviour of actors, or the programme's outcome.

In my view, the process of state intervention accelerates rapid development and influences actors to increase or decrease, explore or avoid new links with the market, and to redefine or confront relations with the administrative processes of state regulation. State intervention generates confrontations, as well as degrees of collaboration and participation. Knowledge, as a relation of power among these actors (Fardon, 1985), then becomes an important venue for analyzing conflicts, negotiation, corruption and political manipulation. These social organisational properties of rural development emerge in the analysis as a result of the process of policy implementation, rather than as the causes of the state's failure to achieve its policy objectives.

In this book, the strategy of the SAM is studied alongside the life-worlds of those social actors involved in the process of state intervention. While we do not disagree with those scholars who see these policies and projects as residual but unsuccessful attempts to correct the economic bias against agriculture (Lipton, 1977; Bates, 1981), we argue, nevertheless, that these interventions generate significant new social and political realities at local level.

The book is primarily about rural projects, bureaucrats, rural producers (*ejidatarios*) and everyday practices surrounding policy implementation in Western Mexico. Yet since policy implementation is connected with discourses on policy formulation and planning, it is difficult not to make some reference to the other facets of social life of development policies. The main objective of the book remains, however, to show what actually happens in the process of policy implementation. In order to do so, we shall analyze some of the interactions and interfaces which enabled the policy to come into life, its impacts on different social environments, and the responses to those impacts. This issue was recently raised again by Adams (1990) in relation to failures of development schemes in Africa. Although in a slightly different form, his comments on policy making, planning and people's responses point in the same direction as Clay and Schaffer (1984) and Long (1984, 1989).

The study of the SAM policy is located in Rainfed District No.1 in Jalisco, Western Mexico, where I sought to describe and analyze the numerous social, administrative, technical, political and cultural circumstances surrounding the implementation of the policy. Unlike other studies, the present one does not pay significant attention to the higher levels of policy formulation and planning (Schaffer, 1984; Apthorpe 1986). Instead, it takes the issues of development to the actual level of implementation. It identifies and analyzes different interfaces of knowledge, speech-acts and everyday practices which the actors participating in the SAM drew upon to organise and shape the action of state intervention within their locality.

## **The Outline of the Book**

In the chapters that follow, I differentiate between various levels of policy implementation. While the material covered in Chapters 2 and 3 is largely concerned with the bureaucratic culture, the book progresses to examine the interfaces between government officials and rural producers. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 establish that state intervention is a process which is constituted not merely through its relationship to official bureaucratic discourse and practice, but to the experiences (reflexivity) of actors in development situations. An analysis of policy outcomes must take account of actors' constant assessment of their own actions.

Chapter 2 focuses on the importance of bureaucratic conflict within the organisation of the state in respect to administrative practices, professional groups and agricultural policy. The chapter identifies different agricultural extension practices and the justifications for the agronomic approach in Mexico. This chapter centres around a series of administrative experiences of an agronomist working in the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (*Secretaría de Agricultura y Recursos Hidráulicos*, SARH).

Chapter 3 looks into the first level at which the local implementation of SAM is coordinated, i.e. the district level. It provides the background to the agricultural administrative processes within the bureaucratic culture and their 'art of management'. The chapter argues that, in order to understand the particularities of administrative practices, one needs to obtain insight into the life-worlds and life-careers of the bureaucrats in charge of the programme.

Chapter 4 examines the institutional environment of the government fieldworkers who are in charge of implementing agricultural policies. The chapter argues that to understand interaction between fieldworkers and rural producers, an important first step is to know the institutional reality of the fieldworker.

Chapter 5 elaborates the Mexican Food Policy (SAM): its formulation, objectives and achievements. After this, the assessment of the SAM from the point of view of several fieldworkers, involved in the implementation of the policy, are presented and analyzed. The chapter forms the bridge between the analysis of the bureaucracy and the case studies of the implementation of SAM at the local level.

In Chapter 6, an *ejido*, Nextipac, is used as a point of access for understanding the problematic nature of rural life, where broader issues of state/peasant relations and a differential understanding of the SAM policy implementation come to the fore.

Chapter 7 focuses on a pilot rainfed project aimed at improving maize production through the incorporation of new technology and organisation. This project involved the cooperation of a Mexican agency (FIRA) and the Hungarian technical mission (AGROVER). The chapter follows this project over the 3 year period of its duration. Questions are posed in connection with local participation, the (in)ability of these projects to work with the technical knowledge of local producers, and the issue of how producers' interests over time shaped the social life of the project.

The book ends with a concluding chapter that draws together the various themes and reconsiders the relationship between state intervention, actors and rural development. Through an analysis of SAM, the book uncovers the importance of analyzing institutional environments and actors' struggles, thus highlighting how rural development is constructed by the actors themselves over the period of policy implementation. It is argued that a more coherent rural development sociology is required for an understanding of the ways in which state-induced rural development figures in the contemporary transformations of developing societies and people's lives.

## Notes

1. This position partly parallels the analysis of Scott in *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott, 1985). However, Scott's position suggests only one alternative, namely that this entanglement cannot produce fundamental changes in society. The notion of entanglement can be used to understand how different actors internalize external factors and shape, re-shape or even challenge existing notions of authority, knowledge and power.
2. Social interface is defined as "a critical point of linkage between different social systems, fields or levels of social order where structural discontinuities, based upon differences of normative value and social interest, are most likely to be found" (Long, 1989:2).
3. An *ejido* is a corporately organised agrarian community that obtained land under the Agrarian Land Reform Law that followed the Mexican revolution of 1910. *Ejidatarios* are the beneficiaries of the Mexican Agrarian Land Reform Law. The people who farm the ejido land are called *ejidatarios*.

## 2. BUREAUCRATIC CONFLICT AND PUBLIC POLICY: RAINFED AGRICULTURE IN MEXICO<sup>1)</sup>

So far the work of Theda Skocpol (1979) represents one of the most radical stands against the simple conceptualisation of the state as an arena of conflicts between social and economic interests. Skocpol directs her criticism towards liberal and Marxist positions and goes on to conceptualize the state as a macro-structure constituted by 'a set of administrative, policing, and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated, by an executive authority' (Skocpol, 1979: 29). In her view the state's main functions are concerned with the extraction of resources from society and the deployment of these in order to create and support coercive and administrative organizations. This macro-structure, which is embedded in class-divided socioeconomic structures and an international system of states (Skocpol, 1979: 32), is seen by her as having a powerful capability to rebuild state organizations with each social revolutionary process.

The importance of Skocpol's contribution for the analysis of the state is the general methodological value of bringing into the analysis the significance of state organizational contradictions in understanding processes of state policy making and intervention. The focus on the nature of the state's rebuilding capabilities and the contradictions surrounding the dynamic of governability may contribute to provide an understanding of state power seen as something more complex than just the direct outcome of developments in civil society, or the result of the dynamic of productive relations and political contradictions.

An analysis concerned with the state's capacity to change or rebuild organizations and forms of governability implies, first, that one does not collapse into a single explanation the complex relationship of state and society, and second, that one perceives the state administrative process as independent from the logic of capital accumulation and from the rationality of the dominant class. The state's capacity for change is linked to a complex institutional process involving ideologies, rules and administrative styles, where contradictions and competition among various state agencies rather than harmony define the forms of state intervention. Policy formulation arises out of these contradictions in an attempt to solve social problems, and through this process styles of governability are defined which become important inputs into the development process.

Thus, policies represent specific attempts to re-adjust the relations between state and society. They constitute procedures for controlling and managing new national and international economic and socio-political circumstances. Policy formulation constitutes the way in which state decision makers and practitioners interpret and try to alleviate existing economic and social constraints which hinder the effectiveness of their actions. Public policy reflects a collective type of

conceptualisation, where scientific knowledge and the relations of power between different units of the state, define and devise a feasible and workable framework for action.

This perspective leads me to focus attention on the actual process of policy formulation. In the following chapters, the focus will shift to the analysis of policy implementation, as has been emphasized by Grindle (1980: 15). While implementation may be crucially important for studying the transformation of policy, it also remains important to understand how public decision-making processes take place. Relationships of power, the use of particular scientific knowledge and state organizational traditions, set within an administrative context, constrain the range of alternative courses of action open to the state. These are crucial factors affecting the ability of the state to intervene in the formulation and implementation of policies.

From this perspective, policy implementation is seen as being 'formatted' by policy formulation and mediated by different levels of administrative action. These processes reveal the essential contradictions affecting state power in its process of governing society. The understanding of these factors involved in the input stage of policy making becomes vital for approaching the content of policy, the role of agents of implementation and the reactions of various social interest groups to the actions of the state.

Policy formulation and policy implementation in Third World countries should be understood, therefore, as an interconnected process and the role of the agent of implementation interpreted as part of the relations that organize and exercise power in society. In this vein, administrative transformation becomes the carrier of different strategic approaches (for an overview of the characteristics and structural consequences of differing state strategies, see Long 1977: 144-192, and Long 1980). The government apparatus presents itself, then, as able to change styles of administration and to carry out reforms in accordance with the organizational alternatives that exist inside the bureaucratic management structure.

In this chapter, I present material that illustrates this process of policy formulation. I seek to analyze the factors involved in determining the rainfed agricultural policy of Mexico. The agricultural policy pursued by the Mexican state from the mid-1970s to the 1980s was a result of an interaction between changes influenced by a general administrative reform and the rise of the agronomic approach to development. This interaction led to the re-organization of the Ministry of Agriculture (*Secretaria de Agricultura y Recursos Hidráulicos*, SARH) whereby the agronomists became the dominant actors operating within a framework of a notion of 'efficiency'. This concept was central to the government's objective of regaining political effectiveness during the 1980s and influenced the need for administrative reform. Thus the need to modernize rainfed agriculture was located within a wider framework of economic and social policy and was accorded a priority position in the state's strategy called the Popular National Alliance for Production (S.P.P, 1980).

This significant departure from previous agricultural policies in Mexico (see the historical account of Mexican state strategy in Hewitt de Alcántara, 1978) presented rainfed modernization under the Mexican Food System (*Sistema Alimentario Mexicano or SAM*) as technically and politically necessary. The need for such an orientation was justified as part of the new criteria adopted by the Mexican state to improve its management of the country. This so-called 'rational' approach introduced new forms of allocating resources and new planning devices. Efficiency was adopted as the central criterion expected to guide administrative operations. The implementation of the administrative reform inaugurated a period of bureaucratic contradictions, during which a new style of agricultural administration was delineated. The experience of this process constitutes an important case for illustrating the complexities of public policy formulation in Third World countries.

In post-revolutionary Mexico, the importance of state intervention in agriculture laid in gradually combining political and economic factors so as to control and manipulate the aspirations of those agricultural producers who, whilst not considered economically important, were seen as politically dangerous (Arce, 1986: 70-121). This traditional form of bureaucratic management was in need of re-organization because, for the first time, the capability of the state to protect and maintain economic growth was questioned and this highlighted the need for a change in the style of administration (Ramirez y Diaz, 1983). This process assumed the character of a transition from a political to a technocratic style of administration and was, to a large extent, conditioned by structural determinants of Mexico's development.

The need for comprehensive planning created a situation wherein administrative reform was seen as the government's means of achieving new levels of management. In the agricultural sector this was presented as the search for efficiency. An agrarian policy based on increasing the production levels of basic crops was formulated, moving the focus of agrarian development away from land distribution.

The implementation of this new administrative approach transformed the existing agricultural government agencies, generating several important institutional conflicts among bureaucrats. This process is studied in detail in the present chapter. I argue that the reform of the institutional context contributed to the generation of a new state approach to agricultural problems and to the consolidation of a new type of agricultural administrator.

The agronomists, a group highly critical of past agricultural policies, defined their first priority as the transformation of the Mexican rural structure. Increased production became their mission and the modernization of peasants their practice. They emphasized that the diffusion of fertilizers, mechanization and high-yielding seeds would solve poverty in rural areas and defuse the rising frustration that was creating political instability. The emphasis on technical alternatives to political problems made this group an influential professional sector during the regime of López Portillo (1976-1982), and they became an expression of the new character

assumed by public administration in relation to development policies in Mexico. By examining the importance of the state's administrative reform and its effects on agricultural services, this chapter provides an insight into policy making in Third World countries. In methodological terms, it uses an actor-oriented perspective to assess the structural implications of these changes.

### **Administrative Reform and Government Agricultural Services**

The first aim of the administrative reform was to make government bureaucracy more efficient but, at the same time, it became an important source of power for the new generation of Mexican decision makers, those officials that Roderic Camp has called 'the technocrats' (Camp, 1983).

The person who assumed the role of political modernizer of Mexican public administration was Licenciado Alejandro Carrillo Castro, son of Alejandro Carrillo Marcor, an important politician who was the former Governor of Sonora, an ex-parliamentarian in both legislative chambers during 1940-1943 and 1970-1976, and ambassador to Egypt during the 1960s. Like the majority of high ranking Mexican officials, Carrillo studied law at the National University of Mexico and obtained his Ph.D in public administration in the Faculty of Political Science at the same. In 1963, when Carrillo was still a university student, he started to work as assistant to the Presidency. He was 27. Two years later he met the future President, López Portillo, who came to chair the Consultative and Legal Office of the Ministry. From this encounter, a working relationship evolved into a close friendship. In 1965, López Portillo assisted at Carrillo's professional viva examination and later became a witness at Carrillo's wedding. Carrillo has publicly recognized that he owes his training as a public servant to López Portillo (Carrillo, 1982: 227).

From 1971 to 1976, Carrillo was General Director of the Administrative Studies Office in the Presidency, and during López Portillo's government was designated General Coordinator of the office. Thus, at the age of 38, he was made responsible for the implementation of administrative reform. Carrillo's career fits the case of classical success within Smith's model of Mexican executive network positions (Smith, 1979).

Developing a political career has not been so important a factor in Carrillo's life, although he became a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (the PRI) just prior to starting his university studies. As Carrillo recalls, two personal reasons influenced his decision to join the party: "first, because General Corona was directing the party, a very capable politician who was interested in working closely with young people and, second, because in the *dirección* of the Youth Action section of the PRI was my good friend and generational contemporary, Miguel Osorio Marban, with whom I often went and visited General Cardenas" (Carrillo, 1982: 321, my translation).

In 1964, when Licenciado Carlos Madrazo assumed the *dirección* of the PRI, the then head of the Youth section, Rodolfo Echeverría (nephew of Luis Echeverría and Minister of the Interior during López Portillo) invited Carrillo to be his deputy. Over time, this was to become Carrillo's most important political post inside the party.

The ideology of Carrillo Castro is much more illuminating than his political career. He argues that it was only after a trip to Europe that he became aware that the PRI was the best option for those Mexicans who wanted to fight in favour of a more free and just country without dogmatism of any ideological label (Carrillo, 1982: 321). This stance of Carrillo takes a more important dimension when he interprets the legacy of the Mexican Revolution as essentially a form of pragmatism which uses administrative means to seek negotiated political solutions. Carrillo sees the development of a mixed economy in Mexico as the only solution to the political conflict that resulted from the revolution. He explains:

"I have learned the concept of mixed economy in Mexico from the fact that Emiliano Zapata demanded restitution of the *ejidal* property, because Zapata was an *ejidatario* himself, a representative of his *ejido*. Villa, on the other hand, wanted the distribution of the large properties (*latifundios*) because he knew these in Chihuahua. So his position was to achieve a more equal distribution of rural property. Obregón, with a different position from the other two, supported private property because he came from the North West of the country. From these different tendencies originated the concept of the mixed economy established in Article 27 of the Constitution and which does not owe its existence to pretentious principles of universal validity" (Carrillo, 1982: 322, my translation).

In Carrillo's view the political-economic system of Mexico is the outcome of a bargain struck among different and fragmented interests, often with ill-defined ends, associated with particular regional experiences. In this context the Constitution is no more than a political blend of these differences. This substantive interpretation of post-revolutionary Mexico means that policy implementation, guided by this perspective, presents serious problems of administrative organization. It is in this light that Carrillo argues that his reform is not just a technocratic exercise but an action to provide the appropriate administrative instruments for government, thus allowing the government to honour the political objectives assigned to the state: "We must have the best technical knowledge to put at the service of political decisions" (Carrillo, 1982: 310).

Following the tradition of governments of the 1960s, Carrillo sees the Constitution as containing the ideological base for government programmes and for the ideological platform of the PRI (Carrillo, 1982: 310). This is argued in an attempt to claim neutrality and legality for the administrative reform.

Around 1979, this position started to be criticized by a group of traditional politicians, who singled out the administrative reform as the target of their discontent. This group achieved its maximum impact with the speech delivered at a meeting in Acapulco on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1979 by the Minister of the Interior, Jesus Reyes Heróles. Reyes Heróles advocated the need to make civil society more political, as a means of preventing the state from becoming too dominant and imposing itself upon society. He added: "A more political society prevents the administration replacing government and the administrators substituting politicians, because when administration is transformed into government, government could get isolated from the electorate" (Carrillo, 1982: 127, my translation). This public disagreement was followed by the resignation of Reyes Heróles from the government of López Portillo.

Confronted with this opposition, Carrillo argued that the role of administrators was to provide the government with the instruments to implement decisions, because these decisions represented the opinion of different sectors of society. The government had to translate these into policies, so, if participation was going to have a political significance in Mexican life, the state machine had to improve its degree of efficiency and rationalization. A less bureaucratic and passive government system was needed in the country.

However, Carrillo was forced to recognize that administrative techniques have to be subordinated to political direction, although he only saw the Mexican Constitution as providing such direction. He pointed out that politics should not replace administration, since traditionally it has forced administrators to improvise, encouraging inefficient management and corruption (Carrillo, 1982: 128).

The debate about administrative reform opened up an exchange of ideas within government concerning the proper way to govern society, bringing two different generations and styles of decision makers into conflict.

A traditional group understood political mediation among autonomous groups as the function of government, while others saw administrators as a group of experts who would put an end to the bargaining tradition of Mexican society. In this way the political importance of the PRI would be diminished by a group of people with good technical qualifications but lacking party political experience.

The new group of decision makers were specialized professional people with high academic qualifications. Their careers were made inside the public bureaucracy rather than within the PRI. They argued that the need of government was to apply technical knowledge and to improve civil servant training. This, for them, was the only way of dealing simultaneously with the economic, social and political problems of Mexico. From their viewpoint, the administrative environment, rather than the political arena, was the field of operation for high-ranking officials. Nevertheless, the party still remained important to them through their kinship relationships that, by ascription, made them members of 'the revolutionary family' of Mexico.

According to Camp (1983), who studied the rise of the Mexican technocrat in government decision making, the specialists had always been part of the political scene in Mexico, but from the 1930s on they systematically increased their influence to the point that university degrees and postgraduate studies became essential requirements for holding a post of Minister or vice Secretary in the government. Until the 1960s, the technocrats, in spite of their bureaucratic power, still acted as advisers to the politicians, but today the group has started to make its own decisions.

In this context, administrative reform became identified with the person of Carrillo. He was seen as the archetypal administrator coming to replace the traditional politician. The defense of reform in public administration became a justification for technical orientation. The acceptance of this orientation as the only possible way open to government to solve problems in society was transformed into an established belief among López Portillo's collaborators. Development was reduced to a problem of efficiency, and administrators became the *shamans* of a technological approach to modernization. Carrillo argued that resistance to any type of change should normally be expected from people who put their own personal interests above the broad interests of society. He claimed that such people could not understand that to serve society sometimes meant transforming the operational mechanisms of the system, even when those mechanisms may have been, in the past, very important for incorporating political clientele. Cutting the link between administration and political control became the target of the reform. The ability simply to mediate or manipulate conflicts was not seen as cost effective given the dimension of the crisis. Reform in government administrative organisation was presented as the first step in re-establishing competition among the different productive sectors in Mexico, and economic growth was seen as the solution to national problems.

The political problems and production difficulties affecting the agrarian structure made agricultural services a priority area of attention for administrative reform. The first measure adopted was the unification, in 1977, of the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. According to Carrillo, this reversed a decision taken in 1946 by President Alemán, who had established a separate agency for the support and organization of irrigation policy.

Alemán's decision had developed a dual approach towards agriculture that created administrative problems, whereby, according to Carrillo, it had become practically impossible to plan agricultural activity. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock had the responsibility for the agricultural plan, but it had to ask the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources about what they were intending to do in the irrigation districts for the next year just to complete information (Carrillo, 1982: 85). Apparently, inter-agency competition had made this exchange of information difficult. Carrillo saw in these practices the constraints affecting the evolution of agricultural services which had never been able to advance beyond the bureaucratic solution of adding individual projects to a plan. According to

Carrillo, the administrative reform would provide the means to tackle agrarian problems within a common institutional framework.

The re-organization of the agricultural services aimed to achieve a better coordination within the traditional departments in charge of programme implementation. Carrillo argued that it was common for departments with offices facing each other to choose to carry out contradictory programmes among the same population, which nullified the expected benefits of both programmes (Carrillo, 1982: 86).

Coordination was an important issue in the effectiveness of centralization, because the different public agencies that were operating in the agricultural sector had individual objectives, a factor that complicated the implementation of policies. This project-by-project approach was to be replaced by more comprehensive planning based on a sectorial re-organization of agricultural government services. In this way the rainfed districts were established as the basic units wherein projects were worked out in consultation with government agencies and producers, executed by local technical staff, and through aggregated planning at the regional level.

In 1980, at a meeting with the Parliamentary Commission for Information, Management and Complaints, Carrillo defined the administrative reform as the process that reviewed, simplified and articulated the relationships between the administrative machine and government policies. Its aim was to contribute to the two main objectives of the Global Plan: first, to guarantee the rational use of Mexico's natural resources, such as oil; and second, to achieve self-sufficiency in basic food crops.

With respect to the first objective, he maintained that there were few administrative difficulties, because only one Ministry was operating in the energy sector. But the situation was more complicated in the agrarian sector; here, traditionally, three main Ministries operated (*Secretaría de Recursos Hidráulicos*, *Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería*, and *Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria*). Consequently, the institutional environment in this sector militated against collaboration. Producers were organized in different ways according to the aims and supervision of the specific agencies. Training, financial support and agricultural extension were just some of the problems needing solution. Carrillo explained this situation as resulting from the incremental development of government agencies that, from 1930 onwards, moved the centre of decision making from the original Ministry of Agriculture to more specialized agencies such as those dealing with finance. Successive governments, instead of coordinating their actions, opted to create new agencies as the quickest administrative means of implementing their policies. This path avoided possible costly political confrontations between the interests of the bureaucracy and the executive. Carrillo pointed out that this practice, after 50 years of use, had generated more than 90 different government agencies operating in the agricultural sector (1982: 284).

The administrative reform, then, was not only aimed at unifying the approach of the two agricultural Ministries, but also attempted to coordinate such activities as the storage of agricultural products, grain regulation and rural insurance, and to increase production. Often, the directors of these agencies refused to accept any coordination arguing that their agencies were under the direct orders of the President. Carrillo pointed out: "It is this type of situation which the administrative reform intends to solve through organizing agricultural development in sectors and through the establishment of an integrated federal public administrative system" (1982: 284-5).

In Carrillo's view, a new state approach to agriculture had to start with a re-organization of the agencies operating in the agricultural sector so as to produce a shift in their responsibilities and to justify public investment. These measures were directed to recover government effectiveness (i.e. the power to carry out policies). In this way Carrillo saw administrative reform "not just as a technocratic or a neutral exercise, but as a contribution to the solution of several problems that have a high political content" (Carrillo, 1982: 288).

This approach generated important changes and a chain of reactions among agricultural bureaucrats which transformed the form and mode of state intervention in rural Mexico. In the next section, I examine the effects of this administrative reform as seen in the creation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources, as well as in the birth of the new 'agricultural' orientation to rainfed agriculture.

### **Sr. López and the Institutional Change**

Sr. López, the central figure of this case, is an agronomist working in the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources. He read agronomy at the University of Guadalajara, obtaining his degree in 1971. He belongs to the third generation of Guadalajara University agronomists. He did social service in the agency of the Ministry of Agriculture in Jalisco from July to September 1969. He worked as an extension assistant in Ixtlahuacán del Río, one of the poorest municipalities in the Guadalajara area. The other six months of his social service were spent working at the Agricultural Bank of the Western Region in the municipality of Cihuatlán in Jalisco, in a project concerning fruit trees.

### **Sr. López's Official Career before the Administrative Reform**

Sr. López recalls that it was not difficult for him to find a place in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, because, as he said, "Real competition for places among graduates from other universities like Chapingo, Juarez and Narro only happened at the level of the most important posts in the institution and these were mainly concentrated in Mexico City. During this period, people were needed in

the regions, but there was not much interest in these places then", and he continued:

"My first job was in the general agency in Nayarit, as delegate of agricultural extension in the municipios of San Blas and Santiago Ixcuintla, from August 1971 to July 1972. That period was very important for me. It gave me experience and the practical opportunity to experiment with different seeds. From that experience I wrote my degree dissertation.

Agricultural extension was virtually impossible to implement. It was left to individuals and it was done by very few professional people. We used to have large areas to cover and no permanent base from which to organize our work. Constantly moving from one place to another, we had no specific plan to perform and the service we delivered were some pamphlets and films to the producers.

Without places to sleep, we frequently used the local municipal building and that usually meant that we were subject to influence from local politicians or authorities. I still remember that our obligation to control crops and livestock was never very significant, because powerful local groups always made sure that our decisions never affected their interests. As extensionists we did not have fixed working hours and many of us used to work Saturdays and Sundays. That style of extension was full of personal sacrifice but highly inefficient."

After this experience, Sr. López was put in charge of agricultural extension in Nayarit, and then he was promoted and transferred to Michoacán, where he arrived in August 1975 as state delegate of the planning department:

"Planning in the agency did not exist. Programmes were directed from Mexico and their implementation was the responsibility of the regional *direcciones*. Instructions were general and the regional structures did not have the means to operate. These were difficult times because of the general lack of institutional organization. I still remember the arrival of a fellow agronomist from Guadalajara University who was interested in PIDER's [Programme of Investment and Rural Development] experiences and he started to talk about the importance of using the new concept 'micro-regions' to organize agricultural assistance to the producers. It was then that he initiated research to explore possible administrative benefits from planning agricultural assistance. I was in an executive position, so I supported the micro-region idea and discussed it with the General Agent of Michoacán, who was an agronomist from Chapingo University, with whom I had a very good personal relationship. As I was in charge of planning, my suggestion was to use the micro-region concept to collect precise information to facilitate planning."

The Michoacán agent supported Sr. López' proposal and delegated to him the task of selecting an area as a case study. When Sr. López and his friend selected one of the most isolated areas in the region, Lázaro Cárdenas, they immediately

realized why these producers very rarely used the Ministry's services. It took peasants at least six hours to come to Morelia, the capital of the region, where all the offices dealing with projects were located. Once in Morelia, producers had to find the delegate dealing with their project, since there were separate delegates for livestock, forestry, plant control and agriculture extension. This took some time, but the worst part was that when producers finally managed to locate their delegate, he had no authority to solve their problems. Every single programme was centrally controlled from Mexico. Each producer's request had to go to Mexico for approval and producers were sent from office to office waiting for the reply from Mexico. Moreover, an affirmative answer from Mexico usually generated new difficulties rather than solutions, because of the lack of coordination among the departments. During that period, the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources was a totally different institution and was opposed to any sort of collaboration. Sr. López remembers:

"These were the reasons why these producers, when confronted with problems, never came on time to us. Their position was to delay their visit to our offices, because a visit to Morelia was not worth the money and time they had to spend to get there and ask for some service. The case study demonstrated that institutional action was only implemented in critical situations in the area and concluded that this type of crisis service did not bring any substantial benefit to producers, because we were in need of a service based on innovation in techniques rather than on supervision. With these conclusions we presented a case for effective coordination at regional level, at the time when some voices in the Ministry were starting to ask for de-centralization and the creation of regional sub-agencies, as a way to concentrate institutional action in some priority areas.

The conclusions of our report and the current trend of opinions probably helped in the decision of our general agent to support politically our project and defend our side against a strong opposition from the other delegates in Michoacán. These were afraid that a regional coordination could cause them to lose their political control over the budget and their political access to Mexico's general offices, where the political game was concentrated."

Because he was from Michoacán, the general agent knew the magnitude of the regional problem. He managed to overcome local unrest and finally took Sr. López's proposals to Mexico. According to Sr. López, this experience demonstrates how important it is that regional decision-making posts be in the hands of people born in the particular state. Sr. López added:

"Finally, we thought we were on the right track towards the solution of our institutional problems, because until then, as a Ministry, we used to attend the areas of agriculture, forestry and livestock in isolation, case by case and only in the rainfed area. We did not control the irrigated area, even when in the law the need for coordination between us and Hydraulic

Resources was specifically mentioned. This separation between Ministries meant that irrigated districts were run only by Hydraulic Resources. They formulated their own agricultural programmes and we used to be invited to the annual meeting, just to accept their agricultural programme. We had no crop policy between institutions and we had no access to irrigation producers, who were under the control of irrigation engineers, through pure commercial programmes that were aimed to recover government investments."

Sr. López said that these administrative difficulties were based on a common belief among both bureaucracies, or as he put it, a 'tacit agreement', that institutional action was divided between rainfed and irrigated agriculture. In 1975, after six months of deliberations, the central office in Mexico authorized the Michoacán agency to go ahead with the organization of a sub-agency in Lázaro Cárdenas. A new post was created as a gesture of support from the Minister towards the Michoacán agent, because they were close friends, contemporaries in the Ministry and of the same university generation from Chapingo.

### **Sr. López as an Actor in the Administrative Transformation Drama**

Sr. López was promoted in April 1976 to the post of Sub-agent in the Michoacán regional office. In December of the same year, the implementation of the public administration reform resulted in the unification of the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock, and Hydraulic Resources, a measure which became effective in January 1977.

This integration immediately established the irrigation districts as the most important area in the new Ministry. The bureaucrats from Hydraulic Resources became the dominant force, thus continuing the successful tradition of administering commercial agriculture. This gave them the opportunity to control the majority of the regional representations in the country.

"Three quarters of all representations were in the hands of irrigation engineers and they continued with their approach of favouring irrigation projects. They were determined to channel Ministry actions to improve even more of their irrigated districts, so we, as agronomists, had to confront them. The extensionist group started to argue that existing agrarian development in Mexico was the institutional result of a policy that did not provide attention and services to the majority of peasants, that the cultivator in rainfed agriculture had to become the subject of attention, since he had been producing local maize varieties and beans under traditional conditions and was therefore marginalized from modernization programmes. Our proposal was to direct technical assistance and resources to that group of producers.

The irrigation engineers saw in this position a political challenge to their authority, and began to use the process of unification as a way of isolating the influence of the extensionist group.

The conflict that started was such, that to save the image of the new Ministry, a compromise formula was implemented. In those offices where the regional post was in the hands of personnel from the ex-Hydraulic Resources Ministry, the post of deputy was given to personnel from the ex-Agriculture Ministry. In the few areas where agricultural personnel were in control, the deputy's post was given to an irrigation engineer. This solution contributed an appearance of normality, but, in reality, the situation was quite the opposite because the control of the Ministry worked against the agronomists.

The irrigation engineers removed extensionist influence from the regional representations and the result was that these people took refuge in the General Directorate of Extension in Mexico. This became the fortress of the agronomists from where they initiated actions to disrupt the activities of regional representations and to prevent the irrigation engineers from absorbing or controlling extension personnel. This period was unbelievable. Everyone was involved in the fight for control of the Ministry: the unification solution resulted in a paralysis of all institutional programmes. The situation was one of total crisis.

Michoacán was one of the only three regional representations where the ex-agricultural agent was designated regional representative, so that meant that my post, which was second in importance, was occupied by an irrigation engineer and I was sent to organize the department of regional agricultural extension. At the national level, and probably as a result of the political crisis, the agronomist group started to plan a new form of administration, which was specifically oriented to rainfed agriculture.

Sr. Castillo Perez, who was an agronomist from Chapingo University with long experience of working with the Rural Credit Bank, proposed several new ideas, one of which was to make extension a central service in the strategy to transform existing traditional production systems. Several of these ideas of Castillo were derived from his visits to Israel and China. Sr. Castillo was one of the main forces in the creation of rainfed districts.

In my commission to organize agricultural extension, the regional representative asked me whether I would like to experiment with districts. I was appointed Regional Coordinator of rainfed districts in February 1977. This was not official, but a regional attempt to prove that the agronomists still survived in the Ministry. I had no guidelines about what a district should look like or how it should be organized, so I decided to use my own experience acquired from the Lázaro Cárdenas sub-agency case study.

My first task was to generate a coordinated structure that would provide basic agricultural services to producers and for that I divided Michoacán into ten administrative micro-regions and created small, but well integrated zones, in which to initiate an integral process of rural development. It was then that the personnel from the former Ministry of Hydraulic Resources reacted. They interpreted my proposal as an attempt to resist their influence and accused me of segregating them from rainfed development. On the other hand, the regional staff from agricultural extension saw my project as an individual effort, which could undermine their political relations with the General Directorate in Mexico. So I was faced with local official opposition from both nationally antagonistic groups. They argued that district organization had no institutional authority because they had not been created by a presidential decree, as were the irrigation districts. The legitimacy of the project was severely questioned at regional level. Confronted with this situation, I decided that my first priority was to make the districts operational and organize the necessary personnel.

Personnel recruitment proved to be a tricky problem under these conditions, but using my personal relations, I managed to recruit from the technical staff a group of people and offered them posts of responsibility. These people were all agronomists who had shown interest in the project. In relation to field personnel, I opted for the recruitment of some young agronomists who had just graduated from university and had to serve their year of social service."

It was after Sr. López completed the organization of these districts in Michoacán, that, in January 1977, a decree from President López Portillo made the rainfed districts the new official administrative units for coordinating agricultural services and maximizing the use of local resources. As Sr. López put it, "this decree boosted our morale; even so, it never explained exactly how to implement it, only stressing that institutional research would establish the general procedures of the districts".

Sr. López remembers that for the first time, his decisions acquired a totally new meaning within the official framework. One of the first measures he implemented was the transformation of the ten micro-regions into nine proper rainfed districts. According to Sr. López, this decree intensified the internal institutional struggle and, from several quarters, bureaucrats asked for the resignation of the Minister, Merino Rabago. As Sr. López expressed it, 'they wanted his head'.

The personnel from ex-Hydraulic Resources perceived the new districts as providing political and working space for the agronomists in the institution. They rejected this new administrative organization because they could not maintain total control over the Ministry. For their part, the extensionist group believed that the formation of these rainfed districts was a political measure to marginalize

their power in the Ministry, their final assault being to establish control by irrigation engineers in the General Directorate of Extension.

Contrary to these positions, Sr. López interpreted the results of the decree positively, since the authority of Merino Rabago was felt for the first time, and the staff had to start to carry out his instructions. As coordinator of the rainfed districts in Michoacán, Sr. López was now concerned with the organization of the operational rainfed units, creating new methods of management for the agronomists and systematically recording these experiences for the national *dirección*.

During this period, Sr. Castillo, who was then the General Director of the Rainfed Districts Directorate and an old friend of the Michoacán representative, came to visit Morelia. Sr. López recalled:

"We remembered his important role in the protection of the agronomists' positions during the conflicts, so we received him with a very good dinner. During the course of the meal we provided Sr. Castillo with a complete report of our advances in the organization of the districts and then we asked for his support to go ahead with the actual implementation of the rainfed district's objectives. I still recall the favourable impression he had of our work and that evening he gave us the green light."

Sr. López was chosen to direct a pilot project to assess the benefits of the new administrative units. In this new situation, ex-supervisors, who in the past had been opposed to Sr. López's proposal, became active, accumulating information and exercising pressure in order to be selected as heads of the districts. Sr. López explained:

"As I was responsible for the official appointments I tried to find a balance between those people who supported me during the conflict and the new personnel. To avoid complications, I made it clear that the person who wanted to direct a district had the obligation to set up his home inside the district boundaries. With this requirement, only the most dedicated personnel remained in the competition. I managed to secure efficiency for the districts with this requirement because from that moment there was always a qualified member of the Ministry in the area to provide assistance to producers."

However, institutional conflicts did not disappear and the General Directorate of Extension, which was fighting to remain as a *Dirección*, started to claim that rainfed districts were units with only a normative character (i.e. with advisory functions only). Therefore, the personnel working in them should follow the policies of the General Directorate of Extension and inform it of their activities while continuing with their regular work in rainfed districts. Sr. López pointed out that this was an attempt by the officials of the Directorate of Extension to control the Directorate of Rainfed Districts and to neutralize any possible negative effects on their bureaucratic positions.

As a result of this action, a process of bargaining was initiated at the national level, whereby regional representatives, who wanted to make sure that rainfed

districts actually operated, had to designate as head of such districts, ex-supervisors from the Agricultural Extension Service; otherwise that representative would suffer constant opposition from the central office in Mexico. According to Sr. López this tactic was used by agronomists to win back their influence at the regional level.

In Michoacán this was not so because it was an agronomist stronghold. Nevertheless, the extension supervisor, a person close to the central government office who had a history of frequent clashes with the regional representative concerning rainfed districts, was finally sent to work at the General Directorate in Mexico City. With this move, Sr. López became recognized as the only person in charge of the rainfed districts in Michoacán and 'the direct line of communication with the central office'.

Sr. López made several people from the extension service local heads of rainfed units. He also had the responsibility of providing the rainfed districts with basic infrastructure. He rented local houses, obtained desks, typewriters and essential support personnel, such as secretaries. This process took him a year. The rainfed districts started operations with a very simple organization: a head of the district with two assistants, one responsible for gathering information and the other for supervising field operations. Below this level, the person in charge of activities in the field was the head of what was called the rainfed unit.

Policies were still highly centralized, Sr. López being responsible for the implementation of instructions from the central office. Any local adaptations had to be communicated to the central office, where they had to be approved before implementation could take place.

Sr. López recalled that the whole process of rainfed district consolidation took approximately two years. During this period, the rise and fall of the political power of the irrigation engineers indicated the beginnings of the agronomists' era. In administrative terms, the rainfed districts were given financial control over their programmes and regional representations, and this meant that in many respects they, and not the *Direcciones* in Mexico City, became the centres of local decision making. Sr. López suggests, though, that some General *Direcciones* managed to survive until 1981 just because they had presidential support and not for practical reasons.

Finally, two national evaluation meetings in 1979 and 1980 on rainfed districts, and the presidential decree to review the existing operational systems in the Ministry, ended the General Directorate of Extension and established the rainfed districts as the administrative structure aimed at modernizing agriculture. In January 1978, Sr. López was designated head of rainfed district No. 3 in Morelia. In this post, he continued performing the same functions and remained there until July 1980, when he moved to the representation in Jalisco.

## **Sr. López's Last Comments on the Administrative Reform**

Sr. López argues that with the implementation of the rainfed districts, the political influence acquired by the irrigation engineers through the integration of the Ministries was reversed. The new administrative organization made it possible for the agronomists to link their ambitions for political influence with the new policy of intervention in rainfed agriculture. The rainfed district became established as the most important *Dirección* in the Ministry: they had more hectares to cover and modernize than the irrigation districts. But, according to Sr. López, this official argument was an excuse used by the Minister, Sr. Merino Rabago, for initiating the final offensive against the old irrigation bureaucracy, and for changing the personnel in charge of regional representations. This action consolidated rainfed agriculture as the priority of the Ministry and established the agronomists as the administrators of the new policy, a fact that gave them control of the Ministry.

While the consolidation of the rainfed district was a political victory for the agronomists, the actual implementation of the rainfed organization varied between the different regions of the country. For instance, Sr. López comments:

"Jalisco, which had a powerful group of livestock producers, had to delay the operation of the rainfed districts for a considerable period. These began to operate only when national strategies, like the Mexican Food System (SAM) was implemented and priority from the central government was given to increasing basic grains."

## **A General Overview of the Administrative Reform in the Ministry of Agriculture**

Now, on the basis of the above case material, I would like to outline some of the effects of the administrative reform on the modernization of the agricultural services. Sr. López's experiences confirm Carrillo's view that changes at the institutional level were needed in the Mexican public system to bring about a change in policy orientation. During the 1970s, the bureaucracy was open to university graduates who were prepared to work in the provinces. But the posts in Mexico City which lead to a political career were only open to people from the most prestigious university, Chapingo. Thus, for those like Sr. López who had graduated from a provincial university, the possibilities of being appointed to the centre were zero, due to the importance of the system of *escuelismo* (networks of influence based on university friendship) in Mexico.

Hence for a whole group of young professional agronomists, the provinces were the only alternative. In the provincially-based agencies, these university professionals were left to organize the service as best as they could. Sr. López described the type of agricultural extension that he knew during this period as

one 'full of personal sacrifice but totally inefficient'. During this time, agricultural extension had the following features:

- a service which had no clear objectives about what to do in the field,
- a service that was left to the fieldworker's individual initiative,
- a service that was provided by very few university graduates in agriculture,
- a service that demanded from the fieldworker the supervision of large agricultural areas,
- the fieldworker had no permanent base (office),
- the fieldworker was not compelled to organize his work,
- the fieldworker had no officially assigned functions to perform,
- the diffusion of knowledge was not by means of practice, but through devices like pamphlets and films,
- local political authorities could influence the activities of the fieldworker because he had no official support,
- the fieldworker had to supervise crops, livestock and to report any plant or animal disease,
- the fieldworker had no fixed hours of work.

This list provides us with the reasons why administrative reforms saw the re-organization of the agricultural services as a prerequisite for any new agricultural policy. Producers also saw the services as inefficient and costly in terms of money and time. They doubted the capability of fieldworkers to solve their problems. This attitude on the part of producers helped to create among technical personnel and fieldworkers the preconception that the *ejidatario* producer did not want technical assistance, because they were traditional people who rejected modernization.

The administrative reform's criterion of efficiency generated a transformation that called for the emergence of a new organizational structure which could mobilize, channel and regulate resources in favour of rainfed agriculture. Institutional conflict within the bureaucracy was strong and this eventually led the agronomists to develop an approach in which agronomic criteria based on technological packages replaced the irrigation engineers' emphasis on irrigation infrastructure. In this way, the administrative reform produced substantial changes in the operations of the agricultural bureaucracy. Nevertheless, we need to examine the extent to which this effort improved the interface between bureaucracy and the peasants, affected the internal composition of the administrative units, and took into consideration the interest of the rainfed agricultural producers.

## The Origins of the Mission and the Missionaries

From the beginning of the century, the mission of the agrarian bureaucracy in Mexico had been to increase production. After the land reform programme was

initiated, one of the first government attempts to support production was through agricultural credit, which became in the 1930s, the primary promoter of development. The conception that agricultural credit had to have a cultural and social function was promoted by the ex-Ministry of Development (*Ministerio de Fomento*), an institution which was the direct predecessor of the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources.

The failure of these credit programmes to achieve the expected increase in production allowed the Ministry of Finance to argue that credit should be given according to technical criteria rather than according to its social value. This view led to the separation of credit from the Ministry of Development, its administration being transferred to the Ministry of Finance. Until the administrative reform, this latter Ministry had been responsible for the supervision of 82 percent of the official credit given to the agrarian sector.

After 1935, credit control ended the notion of credit as an agent of development and presented the Ministry of Development with the need to find a new institutional means to improve production on the *ejidos*. In 1933, the General Directorate of Agriculture organized the Department of Agricultural Research Stations and later the Department of Agricultural Development. Their activities were concentrated on the selection of seeds and their distribution to the *ejidos*. Imported technology was rejected and the creation of a national technological system was to address itself to the practical problems of the producers with a network of agricultural schools set up to provide training for the peasants. In 1947, this group created the Institute of Agricultural Research which operated until 1960 (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1978: 31-2). This began the first agronomist tradition in Mexico and was the origin of the extension service.

The second tradition was established in 1943 when the Rockefeller Foundation created the *Oficina de Estudios Especiales*, which, under the direction of North American agronomists, experimented with new seed varieties in order to develop technological packages that would improve crop production. This research was based on the assumption that agricultural technology was easily transferable from the United States to Mexico. In contrast with the earlier Mexican tradition, technology was seen as independent of economic, social and cultural constraints, and capable of solving the problems of underdevelopment. This research succeeded in generating high-yielding varieties for wheat but was less successful for maize, due to the more difficult conditions under which this crop is cultivated.

The Rockefeller programme did not give importance to extension and it was only in 1947, when some producers started to enquire about the qualities of the new seeds, that an office to satisfy private demand was established. Later, in 1955, a public office to provide agricultural information was created.

The research on High Technological Packages was mainly implemented in irrigated districts where the government, first in 1940 through the Commission for National Irrigation and later, in 1946, with the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources, created the infrastructural conditions to support commercial

agriculture. This irrigation policy favoured 10 percent of Mexican rural families and concentrated public resources in the north-west of the country. Two-thirds of the public investment in agriculture was allocated to this region (Duran and Bustin, 1983: 19). This benefitted the descendants of the revolutionary leaders who used public funds and this research to finance their entrepreneurial activities.

In this context, the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources became the most important agricultural agency, allocating public resources and politically fostering the development of an entrepreneurial agricultural sector in the north-west of the country. This sector, according to Hewitt de Alcántara (1978), in spite of its market orientation, wasted considerable resources and there was no government control over production decisions until 1953, when deplorable management and low crop yields finally led to the formation of the Executive Committees of Irrigation (*Comités Directivos de Irrigación*).

These executive committees tried to involve the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources, the agricultural banks, private credit institutions and the producers in the formulation of an annual plan, in which the needs of the country, both institutional and those of the producers, would be related to the availability of water (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1978: 58). Control of water was under the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources, and the organization of the plan under the charge of the Ministry of Agriculture. A bitter institutional conflict arose between these two Ministries based on a difference of criteria about national priorities: whether water resources should be used to satisfy internal crop demands and equitable development or to support the more profitable irrigated units. Once again, the social aims of the agronomists were blocked by the economically effective policy of the engineers, who controlled water distribution and the irrigation districts, and in this way destroyed the attempts at coordination.

The agronomists criticized the economically effective criteria of the engineers arguing that it lacked any conception of rural development. Property was concentrated and land use patterns established according to market demands and not in relation to national need or in terms of the technological limits of the soil.

Nevertheless, the agronomists' critique had little echo in official circles because the results of the Rockefeller programme showed that improved seeds on irrigated land, plus fertilizers, pesticides and increased mechanization, could increase food production. Thus the effects of the 'green revolution' reinforced the importance of the irrigated districts and the institutional dominance of the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources.

It was not until 1961 that the government attempted to reconcile these two traditions of agricultural thinking. The formation of the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA) was created to increase agronomic knowledge. But unfortunately INIA was unable to generate an autonomous line of research, different from the specialized seed technologies. By 1968, little research existed for the non-irrigated lands in Mexico. These were left aside because the technological packages did not perform well in those areas.

According to Dahlberg (1979), the publication of Theodore W. Schultz's *Transforming Traditional Agriculture* in 1964 revived the issue of the transfer of agricultural technology with the argument that producers were not bound by cultural tradition. It was at this point that Mexican agronomists discovered agricultural extension as a new way of fostering development in rainfed areas. Agricultural education, rather than research, became the central aim of this orientation and the dissemination of existing knowledge its first priority.

The leading agricultural university in Mexico, Chapingo, closely studied the experiences of the North American Agricultural Extension Service, and a generation of agronomists went to North American universities to seek postgraduate training. This process culminated in 1963 with the formulation of the Chapingo plan (Martinez, 1983). This plan was a replica of the Land Grant College curriculum from the United States, and Martinez (1983) suggests that this was the Mexican version of integrating education and agricultural research. Whereas the Land Grant Colleges' objectives during the 1950's and 1960's were to diffuse innovations in order to generate technological changes, the Mexican agronomist's function stressed the need to study existing family practices with a view to improving production and the welfare of the rural population.

In 1967, institutions like the agricultural school of Chapingo, the Chapingo Postgraduate College, INIA and the Department of Agricultural Extension from the Ministry of Agriculture combined to train the new type of professional agronomists. The new agronomist was trained in solving rural problems by applying a combined approach, in which technical and social elements interacted. He was taught that biological, technical, social, cultural, psychological, economic and political aspects were all relevant (Martinez, 1983: 98). Such professionals were endowed with a belief that they were the only group with an integrated approach capable of solving rural problems. Their power was to be based on an understanding of social problems, specialized technical agronomic knowledge and the will to modernize rainfed agriculture.

This professional training lasted until 1975, when the General Directorate of Extension returned to the Ministry of Agriculture, and the new professionals had begun to regain political influence in the bureaucracy. From 1970 onwards their influence steadily grew through the implementation of programmes, like PIDER (Programme of Investment and Rural Development), which made them frontline actors in the bureaucratic competition for the control of rural development programmes.

The establishment of agricultural extension as an important instrument in organizing agricultural policies meant that several agencies included it in their services. The Bank of Rural Credit (BANRURAL) and the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources were just 2 of the 30 official agencies that had extension. As Lamartine (1978) reports, this situation created a confused institutional environment in terms of responsibilities, coordination and objectives. When it was finally decided to which agency extension services should belong it was the Ministry of Agriculture which kept them.

The agricultural extension service acquired more experience with the Plan Puebla. This plan, begun in 1967 at the initiative of the International Centre of Maize and Wheat Improvements (CIMMYT) and founded by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, was taken over in 1973 by the Mexican government and run by the extension service. The approach was based on the dissemination of innovations with the objective of generating controlled technological and social change among producers (Montoya, 1979: 11). Timely credit, the supply of fertilizers and pesticides, plus agronomic supervision in identifying the higher yield corn seeds provided a needed experience for the extension service. Dahlberg (1979) argues that Plan Puebla was a shift away from the approach that focused on single factors. He states, 'the Puebla program has two major thrusts: carrying out research and demonstration work, and seeking better support and delivery systems for inputs' (1979: 196).

Plan Puebla can be considered as the first attempt in Mexico to implement the green revolution technology in rainfed agriculture. As such, it has a historical importance for the agronomist's influence on the formulation of national agricultural policy. The long march of the agronomists finally achieved their mission among the bureaucrats and, during Echeverria's government, they launched several development programmes to benefit poor peasant areas.

The mission of the agronomists has always been identified with rainfed agriculture since bureaucratic competition with rival agencies was sharpened with the creation of the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources. This polarized the situation into two professional groups which split the agricultural service between the irrigation engineers and agronomists. Each was in control of one Ministry, with little or no dialogue between them. With the constant decline in the production of basic crops and the recognition that agricultural extension was the new means to modernize agriculture, the agronomists emerged out of the administrative reform as missionaries who, at last, had been given the opportunity to fulfil their long-denied mission.

The inter-bureaucratic conflict that later resulted from the integration of the two Ministries can be explained by this existing professional opposition between irrigation engineers and agronomists. The difference of approach was only resolved institutionally after the government accepted the agenda of the agronomists and launched a programme directed at the rainfed areas.

## **The Agronomic Approach to Rainfed Agriculture**

The decree that authorized the creation of the rainfed districts started by recognizing that the lack of official attention had contributed to the lack of basic infrastructure, agronomic research, technical assistance, training, producers' organizations and credit in rainfed agriculture. These factors were identified as accounting for the decline in production and the misuse of human and natural resources. Officially, this situation was explained as due to previous government

policy that concentrated resources and infrastructure in the irrigated sector (DGDUT, 1978). Nevertheless, official documents claim that this was the right policy at the time because the Federal Government had limited resources to invest and furthermore it was in the irrigated areas that there existed 'a more positive economic response to government policies' (DGDUT, 1979). This paradigmatic disenchantment with past agricultural policies presented the new approach as the more rational solution to agricultural problems.

Agronomists argued that with proper institutional attention, it would be possible to increase the rainfed rate of productivity by unit of investment. This was identified as the main constraint that had kept agricultural performance low. This reasoning led to an institutional justification in which official intervention and efficiency in management was seen to reverse the existing social and economic conditions of rainfed producers (DGDUT, 1978).

The model of rainfed development was clear. Agronomists would solve the existing bottlenecks in production if they had the resources and power to intervene, just as, in the past, the irrigation engineers had done in the irrigation districts. This position, unthinkable in the 1940's, indicates that traditional bureaucratic stereotypes about rainfed peasants resisting change because of ignorance or traditionalism had been abandoned.

The agronomists' experiences in the rural development programmes of the 1970's provided them with a new perception. They began to consider exploitation in terms of the linkages between local people and the rest of the society and not just as cultural idiosyncrasies of the rural environment (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1982: 258). This understanding was complemented by the agronomists' acceptance of concepts from studies of peasant economy in the design of their own agricultural proposals. The agronomists' aim in incorporating the rainfed producer into the market was to use state intervention to diminish peasant production risks (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1982: 260).

The influence of academic training in North American rural sociology (The Chapingo Plan and the diffusion of innovations) and the practical experience of the agronomists during the 1970's contributed to an approach that aimed to transform rainfed agriculture. This approach initially focused upon individual modernization in agriculture (e.g. on the distribution and supervision of agricultural inputs, mechanization, credit, etc.), rather than directly attacking the social structural conditions in which producers found themselves. The Plan Puebla experience was important in the sense that it contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of these factors effecting agricultural change. Nevertheless, the agronomic identification of needs, while advocating a new policy of intervention and the generation of more effective administrative instruments to carry out controlled changes, did not move away significantly from the 'residual' or 'improvement' approach to development.

The organization and development of rainfed agriculture became more and more dependent on state intervention than on producers' responses to change. The agronomists presented themselves as the only sector of the bureaucracy able

to implement modern public administration techniques, such as systems analysis, in order to achieve their mission and remove the technical obstacles to rural modernization. In this orientation, the rural producer was in effect reduced to a mere economic factor, following the economic rationality of maximization and subject to the administration of the state. It was assumed that the producer could be easily quantified and manipulated if programmes and projects were rationally formulated.

This rational approach proposed the classification of the national rainfed areas according to different climatic conditions and variables. Thermo-pluviometry, illumination and atmospheric relative humidity became the independent variables of an optimum model to identify the physical potential of agronomic resources. This model was further elaborated with calculations on the availability of labour force, financial costs for inputs and services, as well as regional and national market constraints. The objective was to determine 'technically' (contrary to the old political style of management) all aspects of administrative action to be implemented.

The aim of these new administrators was to formulate realistic aims from projections (the 'mystical' powers of planning) and contribute to the determination of a growth model entailing state commitment to rural change. The creation of the rainfed districts was not just a reallocation of roles and statuses among the professional members of the agricultural bureaucracy, but also the consolidation of a new institutional logic of administration which altered the perception on Ministry priorities and redistributed political decision making according to this logic.

Irrigated agricultural production concentrated on crops that could not be cultivated in the rainfed districts. The coordination and control of the agricultural plan did not permit the deviation of any producer (DGDUT, 1978). Producers' participation was accepted through their local democratically- elected representatives, though municipal and regional authorities contributed local, social and political knowledge in order to 'persuade and control local forces' (DGDUT, 1978).

The concept of 'Rainfed District' stressed the use of favourable ecological conditions to increase agricultural production, and was first publicly debated in July 1979, in Lagos de Moreno, Jalisco. At this public meeting the following six main criteria were identified in the formation of the rainfed districts:

1. uniformity in defining agro-ecological and socio-economic areas for planning and implementation purposes,
2. acceptance of political-geographic jurisdictions - the districts should include whole municipalities and be restricted to the state limits,
3. adoption of the existing internal communication system, in order to facilitate the movement of the personnel working in the area,
4. integration within the district boundaries of regional bank branches operating under the official rural credit system,

5. inclusion of the administrative divisions that states have used to coordinate their development,
6. distribution of the official work load according to cultivation areas, number of producers, their degree of relative development and crop priorities (DGDUT, 1980).

The socio-economic and cultural conditions of the cultivators were not given analytical importance in the formation of rainfed districts. Crops were seen as independent of social processes. Hence rural producers did not receive the same degree of institutional attention as the natural elements which were perceived as the only ones constraining the agricultural efficiency in the model. The main objective of this process was to establish a standard type of agricultural management, but this management ignored the historical circumstances of the rural producers, their cultural, social and technological adaptations, and market differences.

This official appraisal highlighted the absence of cooperative projects among rainfed producers. Producers obtained their agricultural inputs from several different sources and so it was recommended that adequate programmes of production should be promoted which would establish certain basic norms and operational policies (DGDUT, 1978). Again, the notion of order was the central element in this development policy. This was to be achieved by programming the distribution of agricultural inputs through support measures or incentives from the Federal Government, and by rules and projects established by the specific agencies in charge of intervention.

The agronomic model attempted a vertical coordination of resources, national targets and local-level production, but it failed to acknowledge that household production, rather than following a tendency towards crop specialization, often adopts a horizontal set of flexible strategies where the combination of economic activities constitutes the core of producers' responses to change. Hence, the agronomic approach did not consider the social organization of the rural producer and ended up supporting a centralized style of administration where transformations were defined by planning according to sectoral aims. Agronomic criteria did not provide room for grass-roots consultation or for ascertaining local requirements. It neglected local knowledge. As will be shown in the following chapters, the gap between theory and reality, clearly expressed in the procedures adopted for forming and organizing the rainfed districts, became the basis of the difficulties that later confronted implementors and fieldworkers of the Ministry when the Mexican Food System (SAM) was launched.

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that fundamental contradictions within the organization of the state agricultural bureaucracy led to change in management structure.

Administrative reform promoted the rise of the agronomists as a district professional group, who emerged as the primary social carriers of the new rainfed policy. Using efficiency criteria as their political weapon, the agronomists displaced the traditional professional and political influence of irrigation engineers in Mexican agricultural policy, whilst presenting themselves as new and efficient managers that could succeed where the previous bureaucrats had failed.

The agronomists identified the agricultural problems of Mexico as best solved through increasing inputs into rainfed agriculture. They focused their strategy on the redistribution of income, which, according to them, would decrease rural-urban migration and achieve a more balanced pattern of regional development. This policy was seen as providing solutions to the decline in the production of basic crops and as a means of regaining the government's political initiative. Accordingly, the agronomists were the driving force in the formulation of the Mexican Food System (SAM), under the presidency of López Portillo. The SAM represented a comprehensive plan that put into practice the alliance for production between the state and the producers of basic crops.

In the process of the creation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SARH), the agronomists' political stance substantially altered. In the 1950s and 1960s, the agronomist tradition was associated with a social critique on the economic orientation of engineering practices, which concentrated investments in large irrigation projects. However, by the time the agronomists gained influence in the Ministry, it concerned a new university generation of agronomists. These were indeed technocratic in outlook and equally interested in achieving efficiency in the countryside. Nonetheless, with the introduction of rainfed districts the fact remains that this implied a redirection of state funds from large irrigation projects to investments in small producers aimed at increasing the production of basic staple foods.

The agronomic model supporting technological change in agriculture through resource allocation and research was the backbone to implementing increased 'efficiency'. The criterion of efficiency postulated that agrarian development, rather than land redistribution, was the central factor initiating a new era of production in Mexico and the way forward to tackling the serious problem of rural poverty. This policy resulted from intra-bureaucratic conflict. The conflict became the catalyst for the acceptance of a new form of 'scientific knowledge', and for a power struggle within the state organization itself. The outcome of this struggle was the generation of an ideology wherein the agronomists provided the means by which to carry out the transformations needed by the state in order to regain its political initiative in steering development.

In this chapter, then, I have focused on state organization and the dynamic properties of administrative structures when confronted with changing economic and social circumstances. The direction of such change may be explained in terms of the state's response to the need to secure conditions through whatever new modes of operation are established. However, as shown in this chapter, the formulation of new policies and the administrative reform that accompanied it did

not follow a simple problem-response pattern. While the impetus for change may have come from the changing political, economic and social circumstances, the emerging agencies of state intervention in rainfed agriculture were the result of political processes surrounding the different practices, interests and world-views of competing bureaucrats.

## Notes

1. A slightly revised version of this chapter has been published in Arce (1987).

### 3. ADMINISTRATIVE REALITY AND BUREAUCRATIC CULTURE: A GAZE INTO THE ART OF MANAGEMENT

My aim in this chapter is to provide a background to agricultural administrative processes. At the outset, we are faced with the problem of how an anthropologist can penetrate the practices of a complex organisation like the Ministry of Agriculture (SARH). The first thing is to examine bureaucrats as members of an epistemological community. Since they share a language, degree of knowledge and behaviour that somehow distinguishes them from other communities in Mexican society. This implies that the researcher has to spend time within their environment, observing the way bureaucrats work and communicate, i.e. how they actually produce their papers, write their memorandums and analyze their data. The second point is how to make sense of the interactions the bureaucrat creates within the 'administrative' culture, which are influenced by all sorts of factors, such as policies, administrative reforms, institutional politicking, personal interests, conflicts and careers. The interpretation of how the bureaucrat translates and makes sense of these contingent factors depends very much on his social background and experiences. In short, in order to understand the implementation of policies, we need to observe the behaviour and penetrate the social life-worlds of the bureaucrats.

This chapter complements my previous analysis of agrarian policy formulation with a more localised view of institutional actors. I discuss factors affecting their behaviour and operation. The chapter links administrative action and actors' experiences to the capacity to implement state political agendas. One crucial aspect of the chapter is the analysis of how bureaucratic culture impinges on the implementation of policies.

Although the ability and skill of local officials to organise and orientate their services to the producers is an important dynamic in Mexico, state intervention, as centralised policy action, antagonises practices which are embedded as routines in local districts. The relevance of everyday bureaucratic practices in my analysis relates to the significance of understanding bureaucratic habituation (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). It also encompasses the impact of administrative responses and the adaptability of bureaucrats in implementing central policies. While lack of resources may constitute a general constraint on district actions, staff attitudes and performance in relation to producers' demands generate a set of everyday practices through which the district agricultural bureaucracy explicitly shows its degree of social power and ideology in making their administrative domain.

Let me first describe the district under study, and then depict the daily routine in the district office. I will elaborate upon three salient aspects of this routine - the manipulation of documents, visits by representatives of the producers to the district office and the social gatherings of office staff (*convivencias*). Finally I present an interview to show the relation between the life-world of one district bureaucrat and his enactment of state policies.

## **Characteristics of District No.1, Zapopan**

Zapopan consists of eleven municipalities in central Jalisco. It is organised into eight operational agricultural field-units serving 54 agricultural zones and 33 livestock areas. The district occupies 5.9 percent of the total area of Jalisco and is located in a neo-volcanic zone to the south of the Sierra Madre Occidental. The landscape is flat or gently undulating and covers an area of 503,213 hectares, classified into 150,382 hectares of cultivable land; 212,370 hectares of pasture land; 47,668 hectares of forestry and 92,793 hectares of non-productive land. Of the agricultural land, 60 percent supports rainfed agriculture, 32 percent a humid type of agriculture, and 8 percent is irrigated. The pattern of crop cultivation is based on maize, wheat, sorghum, beans and chickpeas, but fruit and vegetables also contribute to the district's production. Annual crops are cultivated on 97.6 percent of the agricultural land, of which 72.1 percent is dedicated to maize. The rest is occupied by fruit trees, artificial pastures and sugar cane.

The district has, inside its boundaries, the best road network of the whole state. It is the centre of commercial and transport activities for Jalisco. A regional road system links the interior via dirt roads to all municipalities and productive areas.

Maize and sorghum have traditionally constituted the main products of the district and their production has increased since 1977. The absolute increase in the production of maize has been greater than that of sorghum whose decline was mainly a result of state intervention in the district. According to district information the fertility of the soil favours agriculture. An internal document (1983) estimated the relation between net and gross income for maize to be higher than 41 percent and 45 percent for beans. The production of maize is also favoured by the district's proximity to Guadalajara. In the period from 1977 to 1982, rainfed maize production increased by 619 kilos per hectare and extended its harvested area by 15.5 percent during this period (SARH, 1983). Sorghum, on the other hand, in spite of its increase in terms of productivity has diminished in harvested area in the district. Rainfed maize has been the only crop to double its production value. It is the most important crop in the district and the rainfed producers are the main clients of the SARH.

## **Agricultural Modernisation in the District**

District No.1, Zapopan, is not one of the largest in Jalisco, although it has the highest proportion of its land under maize cultivation. It is cultivated using modern agricultural practices. The district has a high percentage of its land committed to institutional modernisation programmes. Until 1980, the two main institutional programmes of modernisation were based on fertilization and mechanisation. From that year on high yielding varieties were increasingly used

in the district, completing the use of a powerful technological package for maize cultivation.

The high yielding seeds were not firmly established until more than half of the district was mechanised, and fertilizers were used on practically all cultivable land. The use of fertilizers marked the end of extensive farming practices and inaugurated a new era of productivity, characterised by the intensive farming of maize. The administration of technological packages was the device through which the district increased its institutional and administrative control over the local productive space. The area of the technical extension service increased from 1977 to 1982, with the largest advance during the period 1981-1982.

In 1981, technical extension spread to more than twice the area of the preceding year, with a consequently greater area for the fieldworker to cover. This expansion of technical assistance accompanied the implementation of the SAM programme and the extensive introduction of high yielding seed varieties in the district. This stage of agricultural modernisation was characterised by institutional reform and the introduction and diffusion of technological packages of modern agricultural inputs. It coincided with the SAM policy of increasing the use of modern agricultural practices in rainfed agriculture. The implementation of this aim facilitated a closer relation between district practices of intervention and the producers' need to learn how to effectively use modern agricultural inputs. Constraints on *ejido* production were from this moment on perceived as a technical problem of input management, and input management thus became a principal function for the district agronomists to fulfil.

### Government Agencies in the District

The district under study has a privileged geographical location. Due to its short distance from Guadalajara, the state capital, it is serviced by all the government agencies related to agricultural development in Mexico.

In 1980, the National Agricultural Bank, BANRURAL, provided credit for 12 percent of the total planted area of the district, and in 1981 increased this to 30 percent of the rainfed area sown. This was one of the years of highest official government credit to producers of the decade. In addition, FIRA (*Fidecomisos Dependientes del Banco de Mexico*), another government credit institution, which is directed to developing rural property and improving the existing level of machinery, brought credit from private banks to the district. Between 1980-1982, 72 percent of such loans came from private banks and 28 percent from government banks. The level of credit in the district is high compared to that of other districts. Several factors account for this, including the district's agricultural potential, and the fact that its road network and existing storage capacity make it suitable for investment and state intervention.

By far the most important official agency is the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (the SARH) which implements, in the field, government

agricultural intervention through four main programmes: Agriculture extension; Livestock and Forestry; Planning; and Hydraulic Infrastructure. These programmes are carried out using operational plans by field operational units. The operational plans are organised by the district technical assistance service, which, with the personnel working in the field-units, constitutes the backbone of district intervention.

### **District Operations of the SARH**

District operations depend directly on the amount of available resources in the official budget. A major increase in the district budget took place between 1979-1980, coinciding with the launching of the SAM strategy. This tendency continued in 1981 until resources stabilized at the 1981 level in 1982.

Technical assistance received the major slice of district economic resources until 1977, after which budget allocations favoured infrastructural projects. This tendency did not change during the implementation of the SAM, indicating that district intervention during the 1980's was primarily oriented to increasing possibilities for production rather than to social development.

The allocation of resources was based on conflicting criteria. On the one hand was the economic viability of projects, and on the other, the social and political goals of the agricultural extension services. Projects such as irrigation schemes were usually based in areas where state investment was likely to bring a maximum return in production. Extension services, on the other hand, operated more according to the institution's political need to control rainfed maize producers.

Municipalities were blocked from receiving agricultural assistance and therefore achieving agricultural development if the area was not considered viable for fulfilling district production targets. Budget allocations did not favour programmes such as technical assistance, producer organisations or agricultural research. Instead, the budget provided more resources to infrastructural projects and conservation, replicating former government interventions implemented in the irrigated sector (see Chapter 2).

The selection of productive areas became a powerful instrument for the SARH for controlling producers, a necessary condition to safeguard the economic and technical resources invested in project areas. The official assumption behind this policy of intervention was that where comparative advantages existed, local producers would transform their local practices to take advantage of the infrastructural benefits provided by the district.

Investing public resources in productive areas defined rural development during the 1980's in Mexico. The policy met market demands rather than satisfied existing social needs (such as the welfare of producers). Infrastructural projects employed local labour and linked agricultural development with the urban structure of Guadalajara, from where inputs and services were obtained.

Infrastructural projects, such as roads, store-houses, dams, and wells for irrigation, promoted socioeconomic development that integrated rural localities into a regional market dominated by Guadalajara.

### Socio-Economic Characteristics of the District

In 1981, 65 percent of the total cultivable area in the district was controlled by small private property owners, while 35 percent of the land was *ejido* property. The municipalities of Zapopan, Tlajomulco de Zuniga, and Ixtlaucan del Rio were the principal producers of hybrid maize in the district.

The demographic density of the district in 1970 was 327.7 inhabitants per square kilometre. In 1979 the population had grown to 2,615,985 inhabitants, an annual population growth of 5.6 percent. The municipality with the fastest increase of population was Zapopan, with 11 percent per year. Municipalities like Tlajomulco de Zuniga and Junacatlan, in which an important part of the rainfed district programmes were concentrated, experienced only small increases in population. Isolated municipalities, like San Cristobal de la Barranca, in spite of their recent incorporation into the district, significantly decreased in population (-1.5 percent a year).

The majority - 99.5 percent - of the district population lived inside the boundaries of the Metropolitan area and were thus considered urban. However, this figure provides a misleading guide to the pattern of urbanisation in the district, since only 4 percent of the municipalities had more than 2,500 inhabitants. In fact, 68 percent of the municipalities consisted of settlements of less than 99 inhabitants. The rural producers in these settlements found segmented markets in the metropolitan area to sell their products (Roberts, 1987).

The majority of the population in district No.1, 56 percent, was younger than 20 years, with 40 percent in the 20-60 year age group. Of the economically active population, according to the 1980 population census, 22 percent worked in industry, 15 percent in commerce, 6 percent in the building industry, 5 percent in agriculture and 4 percent in transport, accounting for 52 percent of the active population. The relatively small importance of agricultural employment in the district was due to the disproportional concentration of industry, commerce, building and transport in Guadalajara city. But while some municipalities had become part of Guadalajara's economic dynamic, and had diversified economically, others were still heavily dependent on agriculture for their survival.

There were some municipalities in the district (Tlaquepaque, Zapopan, Tonalá, and El Salto) that had historically diversified economically, generating huge *desequilibria* in Jalisco's geographic and economic space. The rural development programme of the state had been highly influenced by this historical *desequilibrio*, reinforcing the differences inside the municipalities that constituted the district.

Projects were located in those municipalities in which agriculture was commercialised and whose productive potential meant that public investment could be recovered. The rainfed district (Zapopan) provided control and direction to the field personnel that organised operations at municipality level. In selecting municipalities, the district criteria had been to choose those municipalities with an existing degree of commercial development, while preventing the creation of political instability in the district.

During the administrative re-organization of the SARH, and later, in the implementation of the Mexican Food Policy (SAM), local political support had to be mobilized by SARH personnel to strengthen the legitimacy of official initiatives and to neutralize any threat to the administrative structure from local politics. Political considerations were not an extra burden for district officials, they knew the game well and had long been involved in the regional political game.

This last aspect had the effect of politically enhancing the importance of the officials running the district. In order to coordinate the implementation of rural policies and the demands of the local political system, they had to extend their network of influence to the municipalities and this was done through the activities of the field-units. This type of administration favoured group trust and the circulation of reliable institutional information on a very personal basis. Internal bureaucratic groups were always competing to gain control over the most important posts at district level or among the field-units.

The district was the structure that promotes projects, and it was its responsibility to achieve expected production targets. Nevertheless, the district was constrained by central administrative procedures and by the economic and social conditions of the *ejidos*. These two factors constituted a social field in which the district had to manage a precarious balance between national and local political dynamics and the cultural factors of bureaucratic practices.

It is in this process of mediation between general administrative rules and what the local official could do in practice, that I begin my analysis of the process of state intervention at district level.

### **Bureaucratic Culture: the Routine in the District**

After the administrative re-organization described in Chapter 2, a hierarchical structure was formalised for the implementation of state policies with regard to rainfed producers. The first level in this line of command was the regional office. The regions were further sub-divided into rainfed districts, which contained different field-units. The field-units were responsible for the actual implementation at municipal and *ejido* level. In this section, I will concentrate on the practices at district-level since the district office was the locus where state policy and implementation at *ejido* level was mediated.

At the headquarters of district No.1, the most important rainfed district in Jalisco, the formal working day began officially at 8:00 am and the staff punched a time clock on arrival. Personnel who were late had to report to the head of the department, who then decided whether to report the fault. When personnel had to organise meetings in the field and, due to distance, could not clock-in at the office, they had to arrange this with the department head a day in advance, preferably in writing, otherwise they might lose a day's pay. Despite these restrictions, in practice rules regulating punctuality were flexible.

Between 8-9am in the office, the staff gossiped and exchanged opinions about important national events while going through the regional newspapers. It was the moment when they commented on institutional rumours. Personal anecdotes involving the behaviour of the staff working in the regional office regularly were the focus of attention in these *informal morning gatherings*.

On one such day, around 9am, the head of the operational department, who normally had just had his first meeting with the district head, burst into the office and called his staff around his centrally located desk. He overlooked five other desks, four of which belonged to officers in charge of field operations, that is, the organisation of producers, plant control, mechanization, data gathering and data presentation. Another desk was occupied by the department secretary. These officials constituted the staff of the operational section of district.

With the staff around his desk the head planned the day, assigning to each assistant some specific task to be carried out. Some of the assistants complained, arguing that the tasks were not their responsibility. The head then took time to explain to his subordinates the importance of the assigned tasks. There followed a heated exchange of opinions about the disorganised character of the district's operations, which led to a discussion of the real objectives of the department. The situation ended with the tasks finally delivered to the staff and the authority of the head restored, as the last word of authority.

Immediately, the personnel dispersed for work, some going out to other institutions, such as the bank or to coordinate tasks in the field. Meanwhile, the department head concentrated on analyzing the statistical data coming from the field. He was responsible for spotting any contradictions between the field data, district objectives, and regional targets. The head was always vigilant that past information did not contradict new information. Filtering field information was important for maintaining district credibility. When contradictory information was spotted he took responsibility for re-adjusting the data, and in such a situation he never asked for a second opinion or for field verification. The head of the department explained to the younger staff how to record statistical data in the official format, stressing that they should consult with him over any readjustments needed.

Around 11am, some officials in charge of the field-units arrived in the office. They came directly to the district personnel in charge of programme organisation to ask them to speed up their institutional request and to keep good relations with them. These officials usually conferred with the head of the operational

department while waiting to see the head of the district office. These visits from the units were important because they were associated with attempts to obtain more resources for field personnel.

Officials from the more important field-units visited the district office up to two or three times per week, requesting field resources from the head of the district, such as their car allowances. SARH field personnel had to use their own car for work, but the district paid the petrol and maintenance. This money could take a long time to be paid. It was a constant source of complaint against the district, so a unit head who managed to get this allowance promptly to his field personnel was regarded as showing concern for his staff. In addition, a fast solution to official bottlenecks demonstrated that the field-unit head was on good political terms with the head of the district office.

Meetings between the head of the district and the personnel from the field-units were important institutional moments, in which political information was exchanged and ways were discussed of counteracting political initiatives from institutional groups which were not politically controlled by the network of the head of the district.

Around midday, some community leaders were wandering around the offices, inviting the staff in charge of the programmes to visit their communities to see for themselves how the projects were going. These were invitations to *convivencias* (social gatherings) in their localities. Occasionally a Municipal President would visit the head of the district to ask for more economic support.

All visitors were scrutinized by the officers present, who routinely made open comments against these people, whom they perceived to be clients just looking for favours. This attitude allowed the staff to generate a discourse by which they differentiated themselves from their clients, in a 'community of fate' similar to those reported by Goffman (1974). However, as will be elaborated below, officers also used this exchange of information on visitors to classify the importance of the visitors. Their attitude towards visitors would depend on the political power they subscribed to the particular person.

Between 11am and 1pm, 'memos' from the regional representative arrived and the department head began to answer official paperwork. By this time, the secretaries were starting their break. Their ritual was to concentrate in one office and have a soft drink and a long chat. Meanwhile the staff went to have a break (*un taco*). This took around fifteen minutes.

Towards 2pm, office activity began to slow down. The first to leave the office were the secretaries who started the ritual of asking members of staff for lifts to Guadalajara. The staff replied with sexist jokes which were received with good humour. Only one person, the head of the department stayed in the office until 2:30pm, the official lunch hour.

On rare occasions the staff returned to the office in the afternoon. They claimed that this was the time they visited the units. In fact, this was the time the district staff carried on their private business or teaching duties at the university, in a word, the traditional and widespread Mexican second occupation. The

working week in the district was from Monday to Friday. The staff only came in on Saturday under extraordinary circumstances, and the head of the department usually appeared for a perfunctory round, but no proper work was done. Although the staff were not in the office on Saturdays, they often met at *convivencias*, as will be described below.

## Documents and Information

This description of district routines gives a glimpse of the importance of bureaucratic practices in the organization of state intervention. Bureaucratic practices are not just endowed with intentionality towards a target population. In fact, they are the agency that provides meanings to state intervention. One of the significant features of these practices is the manipulation of information and documents. This local political *modus operandi* shows that project results mainly have a political function, which can be attributed with different meanings at the diverse levels in the Ministry.

An important function in any administrative style is the performance of the institution's basic maintenance practices. The district has practical arrangements for monitoring the district's operational plans. This is mainly done by carefully registering every activity in official memoranda. Memoranda are the records of the district. Their primary function is to support institutional continuity, and coherence among district operations.

Secretaries might not be experts in maintaining a filing system, but they soon learn through practice to become gatekeepers of the files. In spite of the time devoted to paperwork, records are rarely used to make decisions. In the department under study, it was difficult to find records more than two years old. Neither are secretaries trained in what information to collect, the reports based on this information are therefore unreliable. Official memoranda are mainly used to demonstrate that a particular job has been carried out. Records have an administrative, rather than a practical value. Staff regard these documents as a 'clean' nevertheless untypical expression of the district's achievements in implementing policies.

When I was examining some district memorandum, the staff in the office would come to my desk, and with a combined mixture of experience and cynicism, say to me;

"We have to write memorandums and reports to satisfy expectations from the national and regional offices. You see, they love to dream at their desks and we can't disappoint them. Otherwise, we could end up having financial troubles. So we have to match their objectives in our reports, through constant readjustments and data manipulation. The nature of our information is changed according to its destination. Documents are important for our institutional image, but they don't provide any accurate

information about our activities. The only way to know our reality is by going to the field."

In other words, official district documents are important devices in terms of institutional administration, mainly because the Ministry's central command control is based on the routine of showing project results, and not on the actual process of explaining how outcomes are obtained.

Official documents are central to maintaining a district's image vis-à-vis the national and regional structure of command. This structure did not accept modifications to its project aims or favour criticisms from the operational level. Therefore, manipulation of information going to superior levels follows a pattern where actual practices and performances are never reported. Every report has the object of obtaining some institutional advantage, rather than improving the process of delivering services.

This system of document circulation operates in a symbolic interaction, in which the high levels exercise their authority, and the low levels cover up their practices through manipulation of the district's paperwork. This practice keeps the operational levels protected from central bureaucracy, because the local level can always demonstrate that its goals are obtained and the expected results of the central policy achieved.

## Visits

When on one situation, the Municipal President of San Cristobal de la Barranca arrived for an interview with the head of the district, one of the members of the staff immediately commented, "this President is not a very good politician. A friend told me that he went to the education department to ask for chairs for one of his schools and he was made to wait for hours before seeing the representative. I think he has no political influence".

A second member of the staff came in with - "he does not look as if he has the physical strength and calm to get things done". A third opinion added "he is a teacher and won the municipal election because the party was divided and the PRI, to save its image, had to support him". The person who initiated the conversation offered further "Yes, I remember our technical field assistant in San Cristobal thought he was going to be elected and was furious when the teacher was selected".

This exchange of information and opinion concluded with the staff agreeing that the Municipal President from San Cristobal was not going to get too much institutional help or support from the district during this *sexenio* (the Mexican presidential period of six years).

Such institutional treatment of visitors can be seen as a kind of team assessment of the people who seek favours in the district. It is an important practice, the attitudes formed contribute to a particular pattern of administrative conduct among the staff when they later have to deal with some of these clients'

requests. The Municipal President of San Cristobal de la Barranca was judged as having failed in his efforts to mobilize support for his area before he had even started his meeting with the head of the district.

### *Convivencias*

Saturday was the day when office personnel organised their *convivencias*. These were important occasions when personnel came together for outdoor activities followed by heavy drinking and abundant food. Food was organised by the female component in the office, the secretaries. On these occasions the women preparing food formed a separate group from the men, who normally played football or were just drinking and talking. Everyone in the office was expected to attend these *convivencias* and contribute financially.

The meeting place for the *convivencias* depended on existing invitations from *ejidos* or from the field-units. However, the participation of local people was limited to the *ejidal* president and important local community leaders, who, while playing the role of host, took the opportunity to ask for favours from the official in charge of programmes.

*Convivencias* were important occasions that facilitated face-to-face contacts among Ministry personnel working in the district and enabled different administrative levels to meet and generate a sense of organic solidarity within the agency. The head of the district normally attended these gatherings and he had drinks with his staff. This was the moment when staff openly made jokes about institutional incidents. They mocked the more embedded practices of the system. Although the atmosphere was relaxed, there was a constant search for institutional information, such as about individual promotions and political conflicts within the Ministry.

*Convivencias* were not very different from the common 'traditional' Mexican holidays, in which families spend their weekends drinking and eating at the beach or in the countryside. In *convivencias*, the sexual roles established in society were reproduced, and the pattern of food and drinking were no different from those of the middle class of Jalisco. The only special feature was that the participants in these gatherings were members of a government agency and they used their collegial ties and official practices and routines, as a social field of reference to facilitate communication. The informal situation provided the *ejido* leaders present with the opportunity to secure their interests or ask for favours. *Convivencias* were a long-established tradition of Mexican government personnel for whom face-to-face contacts are important elements in a system which uses personal relationships to build a sense of institutional cohesion.

The daily routine in the office was affected by these collegial relations, which mediated formal administrative practices. They were part of Mexican political culture, reconciling structural or functional discrepancies and inducing individuals

to an apparent social conformity in a culture where change is normally associated with troublemakers.

The fact that people in authority had to show the 'nature of their power' in social gatherings, meant that *convivencias* represented a symbolic boundary between the bureaucrat's life-style inside the state and his life-style as a member of civil society (Cohen, 1985, 1986). It was in these 'unstructured' performances where the ability to manage the district was actually constructed. District consensus depended on the support and cooperation of desk officers and secretaries, so *convivencias* provided an environment for communication between different levels of relevant staff. So, in order to build group cohesion, people in 'authority' had to manipulate convincingly, and simultaneously, several 'logical spheres' of human action within the constraining framework of the institution. It was only by direct reference to these 'institutional practices' (the formal and informal) that I began to understand the significance of 'connections' within the bureaucratic environment. Against a background of complex institutional discontinuity, complementarity was still a fundamental quality kept alive by the actors' everyday practices in the district.

### **The Life-World of Bureaucratic Actors: an Encounter with a State Official**

In the interview with a district officer that follows, we can identify some of the fundamental issues that dominate the organisation and style of rainfed district operations. District actions, as we shall see, are the product of individual and collective experiences. How bureaucrats respond to institutional and wider political forces is part of a process of familiarization and transmission of experiences which is based on their silent observation of staff interactions, their rituals, games and strategies within the 'culture' of the office. These institutional interactions allow actors to explore and identify the existing room for manoeuvre within the bureaucratic system.

The information gathered by actors is organised in a context. This contextualisation of information is an analytical condition, actor-constructed, that involves the super-imposition, assemblance and manipulation of different perceptions, thoughts and actions. This process makes everyday bureaucratic practices a locus where actors internalise the differences and complementarities between people, society and government institutions.

Bureaucratic practices are very much related to the bureaucrats' own life circumstances, experiences and world views. The relationship between experience and daily institutional action leads bureaucrats to re-use existing rules and social conventions within the Ministry. Their actions provide social and political meaning for agricultural policy on a daily basis. The district bureaucrat's knowledge of the institutional and rural worlds provides meaning to policy that reaches far beyond the aims of policy documents. Therefore the deciphering of

an institutional style is as much related to making sense of an actor's past experiences, as it is to understanding their contingent problems.

It is impossible to penetrate and understand the paradoxical outcomes of bureaucratic practices if one just evaluates bureaucratic actions and what processes these give rise to in policy implementation. Practices are not the aggregated result of the administrative structures, nor the individual eccentricities and deviations of some actors. Practices are limited or enhanced by the actors' public and private spheres of actions. The historical and social construction of a context, in practice, is the basis for both the human un-predictability of social change, as well as the simple reproduction of an administrative process.

The case that follows, uses this approach to examine the life-world of an important district official, Engineer Pedro Solis. The aim is to provide an entrance into the situations and circumstances of institutional actors who organise local intervention. The case draws upon the history of this man's career.

### **The Officer in Charge of Programme Operation: His Life and the Contextualisation of his Practices**

Pedro Solis is the head of the operational department and deputy head of the district office. Here is his story as told by himself:

"I have worked for the SARH since 1967 and I have been in two districts during this period, District No.6 and No.1 in Jalisco. After I graduated from university, I found a post in the Ministry. At that time, the rainfed districts were just being created and agronomists were in much demand. From my group of fellow students, 25 of us started our professional life in the SARH. I began as deputy head of district No.6, and so far I have not been promoted nor demoted in all those years. In my first job, I saw the head of district change four times. In this district I have only witnessed two changes at district level, one of these motivated by the *sexenial* changes. Presidential changes are the most important situation for institutional rotation, and it is the moment when new policies are formulated for the next six years.

When I started work, I felt that the post was too big for me. Nevertheless, as time went by, I became familiar with it, and today I like it. Some of my contemporaries, bored with the office work and in spite of having a position on the staff, ask to be sent back to the field. Others, thanks to their political contacts, have positions in the central offices in Mexico city. In the Ministry all staff are subject to transfers, but to be promoted to head of a district or regional representative, a person has to have very good political contacts. In fact, from the position of district representative upwards, technical agronomic knowledge is secondary to politics. From the head of the district downwards, the most important

merit is to be good in *la cosa practica* [practice]. As you have observed, in my department, we don't play politics.

In my situation, because I have no political contacts I don't expect promotion. The only chance I have is if one of my generational friends reaches an important post. In the Ministry, if you are a member of the PRI and the party supports your case, you can surely get promotion. After all these years, my only wish is to hold on to this post and stabilize my position, and perhaps just to work the minimum to protect my place. But I keep hoping that something may come tomorrow, so I still keep in touch with my own generational group, and often we analyze the institutional situation.

As head of the operational department I must keep good relations with other districts. It is my responsibility to maintain good contacts with other agencies operating in the agricultural sector. I don't have problems, but difficulties exist at the level of implementation of policies. It is in the field where coordination among institutional agencies is difficult. Different agencies interpret policies differently. To explain this is complex. Take for instance the case of BANRURAL. When it was created, three different banks were merged and the respective groups initiated a process of internal competition. Finally the most powerful group imposed its rules on the others and a peculiar situation was established in which different interpretations of rules have survived in different regions where the bank operates. These different interpretations of rules influence the implementation of policies while favouring internal group struggle.

In the process of the formation of the SARH, two ex-Ministries were merged, this action generated internal disputes over institutional power. The effect of that confrontation still survives among the older personnel of the Ministry. You will find that staff over 45 years and people in high positions, remember this conflict very well. For the younger generation, subject to a different type of institutional experience, this past means little. For them collaboration is a more pragmatic question. Today, we don't oppose coordination.

Besides the lack of resources, our problems in the district are more a question of the relationship between technical assistance and agricultural producer. We have advanced a lot in planning and our staff have a good basic level of agricultural training because the majority of them come from the university. But this basic field relationship still needs improving. Policies we organise from here still have problems in the field.

As a Ministry we have not solved the problem of how to use the experience of our field personnel. The Ministry policy is to provide an average of three courses per year to up-date training, and the staff in charge of implementing programmes have to attend these courses and later they communicate the 'new ideas' to the rest of the personnel.

These courses, in theory, last a month, but the district cannot afford to allow an official in charge of a programme to disappear for so long. So, in practice, they never last more than three days. In my opinion, no one benefits from this situation, and the contribution of these courses to training is very relative.

It is in this type of situation that problems are created. The up-date of training [in relation to the technological packages] has always been insufficient. Today, with the economic crisis and cuts in public spending, training has been the first to be affected. These last two years we have had no national courses, and few have been organised at local level.

Another problem is how to deal with the individual motivation of personnel. Their behaviour determines the kind of relationship that exists between the district and producers. This relation is a reflection of our policy effectiveness in the area. I can assure you, that no fieldworker wants to have more training, or work more intensively in the field if he continues to receive the same salary. So while training is important, the individualism of fieldworkers, which is a result of the low salaries, contributes to constrain the scope of our delivery of policies.

Field personnel don't want to change things. For instance, they don't always like becoming staff, at least in this district. I know this, because I have a direct involvement in promotions here and I know everyone by his merits. When a post is created in the regional office, the management usually phone to ask me if I can suggest the names of people who could be promoted. At the level of the units, promotions are the responsibility of the head of the field-unit. The heads of field-units are people of *confianza* [trust] to the district representative, therefore, such promotions tend to support the political position of the rainfed district representative. Promotions in the SARH are not institutionally regulated, and continuous working within the institution is not an element that by itself can secure a promotion. Promotions are linked with the political clout a person has, and to whom he is being recommended by his superior.

I want to be honest with you. Political influences are important, and even I sometimes can't escape these. In the past administration [López Portillo] a couple of recommended people arrived in this office, one from the Governor's office and the other from an important local member of parliament [PRI] ...*ni modo*... I have to accept them. These people never came to work in the office and they used the district just to claim a federal salary. One of these people was receiving a second salary from the municipality. The economic crisis has made these practices more difficult, but they have not disappeared and they have a negative impact on the morale of the personnel.

One of the central jobs in my department is related to collecting and presenting statistics. Because institutional programmes are all politically orientated, these statistics are very important for demonstrating the

success of district policies. Sometimes we have to inflate the figures to show a good result, this is expected from regional and central offices. Because agricultural programmes are politically orientated, we can never admit failure. The only exception has been the SAM, because it has been acknowledged officially that it did not achieve its objectives.

Financial restrictions have curtailed our machinery yard. It has created important institutional problems, because the actual value of our machinery is not producing the results calculated by our regional office where they can't accept that their calculations relate to normal financial circumstances. Today, they need to modify their objectives to suit the new financial conditions. Instead, they keep reducing our budget to punish our inefficiency. The notion of efficiency or inefficiency under normal circumstances, and under a public policy of financial restrictions, can't be the same.

The staff of the Ministry are subject to change at any moment. But this cannot always be understood as a negative thing. In my case, if the regional office should give me a position in a field-unit, I would work just 6 hours and after that I would teach in a school or have my own business. In economic terms, I would be better off. The problem with institutional transfer or change is not one related to economic benefits, but to the fact that superiors make political use of this rule. The fact that you can be moved implies that you always have to be on good terms with your superior. You can never antagonise him, even if you disagree with him.

District operations are supposedly linked to the regional budget. This is prepared once a year and has to include personnel costs, salaries, transport etc. This is submitted to the general office of rainfed districts, and, there, our budget is weighed against those of other Jalisco districts, following the principle that resources are allocated to satisfy minimal district requirements.

The sum is first worked out for the whole state. Last year I think they gave to Jalisco something like 7 million *pesos*. This amount arrives at the regional office which controls financial resources. Immediately after this, the original regional budget is 'forgotten' and the head of the region distributes resources through programmes and sub-programmes in the different districts. They always try to avoid political disputes, so they usually divide the general budget 'equally' among the Jalisco districts.

This system is practical, but it is not just. Those districts that are in remote areas of the state, and lack roads facilities, have higher operational costs than districts like ours. I still remember, in district No.6, just to make a field visit took us six hours, plus high costs on transport. In that district, if they have insufficient financial resources, the normal procedure is to cut down the number of field visits that personnel make to the producers. The consequence of this is a deterioration in

relations between producers and the SARH. Staff become isolated and the implementation of policy suffers. In a critical financial situation the office work can't be stopped, so field operations have to be cut back.

People say that the Ministry is today in an administrative crisis, mainly because of the cuts in public spending. It is a fact that new posts have not been created since 1977. I remember that the economic situation was difficult before 1977, but in spite of public restrictions, rainfed districts were created and a lot of agronomists had the opportunity to join the Ministry. Now it looks unlikely that something like that will happen again. Financial restrictions will make our institutional problems more evident and increase the administrative difficulties of all agencies working in the agricultural sector. All these problems I am talking about are general to the Ministry, although perhaps some differences exist in particular locations."

### **The Connections Between the Actor and Administrative Practice**

Engineer Solis apparently obtained his position as deputy head of the district because of his professional training. Having studied agriculture at the University of Guadalajara, he is special in the way he perceives his career within the Ministry, and how he assesses 'political interference' within the local administrative system. In his accounts it is possible to identify some of the main features of the administrative practices at the district level:

1. Administrative practice is presented as technical, but it is clear that in everyday routines it has obvious political undertones. Politics tend to be institutionalised in administrative practice, so these stabilize and generally support the local political regime.
2. General institutional practice (of the SARH) is based on the achievement of operational agreements (coordination) between different agencies operating in the district. The communication and coordination of agencies are affected by the institutional groups internal interpretation of policies and their competition for power. Both these factors are important for administrative practice, because these situations, which usually end up in open conflicts, are commonly experienced by officials as 'generational' events in which the bureaucrats' identity (*escuelismo*, regionalism etc) and status are questioned and contested within the institutional field.
3. While politics is the sensitive factor that can be invoked to blame the lack of administrative efficiency, the district has been so far unable to integrate field experiences with the training received by the officials from the university.
4. District practices are highly vulnerable to national public spending policies. Regional budget constraints directly affect the district's training courses, personnel behaviour and the implementation of programmes. Since allocations of resources are made for political considerations and not according to

operational criteria, this helps to secure political justifications as the main procedure for agricultural management, ignoring historical circumstances of the localities, their cultural, social and technological adaptations, and market differences.

5. Administrative practices are susceptible to influence from local political authorities. These are usually heavy knocks to the morale of the officials. Bureaucrats usually criticise such political influences, attaching corrupt interests to the political networks of heads of districts and regions.<sup>1)</sup> Underlying this view is a notion of 'collective responsibility' for the country's limited national resources. This is an administrative coding, a way of perceiving the complex problems that are created by 'external politics'.
6. Administrative practices are internalised by actors as institutional processes. These processes filter the actor's interpretation of his institutional career. Although they present themselves as 'impartial' technocrats, they evaluate their opportunities in a complex political environment, where the combination of competition and personal relationships determine their construction of probable and possible scenarios.

It is necessary to remind ourselves that the practices described here are concerned with the actors' knowledge and information of the institution both locally and nationally. The actors' probabilities therefore correlate with what is going on in the local and national world of politics. So, administrative practices are related to the reproduction of the social organisation of district bureaucracy and to the type of experiences and meanings that actors' currently attribute to their experiences.

## Conclusion

In discussing administrative practices and bureaucrats' routines in this chapter, I have argued that district operations and officials' behaviour need to be related to the culture of the office and the life-world of the officials. This perspective is supported by our look at the routines and social gatherings of the district. Further evidence of the relationship between actors' meanings and practices is found in the life-world narrative of the bureaucrat in charge of programme operations. There is strong evidence of a relation between the actor's attribution of meanings to his past, the analysis of his present and his vision of the future. In each of these time perspectives the institutional context was a significant part of his cultural frame. While variations from bureaucrat to bureaucrat are to be expected, the central thrust of the argument is that a process of internalisation exists between the life-world of bureaucrats and the way the administrative structure operates.

Thus, it is possible to say that the organisation of institutional options are situated in a whole series of logical spheres of human action. These operate simultaneously within the constraining framework of administrative tasks, because the actor's information and knowledge of the institution are more or less shared

by the members of the 'bureaucratic culture'. It is the process of attributing meanings to everyday practical agricultural issues that is the main factor affecting the administration of policies and programmes. As a consequence of this, we have to regard administrative practices as a complex social function, which is not a consequence of policy documents or social indicators of the social structure, but devices specific to the way power is exercised at local level. Administrative practices are individual political tactics.

Instead of treating rural policy formulation and bureaucratic experience simply as two separate logical spheres of action whose overlap appears to generate the emergent property of 'administrative practice', it might perhaps be interesting to ask whether the interface has some common origin with the process of how Mexican society operates and how Mexicans act to support or oppose state rural intervention.

The next chapter takes the analysis further to the level of actual policy implementation at the base of the bureaucracy, i.e. in the field-units. We have seen that several actors mentioned field operations as the level of 'reality' that could provide us with another point of entry for studying the process of policy implementation, and with it the analysis of the delivery of technical assistance to producers. Technical assistance in practice constitutes a whole body of scientific agronomic knowledge. In this sense, this book is not just concerned with the effects of a policy like SAM, but with the analysis of who the people are, who are invested with the power to carry out modernisation in rural Mexico.

In the following chapter we will analyse the field-workers' life-world, how they came to be part of the government agency and their perceptions of the rural producers. Using these elements, I will explain later in Chapter 5, why these actors, when confronted with a policy document like SAM, come to identify factors for institutional intervention, which do not correspond to the policy - document guidelines, but with their own perception of the local rural 'reality'.

The next chapter lays the foundations to argue that intervention is related to different sets of practices, one at the operational level (the district), and the second at the field-unit level. This approach allows us to see policy implementation as a multilinear process, one affected by the interactions and life-world of the bureaucrats. Implementation is full of tensions and contradictions, which partly centre around the conflicting interpretations or social constructions of the different actors. In the next chapter I try to see how the social construction of bureaucrats actually takes place, i.e. how bureaucrats develop their attitudes in the process of institutionalisation and through their experiences with rural producers.

## Notes

1. Although personnel criticise the existence of political networks within the Ministry, the next chapter shows that in order to survive in the Ministry, they cannot escape from playing politics themselves.

#### **4. AT THE BASE OF THE BUREAUCRACY: FIELDWORKERS, SOCIAL BACKGROUND, PRACTICES AND CAREERS**

The rainfed district's operational unit is the organisational level responsible for delivering government guidelines and agricultural services to producers in the field. This institutional level is a social field, where different parties are constantly interacting. Administrative representatives, fieldworkers, politicians and producers all make sense of policy discourses and the development condition according to their own life-worlds, that is, from their previous experiences, understandings, values and expectations. This process of actors defining and translating the social field of rural development has a significant bearing on the room for manoeuvre that a field-unit will actually have in its operations. Thus the pattern of interaction between fieldworkers and the way they focus their attention, reflect on and monitor the different sets of interests surrounding the process of policy implementation, are central to the process of state intervention.

Fieldworkers are not neutral. They owe their allegiance to the government, but to achieve programme goals they have to compromise between the usually conflicting interests of government and rural producers. The fieldworker is in charge of mediating (translating into practice) the enforcement of agricultural policies in localities, and as policies are not self-executing, they are the agents who arrange the presentation of official goals according to the conditions of the locality. This gives the fieldworker a discretionary space in which to take decisions which influence the rural social environment.

Fieldworkers cannot solely depend on their bureaucratic status to intervene in localities. *Ejidors* are not part of the bureaucratic 'ethos' and fieldworkers must enter a field of acting social relations that producers use to meet the needs of their households. Hence, the fieldworker must select a point and form of intervention, and this central individual decision can determine the level of efficiency of policy implementation.

Fieldworkers are accountable to an administrative system, where the field-unit head and district staff constantly influence their decisions and the way they tackle a particular situation. These interactions accumulate over time, and an individual knowledge acquires a new property, 'experience'. This experience heavily influences the decisions fieldworkers make and their relations with producers.

Studying the practices of fieldworkers is a way of analyzing the factors affecting their definition of the social field in which they operate. However, observing and describing practices is not enough. We need to analyze how actors themselves assemble the multitude of processes that impinge on their life-world, to understand how they socially construct their own practices. When talking with fieldworkers, they seem eager to assume an active role in solving the problems of the rural producers within the context of a national policy. However, observing their actual

activities in the field, they do not seem to be able to achieve the aspirations put forward in their discourses.

This may be partly attributed to the district administrative routines described in the previous chapter. The district routines seem to be one factor that constrains low ranking bureaucrats from reflecting about their experiences. Nevertheless, the situation is more complex. While institutional factors are important, the social background of the fieldworkers, their personal experiences within the institution and their everyday experiences with the agricultural producers are a series of related, contingent factors that in their specific combination delineate the heterogeneous definitions and practices of the fieldworkers. These are some of the issues we want to explore in this chapter.

### **The Study and the Source of Information**

Two operational units from the district under study were analyzed. The information is drawn from 16 interviews conducted by myself during 1983 in Guadalajara. The age of the fieldworkers interviewed ranged from 25 to 40 years, the majority of them being in their late 20's or early 30's. Although there are a few female fieldworkers, these interviews all concern men. The group was roughly equally composed of married men and bachelors. Eleven of the fieldworkers had studied at Guadalajara University, two at Nayarit University and three at agricultural technical schools. Of the latter, two were from Jalisco and one from Michoacán. Of the 14 fieldworkers with university training only two had successfully completed all requirements, the other 12 had not completed their final dissertations which conferred the title of Engineer.

The composition of the sample by regional origin was twelve fieldworkers from Jalisco, two from Nayarit and one from Sinaloa. Only one fieldworker was a recent recruit (4 months), the rest had served in the Ministry for an average of two years, with the exception of one who had more than 11 years service. The period worked continuously in the units varied. Three had been in their units for less than a year, five for between one and three years, six for three years, and two for five years.

A significant number (7) admitted having a second job. Three pointed out that they did not have a second job because their wives were providing a second income, and five said that they were in no need of a second job because they were university students and had additional income from their student grants. Only one *tecnico* declared himself to be exclusively dependent on the Ministry's salary. Fieldworkers with a second job were quite aware that their actions constituted a breach of the Ministry's regulations, but they argued that the low salary presently being paid in the district made the practice unavoidable. They said the office staff had to accept this reality, otherwise they would face difficulties attracting people to work in the units.

The fieldworkers were all well disposed to relate their experiences of the administrative structure of the Ministry, and furthermore, openly invited me to

observe in the field their work with the producers. The general opinion was that their experiences had not been taken into consideration in shaping the procedures of the administrative reform of 1976, nor had they been allowed to contribute to the formulation of SAM policies. There existed among them a feeling of alienation from policy formulation, based on the perception that their position in the organisation had not changed, that their experiences had not been considered important in programming the new national agricultural aims. This explains why they felt the failure of the SAM was predictable. The following analysis explores the institutional relations that influence the *tecnicos*' decisions to assume a particular attitude in their relations with producers.

The information was gathered through participant observation, living, talking and observing the fieldworkers in the field and in other social contexts. The result of this strategy is a massive quantity of ethnographic data, of which only some will be presented here.

## The Institutional Process

In the following sections, several institutional processes are identified and described, i.e. recruitment patterns, administrative protocol, the professional role of *tecnicos*, and bureaucratic politics. In describing these processes it becomes apparent how fieldworkers are 'institutionalised', i.e. how they learn to operate within the bureaucrat culture and internalise how to 'play the game' of being a representative of the state.

## The Recruitment Patterns

Recruitment for fieldworker personnel is determined by a combination of contacts and opportunities. The personnel selected in the district came from a group of agronomists 'waiting' for a post inside the Ministry. Selection procedures are highly subjective and the incorporation of personnel is linked to whom the candidate knows in the Ministry, to qualifications plus an entrance examination of their agronomic knowledge.

Although formal requirements like the examination are not a central factor in the final selection, every fieldworker has to go through the experience of being evaluated. In my interviews with the fieldworkers, it was clear that none of them believed in selection by merit. The different ways in which they had fulfilled the formal requirement criteria provided me with an insight into the pattern of institutional recruitment. After all, everyone had a story to tell about how they had made it in the end. Fieldworkers' experiences with the examination procedure show the flexibility exercised by the administration in the selection process.

a) First Form of Recruitment

"To join the Ministry was not easy, first I had to work for them during my *servicio social* in the Ameca unit<sup>1)</sup>. After that I had to sit an exam which I successfully passed. Even so the district never gave me final approval for a position. They kept delaying my case for months, arguing that some papers were missing from my file. In the end they decided to 'review' my case. At that moment I knew that I had lost the post. The following year I sat exams again, but by this time I had previously made some contacts with agronomists already working in the Ministry who supported my case with a strong recommendation from an influential university lecturer of the Guadalajara University. This time they gave me the post. I would only say that to be recruited by the Ministry a *tecnico* has somehow to be politically involved. In my case if I hadn't had the contacts I would never have made it."

This form of recruitment experience was commonly reported to me. One of its variations was that the candidate would be called several times to the central offices in Mexico City, just to be re-assured that it was only a matter of time before his contract would be approved. If the candidate cannot support his application with political contacts, he may eventually be offered a different post in the Ministry, usually in a different region from where he lives. As this process takes time and money and may require at least two or three trips to Mexico to secure a contract, candidates that have successfully passed their exams, but lack political contacts often choose to withdraw their applications. In short, this form of recruitment pattern compels any candidate interested in pursuing a career in the Ministry to enter into a system of group affiliations.

b) Second Form of Recruitment

"I joined the Ministry in 1980 when I was in my fifth year at the university as a student of agronomy. This was possible because I had good recommendations. For me it was easy to enter in the Ministry, but I can tell you that this is not the rule for the majority of applicants. I did take the exam, but my political contacts through my family and in the PRI (I did my social service in the *Brigades Dominicales*) had already secured a place for me in the district."

In this second case the candidate was aware beforehand of the importance of political contacts to secure a place. In this situation the formal requirements were irrelevant and the applicant was offered a place because of his contacts.

Political patronage constitutes a common and discretionary form of selection. Candidates who enter this way are usually very well situated to step into a political career. These candidates look for a quick institutional career and their road to the top is dependent on their political pull. Local university power groups use this form to extend their network inside the Ministry.

c) Third Form of Recruitment

"When I joined the Ministry in 1972, I did not sit an exam because the post was so poorly paid there was no competition for it. I was called by the Guanajuato Representative and he said to me if you want the post it's yours. At the time I did not like the post but I thought that the principal thing was to enter the Ministry and then look for a better position later on. This offer was made to me after being in Guanajuato for a year as representative of the private agricultural producers."

In this situation the applicant was offered a low salary post by the representative of the Ministry, by-passing the formalities of the examination, demonstrating that middle level personnel have the capacity to co-opt people who they think can be useful to the agency.

d) Fourth Form of Recruitment

"I entered the Ministry (1975) after two years of working with the Ministry of Agrarian Reform and I did not sit the exam. To be honest, I never thought I was going to be an agronomist. My first desire was to be a fighter pilot in the Mexican Air Force. Unfortunately, I failed the physical and my father, who is an important pork dealer (*porcicultor*), persuaded me to study agronomy at Guadalajara University (1967). There the influence of some lecturers was very important because until then, an agronomic career was practically unknown in Mexico.

During my first year at the university my father bought me a fruit farm, just to allow me to practice. After that experience I bought a *rancho* and started to deal in pigs. These agronomic ventures provided me with a lot of contacts that combined with my professional qualifications and family background finally to help me enter the Ministry."

In this last case, recruitment procedures were linked to family ties and social class position of the applicant rather than political affiliation. The social background of the fieldworker was his main asset in gaining entrance to the Ministry.

In summary, the four experiences presented here indicate the existence of an administrative structure which does not apply universal rules to recruit personnel. In this situation, merit alone does not serve the political needs of the Ministry, and as the majority of the candidates had university training anyway, technical considerations were less significant than political ones.

Political recruitment in Mexico is common practice. However, the question is how to explain this practice. Is it the way individual bureaucrats try to create a network of followers in order to strengthen their own power positions? This would be the explanation put forward by those who perceive corruption to be the major driving force in Mexican bureaucracies. The cases presented here, however, suggest an additional explanation. It seems that political influences operate in different forms as a device for maintaining the reproduction of the bureaucracy, rather than an individual avenue to just benefit some individuals. The political form of recruitment

corresponds with the institutional need to select those people who will commit themselves to reproducing the Mexican political system. The recruitment practices seem to serve as a political filter of candidates. Moreover, in general terms, 'politics' is the only device that the bureaucracy has to select candidates within an educational system that has made the professions more accessible, leading to an over-supply of candidates. As some fieldworkers pointed out, only if candidates were in short supply, did technical prevail over political criteria.

### **The Administrative Ritual**

After a fieldworker has been recruited by the Ministry, he has to learn the bureaucratic rules of the game. This may be a difficult process for a young agronomist who has a genuine desire to serve the country and the rural producers. As one fieldworker said to me "one of the first lessons in the Ministry is that ideals fade away with time" (*los ideales con el tiempo se desgastan*). Behind this observation lies the impact that administrative practices have on the fieldworkers' social and cultural attitudes towards development. It is through such individual experiences that one begins to appreciate the significance of administrative protocol in influencing the way in which fieldworkers understand agricultural policies, and how much personal commitment they are willing to give to implement a policy.

Three stages were identified as influencing the life-world of the fieldworkers. First, the stage of adjustment to the institutional structure; second, the establishment of the professional role; and finally, the realization that institutional reward was linked to bureaucratic politics. These stages are closely bound up with the administrative practices of the field-units and districts. Below, I examine some life experiences in the light of the fieldworkers' institutional routine and its consequences for policy implementation.

### ***Técnicos'* Initiation into the Ministry**

One of the most important periods in the official life of a fieldworker is the time between his arrival in the unit and his final acceptance by his colleagues. This process of acceptance may take up to three years, and during this time, the fieldworker must develop both his sense of identification with the bureaucratic environment and the practical skills needed to master relations with producers.

During this initiation period, a fieldworker must learn how to manage the day to day activities and internal practices of the organisation. For example, he must learn the proper way to cover up for a colleague's mistakes, and the importance of participating in the social activities and heavy drinking sessions and *convivencias*. At the end of this period, professionals emerge with a higher status and a clearer understanding of the sort of relations that operate in the Ministry. They are able to manipulate, neutralize or exercise pressure within the immediate sphere of influence.

During this period of adjustment, they experience situations that will deeply affect their future motivation for public service. The following two cases illustrate this point.

Case 1.

"When I started to work as a *tecnico* I always had to spend extra time in the field, mainly to get to know the producers well and also to show them that I work hard. During that first year I was committed to making a good impression and delivering the technical services in the best manner possible. I can tell you that none of this personal effort was noticed by the head of the unit. Furthermore, during the first two years, I had to work in the office during Saturdays and Sundays, because I had to 'volunteer' to write reports, so to satisfy the information requirements of the district office.

These odd jobs were always done by the three new arrivals of the unit. Traditionally, it is the young personnel who must cooperate more. In my case my motivation was to contribute to the Ministry. In return, I expected institutional recognition. Through time, I realised that recognition is never acknowledged in the Ministry, so I began to change.

In retrospect I can say that *tecnicos* work very intensively at the beginning. But this is because they lack experience. As one becomes more familiar with the Ministry and with producers, the institutional problems are seen less and less as personal issues."

The fieldworker remembers his process of incorporation into the organisation as an overall experience from which he learned that intensive work is not the proper way to get institutional recognition. His exposure to this administrative environment produced a change in his attitude towards the value of delivering a good service to the producer, and to the degree of personal involvement he was willing to contribute. The adjustment period affected his motivation, made him more individually orientated and contributed to his decision to diminish his personal efforts. He started to get involved in bureaucratic politicking at the expense of his commitment to solve producers' problems.

Case 2.

"I work in one of the poorest communities within the administrative area covered by my field-unit. Just to give you an idea, until I came producers were only using natural fertilizers, and this in spite of the fact that the Ministry always had a *tecnico* in this community. I am not new in the Ministry. I entered in 1977, although I had no practical experience, because until 1982 I worked as a member of the district staff. My first experience in the field (January 1983) shocked me. I could not believe my eyes when I saw the standard of living of producers, mainly because I was in the ex-hacienda del Lazo, which is a locality not far away from Guadalajara.

I came to the community with an integral approach. To me it was clear that the lack of productivity was a result of Ministry policy, which has

usually only invested in areas where there is good soil. In this community the soil is not very fertile, moreover the presence of social problems, such as alcoholism, consume huge amounts of the producers' resources.

My first task was to put forward the case of my community to the field-unit, and to mobilize resources from the field-unit for the *ejido*. I talked with the people and explained to them that the money they were spending on *tequila* [a local spirit] was damaging the future of their families. Only a few producers listened. But those producers who did follow my advice were worth my helping. So I provided them with free building materials for their homes which I managed to get from Guadalajara friends.

These were all personal contributions and not part of my responsibility as a fieldworker. These activities went quite well until on one occasion I promised a producer a corrugated metal sheet for his roof. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain it. He reacted very angrily and thought that it was my duty to provide him with favours (*favores*). He went to complain about my work to the unit.

Well... that was it. The head of the unit took the complaint and severely reprimanded me. He blamed me for using the wrong approach with the producers and pointed out that as a fieldworker my responsibility was just to assist people with agricultural problems and that I had no right or authorization to do anything beyond that in my community. This experience taught me a lot about producers and how the Ministry runs its affairs. From that day I have only been concerned with solving the agricultural problems of the *ejido*."

Administrative capacity to inflict sanctions on the fieldworker's behaviour was an important factor influencing the attitude of someone with several years of service in the Ministry. But the most important point in this experience was the institutional stand of the unit head, who on discovering that the fieldworker had confused social and agricultural demands in the course of delivering extension services, restrained him from intervening in the social life of the community, and insisted on a fragmented and specialized delivery of services to the producers. The head of the unit saw the fieldworker's approach as a dangerous precedent, which favoured a different assumption of intervention. Such an approach suggested that community problems were not just the result of a producer's inability to cope with agricultural and technological problems, but were, in fact, a consequence of broader social problems directly associated with the state of agricultural backwardness.

The head of the unit was annoyed to see a producer making social demands on a 'technical agency'. He perceived this as a threat to the specialized function of the unit and therefore sanctioned the fieldworker for exceeding his functions. The negative character of the sanction was demonstrated by the fact that the head of the unit did not suggest to the fieldworker that he could direct producers to other government agencies more directly responsible for solving social problems. The main objective of the sanction was to insulate the fieldworker from such problems, rather than to reorientate producer/fieldworker relations. The fieldworker felt he had

been sold out by the producer's ingratitude, and this negative way of assimilating the experience helped him to change his previous good disposition towards the producers.

In the two cases presented, contact with institutional practices produced important transformations in the fieldworker's sense of how to deliver agricultural services. It is an adaptation process through which fieldworkers learn the limits of their individual actions and discover how much room for manoeuvre exists within the administrative structure. These experiences contribute to the generation of critical views of the administrative organization, but do not lead to a challenge of administrative practices. Instead, a fieldworker learns to accept integration into the administrative environment and obedience to the authority of the head of the unit as something which is normal in the institutional style of operations.

### **The Professional Role of the *Tecnico***

In accommodating to the administrative form of operation, fieldworkers internalize the daily routine of the field-unit. In my research, I focus upon this accommodation process as a way of understanding the fieldworker's professional role and motivations.

Fieldworkers arrived at the unit at 8am every morning and as the majority of them lived in Guadalajara, they had an average 30 to 45 minutes journey to get to work. The two units studied were located in accessible places with excellent roads. A great number of fieldworkers owned a car (volkswagen) acquired with a loan facilitated by the Ministry as part of an agreement that the vehicle would be used in their fieldwork. The Ministry pays for petrol and what is called a 'rent for the car', but its maintenance is the responsibility of the fieldworker. This system of loans for a car was established as a way of solving the mobility problems of the fieldworkers and helped reconcile the time/space conflicts between the interests of urban-based fieldworker's and their rural duties.

In the field, activities were organized around the administrative tasks of the head of the unit. His political knowledge and skills in dealing with the district staff, and the style of his leadership were important elements in stimulating the work of his subordinates. Programme implementation was directly dependent on the experience of unit heads within an area and their personal relations with the fieldworkers were very important. As one head of a unit said:

"To operate in a unit one has to have a lot of good common sense and know when to give in to the fieldworker's demands and when to tighten up discipline. These two things are essential to effective management. Nevertheless, differences between unit heads are mainly accounted for by the political influences that a head has with district and regional representatives. It is the political pull of this relation that will decide whether a head implements an unpopular administrative measure ordered from Mexico, either in its entirety, partly or just ignore it. A head of a unit

with no political support and who has to implement every single regulation by the book is bound to have problems controlling the fieldworkers." Head of units are part of the central line of command. They are the last authority before policy implementation takes place in the field, and the first to receive the feedback from field personnel. A main function is to stimulate fieldworkers to work, in spite of administrative limitations and the lack of resources. He has to administer human resources to the best of his abilities and create an operational team.

One of the most unpopular administrative rules in the Ministry was the regulation that every fieldworker had to sign the office 'control book' four times a day. Fieldworkers bitterly complained against this rule, arguing that spent more time coming and going between the office and the *ejido* than working with producers. They pointed to the expenditure on petrol "just to satisfy the need for administrative control". I observed that the implementation of this rule was executed differently among the units in the district and varied from total compliance with the rule to numerous internal agreements between the head of the unit and his personnel. In other words, a unit head perceives the implementation of regulations of this nature as a matter of personal discretion which can be used, or not, to create a favourable environment and a good disposition among the fieldworkers.

Fieldworkers all agreed on the importance of a unit head, that a good unit head made a lot of difference to the fieldworkers' performance and to the way they approached their duties. One fieldworker explained that it was necessary to realize that, in the last instance, it was the head of the unit who was responsible to the district. A good relation between head and *tecnicos* always resulted in a better disposition to fulfil institutional tasks, and this directly benefitted the political career of the unit head. So, according to the fieldworker "it is in his interests to maintain good working relations with us".

Fieldworkers were highly critical of the administrative structure for not providing them with opportunities to exercise their knowledge of agriculture, but did not blame the head of the unit for the fact that they spent around 60 percent of their time doing office work. It was understood that he had to organize staff requirements and was not able to oppose institutional policies.

A unit head needed to know how to drink with his personnel and when to organize a *convivencia*. In other words, he had to take care of human relations in the unit, be good at giving commands, and convincing when he talked to the producers. Among the fieldworkers there was general agreement that a head of a unit could ease the integration of a fieldworker into the administrative system, but could not remove the structural factors which really frustrated them and in this respect he was seen as having no real power to decide on issues of policy formulation. It was recognized that although he was nearer to the reality of fieldworkers in the field, he was nevertheless part of the official political system of the Ministry.

## Fieldworkers' Professional Frustrations

I focus here on the frustrations of fieldworkers as I believe they allow one to identify the key element in their professional dissatisfaction within the institution. Frustration seemed to be embedded in the institution's everyday operations. The following case shows the difficulties of working as a technical expert in the Ministry and establishes the political factor as the more important parameter of the agronomists' sphere of activity. Fieldworkers blamed institutional politics for their professional frustrations and their lack of efficiency in achieving a reasonably good level of professional performance. Institutional politics should now be emerging sufficiently strongly in this study to direct us towards the implications of this for the individual, an issue I will explore further in the following section.

"In the Ministry, fieldworkers are personnel of a thousand uses (*los mil usos*), but not those for which you studied and specialized at the university. I am an expert in seed propagation and until now I have never been used in that role. If you have a Masters degree then the Ministry may accommodate you in a more appropriate institutional position, otherwise you have to accept the Ministry's style of operations.

I feel myself limited in the Ministry and my agricultural knowledge has deteriorated, because the Ministry is not interested in stimulating the improvement of our skills. Next month I will go on holiday to the U.S.A., and I intend to use that opportunity to buy some books, but it is not just the lack of training in the Ministry that affects us. It is also the fact that a fieldworker cannot get promotions if he has no friends with political influence. It is this sort of practice, that always subordinates merit to 'politics', that dampens a more positive response towards the Ministry's policies.

Sub-programmes are always changing and the objectives of programmes are never clearly defined. Our main job is usually to monitor technological packages, collecting field data and writing favourable reports to satisfy the political considerations of the staff. With this description of our reality you may now be in a better position to understand our professional frustrations."

In a word, this fieldworker believed that the institution had not given him any incentive to acquire a 'love of his duty'. This professional frustration was linked to the political nature of institutional rewards. Little expert knowledge was required of the fieldworker since the institution established the use of agricultural technological packages. This change forced fieldworkers to perform administrative rather than agronomic tasks.

In short, professional disposition among fieldworkers was negative because they did not perceive themselves as participating in the administrative structure as agricultural experts. Official programs did not use their agricultural training in a productive way. It is ironic, to conclude that the mixture of institutional politics plus the adoption of modernization techniques (packages) had resulted in procedures that denigrated the useful role of these Mexican professionals.

## Fieldworkers and Bureaucratic Politics

Bureaucratic politics was, and presumably still is, an institutional process that provides some fieldworkers with selective rewards such as access to high posts and political responsibility. This dynamic is independent of expert knowledge or professional merit, and plays an important integrative function in the system, acting as a regulative mechanism among fieldworkers between their sense of bureaucratic membership and their ambition for higher status recognition.

This process is directed to the maintenance and continuation of the administrative structure. Therefore, it constrains political and technical professional values that could primarily serve the interests of agricultural producers. Bureaucratic politics constitute an important filter for the interpretation and execution of public policies, because it relegates the importance of agricultural practice to a secondary level of importance. In this perspective, the particular style of Ministry administration erodes the technical efficiency of the state's agricultural policies. The following case illustrates the impact of these factors on fieldworker attitudes towards the achievement of policy goals.

### The Case of Tomas

Tomas joined the Ministry in 1980 when he was in the last year of his university studies. He sat for exams, but his personal recommendations and contacts were the main factors that secured the post for him. For two and half years he worked in Zapotlanejo and after that period he was transferred to Tlajomulco de Zuniga as a result of institutional politicking (*grilla*).

"My transfer was due to the fact that a member of the staff decided that my post would constitute an excellent opportunity for a friend of his who was in Nayarit and wanted to move to Jalisco. So he started a campaign to force me out of the unit. Suddenly I started to receive an incredible amount of work, and because it was done *oficio* [a legal registration system to record individual efficiency within the agency, subject to the control of the head of the district, or whoever is responsible for the programme], he managed to build up a record of my work with which he finally *me reventó* [blew me away]. I was presented with the alternative of accepting the transfer or resigning from the Ministry."

Tomas emphasized that such actions were not uncommon in the administrative environment of the Ministry and added:

"We have to learn to live with this. As fieldworkers, we can't apply pressure on the administrative structure, because we have been reduced to administrators of technological packages. So we don't play any important function in those factors which are presently considered important for increasing production. In a word, we have become dispensable in the agency, and the district staff use this to their advantage. Our trade union is

absolutely a *charro* organisation [i.e. it sells out to government interests] usually more concerned with pacifying us than defending our rights."

Tomas complained that fieldworkers were not respected as agricultural experts and saw the agency as wasting their agronomic training. What is more, he saw himself as having no capacity to threaten the institution by withdrawing his expert knowledge since the institution made no virtue of individual agronomic skills. Only politically orientated action could link personal ambitions, authority, power and promotions within the SARH. The fieldworker believed that technical problems did not concern Ministry administrators:

"After all we have no control over the instruments affecting production, we have to follow objectives set up in Mexico and fill the office with reports describing the wonderful outcomes of programmes, even when in reality none of the projected aims have been achieved. We are experts in inventing expected figures, as feedback, that supports the political requirements of the national programmes."

Tomas maintained that these institutional practices were a consequence of the political character of the agency and that nobody working in this environment could escape these influences. He identified four main areas that, according to him, affected a fieldworker's activities: 1) *la grilla* (institutional politics), 2) salary, 3) that fieldworkers had no specific role as professionals, and 4) that their work did not provide a social service to the community.

In order to demonstrate the sequestration of his hopes and the roots of his anxieties, Tomas talked about bureaucratic politics and his own career as a fieldworker.

"As a student at the university we learnt several important skills to practice agriculture, but as fieldworkers we never use them. Our job in the Ministry is not organised around the training we received at the university. In the Ministry we are the *corre, ve, y dile* [run, see and tell]. They, the staff, have us just to gather data. Like a policeman we have to report areas where problems may arise. I can tell you, to perform this kind of function I did not need any training at the university.

Work in the Ministry teaches you something about administration and organisation but not agriculture. Politics in the institution is our main worry. *La grilla* produces constant insecurity and anxiety among us, affecting our daily work. If you add to this the low remuneration we receive, you have the reasons why we don't bother with the institutional results of the programmes. Politics is the dynamic that may help us win a higher position, so we have to play *la grilla*, because we have very few possibilities open to us. Professional careers do not exist in the Ministry and *la grilla* is one of the few avenues through which a fieldworker can make it.

When I joined the Ministry, I did it in administrative category 9. After two years and a half, I am still in the same grade. Competition to advance in the Ministry is politically tough, intense and places are few. For a fieldworker, an important promotion is to be field-unit head. As these are

not given by merit, a fieldworker has to have friends, because *dedaso* (top down cooptation) is the only way to gain promotion. A fieldworker can make contacts in the *Federacion Agronomica del Estado* (Agronomic Federation of Jalisco), or in the Graduate Society of Guadalajara University. These two groups are organised according to power relations, and their influence spreads from Guadalajara University to the Ministry. In this way they control professional people at all levels in the Ministry. These today play an important function in controlling access to staff posts in Jalisco.

Political grouping is an important institutional activity, fulfilling the needs of individual political affiliations and the sense of belonging to a solidarity network. If a fieldworker is accepted into one of these networks, he will go up in the organisation as the group gains in influence. In Jalisco these groups are directed by the first generation of agronomists who graduated from Guadalajara University, and they hold the most important posts in the region. The leaders of these networks make alliances and commitments among themselves to solve particular problems, but most of the time they are involved in institutional disputes. They have powers of decision making because of their institutional positions and they exercise political pressure or the capacity of protection in the peripheral areas of the institutional struggle, such as the posts of the fieldworkers at field-unit level. In a word, we are pawns in their confrontations, so every fieldworker has to have someone protecting him, and we survive until the luck of a 'friend' changes in the structure.

Because all the units of this district are near Guadalajara, all the groups try to move their people here for political reasons. We are always afraid of being subjected to sudden changes. If you are married and have your children at school, and perhaps own your own house, then it is difficult to accept, just like that, a transfer for example to Vallarta. But such things happen in the service when a group is politically defeated. So good people with years in the Ministry are forced to move or resign. We have to be aware of the institutional struggles and to be quick in changing sides according to the possible outcomes of the struggle, just to protect our posts. In my opinion, all these affect our attention and time, so it is not surprising that our professional performance has never been good."

Tomas's experiences illustrate the effects that administrative practices have on the fieldworkers involved in the implementation of government programmes. Their professional frustrations are motivated by factors such as the lack of job recognition, restrictions on practising their agricultural knowledge and issues associated with the Ministry's decision to introduce the use of technological packages. On the other hand, the importance of political games highlights the existence of deceptive bureaucratic practices which have eroded, for instance, the whole system of promotions and has favoured internal dissention.

The practices described are the Ministry's organisational routines and they have acted against the formation of a cohesive administrative system. This has affected

the implementation of policies and has militated against fieldworkers delivering a good professional service to agricultural producers.

Institutional struggles, and the constant manoeuvring to achieve group objectives has interfered with the organization and managerial functions of the Ministry, and it is this institutional dynamic which is a determining factor at local level in shaping the fieldworker's interpretation and implementation of government policies.

### Fieldworkers' Speech-Acts

The material so far presented, has emphasized the significance of institutional procedures in the everyday life of the fieldworkers. However, this picture has ignored the ability of the fieldworkers to resist, accept or modify administrative practices. Fieldworkers search for room for manoeuvre within the institution. Although their efforts are improvised according to situations, it is in such actions that the fieldworkers translate the policy into the process of implementation. In the fieldworkers' task of diffusing policy among rural producers, the policy is 'filtered' according to the definition of the fieldworker of the local situation.

The attitudes and actions of fieldworkers are not only responses to the institutional environment. They also develop a process of reflexivity, through consistently assessing government policies against incoming intervention experiences. This process provides the guideline for adjusting the nature of agricultural policies at the implementation level. In this sense, policy implementation is partly constituted by fieldworkers knowledge of how to manage the institutional procedures and the interests of producers, and partly by the fieldworkers' values and interests that accompany this process of practical policy translation.

In operation, government officials divert institutional influence and resources for intervention in a manner that is different from the aims and administrative constraints of the policy. Fieldworkers take pleasure in cunningly creating room in which to show their own capability for manoeuvre (power) through the action of intervention. With this they confirm their degree of commitment to the rural producers.

Far from being a regression towards what existed previous to the administrative reforms and the creation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SARH), these fieldworkers are sure that they do not want to return to a practice which they thought "full of personal sacrifice but totally inefficient". On the contrary, they believe their knowledge should be used to improve rural policy formulation and implementation as a whole. A fieldworker's knowledge of rural policy and policy implementation, introduces the issue of how important human agency is in planned rural development.

In this section, I want to show, then, that in spite of the normative context of policy discourse and bureaucratic culture, fieldworkers' representations and actions depend on 1) how they perceive the reality of agricultural producers, 2) how they assess peasants entitlement to receive state resources, and 3) the nature and function

they attribute to *ejidos*. All these factors influence the intentionality of fieldworkers and their choices of action within the administrative system.

Fieldworkers are not passive subjects of administrative structures. Their specific and personal responses to a policy or programme are meaningful actions, that are influenced not only by the three factors above, but also by their individual social positions within Mexican society, their own life-worlds and their direct experience with producers. It is my contention that the fieldworkers' social background and their work experiences are the two main aspects influencing their interpretation of policies (meanings) and their patterns of interaction with agricultural producers.

The fieldworkers' interpretation of policies and their individual concerns with producers orient them to relate to an agricultural policy in quite different ways. This practical knowledge constitutes a cognitive map, where policy implementation takes shape. Their home ground (the field) is the locus where the 'other side' of the intervention (civil society) becomes visible. This provides fieldworkers with a set of options and a certain degree of confidence in how to act in the field. The differences between fieldworkers are not random, they depend on the notions and concepts they have at their disposal and use in their everyday life to define the meaning of intervention. The point here is that among fieldworkers there is not just one way of defining their professional activity. They have different perceptions about what the priorities of Mexican agriculture are and where the scarce resources of the state should be allocated. The differences are not just responses to external (political) demands made upon them by individuals and groups, as the study by Grindle (1980) suggests. The basic dimension of these differences is reflexivity, a reflexivity constituted through a combination of experience within the institution, within their own socialization, life-worlds, career ambitions, and direct experience with producers.

Drawing upon these experiences in situations of policy implementation means that fieldworkers organise their practical knowledge towards the improvement of their intervention effectiveness, and to problematic situations. The institutional system demands from them a capacity to intervene with clarity and precision. Yet, as we have seen, the application of their knowledge is constrained by the limitations of the technological package approach that in the end blurs for the fieldworkers the actual purpose of their actions. On the one hand, they are unlikely to be able to practice much agricultural expertise, and neither are they able to deal with the social problems surrounding agriculture.

Despite these constraints, fieldworkers mobilize their reflexivity and experiences into action. This is manifest, among other things in their individual speech-acts. Speech-acts are seen by me as a feature of the actors' ability to connect, in action at the interface, speech, meaning, knowledge and performance.<sup>2)</sup> These speech-acts represent fieldworkers' assessment of opportunities, options and potential problems in their everyday activities. Speech-acts reflect, not necessarily consciously, practical 'knowledge' that constitutes the individual fieldworkers' ground for operating.

Unlike Grindles' analysis, which supposes politics to be an external variable that can explain administrative behaviour, here politics is perceived of as a consequence

of a tension between the complex combination of the fieldworkers' life-worlds and experiences and how they operate with this in the real world. Any external pressures or demands upon the fieldworkers are likely to be interpreted in terms which do not necessarily conform with the local dominant political reality. In this sense, we are suggesting that fieldworkers' action are not just guided by political pragmatic reasons, but also by a series of personal and social events. Fieldworkers' speech-acts encapsulate these combination of experiences, and influence descriptions of macro-rules and social conventions in new contexts, regulating their performance when they are implementing a policy. These points will be illustrated in the section that follows.

In practice, three main types of speech-act were identified among the fieldworkers: The authoritarian, the paternalistic, and the egalitarian. The information presented here consists primarily of material obtained directly from the fieldworkers.

### The Authoritarian Speech-Act

Fieldworkers expressing an authoritarian attitude towards the producers were a minority in the group under study. These 'authoritarian' fieldworkers were drawn largely from family backgrounds involved in livestock activities (i.e from rancher families) who combined city living with periodic residence in their rural homes (*ranchos*).

In practice, they perceived small-scale private producers as most accepting of Ministry policies of modernisation, and the *ejidatario*, as a suspicious producer who distrusted their technical assistance. These fieldworkers were against government policy to support basic grain production. They perceived such policies as dangerous political experiments that usually ended up eroding 'order' in society and wasting the scarce resources available to the government for supporting agricultural development.

In the following case, the fieldworker's authoritarian speech-acts express resentful feelings towards government policies, because a local leader of the *Liga Agraria* has challenged his position both as an agricultural expert and member of the bureaucracy (the *Liga Agraria* is a political association of rural producers, controlled by the PRI). The fieldworker's speech-act constitutes a scheme of articulate practices and an account of his rules, actions and doubts about government policy. The formality and informality of everyday fieldworker practices are encapsulated in his narrative, as a memory of the practical interface between officials and producers. This narrative, which is based upon his life-world, identity and professional status, reveals to us his lack of trust in agricultural intervention and his 'power' relations with producers.

"This Señor Hernandez (producer) hates us and his game is to boast around that every single project in Tlajomulco, like the wells, has been the result

of his political influence. He does this to gain support among the producers and he is always trying to control us [the fieldworkers].

One day I was walking in Tlajomulco when Sr. Hernandez came and invited me to drink *una copa* with him. In a very improper way he said to me. 'Well now, you *tecnico*, you have to drink with Hernandez! You have to have a good drinking session with me! (*pegarte una buena conmigo*)'. I was sharp in my reply, because I knew him by reputation, so I just said: 'sorry, but I don't drink'. My answer transformed him into a very aggressive person and he said to me, 'Ok, it's your decision, from now on, you will have difficulties being accepted by the producers (*entrarle a los productores*). I can assure you they will reject you'.

After this incident I had several other problems with this person, so I decided to report these incidents to the head of the unit. After a while, I was surprised to hear that instead of the Ministry giving me support, the district head stated that it was my job to avoid conflict with Señor Hernandez. In other words, he had more influence than me at district level.

This experience still annoys me, because I cannot believe that a producer would be more influential than a professional at the Ministry. All this is possible because the district staff are a bunch of people who ignore the realities of work in the field. They are able to deny support to a colleague just for political motives. This is wrong, because Hernandez is a *cabron* (son of a bitch) who loves to interfere with my responsibilities to provide technical assistance to the producers."

The above is an example of a case in which the actions of a producer do not coincide with what the fieldworker expects of a local leader's attitude. Moreover, when he did ask for institutional support the political reality in the field provided a local meaning to the interaction, which led to the district refusing institutional support to the fieldworker. As a result, in this interface, the fieldworker felt stripped of his status, because he assumed that the district would support him, as a matter of principle, against producers.

The need to deal from a position of social distance with producers was further illustrated, when later, in an informal gathering, the fieldworker told me: "it is not true that I don't drink, but I like to choose with whom I do it". This affirmation of will was followed by a statement that revealed the fieldworker's social background. He said, "in Sinaloa producers know their place ... they are not like here in Jalisco".

The fieldworker's social background, rooted in the Sinaloa system of social relations where once he had been a *ranchero* dealing in livestock, may explain why he wanted to remove personal relations from the immediacy of his professional sphere. The event with Señor Hernandez confronted him with an unfamiliar political context. But more than that, he felt that his own image as an expert had been diminished by the incident.

The fieldworker's father worked in the district office, and did not give support to the son, who relished his *ranchero* status. He dressed like a rich *charro*

(cowboy), was one of only two fieldworkers who owned a pick-up truck in the unit (a symbol of high economic status in the rural area), and in his area of work he was well known to producers for always trying to spot and buy good horses, that he could later sell for *charro* activities in Guadalajara. The fieldworker, who saw himself as a representative of those who in Mexico control economic and political power, never expected an attempt at political co-option from one of his low status clients. After all, he was from the *charro culture*<sup>3)</sup>, and a member of the professional agricultural sector.

How a rural producer would have the capacity to challenge either of these statuses was, for him, beyond comprehension. So, when he realised that not only was it possible for producers in Jalisco to challenge a fieldworker's status, but that this was accepted by the agency, he blamed the incident on government policies. "These policies that have encouraged the producers to grow maize, are economically a failure, because the only profitable activity in the countryside is livestock. These policies only provide more ammunition to those political producers who like to challenge Ministry activities in the field".

In his opinion *ejidatarios* often deceived fieldworkers with fake economic information. Lack of trust and a weak knowledge of the social nature of the *ejidatarios* were the main reasons why government wasted resources, and programmes never appeared to yield the expected results.

The fieldworker's position was against the course of actions dictated by the district. According to him, these did not support fieldworker activities or provide clear institutional authority for the fieldworker to impose his expert view on producers. His disappointment with this situation made him decide that after graduation from the university he would return to his *ranchito* in Sinaloa.

This fieldworker identified in his speech-acts institutional practices as a main constraint in his job arguing that it was even harder to find support among the people of his unit: "the head of the unit can't support us, because he is not free to do so. His main loyalties must remain with the head of programmes in the district, so we have no protection". The fieldworker was convinced that the lack of institutional authority was the main reason why the quality of the fieldworkers' performance was constantly declining.

### **The Paternalistic Speech-Act**

The paternalistic speech-act is the most general 'language-practice' among fieldworkers. Those holding paternalistic attitudes have normally an urban middle class background, and they see agricultural producers as uneducated people who lack motivation to improve their social situation. Among these fieldworkers it is not unusual to hear opinions such as the following:

"The problem with the producer is that they don't work hard, they don't invest to improve the value of their plots because they prefer to drink and show off to other producers and friends that they have money to spend.

These practices don't help their families nor improve their condition as producers. I don't like to defend the government. It is criminal and exploits people, but that fact doesn't change the producers sin: they are lazy. Producers only want to receive free things from the government, and if it does not give these to them, they complain and complain."

Such language portrays agricultural producers as unable to make any use of the fieldworker's services due to their culturally backward condition. This condition relates to a perception that producers are unwilling to defer gratification. This perception carves out a role in society for the fieldworker as an agent of progress, someone who can teach producers to behave in a civilized way. This speech-act rejects authoritarian impositions as an approach to producers.

However, there exist different opinions about how close a relationship a fieldworker needs with producers in order to achieve positive results. One group believes in the need to approach producers with a friendly attitude. Thus a central point in their interactional approach is to gain the producers' *confianza* (trust), and for them, this requires the need to construct a personal relationship between the fieldworker and producer. This group emphasizes that drinking with producers, or passing inside institutional information to them are essential symbolic tokens through which fieldworkers become accepted by their clients. Another group argues that too much involvement in personal relations is counter-productive, because producers in the end become disrespectful to the fieldworker. Drinking sessions with producers are seen as particularly risky situations, as they are providing producers with too much information. For these fieldworkers, social distance and respect for their expert status are important components in the constitution of trust between fieldworker and producers.

These two variations of the same type of speech-act favour a paternalistic interaction with producers. In their practice, such fieldworkers show an apparent disregard for the macro-norms and rules coming from the administrative structure, emphasising flexibility in order to help producers. The two cases that follow, illustrate each type of variation, as directly observed by me in the field. I suggest that although there is a parallel between these approaches, there is an important difference in how fieldworkers use their power (capacity) of intervention.

In the first situation inside institutional information is given to prevent local people from losing resources. The fieldworker capitalises trust without suffering any institutional action. In the second case, the fieldworker expresses a desire to represent the producers' interests. But in this, he is forced to move his expert knowledge beyond the protected space of the *ejido* into the risky domain of the institution. At this level, the fieldworker has to balance the dilemma of being the representative of the producers with his personal ambitions to advance in the institution.

The fieldworker's final decision shows us the nature of his capacity for intervention. While he is trying to do well for his clients, in the end he does not achieve what the producers wanted. In this case, the power trajectory of institutional practices stop the fieldworker from taking the risk of exposing institutional

corruption. The fieldworker in fact withdraws his trust from the producers' allegations, in order to avoid personal risk, while keeping alive his personal ambitions. Somehow his authority is made passive.

### 1) How to Gain Producer Trust

One day the head of the unit suggested that I could go and visit the *ejido* San Sebastian. The fieldworker immediately approved because, as he said, he had just been assigned to the place and he did not have a car, hence it was difficult for him to go constantly to the *ejido*. During the car journey, which took around 20 minutes, the fieldworker complained that producers did not go to the meetings, in spite of the fact that the *ejido* had great agricultural potential. He said that the previous fieldworker had done a bad job, so producers had lost confidence in the Ministry. When we arrived, it was clear that the only people he knew well were the community authorities, and the following dialogue occurred between the *tecnico* and the Secretary of the *ejido*:

*Tecnico:* We have several issues to solve.

*Producer:* Yes, but that is your fault, because you didn't come to our meeting even when you promised us your presence for last week.

*Tecnico:* I'm sorry about that. I had a serious car accident in Nayarit, and that was the reason why I didn't come to the meeting. Anyway, we have to decide who are the producers who want to participate in the PIPMA programme. We have to find at least 1000 hectares to be able to implement it.

*Producer:* Yes, I want the programme, but we have to organise a meeting first, to see the advantages and problems of the programme, and to let the producers decide for themselves.

*Tecnico:* Ok, but I only say that if you don't give me your decision quickly the programme will go somewhere else.

*Producer:* We want the programme, but I don't know how many other producers want to participate in the programme.

*Tecnico:* Come on man! You as Secretary must set the example. You can incorporate your 20 hectares into the programme, and the benefit is for you, because you will receive an increase in credit. Now, you only receive credit for 10 hectares, with the programme, because it is me who administers it, it is no problem to cover all your land. But you have to convince your father, family and *cuates* (close friends) to participate. We have to bring this programme to the *ejido*. All we need is land. It doesn't matter if all these hectares are not from *ejidatarios*, because private small producers can participate as well.

**Producer:** Yes I understand the importance of the programme, but we have to be careful about commitment. We are the ones who will later pay for the results.

**Tecnico:** We have to organise a meeting soon, and I will invite the head of the unit. For this I have to be sure that all the people will come to the meeting. Not like the last time, when the head only saw a few people. You have to drive (*arrear*) the producers, and we have to use this new opportunity. Ahhh... before I forget, I will give you a tip. At the moment we have a terrible infection among goats, so next week the people from the district will come to take samples from the animals and destroy the ones with disease. So tell the producers, and they can send the animals to the hills, saving them from the health control people."

When we came back to the car the fieldworker said to me: "I had to help these people, and I know that if I can gain their trust I will be able to do good work here. I need to get to know them well and show them I am on their side. The tip about the infection control campaign is economically more important for them than for the district. It could take me a long way in my relationship with them."

In this case, the fieldworker was using inside information to gain acceptance (trust) in the *ejido*. His main concern was to bring a new programme into operation and, for this, he had to show his commitment to 'defending producers' interests' and the 'tip' was an important device for doing so, first because the health control people were not directly connected with his unit, they were district people, and second, the fieldworker felt it was more important to support 'his programme' than other programmes of the Ministry, especially since the health control people had the reputation of coming into the *ejidos* and shooting animals without any warning and then disappearing, leaving the fieldworkers with the task of facing angry producers. The warning was helpful in constructing good relations with the producers, even though he was invalidating the effects of the health control programme.

After this visit, which took no more than two hours, the fieldworker was absolutely convinced that he had helped producers to benefit from his capacity to intervene, in spite of the fact that he had violated official norms.

## 2) Respect as a Fieldwork Device

One evening the fieldworker Herberto invited me to see his work in the field. During the journey to the *ejido*, which took an hour, he openly talked about his disagreement with those agronomists who believed that the only way to get producers' trust was to drink with them (*echarse unas copas con ellos para ganarse su confianza*). Herberto said "I have never done that. If you do it they lose respect for you. In my book it is always necessary to keep work apart from having a good time". The fieldworker was a person of sound principles and his attitude, according to him, had created some problems in his relations with producers. Herberto said:

"When I was assigned to the *ejido* I had problems with the President of the community. He was a *grilloso* [actively involved in politics] and in all ways behaved like a small-time cacique [local boss]. The first day I arrived he invited me to have a drink and as I refused, he rejected me. Producers never went to meetings and when I had to return to Guadalajara at night, I was always expecting a shot from the road. Although I was afraid, it was important for me to stick to my principles and I didn't give in. I was determined not to accept being integrated into their community on their terms. After some weeks, I managed to make contact with an old man who became close to me, mainly because he was a practising Catholic like me, so we used to meet and talk about religion quite a lot.

Eventually, this producer told me what the situation was in the *ejido*. I was often in his house. This relation was misinterpreted by the President of the community, who thought I was trying to prepare this producer to gain the next election in the *ejido*. When that election took place and only one list was presented, the whole community realised that my intentions were not to intervene in local politics. The new President, who is a relative of the last one, is much more open with me, and so far we have kept good relations. I believe that now my work has really started. After six months of rejection, I am trying to organise the *ejido*. This is not my work, and the district could punish me at any moment, but I believe that these producers, without a minimal level of organisation, are not going to be able to benefit from my technical assistance. So I decided to start from the base, because I don't want my work to be a sterile effort, but a real contribution.

Last year, the association programme for the district was here, but apparently the *promotores* [people in charge of the producers' association] were unable to do anything practical, and of course the producers got fed up with their meetings.

The nature of the problems I have to solve are difficult, but I pray to the Lord that people from the district don't realise the actual nature of my work, so I have enough time to set the basis of my contribution well in the producer's mind. I don't need anything from the district, but I don't want obstructions or *grilla* from them. My aim is to organise a good *ejido* and provide producers with an internal code of practice that would be legalized by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, so I could use that document later, to help producers to formulate their own petitions to the district.

For me, that moment will be the hour of truth, because the district will start to investigate who the fieldworker is who is working on that, because they don't like producers' petitions. If they approve my work then I will be fine, otherwise they may sanction me for taking responsibilities beyond my work as fieldworker, but if that happens, they will not be able to reverse the level of organisation among the producers."

When we arrived in the *ejido*, the fieldworker called the community producers to a prearranged meeting. He used the church loud-speaker to announce his presence.

The meeting started more than four hours later because people were doing communal work, and twenty-five producers were absent.

One producer explained to me that the twenty-five were all members of a political faction opposed to the *ejido* President, and that was the reason why they did not want to come to the meetings. He tried during the meeting to get the twenty-five condemned politically, including the fieldworker. But the latter, perceiving the move, called for unity and the need to work for the collective benefit of the *ejido*.

When the fieldworker finally started the meeting he said, "I am afraid I have bad news for you. A letter from Mexico has arrived saying that those producers who don't pay their debts to the bank (BANRURAL), may be subject to seizure by law, and their house, belongings and even their freedom may be taken in repayment for the debts". The fieldworker went on to explain that these measures were the result of the national economic crisis and that Mexico needed the support of every Mexican in order to survive. The fieldworker's words were received without comment, although smiles appeared on the faces of some producers.

After this information, the fieldworker announced the rules for the high productivity competition, and he encouraged producers to participate in the contest. The fieldworker then asked producers whether they were happy with the implementation of the *desempiedre* programme organised by the Ministry (removing stones from the soil), a work done by private contractors in the *ejido*. At this point there was a heated discussion and a denouncing of several cases of corruption from the people operating the machinery. The most frequent charge was that the operators did not carry out the work if producers were not able to pay them for coming to their plots, so 'only a few producers have benefitted from the programme'.

The fieldworker just listened to these complaints, and tried to dissociate the Ministry from the private contractors. He promised to inform the head of the unit and he said, "these accusations are serious, so I hope you will not retract your comments when the inquiry starts, otherwise I will lose credibility in my unit".

When we returned to Guadalajara it was after 10.30 pm, the fieldworker was physically exhausted and worried about the complaints from the meeting. During the journey he was assessing the real implications of the accusations and whether he had to report these irregularities and so start an inquiry. Who were the people in the district acting with these contractors? To what extent would an inquiry attract attention to his job? How would these affect his long term objectives? These questions made the fieldworker hesitate, although he had to decide on a course of action before the next morning. He did not arrive at a decision while I was with him. He invited me to his house where we relaxed with a cup of hot chocolate and a piece of traditional Mexican sweet bread. The subject of the inquiry was never raised again.

In the above case, one can see that the fieldworker's sympathetic disposition towards the producers was not enough to gain their trust. The approach used by the fieldworker, who tried to establish a relation of respect with each of the interacting parties, created a problem and the politically active producers did not know how to interpret his actions. Producers' experiences in dealing with the Mexican system had

taught them that a refusal to drink was the sign of a negative attitude on the part of the fieldworker. By refusing to drink, the fieldworker threatened the existing system of political transactions operating in the community. State intervention constituted a threat to the position of the dominant group in the community. Herberto's case shows the difficulties of the fieldworker at work; on the one hand trying to gain producers' *confianza*, while on the other, the producers wait to see on which side of the local political divide the fieldworker will choose to situate himself, and thus the degree of confidence they can afford.

Herberto was compelled to organise his own programme of intervention in the *ejido*. This was different from the official programme. When the fieldworker assumed responsibility for evaluating producers' complaints, he acted as a filter between the corrupt practices of the official system and the interests of producers. It is in terms of this mediation that the paternalistic approach has to be understood. Although Herberto challenged the official system, when he took on a task that went beyond the *ejido*, he used his experiences as a way of avoiding a strong encounter between producers and the system. Herberto saw himself as the person who should decide when and how a confrontation with the system should take place. Such an action is, of course, mediated by an interpretation of both the local and the institutional situation, that would minimise the contradictions and his own risks. This action, based on the fieldworker's own reflexivity, middle class background and well-informed knowledge of the different contexts and circumstances, shows how such institutional actors are aware of the need to protect their own interests. They calculate their actions so as not to jeopardise their chances for advancement politically in the Ministry (usually justified as 'to change things' from the inside), or to gain a good reputation for technical achievements and dedication. These are important considerations, not only for the nature of their involvement with producers, but also in avoiding a possible transfer from Guadalajara, where they all have their urban base. In other words, in critical situations of interface, these fieldworkers are perfectly aware of what is important and what is contingent in their careers.

These personal motivations mean that fieldworkers using a paternalistic speech-act, are unlikely to support the direct participation of producers when confronted with the need to solve a local problem. They see themselves as representing producer interests, although none of their actions are radical enough to change the existing distribution of rights and obligations (power) in favour of producers in the Jalisco region.

These fieldworkers never openly discuss their experiences at unit level. Their experiences and contradictions with the institutional guidelines are thus never acknowledged by the administrative system. With time, these fieldworkers become more concerned to save their individual relations with producers, than to achieve collective change.

## The Egalitarian Speech-Act

A more egalitarian attitude was found among the group of fieldworkers with a humble rural or urban social background. They are usually the first members of their families to have a university degree and to work for the government. They have thus achieved a degree of upward social mobility.

Their perception of agricultural producers is different from the other two groups. For them, agricultural producers are people actively involved in local politics, usually through their membership in a group that follows the direction of a local leader. One of these fieldworkers said to me, "changes can be implemented in the *ejidos* if one manages to get the support of these leaders. Otherwise, they become one of the major obstacles that a fieldworker has to confront when implementing a programme".

This group of fieldworkers is positively motivated to favour close contact with producers, seeing such close relations as the main factor securing producers' trust and collaboration with programmes. As one of them said:

"To gain the producers' trust it is necessary to accept their invitations. If a fieldworker rejects these, they immediately interpret this as a superior attitude, because of differences in their and our economic situations. In my case I love to be among producers and am always on friendly terms with them. In my experience I would say that this is essential if a fieldworker wants a producer to take any notice of his recommendations."

These fieldworkers emphasize in their discourse that good communications with producers are the best protection against administrative sanctions. As one of them related:

"One day, a *compañera* (female fieldworker) from the organisation had to leave the Ministry because her contract was not renewed. The producers in my area started to ask me, how they could put pressure on the district to stop the dismissal of the *compañera*. First, I explained to them that this was not a district or even a regional decision, but policy from Mexico City. However, they remained determined to fight for her case. In the end, they succeeded in convincing the authorities and her contract was renewed."

To accentuate further the differences with the other two speech-acts, these fieldworkers did not perceive producers in terms of their good or bad moral qualities. On the contrary, they were willing to operate within the limits of the social reality in which producers lived. They adopted a more positive stance than the paternalistic posture, because they did not attribute any special function or status to the fieldworker's social position. An illustration of their perception is found in the following account:

"It is true that a fieldworker has to be aware of appearances with producers. Producers are *tranzas* (fiddlers) and they sometimes sell the subsidised fertilizers. I once witnessed a government truck delivering the fertilizer and immediately behind, a city trader exchanging the fertilizer for mattresses. Ok, this type of situation may be considered bad for Ministry policies, but

who in Mexico is not a fiddler? And who is to say that the producer needs fertilizer more than a new mattress?

I can tell you, that one of central problems here is that some fieldworkers can't accept the producer as he is; or the fact that producers can make decisions for themselves, and that they don't want to change their decisions because they are based on their own way of living (*forma de vida*). Some fieldworkers never learn their lesson and when producers value their own experiences above our advice, the fieldworkers complain that producers take decisions behind our back."

The most relevant point about these egalitarian speech-acts is the fact that they do not see the producers' values as being any different from the values of Mexican society as a whole. Such fieldworkers do not perceive producers' attitude as culturally backward, and they see the agricultural way of life of producers as valid. While recognizing the existence of fiddling among producers, they accept that corruption is a cultural feature of Mexican society from which it is very difficult to escape.

The process of reflexivity of such fieldworkers leads them to believe that the technical service from the Ministry has to prove itself of value to the producer. Among themselves, they say that, in reality, if the whole Ministry disappeared overnight, producers would not realise it and production would probably increase immediately.

In other words, these fieldworkers see the means to develop agriculture in the alteration of official practices, and not in an intervention that could change producers' attitudes. They stress the importance of human relations over any technical knowledge, as a way to achieve trust and reduce or minimise the risks of modernisation. They view official norms and rules as constraining efficiency, and they suggest a closer relation between administrators' targets and producers' needs. They say that unless this situation changes, everything will remain as it is. This group was the most disposed to favour producers' direct participation, but they were not in a powerful enough position to use this as a device to challenge the other speech-acts within the Ministry.

In this section, three main types of speech-acts have been identified as the basis of interactions with producers. In doing so, fieldworkers' social backgrounds and their experiences with producers were found to be significant variables. These influenced fieldworkers understanding of the aim of national policies and the nature of their relations with producers. These factors were also seen to be important in determining their administrative behaviour.

This section has shown the heterogeneity that exists among field personnel. Fieldworkers are not passive subjects of the administrative context. External political pressures are not the cause of diversity to be found in the speech-acts of fieldworkers and in administrative behaviour. External political pressures are part of the social circumstances of policy implementation. In this sense, how a fieldworker relates and responds to the circumstances of policy implementation is connected with an individual process of reflexivity and knowledge that includes his

life-world, institutional experiences and relationship to rural producers. Fieldworker actions usually involve both a challenge to and acceptance of the official administrative system. Nevertheless, one common factor unifies all fieldworkers, and that is that they are constantly searching to create room for manoeuvre within the official system.

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that fieldworkers in Jalisco have different ways of integrating their experiences, life-worlds, agricultural policy aims and their degree of involvement with rural producers. Three main speech-acts were identified as reflecting these different ways of integrating and organising at the individual level the circumstances of policy implementation, while minimising possible risks during the process of agricultural intervention. The preceding discussion indicated that the role of the fieldworker is important in linking two different contexts of knowledge: that of the rural producers and that of the institutional system. The fieldworker enters the rural producer's life world in the *ejido*, while he has to survive and makes his career in the institutional environment.

The everyday existence of the fieldworker in these two contexts forces him to separate these two worlds into providing guarantees of a better future for producers, while claiming total achievement of programme targets in the institutional arena. This practice makes the fieldworker a manipulator of circumstances, rather than a controller of standardised agricultural services. The fieldworker's role is clearly different to that of the district officers in charge of programme operations. As was shown in the previous chapter. In this sense, it is possible to say that the knowledge and actions claimed by the fieldworkers are different to the actions and knowledge claimed by district personnel. At the level of policy implementation, district and field-units are rather separate cultures, with an emphasis on agricultural service-orientated thinking leading to an uncoordinated organisation in the belief that this would benefit the needs of rural producers, institutional politics and the careers of the individuals.

Fieldworkers have no trust in district practices, but they nevertheless have to accept the constraints of the organisation, while being aware of the political circumstances within the institution. They have to learn how to rely upon internal political networks to minimise their risks. The major lesson fieldworkers learn in the process of institutionalisation, seems to be that instead of directing their intervention practices to obtain the aims of the institutional policy, they might better use them to push their own 'mission', objectives and strategies. Their reflexivity of policy implementation becomes entangled with their cultural attitudes, life-worlds, administrative practices, motivations, career possibilities, ambitions, professional role, achievements and frustrations.

In summary, reflexivity leads to a re-definition of the existing policy discourse and practices. Paradoxically, the case-studies show how an active, reflexive attitude

on the part of fieldworkers can indeed situationally re-define the relation between state and rural producers, but this re-definition does not follow the objectives of state policy. The focus on reflexivity with regard to policy implementation has shifted the analysis in rural development from the political arena and flow of influences upon institutional officials (Grindle, 1980), to the far more important process of fieldworkers' modes of operation and how they filter society's demands in action. Within this perspective, the practices of fieldworkers in society are far more important and complex than a mere effort to keep the dominant notion of 'political order' working in society.

The combination of institutional knowledge, life-world and interaction with rural producers, determines the practical outcomes of any rural policy. These are not constructed simply as bureaucratic preferences for the 'avoidance of conflicts', these are individual experiences, beliefs and values that find their way into policy implementation. As the policy formulation document may not represent shared values in society, the fieldworker becomes in practice, the filtering 'factor' in deciding on what is credible and possible for a rural policy.

How fieldworkers resolve the conflict between their own reflexivity and the institutional aims of a particular agrarian policy is essentially the practical problem of adjusting general policy goals to the locality, and adjusting the fieldworkers' representations to the means available to implement them. This problem constitutes the leading theme in Chapter 5.

## Notes

1. The *servicio social* is a compulsory period of social service for university students before they can graduate. The *servicio* often provides students with their first work experience, while serving the community.
2. Speech-act: the importance of this concept in understanding the 'real world' was brought to my attention by Quarles van Ufford at the EIDOS summer school 'Giving Disorder its Due' at the Free University of Amsterdam, June 1990. The concept has been used by Steiner (1989) to balance the study of interpretation and action. See also in this line of analysis the critical view of J.B. Thompson (1981) against the centrality of language in the study of social life.
3. *Charro* culture can be viewed as the maximum expression of *machismo* in Mexico. A good *charro* is not only a person who can control horses, but who can equally control guns and women.

## 5. THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY

In this chapter, I focus on perceptions of the implementation of the SAM policy at local level. In the first part of the chapter the policy is explained, the cultural and practical importance of maize is highlighted and some institutional evaluations of the policy in some regions of the country are presented. All these constitute a prelude to a closer examination of the SAM policy at the local level. The study of the SAM in Jalisco contributes to identifying some of the more important agricultural changes and social processes which emanate from the construction of a policy. This chapter provides, from the producers and fieldworker's point of view, an initial explanation of SAM limitations at the level of policy implementation.

### The Formulation of a 'New Agricultural Policy'

In 1980, President López Portillo launched the Mexican Food System (SAM). This policy attempted to cover Mexican food provision. It formalised a policy trend from the sixties, in which rural development programmes had been launched on a project-to-project basis, such as Plan Puebla and the Chapingo Plan (see Chapter 2)<sup>1</sup>. The 'new' agricultural policy of SAM aimed to consolidate this trend and to provide a comprehensive, coordinated development policy. It singled out production, transformation, commercialisation and distribution of basic grains, in particular maize, as the mean to solve nutritional deficiencies among the Mexican population, and to improve the conditions of rainfed producers. The SAM had the ultimate objective a) to achieve self-sufficiency in the production of food, b) to improve the income of rural producers and c) to create employment in the rural areas. (S.P.P., 1980; Luiselli, 1980). SAM was presented as a 'new' policy, but it also included the assemblance and coordination of existing projects which had been implemented for some time.

With the arrival of the administration of President de la Madrid, SAM continued under a new name: Programa Nacional de Alimentacion (PRONAL, National Food Programme). This continuation of agricultural policy was formally announced in October 1983. The information presented in this chapter was collected in Jalisco in 1983, that is, during the transitional period of SAM to PRONAL, though throughout I refer to the policy as SAM.

SAM constituted the foundation of Mexican agricultural production policy for the decade of the 1980's and as such is an important case study of state intervention. The policy aimed to transform producers' social conditions through subsidized credit and better access to fertilizers, pesticides and improved seeds. The *ejidatarios* and small private producers were the main target groups to receive these benefits which were to be financed by the revenues generated by the oil industry. The implementation of this policy and the development of rainfed agriculture was

expected to absorb 25 percent of these revenues (S.P.P., 1980). The policy promoted twenty different projects to modernise rainfed agriculture, and sought to integrate this agricultural sector into the national economy.

The food policy was formulated by the group of policy advisers around the President (the technocratic group), but they had no proper institutional channel for its implementation. Before the formal launching of the SAM policy, the projects that formed its core had to be almost literally sold to the existing bureaucracy in charge of the agricultural sector. President López Portillos' formalisation of the SAM ensured that agencies accepted the projects. The SAM policy as it finally emerged in 1980 had four main strategic components.

The first was harvest insurance. With a premium of 3 percent, this was a government scheme to share the risk of production with the producers. The insurance covered the value of the credit for agricultural inputs, the cost of production and the subsistence needs of the producer and his family during one agricultural cycle (to an equivalent of 40 percent of the value of the input credit).

The second component of the agricultural policy was an increase in the guaranteed price of maize and beans in real terms. For maize, the price increase was 15 percent in 1980 and 6 percent in 1981-1982. The third element aimed to subsidize agricultural inputs and to provide better access to improved high yielding seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. The real price of maize seeds was reduced by 75 percent, fertilizers and pesticides by 30 percent and interest rates for agricultural credit were reduced from 14 to 3 percent.

The fourth component of the policy aimed to improve the quality of the agricultural extension service and to increase organisation among producers. This was aimed at the efficient use of credit, and to improve the bargaining capacities of producers in the market. These four policy components were expected to trigger off rural development, increase grain production and improve the income of rural producers.

### **Initial Responses to the Policy**

From the start, the SAM policy brought mixed responses from different sectors in Mexican society. Generally speaking, the private sector resented the SAM strategy because it was seen as increasing state intervention, the importance of bureaucracy in agricultural development and public spending. However, the large capitalist farmers perceived this agricultural policy from 'above' as a transitional situation. They realised that SAM would not interfere with their economic activities and that the cost of the subsidies embedded in the policy would make it unlikely for the approach to become a permanent feature of state agricultural strategy. Therefore, the large farmers did not openly resist SAM. Nevertheless, they pointed out that, in their view, public investment should be directed to productive projects (infrastructure) as a strategy to increase the supply side of rainfed agriculture. In that

way, the policy would not increase the 'evil of inflation', which the rich farmers expected from the existing policy (COPERMEX, 1981).

The livestock and poultry farmers opposed the SAM, arguing that the increase of maize would produce a decline in the production of sorghum and soya, affecting the production of Mexican meat and dairy products.

For the political opposition on the left, subsidies for poor rural producers was a political strategy to avoid the materialisation of the Mexican state 'legitimation' crisis. They argued that SAM was formulated to maintain the existing privileges of the land-owners and the multinationals, which, in Mexico, control 75 percent of the food industry. They asked for an agricultural policy that would reduce the privileges of large, export-orientated producers. Other sectors of the left coalition criticised the SAM policy for being anti-democratic, because planners had not involved the peasant movement in the formulation of the SAM objectives.

The designers of the SAM underestimated the negative response from society to the agricultural policy. The policy makers wrongly assumed that they had a favourable political context for this type of policy. But, as it turned out, in the end the implementation of SAM was indeed constrained by problems in the Mexican economy. These contradictions surrounding the SAM policy had materialized by the end of 1983, when the policy was recognised to have failed as such, and adaptations to the policy were formulated.

### **The Social Significance of Maize in the Formulation of SAM**

SAM's intervention in the rainfed agricultural sector was mainly aimed at altering the production conditions of maize. This crop, that according to some Mexican agronomists has its origins in the South of Puebla and North of Oaxaca (see Palacios, 1983), has been cultivated in Mexico since 1500 B.C. (Wolf, 1959) since which time it has been part of the production and reproduction of the Mexican peasant household.

Maize was the most important crop of the traditional farming system, which, as the centre of pre-hispanic social organisation, was closely regulated by community rights. Later, this farming system and maize were the basis for peasant demands to reclaim the devolution of their native land. It took its maximum expression with the advent of the Mexican Revolution, the implementation of the Agrarian Reform and the establishment of the *ejido*.

In short, the cultural, economic and social traditions of maize have made the crop an important political symbol in Mexico. López Portillo's strategy with the SAM was to introduce a policy which recognized the basic grain needs of the poor. State intervention aimed to increase production among *ejidatarios* and *minifundistas* (small private producers).

In Mexico, about 91 percent of the *ejido* land produces 85 percent of the total maize production (Palacios, 1983: 2), and 70 percent of the national demand for the cereal is for human consumption. This trend has slowly decreased from 1978

onwards, but human consumption demand was still over 60 percent in 1980 (COPLAMAR, 1982). Nutritional studies report that in rural areas the consumption of maize per person had declined from 407 grammes per day to 324 grammes per day from 1964 to 1979. On the other hand, in the urban areas, the consumption of maize has remained at the traditional level of 200 grammes per day (COPLAMAR, 1980).

The same study pointed out that the consumption of maize in the poorest 10 percent of the population in Mexico took up to 32 percent of their monetary budget. The study found, in 1980, that among the population that did not satisfy their minimal nutritional requirements, maize and beans represented 36 percent of their normal consumption basket. More staggering was the relation between income groups and maize consumption in Mexico. In 1975, cereal consumption in grammes per day in the lower income groups was double that of higher income groups (COPLAMAR, 1982).

These low income sectors are pools of reserve labour located on the boundaries of the urban settlements in belts of shanty towns, where their deprivation forces them to survive from the informal sector of the economy, or from the solidarity networks which embrace this mass in a brotherhood of '*sans culottes*'. The potential of an awakening of social consciousness among these groups forced the state to realise the political importance of maintaining a constant supply of maize for these people. Hence, the possible social and political costs of a crisis in maize production put the rainfed sector to the forefront of state policy, and presented López Portillo's government as making a break from the past, unsuccessful, rural development policies.

The state in Mexico has traditionally responded to urban food problems with a limited policy of price guarantees to secure the production of grain among rural producers, complemented by large maize imports from the United States. On the consumer side, it subsidized the mills and *tortillerias* (commercial places where tortillas are made) to keep bread and *tortillas* (traditional Mexican bread) accessible to the poor. This policy subsidized consumption for the urban poor, but it adversely affected the profitability of maize in relation to other crops in the rainfed sector.

López Portillo's agricultural policy attempted to reverse the trends which negatively affected the production of basic grains. The social and political importance of maize made him realise that a continuation of the policy to import maize would provide a weapon, which could be used by the United States to intervene in Mexican politics (Durston, 1982: 22). Such considerations persuaded the government to change the way it traditionally intervened in corn production (SAM 1980-1982, 1981). According to Salinas de Gortary, from 1978 onwards, López Portillo argued the use of revenues generated by oil resources to allocate funds to government projects that would solve problems of unemployment and marginalization in rural areas (Salinas de Gortary, 1980: 22).

In a country where government policies have favoured capital formation and economic growth strategies rather than redistribution or welfare policies, the food policy (SAM) and the importance of maize in it constituted an innovative case of

agricultural policy formulation. The possibilities of modernising rainfed agriculture and at the same time attacking the social problems affecting Mexican rainfed producers, promised to bring about a different type of agricultural transformation.

### **Barriers in the Path of Implementing Self-Sufficiency**

The administrative reform of the 1970's (see Chapter 2) radically altered the organization of the agricultural sector. The rainfed districts were consolidated and the new SAM policy was launched. The Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SARH) and other government agencies were ready, on paper at least, to coordinate institutional actions and implement the programmes of mechanization, fertilization, plant control and the use of high yielding seeds in support of the new policy. Low income producers were identified as target groups to be modernised by the SARH, while the National Agricultural Insurance agency (ANAGSA) and the Bank of Rural Credit (BANRURAL) were to constitute the agencies in charge of the financial aspects of the policy. The SARH was to coordinate actions with the Mexican Fertilizer Enterprise (FERTIMEX) and organise the distribution of fertilizers and pesticides among rainfed producers. The National Seed Enterprise (PRONASE) agreed to deliver high yielding seeds and to select and treat native seeds to improve the producers' own genetic maize resources (SARH, 1980a).

As a result of these arrangements, the official government policy towards rainfed agriculture appeared to have generated and established the main institutional agencies to implement the necessary technical changes.

After one year of implementation, a first evaluation of the progress of the SAM policy was conducted by SARH. The evaluation was carried out in six states of Mexico: Chiapas, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Oaxaca and Zacatecas. The data were obtained from the following rainfed districts in these six states, respectively: Comitán, Autlán, Patzcuaro, Santiago Ixcuintla, Tuxpec and Juarez. This early evaluation is one of the most important documents for understanding the 'administrative view' about the implementation of SAM during the years 1980-1981 (SARH, 1980b).

The evaluation stated that rainfed producers, even when they had not been significantly incorporated into the risk-sharing programme, had taken advantage of the other measures of the policy. The progress report showed an increase of 97.2 percent in the number of producers receiving technical assistance for the period 1979-1980.

The SARH reported that the majority of its fieldworkers had received the operative guidelines of the SAM. Unfortunately, the fieldworkers complained that they did not have time to digest them, and that the directives were not always clear. Many fieldworkers, for example, had understood that the producers to be enrolled under the risks-sharing programme had first to agree to increase their technological level. This interpretation meant that producers or *ejidos* seen by them as not using new technology were left out of the risk-sharing insurance programme. The field

personnel also pointed out in the evaluation, that coordination between agencies was deficient, which effected the distribution of agricultural inputs among producers.

Producers were reported to be aware of SAM benefits, and ANAGSA (the insurance agency) was reported as paying the agricultural insurance according to the government agreement. The insurance was presented as an important way of motivating producers to participate in the SAM projects. In spite of traditional input distribution problems (cf. Sequeira, 1987), the fieldworkers reported that seed, fertilizer and insecticides had been received on time by the producers, and that policy promotion and diffusion of information had been very important in insuring that production targets would be obtained (SARH, 1980b).

The heads of the rainfed districts reported in the evaluation that they had had frequent contacts with the representatives of other agencies and producers. In relation to the nutritional aims of SAM, the head of the districts said that there had been publicity in their districts and that training courses had been arranged for the fieldworkers and producers. Nevertheless, the general opinion of personnel in charge of the districts was that information about SAM was insufficient and unsystematic. They also complained about inter-agency coordination, in particular with those agencies in charge of supplying agricultural inputs (SARH, 1980b).

The agencies in charge of agricultural inputs, such as PRONASE, reported that they had no problem delivering seeds and promoting demands for improved seeds. On the other hand, FERTIMEX recognized, that they had no expertise in the distribution of fertilizers. The reason for this, according to the people working in FERTIMEX, was that this function used to be the responsibility of the national agricultural bank (BANRURAL). FERTIMEX argued that they had no mechanism to monitor whether or not the SAM target population was receiving fertilizers. (SARH, 1980b).

The national agricultural bank (BANRURAL) claimed that SAM was adequately financed, and that producers' acquisition of agricultural inputs had increased in relation to previous agricultural years. Personnel said that they knew the operative guidelines of the SAM policies, and that in spite of this having arrived late, they had promoted the risk-sharing programme (SARH, 1980b).

From this brief summary of the evaluation report, it can be concluded that very early on there were communication problems among the agencies implementing the policy, even though individually they each claimed to have proceeded with their task. The most common complaint was that the guidelines had been issued late and this was identified as the factor affecting regional, district and fieldwork operations. A second important deficiency of the SAM was the apparent inability to implement projects in the fields, such as the risk-sharing programme. This was related to the lack of efficient coordination among the agencies implementing the policy resulting from institutional competition. This institutional bottleneck contributed to the delivery of an integral agricultural service to producers being blocked (see Rello, 1981: 25).

The SARH evaluation recognised that institutional problems limited the implementation of the new policy. Still, substantial achievements were claimed for

the policy. The limitations in the implementation of SAM became even more clear in a second evaluation, which was conducted by an independent research institute in the same year (ITESO, 1980).

This second evaluation was conducted at the end of 1980 in 16 municipalities of Durango State (ITESO, 1980). According to this report, one of the problems with the implementation of the policy was the large degree of freedom that agricultural agencies were given in interpreting the SAM objectives. According to this evaluation, a second problem was the anti-peasant bias of the bureaucracy which conflicted with the producers' set of priorities. It was reported, for instance, that the bank personnel could not understand why producers did not see the re-payment of agricultural credit as their first priority.

The evaluation suggested that producers first insured a minimal income for their household subsistence from the harvest. After that they repaid loans to their relatives, friends and the local money lender. Their third priority was to replace their means of production, and only after all these considerations, were producers ready to cancel their debt with the bank. In contrast, the bank officials interpreted producers' practices as failing to perceive SAM as a rational strategy for solving their problems and of seeing it instead simply as welcome government financial help (ITESO, 1980).

This interpretation of the producers' views of the policy made the BANRURAL fieldworkers overly aware of 'credit-abuse'. Following their traditional mission to recover credit, they decided to make accessibility difficult and started to organise access to credit according to their own assessment of producers. This form of operation, in the end, differentiated between producers with good credit records and those who were considered a liability to the bank, and by implication to the SAM policy.

During the SAM, the bank, instead of paying subsidies to the producers, withheld part of their funds, as a way of securing re-payment for rural credit. According to the Durango evaluation, the result of this institutional procedure was that 95 percent of the producers who participated in the sample did not consider that SAM had helped them to obtain cheap fertilizer or insecticides. More revealing yet was the fact that only 30 percent of the producer sample knew about the subsidies, suggesting that in the interests of the bank they had not provided information about the right of producers to participate in these projects (ITESO, 1980).

The evaluation reported that agricultural insurance was another important area of conflict. The insurance agency (ANAGSA), in order to be considered efficient and avoid payments, recognised the least possible claims. Producers complained about the procedures that determined their crop losses (the differences between the producers' and the fieldworkers' computations were in the range of 300 kilos). This type of bureaucratic behaviour forced producers not to re-pay their credit until their losses had been correctly estimated. This situation created an extra area of social friction between bank officials and producers. On the other hand, the report recognised that some producers saw in the insurance scheme a way to get extra resources for their households, and as usual, they used the Mexican system of

*mordidas* (bribes to the fieldworkers) to make their actual crop losses appear greater than they were, and their actual yields appear less. As a result of these every-day practices, the goals of the insurance programme were distorted (ITESO, 1980).

The Durango evaluation emphasized that producers were highly suspicious of the SARH and BANRURAL. The evaluation stated that 90 percent of the producers did not know the meaning of SAM and that only 10 percent knew something about its projects. From this evaluation, one of the main institutional questions facing the SAM was through what mechanisms and forms the bureaucracy was distributing agricultural inputs and politically dealing with producers' responses.

It was clear that SAM's agricultural impact was dependent on the political character of the relations between bureaucracy and producers. The social objectives of the policy were linked to the specific situations and political capabilities available to the actors. The difficulties reported in the evaluations provided the SARH with the opportunity to request more authority to carry out the strategy.

In September 1980, López Portillo initiated the 'third stage' of his agricultural policy. The first stage consisted of the administrative reforms in the second half of the 1970s, and the second consisted of formalisation of the SAM. Now, he sent to parliament the Agrarian Development Law (ADL, *Ley de Fomento Agropecuario*). The ADL provided a general frame of reference for defining SAM projects and agency actions in rural development. The law gave rise to vehement public debate in Mexico. According to Rello, the Agrarian Development Law (ADL) was a victory for the capitalist farmers and the bureaucracy, especially for the latter, which, with an authoritarian, paternalistic and technocratic approach, was placing itself in a position where it could control the independent initiatives of rural producers (Rello, 1981: 11). From this standpoint, Rello, like other Mexican intellectuals and progressive political parties, started to challenge the objectives of the SAM. The agricultural law was strongly criticized as a law that favoured the interests of private property, multinationals and was in total contradiction to article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which forms the basis of the Mexican land reform.

The SAM policy arose as a response to the state's recognition that rainfed producers needed public support, but once having established the legitimacy of the rainfed producer's case, the government had no proper tools for intervention. As the shortcomings of the first year demonstrated, a continuation of the SAM agricultural strategy needed to be based on a more realistic model of intervention. The ADL represented a device for intervention, in which the SAM policy makers could adapt their general agricultural strategy to the political and institutional reality of the country.

The law laid out the projects for implementing the SAM, but it also incorporated the terms for an agreement between the bureaucracy and the capitalist farmers. As such, it consolidated the right of the state to intervene in the rainfed sector of agriculture. The state accepted the capitalist farmers' demands that it was necessary to end the period of land distribution in Mexico, and supported the idea that the ADL and SAM were the beginning of an era of agricultural modernisation.

The ADL allowed the formation of associations between *ejidatarios*, *pequenos propietarios* (small private property owners) and private capital. It provided private investors with the opportunity to invest in land, which, until then, had been forbidden by law. In this context, the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SARH) was made the state agency with the power to plan, organise and guide *ejidal* agriculture. It was given responsibility for supervising the different agricultural associations and it had the capacity to mediate in conflicts between the social and private sectors in Mexican agriculture.

As Rello points out (1981), the ADL did not have an immediate effect on ownership relations in the rainfed districts, because rainfed production was not considered a profitable investment. The real effect of the law, therefore was in the political domain of the bureaucratic struggle for power. The outcome was the delegation of extra power to SARH to carry on with the implementation of agricultural modernisation.

The ADL finally helped to set up planning, as an important tool of SARH intervention, and aimed to remove the obstacles discouraging production and efficiency. The ADL provided SARH with a series of direct intervention tools to organise the implementation of the policy. This consolidated the departure from the traditional assumption that state intervention was simply a means of politically controlling producers, and it established technocratic intervention at the heart of the agrarian process of modernisation.

The SARH was given the authority to integrate any type of land with agricultural potential into production, and could promote contracts between *ejidatarios* and private property producers around private ventures. The Ministry acquired the responsibility for supervising these contracts and ensuring that they did not effect the legal situation of the parties. In brief, SARH became the main institutional agency of the agricultural sector. It was given responsibility for formulating the national agricultural plan and coordinating the actions of the other agencies. In spite of the difficult political environment and general suspicions about the SAM, the new agricultural rationale for intervention was slowly put into practice.

At that moment, in 1981, the institutional environment was full of contradictions and political conflicts. Despite institutional re-organization, 270 government agencies were still operating in the agricultural sector. The SARH was perceived as invading the administrative areas of others. Especially the financial bureaucracy opposed the SARH and rejected its criteria of operations. The SARH's position was complicated further when it was given responsibility for rationalising the number of agencies operating in the agricultural sector. It had to assess the performance of agencies and suppress those which had no clear role in the 'new' agricultural plan of modernisation. This politically conflictive institutional environment generated confusion for the personnel in charge of implementing the policy. As a fieldworker said:

"First we received a set of general procedures with the SAM to promote the increase of agricultural inputs among producers. With the ADL, they changed the orientation and made us spot potential land that could be

integrated into production. After that we were rushed into the creation of 'farmers associations'. We had no clear official guidelines about what our aims were with the new policy. Differences among agencies and between SARH and the *ejidos* were never settled properly and, in the end, we were the ones who had to choose what to do and not do in the field."

The ADL provided a stimulus to the implementation of the SAM policy. To accomplish the agronomic objectives, the Ministry had to find a starting point from which to influence social relations and exercise control over some critical local agricultural resources. The Ministry then decided to direct the majority of the agricultural resources to those regions where intervention and investment was more likely to show success in achieving policy objectives.

The diffusion of agricultural inputs during the SAM aimed to raise the profitability of maize cultivation through increasing crop production per hectare. This aim resulted in a selective allocation of resources towards those regions where production potential already existed. The technical assistance service, one of the main tools to transform agriculture, was mainly concentrated in six of the 32 states of the country. These six states were, Jalisco, Mexico, Zacatecas, Chiapas, Michoacan and Guanajuato. These regions have traditionally been good producers of maize, and according to the SARH agro-ecological profiles, were highly suited to technological packages. 35.9 percent of the assistance in 1980 and 42.3 percent during 1981 and 1982 was concentrated in these regions.

From 1977 to 1981, these states had more than 50 percent of the agricultural area under the modernisation programmes. Jalisco alone was allocated around 20 percent of the total mechanisation programme, 18 percent of the national area under fertilization and 27 percent of the total input of high yielding seeds.

These data suggest that institutional programmes to modernise rainfed agriculture in Mexico followed an unequal distribution of resources, and their agro-ecological criteria were linked to production viability, rather than to social objectives. Therefore, development of rainfed agricultural practices was closely related to regions that traditionally had high levels of grain production. The policy to increase maize production concentrated inputs in those regions where the SARH did not need to produce major changes in the farming systems. As a result, the cultivated area of maize did not expand and many producers did not receive the benefits of modernisation. This opens up to question the SAM policy and redirects us to concentrating on the factors limiting the modernisation of Mexican rainfed agriculture.

A central limiting factor was the fact that maize, in spite of receiving state support, failed to be commercially competitive with other agricultural crops. Maize did not regain land used for crops like sorghum or export agricultural crops. Maize continued to be perceived by producers as a crop whose yield was uncommercial and not attractive enough to justify the labour and inputs required. In any case, the low profitability of the crop forced producers to cultivate maize on the less fertile soil.

The deterioration of commercial terms for maize in relation to other crops of ten percent in 1978 and 11 percent in 1979 were effectively improved with the

establishment of the new agricultural policy and the organisation of the rainfed district structure. But even so, the market terms for maize in 1981 still remained lower than that registered in 1977 (-3 percent).

In view of these limitations, the major aim of the SAM programme became in practice to realise high yields of maize as quickly as possible. In spite of SAM's social objectives, the programmes at local level concentrated on achieving agricultural production targets. This generated a conflict of interests between field administrators in charge of the implementation of programmes, and producers who were following household strategies to secure their maintenance and reproduction.

The institutional objectives of the rainfed districts and the SAM agricultural projects, both tended to ensure that project beneficiaries were selected according to agro-ecological conditions. The 'new agricultural policy' (SAM) ran in practice against the allocation of resources according to social criteria. The use of a costs and benefits approach increased polarisation between regions conserving the inequality of agricultural development among them.

### **The SAM Policy, the Producers and the Fieldworkers<sup>2)</sup>**

The discussion in the previous section of this chapter focused largely on the introduction of the SAM as a 'new' agricultural policy in Mexico, and on the outcome that it was designed to promote. Like all policies, SAM was not self-implementing. Instead, it was a policy addressed to actors in the rainfed sector in rural Mexico, who were supposed to use it to guide their practice. It is through the description of the actions and practices that the significance of an actor-oriented analysis of policy implementation can be presented. Hence, any study of policy formulation and implementation needs to encompass a study of actors' practices, analyzing the nature of the interface by which policy implementation acquires a practical meaning. In the following sections, I will introduce three *tecnicos* (Gilberto, Jose and Enrique) and present their representation of the implementation of SAM. This is introduced by describing an encounter between Gilberto and Don Luis, a producer from the *ejido* of Tlajomulco.

### **A Routine Encounter<sup>3)</sup>**

Gilberto, a fieldworker, invited me to see his area of work. He was a *tecnico* who believed that producers were in a social and economic backward situation because they did not work hard enough and did not want to invest in their plots. He was highly suspicious of the efficiency of government programmes "because the aims of the government and reality are two separate things. In between there exist so many difficulties that people in Mexico City (central office) could never even imagine them let alone taking them into account when they are planning".

His perception of producers, as people who lack the independent will to improve their conditions ("they are always waiting to receive everything free from the government"), made Gilberto's position an ambiguous one. According to him, the 'realities in the communities' acted against the good intentions of the SAM, which, in a very idealistic way, tried to improve the social and economic conditions of rainfed producers.

That day we stopped in a place where a few houses constituted the community (*ejido*) of La Teja. Inside one of the houses, the head of the *ejido* introduced us to the producer, Don Luis, from the *ejido* of Tlajomulco. Don Luis had just finished his period as *ejidal* president, so I asked him about the implementation of the SAM policy in his area. He replied:

"The SAM subsidized us to buy fertilizers, improved seed and insecticides and these inputs (*insumos*) arrived in 1981 more or less on time. The majority of producers, apart from receiving these *insumos* cheaper, were not aware of their rights in relation to SAM. So they were unable to claim a better service from government agencies. These, as usual, refused us services and did not give us information. For instance, we did not know how to approach the bank and get the programme of risk sharing (*riesgo compartido*) implemented in the *ejido*."

At this point, the *tecnico*, intervening, said:

"That was not the whole picture of SAM's problems, because it was the producers who didn't respond on time to our guidelines and instructions. For instance, in the unit, we used to receive people who came to us with their bills after six months. They were absolutely too late to claim their benefits. So, Don Luis, how do you expect us to help producers get their rights?"

Don Luis answered the *tecnico*:

"Of course, that happened all the time, but the reason why producers did not respond was because they were not informed about their rights. *Tecnicos* don't want to recognise the fact that peasants today are awake. We are not happy just surviving eating *nopalitos* [a cactus variety whose fleshy stems are eaten as salads] or just what *el monte* [nature] gives us. So, *tecnicos* should give us the information, and then it is our responsibility to use it properly. The SAM had good intentions but the information was defective."

The *tecnico*, now with an authoritarian tone of voice said:

"Ok then, let us be honest Don Luis. I accept that our faults are important, but what about the faults of the *ejido* presidents and of the producers? I think they also accounted for the failure of the SAM. We have to understand that if any of these three levels don't work properly, any programme will fail in spite of good intentions. Producers are always fighting over the presidential *ejido* elections, and, after the elections, producers forget their responsibilities. They don't want to realise that to improve their community situation they have to continue supporting their *ejido* president. In reality, they start to use the president to solve their individual problems and

presidents don't have time to look out for the interests of the whole community. In the end, the president becomes isolated and plays politics in favour of himself or just one sector in the *ejido*.

Then, the majority of the *ejidatarios* starts to withdraw from meetings. As they still want to receive government benefits, they end up organising an opposition party, and as you know very well Don Luis, some producers don't want to participate in our programmes because they believe that *tecnicos* only support the *ejido* president.

Producers don't realise that, by law, we can't deny recognition to a president and that for us, that person is the one who represents the community whether we like it or not. So, while presidents and producers don't learn how to solve their disputes in a better way, our job in the *ejidos* is going to be defective, or, at best, partial towards some producers."

Don Luis, emphasizing his position, said:

"It is not that sort of order that makes us survive in the present economic conditions. If the government really wants to increase production, it is not enough to give authority to the president of the communities. We, the peasants, have increased our awareness and this should not be misunderstood by the government. Because, like it or not, today it is the Ministry of Agriculture's responsibility to give us a hand with the organisation of the producers. *Tecnicos* have to speak directly to the *ejido* presidents and to the producers. They listen to the *tecnico* because he is coming from outside the *ejido*. Producers usually don't listen to their own leaders, because they see them daily."

In this situation, I was observing a reaction to the agricultural policy from a producer who was used to the traditional political style of state intervention. He was concerned to highlight the need for *tecnicos* to consider peasants opinions and knowledge. The *tecnico*, on the other hand, did not appreciate the political nature of the *ejido*. He wanted the *ejido* organisation to act as an administrative structure through which the policy could be implemented.

It was clear that the policy of increasing maize production was not a central goal for all peasants. The producer advocated the need to develop a type of political participation that acknowledged that peasants were now more awake and provide local producers with room for manoeuvre. In this sense, the producer's interpretation of the aim of the SAM policy was different from the objectives of the *tecnico*. When we stood up to leave the producer said:

"The government has to realise that the present official price for maize is nothing, and that it is thanks to us that cities can eat. But this does not mean that we are *tarugos* [stupid]. Last year, when the harvest was not very good, and the price was low, producers did not want to sell corn. So the government sent the police. They arrived in Tlajomulco and started to confiscate the grain from our houses. They compelled us to sell the grain at the lowest price possible, and if we resisted, the police were there to put us in jail.

In the end, we did not go to jail nor did we sell the grain to the official market board. We gave the maize to the pigs, because that was the only way open to us to make some profit. We like to support our government, but we don't like to be considered *tarugos*. We can survive here with just half a hectare of maize, and if we decide to do that, it would be interesting to see how cities would survive."

With this clear statement from the producer we left the house. In observing this interaction, I had a brief introduction to the social character of the relations between *tecnicos* and rural producers during the implementation of the SAM. The policy, in spite of its good intentions to achieve development in rainfed agriculture, was strongly mediated by the different actors' expectations and understanding of the policy aims. This process of diverse policy expectations, generated a confrontation of different bargaining styles. Don Luis asked for a fair exchange of obligations and benefits, if they were to be affiliated to government policies. Gilberto wanted to implement the SAM without having to take into account politics in the *ejido*. Nevertheless, fieldworkers and *ejido* producers were unable to escape from the effects of a long sequential process of Mexican political intervention. Hence, the transition from a political to a technocratic type of intervention in the implementation of the SAM policy created local tension.

The views of Don Luis were shared by many *ejidal* producers. People whose experiences with the state had taught them to expect special opportunities and deferential treatment from development agencies and state representatives. The *tecnico*, following agronomic approach and language perceived *ejido* politics as something alien from his professional status and out of his control and understanding. According to the *tecnico*, *ejido* politics constituted just a disturbing factor that disrupted production by limiting the management and the achievement of assigned production targets. It is important to realise that politics was a means for the producer to acquire a similar status to the *tecnico*, and as such he expected to be recognized and consulted about the best way to implement the policy. For *tecnicos*, politics was the last thing on which they wanted to base their work. They feared to become too dependent on local political leaders and on their individual interests, since they thought this could corrupt institutional aims.

The encounter described here provides a first window into the obstacles to the implementation of the SAM and ADL policies. Those producers, who traditionally considered development opportunities as dependent on political support, perceived the new policy to be based on simple technical assumptions (see also Viniegra, 1987). Consequently, producers resisted collaborating to achieve SARH targets.

Contrary to the SAM document assumptions, rainfed peasants were not backward producers. They had a long political and economic experience of dealing with government agencies. They were able to limit *tecnicos*' administrative influences in their attempt to control the productive process at local level. Indeed, in Tlajomulco de Zuniga, the government had to send the police in to collect a maize harvest. Repression remained in the end an instrument to recover the 'benefits' of the programmes. This measure, in an area historically tied to government policies,

shows some of the difficulties that government faced in implementing the SAM and the ineffectiveness of the rational-planning approach to re-orientate long term producers' expectations at local level.

Those producers who perceived the gap in political control, and the difficulties of the state agencies in implementing the SAM, turned to obtaining the maximum profit for their crops, and some of them decided to re-direct their grain from people to animal consumption. This sort of local action contradicted the whole aims of the SAM agricultural policy at the *ejido* level.

### Everyday Experiences of a Technocrat

Jose was also involved as a *tecnico* in the SAM implementation process. In his representation of the SAM, we can strongly recognise a technocratic attitude. He argued that the main problem with the strategy was that the government subsidies were not enough to cover the magnitude of inputs needed to fulfil the programmed quotas of production. According to him, producers did not receive the promised economic help. When they realised that economic help was not coming, they started to doubt government intentions. "Producers usually do not cultivate their programmed plots if they have not received the subsidies. This producers' attitude upset the whole organisational arrangements, and made us (fieldworkers) dependent on the delivery of financial resources."

Jose also pointed to inter-agency conflicts, that eroded his authority. According to him, the *tecnico* had to verify whether producers had cultivated basic grains and applied the 'modern' agricultural inputs to the crops under the agricultural programme. It was only after these inspections that the subsidies were paid to the producers. Jose said that the SARH was given the function to control the so-called *libre* (free) producers, that is those producers who were not receiving loans from BANRURAL. But the bank keeps under its control producers working with government's official agricultural loans. As the majority of producers were receiving help from BANRURAL, according to Jose, between 90 percent to 95 percent of the ejidatarios producers 'escaped' SARH control. According to Jose, the bank found itself with immense power over the target population: "It was this lack of vision, of taking power away from SARH and allocating it to the bank, which was a principal factor that contributed to the failure of SAM."

Jose further identified the following problems during the implementation of the SAM strategy: 1) severe problems with the planning arrangements, 2) subsidies did not keep up with national inflation, and 3) the government did not increase the price of maize enough, so producers had to continue selling the crop to middlemen, who re-directed the crop away from human consumption.

Jose supported the general aims of the food policy, but he believed that it would have been more effective to stimulate production through a higher increase in the official price of grain, rather than help producers through input subsidies, which are difficult to deliver to them: "the government has to realise, that the only solution to

increase maize production is to establish a real value for the price of the crop". Nevertheless, as a positive effect of SAM, Jose mentioned the by-passing of those middlemen who used to deal with fertilizers and seeds:

"Producers, to claim their subsidies, had to buy the fertilizers in established places, because they had to present invoices. These measures affected dishonest traders, who in the past, combined good and bad fertilizers to increase their profits, or mixed the improved seeds. These agricultural traders had to stop these practices, because now they had become liable to legal prosecution by the SARH."

The SAM experience made Jose suggest that *tecnicos* should have more power to allocate, in the field, the financial resources of the programmes, and to have time to supervise these technically, from the beginning to the end.

Jose was clearly disappointed with the reduction of his professional function from that of being an extensionist to becoming an administrator of the technological package. He explained that the food policy (SAM) was a strategy that delivered 'modern' agricultural inputs to the producers, but it did not attempt to maximise the resources that already existed in the local areas. Jose commented, "SAM was concerned to achieve short term benefits and it did not invest in projects whose effects could go beyond one agricultural cycle, or could improve the natural environment for agricultural production with projects such as soil regeneration or *desempiedres* (stones clearing)". According to him not all areas could "yield the expected production or make the package cost effective". The dependence of the food policy on the technological package meant that the SAM projects were constrained to those areas where the natural conditions existed to make use of the benefits of the technological package.

Jose's experiences indicate that the food policy, at local level, had significant problems during its implementation stage. These bottlenecks were the result of the internal practices of the agencies and of the different interpretations that these agencies had of the reformed policy. These issues prevented a unified criteria for institutional operations. The contradictions between the financial and agronomic criteria generated two different understandings of SAM policy. The agronomic approach was limited by the different agencies' interests. In practice, the bank controlled the administration of public resources. They managed to prevent SARH from increasing its influence over the producers.

The account of Jose represents the technocratic attitude of some of the fieldworkers. In his interpretation it seems that he was only able to grasp the 'formal life' of the SAM, that is the project-by-project organisation of the policy. He treats SAM as a project and thus focuses entirely on the objectives, inter-agency arrangements and implementation mechanisms. He acknowledges that the particularities of the different areas should have been taken into account, but the producers, their knowledge and politics, seem to be excluded from his perspective.

## Everyday Experiences, Policy and Reality

Enrique was the only fieldworker of the unit under study, who actually lived in the area. Perhaps this explains why producers figure much more in his account of SAM implementation. He argued that the food policy gave away subsidies without supervising the producers. "Producers presented invoices, but whether they had used these inputs for maize or not was impossible to check in every case". Enrique claims that the operational procedures of the programme were unknown to the *tecnico*. "So we had in front of us a queue of producers with their bills ready to receive their money, but we did not know what to do, because the whole system had organisational problems". In spite of this, Enrique claims that resources did reach producers, although this depended on the attitude of the fieldworker and on his determination to stop the rich producers from getting all the subsidies. This process of distributing resources, according to the *tecnico*, was not an easy one. He recalls one incident:

"One day we were in the unit when a producer, who we all knew very well came to claim subsidies. He presented an input bill for 80 hectares of maize. The *tecnico* in charge of that area explained that subsidies were just to help small producers of maize and that a unit of 80 hectares was considered a large unit of production. So I explained that he was not eligible to receive the benefits of the SAM. At that point, the producer became very angry and started to complain against the government. He said to me, that it was incredible that the government could not help someone like him, who was a real producer of maize, and that it was stupid waste of resources to give support to inefficient producers (*ejidatarios*), who were not really interested in increasing production, but just in submitting false invoices to cheat the government. He finally said to me, "you go to my field and see my production of maize and then you tell the government"."

Enrique suggested that the food policy was highly dependent on the *tecnico's* personal knowledge of the physical environment and the social composition of the producers in the area, and on the fieldworker not being afraid to make some very dangerous local enemies.

To defend the rights of the small producers to have access to resources was a local political problem for the fieldworkers. The other problem was how to convince the small producers (individual *ejidatarios* and small private property producers) to accept the SARH project to cultivate maize. "Our problem was that producers knew that *tecnicos* did not have authority in the field and were only able to make recommendations, which producers never followed. Traditionally, producers had only seen the bank and the Ministry of Agrarian Reform as important agencies and not the SARH. So, we had serious *broncas* (rows) with the producers to establish the status of the Ministry and our authority as the agency in charge of SAM. But in spite of all this producers did not want to use all their land to produce maize. So, to fulfil our institutional quotas we had to work personally and politically very hard

on the *ejidal* president, or on those people who opposed our plans. Otherwise we could not achieve our official targets".

Enrique recognised that when this sort of 'conciliatory' approach did not work, *tecnicos* had to enforce the implementation of the idle land law. But, this 'authoritarian' approach created more problems than it solved, because, as land was incorporated into production against the will of producers, *tecnicos* started to receive threats to their lives.

"This form of incorporating land into production made us unpopular in the countryside, and for the first time, we had to visit *ejidos* under rural police protection. We started to feel that the government was asking too much from us. We were there, risking our lives for something which was not producing any benefit for us. We still received the same bad salary and lack of official recognition. So, *ni modo*, we decided just to keep the appearance implementing the law."

To further justify his position, Enrique said:

"When a *tecnico* did implement the law, the staff from the regional office kept intervening against us. For instance, in one case, Daniel, another fieldworker from my unit, after a long process of trying to persuade a producer to cultivate maize, finally declared the producers' land idle. Daniel was called by the head of the regional office, and severely reprimanded because he implemented the law on the land of the head of the agricultural department's *compadre* [godfather of one of his children]. So, Daniel was ordered to withdraw his decision. With cases like these, the SAM policy was not worth our sacrifices."

Enrique recalls that when some livestock producers perceived the possible effects of the ADL, they started to cultivate just a small part of their land with maize, arguing that the other part was under pasture because of the need to conserve the land through rotation practices. Other groups started to cultivate maize, but instead of using the harvest for human consumption, they stored it in their silos for livestock. As some of these situations happened at the end of the agricultural cycle, *tecnicos* had no way to stop them.

Enrique understands and explains these actions as resulting from the lack of trust between producers and the government. This, in his opinion, made a *tecnico's* job practically impossible. *Tecnicos* could have gained the producers' trust and diminished their fears of risks, if they had received district support, but the district never accepted the *tecnico's* assessment, evaluation and reports and petitions as important information that had to be analyzed and decided on quickly.

For Enrique, the SAM could have been more successful if more opportunities for producers' participation had been incorporated in the policy. Nevertheless, according to Enrique, some transformation did take place, for instance in the annual meeting of municipal evaluation:

"It was good to see in this meeting, that the head of the field-unit had to meet the representatives from other agencies and listen to the producers' petitions. This procedure took some pressure off our shoulders because

producers could now see for themselves that *tecnicos* did not have the power to solve all their problems. We suggested to producers that they demand services in these meetings, because that would help us to get the things we ask for in our reports to the field-unit."

Political and technical information during the SAM was a constant problem between agencies. According to Enrique, "it was common for the bank to deny us information. The only way to get it was by using the slow and complicated system of official memorandums. The institutional coordination process was always tense and highly bureaucratic". On reflection, Enrique said, "perhaps if we had done a little bit more to support SAM, if the government had improved on our salary conditions, but still I think that the central factor was the producers. They made their own decisions. Some producers rejected my help because they believed they knew better. Unfortunately, producers who used my technical advice were those who had more money, so these were the ones who got more benefits from a more efficient use of agricultural inputs".

According to the *tecnico's* view, the SAM was not a radical rural strategy because it was adapted and filtered to suit the existing institutional practices of the Ministry. "How can you expect a radical increase in production if fieldworkers avoid daily contacts with producers? During the SAM, we went to see producers two or three times per week, but not to see the producers' plot, just to talk with the president of the *ejido*."

Enrique's experiences indicate that some poor producers received government subsidies, although channelling resources towards these producers created conflicts which required a clear stand against the rich producers at the local level. Enrique was a fieldworker who was keenly aware of the political dimension of policy implementation and tried to keep up his motivation to help rural producers. Unfortunately, the majority did not consider the SAM worth exposure to political or even physical risks in implementing the policy. The fieldworkers, therefore, only partially implemented the food policy.

## Conclusion

This chapter has presented background material, drawn from government sources on the problems of implementing the agricultural food policy (SAM). This new agricultural policy was designed to modernise rainfed agricultural production, in order to achieve self-sufficiency in grains at the national level and to improve the situation of rainfed producers. In the second part of the chapter, the accounts of three *tecnicos* on the implementation of the SAM were presented using ethnographic data. The stories of the three *tecnicos* tell us a lot about the actual problems encountered in the implementation of the policy. They also tell us how *tecnicos* internalise and translate the SAM in their own way and interpret implementation accordingly. In doing so, they create a social field at the lower end of the

bureaucracy, where technocratic and political views coexist in organizing the fieldworkers' practices of intervention.

There exists a general notion that the SAM was largely a failure. From producers, to fieldworkers and even up to the highest state authorities, SAM was considered to have failed to achieve its objectives. This resulted in a reformulation of the policy in 1983.

Several Mexican scholars have tried to find an explanation for this failure. Austin and Esteva (1987) for example argue that the major problem was at the level of policy formulation. According to these authors, it was the intention of policy makers to solve the problem of agricultural self-sufficiency in Mexico and that SAM could be regarded as an idealistically good strategy, if it was true that the policy was the only path along which rural development could advance. This, however, according to Austin and Esteva, was not the case. They suggest there were other conceivable scenarios that could have formed the basis for formulating and organizing a food policy. In Mexico, apparently, the policy makers of the SAM did not envisage these other alternatives. As a proof of their views, these authors stress that the policy makers did not come up with a food policy that was backed by a financial reserve capable of maintaining its continuity and general principles (Austin and Esteva, 1987). While some of these points might be relevant for understanding the shortcomings of the SAM, we can find in the accounts of one of the policy makers, Luiselli, a more complicated explanation of the SAM failure. According to him, policy was strongly shaped by economic and political international and national considerations, which explains the limitations of the policy (Luiselli, 1987). Other studies (see Viniestra, 1987) have indicated that the generation and dissemination of technology was the main problem in implementing SAM. According to Viniestra, this problem could be solved in future interventions by rescuing, assessing and promoting traditional practices of production.

All the above scholars have highlighted important factors constraining the SAM policy. However, they do not seem to take into account the social life of policy formulation and implementation, and this has led them to single out particular factors as the dominant explanation of the SAM shortcomings.

This book takes a different approach. We try to show how both the formulation and the implementation of policy are socially constructed. From this point of view, it follows that a better representation of policy implementation can be achieved by looking at the ensemble of actors' practices. From this chapter, it becomes already clear that the social life of policy implementation is full of diversity. Because of this we have stressed the importance of studying and analyzing both the interpretations and actions of rural producers and *tecnicos*. This is central to interpreting the social processes surrounding SAM implementation.

As the cases in the next two chapters will demonstrate, localities are active constitutive parts of the definition and practices of agricultural intervention. As we shall see, the contradictions of the policy are linked to the process of negotiating its implementation. In this process, both fieldworkers and producers act according to their own assessments of the contingencies of the situation. This is why it is so

important to pay attention to the way in which actors internalise and translate state intervention. From a constructivist perspective it becomes clear, then, that a policy can not be merely implemented, but finds its translation in the locality. As such, actors become the carriers of policy implementation. The actors - bureaucrats and rural producers - become entangled in a process that combines at the same time elements of both continuity and discontinuity. Therefore, any explanation of the SAM that rests upon a restricted number of factors for analyzing the shortcomings of this policy is bound to provide a limited account of the social life of state intervention. This kind of single focus explanation leaves out what is perhaps the most relevant aspect of policy implementation, namely the variations that emerge at the local level in *ejidos* and the administrative context.

## Notes

1. The history of the SAM policy formation was more complex than presented in this chapter. For a more detailed analysis, see Arce, 1986, chapter 2.
2. For an additional case of the life-history of a fieldworker in relation to his enactment of policy implementation, see Arce, 1985.
3. A more extended version of the case presented in this section can be found in Arce, see forthcoming paper.

## 6. THE *EJIDO* OF NEXTIPAC: A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SAM POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter analyses the response of producers to policy implementation. It finds that objections to agricultural policies are not embedded in traditional peasant knowledge, nor are they just individual reactions to the state. They are experiences that are socially constructed by the actors' internalisation of local history and economic and social development opportunities at *ejido* level and in the wider setting.

Local experience of previous agricultural policies, and their effect on the distribution of resources and power among households, have generated different actor strategies or ways in which producers engage or disengage themselves from the process of state intervention, and how their actions are an attempt to overcome the specific constraints in which they find themselves. Differences among producers in using or rejecting government policies are expressions of their local experience, as well as of their understanding of government (agency) preferences for a particular form or style of agricultural development.

This chapter attempts to show that these differences should be taken into account both at the moment of designing a policy and at the level of implementation, otherwise, state officials and *ejidatarios* will continue to encounter serious problems in the field. Technical or financial criteria for resource allocation are no better than political criteria if they are isolated from the social and cultural environment. Planners cannot continue with their fantasies and projections about the positive effects of their agricultural policy programme. Their projections did not convince rural producers of the importance and benefits of the SAM food policy for the people living in the *ejido*. This situation provoked a lively set of reproaches against the irrelevance, simplicity and inexactitudes of planners as they tried to achieve the aims of the food policy. The case of Nextipac shows that producers are not just passive recipients of government intervention.

Nextipac is an *ejido* in the municipality of Zapopan, and was chosen as a research site as a direct result of the period I spent in the central office of the rainfed district No.1. During that period, Nextipac emerged as one of the *ejidos* which presented problems for the personnel in charge of implementing programmes. The area was perceived by government officials "as not providing a very sympathetic environment for Ministry policies". Their perception was composed of two different views: the view that Nextipac was still a traditional community and producers were strong keepers of cultural identity and traditions; and the view that considered the problem with the people of Nextipac was that they were *grillos* (experts in politicking) and that they knew how to manipulate officials to get benefits from any government programme. Because of this, fieldworkers generated a rule of

thumb: "to survive in Nextipac *tecnicos* have to be extremely careful not to antagonise the producers".

The comments on Nextipac which I heard at the district office, interested me enough to make the *ejido* a case in my study. I thus decided to go and live there for a period of three months, after which I visited the *ejido* on a regular basis in order to follow some particular actors. During my stay I realised that the attitude of the fieldworkers created practical problems for the implementation of the policy in the *ejido*. In their concern not to antagonise producers, the *tecnicos* ignored social and economic differences within the *ejido*, specifically to ignore the local history. Their lack of awareness of the social life of the *ejido* reduced them to faithful practitioners of the technocratic (agronomic) approach.

The co-existence of local, traditional knowledge and modern, scientific knowledge had existed in the area since 1970, when the University of Guadalajara settled its Faculty of Agriculture just a few kilometres from Nextipac. At this time also, DECAL, an important producer of hybrid seeds in Mexico, established its Guadalajara plant very close to the village.

### The Spectacle of Everyday Life in Nextipac

My first visit to Nextipac was in March 1983. My intention on that first visit was to observe a normal day and also to make enquiries about the producers' perception of progress. It was around 11am and the heat had not yet reached its peak. The valley was full of activity, the noise of birds mixing with the roar of tractors. People were preparing the soil.

In the flat extension of the valley the settlement of Nextipac appeared like an incongruous mirage, more properly belonging to the landscape of Italian or Spanish hill towns. It gave the impression of being designed to control and defend space, following a kind of condottiere rationality. It was later explained to me that the founders of Nextipac had chosen to build the pueblo there, because it was less productive land.

The unmistakable smell of burning tires and a column of smoke gave indisputable signs that brick making was an important economic activity in the *ejido*. In a plot close to the dirt road, a producer was beginning to till the land. His cultivation equipment was two horses (*remudas*) tied to a metal plough (*la rastra*), and a tree trunk. I was attracted by this sight and surprised to see such technology still in use in Zapopan, as I thought that such techniques had been superseded long ago.

As the heat was starting to increase, I approached the producer with one of those typical English remarks about the weather. He responded:

"*Si, esta haciendo calorcito pero que se le va hacer...* (Yes, it is quite hot, but what can we do...). This is the difference between those who own a tractor and those who haven't got one. People with tractors use the early hours of the morning to work, or they do it during the night, so they can

stop in the hottest periods and have a rest or do their personal business." After he had asked about our visit and showed that he approved, we prepared for a talk. Don David was not in a hurry to continue working. I apologised for interrupting his work, but he replied "after all, if I don't finish it today, I can do it tomorrow (*mañana*)". He continued:

"In the *ejido* there are 150 producers and not more than 30 have a good situation economically, the rest have a moderate one and some are very poor (*pobres de a tiro*). There is not much selling or buying of land in Nextipac, but it is easier to sell land than to buy. Not all *ejidatarios* have the same number of hectares; some have eight and others more than 20. Progress has only come to Nextipac in the last 10 years. Today we have 7 tractors and several trucks (*trokas*) in the *ejido*, and people are starting to buy pick-ups.

In the past we used to have a lot of problems because the authorities never came here (*el gobierno no entraba*), therefore people were afraid of outsiders, and several times they killed them thinking that they could be *pistoleros* (gun fighters). With the improvement of the road, the authorities now come to Nextipac, and for every fiesta they send a group of policemen to keep order.

With the arrival of the university and DECAL [the seed industry] we are much less isolated. Unfortunately, we don't have good relations with the students. They steal our animals for their *pachangas* (parties) and they have no respect for us. DECAL has been good for us, because several of our people work there and we have learned from them how to use hybrid seeds. We normally buy seeds from them and they come to the *ejido* with pictures showing us how to use insecticides, weed killers and hybrid seeds.

The producer who has money to sow the land in Nextipac can make it, but the producer who does not have cash to invest in the land suffers because the land does not produce. The Orozcós (the ex-hacienda owner's family) have changed the crop sown on their land; they used to cultivate maize, but now they plant sugar cane. Four years ago 'the big-man' had a disease in his maize and the government came in to burn it all. Orozco lost his entire production. He was so angry with this government action that he decided to change the crop.

Orozco sells his production to Tala's *ingenio* (sugar refinery). He has offered us 10,000 sugar cane plants free if we change crop, but none of the *ejidatarios* have accepted his proposal. We don't trust the cultivation of sugar cane. We know that with maize in a bad agricultural year we can at least keep the household going with corn, but you can't eat sugar cane. After a year of sugar cane my soil would be exhausted and from then on I would have to depend on the *ingenio's* credit for ever. In Nextipac, only the Orozcós and some private producers have changed from *maiz* to sugar cane, but not the *ejidatarios*.

In the last 5 or 7 years we have received better support from the government. It is not enough, but credit has improved. Today we have two

banks operating with us, Banobras and Banrural. I was president of the *ejido* when SAM gave us subsidies and a bonus for productivity. That helped us to produce maize and it was good financial help, because it is difficult for us to survive from the land. SAM also improved agricultural insurance. Before that, the agency never accepted our claims. They were useless, but now they are starting to help us.

We still have problems with the insurance agency. They pay without any problem when a producer reports a totally lost crop (*siniestro total*), but they become very difficult people when we report a partial loss (*siniestro parcial*), because the inspector always argues that with the remaining harvest we will have enough to repay the bank. Only when the entire harvest is lost do we not have to pay the loan back. So we have had to learn how to *chingar al gobierno en el seguro* (cheat the authorities on insurance) because this is one of the policies from which we can get some benefit. So we always try to claim for a totally lost harvest and we hide any good portion of the maize from the inspectors, or we decrease the value of the remainder by using the *milpa* (maize plant) as *rastrojo* (fodder) before the inspectors arrive. The bank, the insurance agency and the producer have to examine the crop together. If the producer is not satisfied with the field assessment, he can complain to the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SARH) and they send the case to 'higher' authorities. Those people can rule against the field inspectors and may even impose disciplinary action on them. There have been some important changes in the *ejido* in recent years. Now we have no livestock because of land shortage. The two or three people who still had some animals a year ago have sold them this year.

Nextipac is now mainly a maize producing *ejido*."

The dry, hot air of Guadalajara and the spirals of dust running over the flat agricultural extensions were an indication of the beginning of the *secas* (the dry period). Don David, with his *huaraches* (traditional peasant sandals) and a straw hat, blended into the brown texture of the dry season. There was a feeling of seasonal transition. A pick-up stopped in front of the plot and three *rancheros* came out to talk to him. The difference in status between the *ejidatario* and the *rancheros* (small-scale private producers) was expressed in the vehicle, in the *charro* style of the clothes and in their 'innocent', but still authoritarian tone of voice:

"So, are you going to sell David?"

"Yes, if the price is right."

"Well then David, you should consider my offer, because I am interested."

Only one of the *rancheros* talked, the others just observed. Don David, with great skill, was providing positive answers without any commitment. They were discussing whether Don David would sell some land. After eight or ten minutes, they said good-bye and disappeared, leaving nothing behind but a trail of dust. Don David came back and said:

"I want to sell this land that I inherited from my father. You know, in my life I have had bad luck. My father died when he was 33 years old and I

was left an orphan. From the age of 12, I had to work to help my mother's brother and sister and I have never been able to make any money. I want to buy a tractor. I am tired of cultivating the land with animals and these are already too old. If I can sell the land this may be my last year of cultivation with animals."

Don David then pointed in the direction of Guadalajara and said:

"Can you see that blue tractor? ... Well that's my son. He didn't want to study because he had some problems with his teachers. My Uncle Antonio, who is like my own father, suggested that he could learn to drive a tractor and he offered the use of his tractor and work on his land. My uncle leaves the responsibility of making the furrows to my son and he pays him 5,000 pesos per week [well below the average wage]. But at least my son is learning a job."

Don David was proud of his son and several times called him to my attention, just to show me how he was turning the tractor in the field and said, "He looks as if he is going to be a good *tractorista* (tractor driver)". Don David was not just talking, but thinking about his lack of resources and the ways he saw to improve his economic condition: "If my son behaves properly with my uncle and works hard, I am sure that he will inherit. So I always say to him *metele muchas ganas* (put a will in your work)."

This was an example of how the use of kinship relations could be an avenue towards the improvement of a producer's economic situation. Don David took off his hat and moved it around his earthy finger and cleared the morning sweat from his brow. It was a brief moment, followed by a glimpse into his life.

"I have had bad luck in my life, but I have always tried to improve my situation. It was 22 years ago that I became an *ejidatario*. Ortega was president of the *ejido* and it took me two years to get community recognition of my right to land. I had to use some political contacts in Zapopan, but in the end Ortega had to accept my claim.

When I was president of the *ejido*, the ex-president gave me a tip about how to get access to two hectares which were not under cultivation. He told me to take control of the land under the idle land law (*ley de tierras ociosas*). I immediately started to plough the plot and, when I had finished, a producer appeared and asked me if I knew who had been working his land. I replied that I had been working it. This person became very angry and told me that he had paid the ex-president (*le di una feria*) for the use of the land. I said that I did not want to know about his dealings with the ex-president. I pointed out the fact that he had not worked the land for a period of two years, so he had no legal right to it. The man then said: "Ok David, but remember you will not be president for ever and I will get my property back. I said to myself *a huevo me la quites* [something like 'the devil you will']. I immediately submitted a document to the SARH to legalise my right to the plot and I included the case of my *compadre* to whom I gave the other hectare of land. In Nextipac it has not been easy for

me to improve my situation. With the exception of that hectare of land I have not had too much luck. Since 1934, I have never stopped working." When Don David finished his account of his life in Nextipac, it was nearly two o'clock; a sacred time in Mexico, devoted to eating. So I left Don David promising to visit him at home.

Through the heat and dryness came the tart smell of municipal disposal through the open windows of the car. The fields of Zapopan are being covered by the city's rubbish, which is used as a soil re-generator. Hundreds of polythene bags were shining in the sun, and a group of children were selecting things to play with from the rubbish in the middle of the fields. In less than twenty minutes one arrives at the modern Guadalajara ring road. That day my car was not stopped by the army, who where usually there looking for guns, in what they called the campaign of *despistolizacion*.

### Tying up the Images to the Structure of Production

The structure of production in Nextipac consists of rainfed and pasture land. The land is divided into individual plots and the soil is well suited to maize production. Land is a valuable resource. In our sample of 49 households<sup>1)</sup>, 55% claimed to have access to land of between 6 and 10 hectares, 19% possessed between 1 and 5 hectares, 12% of the households had between 11 and 15 hectares and the remaining 14% possessed between 16 and 30 hectares (see Table 1).

On average, households possessed 9.5 hectares of land, which is slightly above the national *ejido* average for rainfed land (6.5 hectares in 1960, CDIA, 1979: 443), but considerably less than the official figure recommended in the agrarian law (20 hectares, according to the law of 1971, CDIA, 1979: 443).

Agriculture in Nextipac is of a commercial type.<sup>2)</sup> According to sample information, 90% of maize production is sold. This production is sold to CONASUPO (a government agency) and to the middlemen in Tesistan. Maize production is limited by the scarcity of land and access to resources.

Of those households with 1 to 5 hectares of land, none have a tractor. Five of them use only family labour for their agricultural activities, while the others contract seasonal wage labour. Technological conditions of production in this group are diverse; two households have a low technological level, five an intermediate and two a high level.<sup>3)</sup>

Table 1: Land Distribution by Households

No of Hectares	No of Households	%
1 - 5	9	19%
6 - 10	27	55%
11 - 15	6	12%
16 - 20	3	6%
21 - 25	2	4%
26 - 30	2	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100</b>

Of the group of households with 6 to 10 hectares, eight had tractors. Seasonal wage labour was contracted by 18 households and only 9 used family labour alone. The technological level was intermediate in 12 households, high in 11, and in 4 the technological level was low.

Of the group of households with 16 to 20 hectares, two had tractors and only one contracted seasonal wage labour. The three households all had a high technological level. The two households with 21 to 25 hectares both had tractors and a high technological level. One of these households used family labour exclusively. The other two households, with 26 to 30 hectares, both had high technological levels and contracted seasonal wage labour, but only one of them had tractors.

These data are summarised in Table 2. The data show that access to land is correlated with access to tractors and level of technology. The use of family labour, however, appears as a strategy that crosses lines between a household's access to resources. The dominant tendency in the *ejido*, however, is to contract seasonal wage labour.

Table 2 shows a process of concentration of the means of production in those households with more access to land, suggesting the existence of an *ejido* structure supporting unequal access to resources.

Table 2: Nextipac Household Labour and Technological level

Hectares	Tractors		Technological level		Labour force	
	High	Low	High	Low	Family Labour	Wage Labour
1-5	0	2	5	2	5	4
6-10	8	1	12	4	9	18
11-15	2	3	2	1	1	5
16-20	2	3			2	1
21-25	2	2			1	1
26-30	1	2				2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>31</b>

As will be shown later, the history of the *ejido* and its contacts with government policies account for the emergence of this differentiated structure of production. In

the analysis which follows, I concentrate briefly on the local farming system, local history and upon the way in which government agencies, with their orientation towards increased production, implemented the SAM programme in Nextipac. The main point here is to assess the extent to which the agencies altered the unequal social relations in the *ejido* as a result of their actions.

### The Farming System of Cultivation

According to the producers in Nextipac they use the Zapopan system of cultivation (explained below). They started to use this system about 35 years ago (1948). In former days, a deep furrow system was applied in order to utilise the humidity of the soil, but this could only be applied in a limited part of the area under cultivation. In other plots the soil had different characteristics and the *ejidatarios* did not know how to use the humidity in the soil.

"Our principal problem with the soil was how to open it. In the dry season the soil became solid and we had no instrument able to dig the furrows. When the *cabanuelas* (light rains) arrived in October we were able to do something, but it was very slow work.

We then found out that we could use the three light rains before the rainy season [the *temporal*] really started. These first rains soften the earth, which allows us to prepare the soil. Then, just before the heavy rains of the *temporal* start, we sow the *milpa* (maize). By the time the *temporal* arrives, the seeds must be in the process of germinating. The *temporal* comes two or three months after Ash Wednesday, so we have a lot to do in the first days of June. We have to sow according to when we feel that the *temporal* is coming. If we sow too early, the soil will be too tight. If we sow too late, the *milpa* will rot because there is too much water."

This particular way of cultivating is called the Zapopan system. According to some producers it was a German who had given them the secret. Because the soil in Zapopan is moist under the first layer, the seeds can germinate without the rains. The main principle of the 'Zapopan system' is to keep the soil loose and, at the same time, to maintain the humidity in the soil. This is achieved with constant ploughing after the short fallow, and constant covering to avoid loss of humidity .

Producers use approximately 25 plants of maize per meter, and it is of critical importance that the soil is fertilized before the rain comes. Several producers fertilize with tractors, but it is still possible to observe the old method, which consists of a long tube that is used to direct the fertilizer to the base of the *milpa*. Using this system, they have to mark the rows when it is dry (before the rains). This practice facilitates the weeding operation (*escarda*) because, as they explained, with the addition of fertilizer, not only did the *milpa* grow quickly but the weeds did too.

They ploughed again when the *milpa* was 20 or 30 centimetres high, to make el *arropaje*. This operation consisted of re-forming the furrow, which, with the arrival of the rains became low. Later the producers do a second *arropaje*, this time

to provide more support to the plants and to help them resist the wind.

Contrary to what the agencies say, the producers claim this system was learned and improved by themselves alone. They recognize that the bank came around 1959-1960 and taught them to plough in the maize stems as organic fertilizer and that it was then, when the financial credit group was formed and the first tractor arrived in Nextipac.

Producers emphasized that in the 'Zapopan system' of cultivation, the most important factor was to receive agricultural inputs on time. Due to the rapid changes in environmental conditions, the risks of agricultural failure are extremely high if this does not happen.

### The Machination of Forces: the Soil, Rain, State Agencies and Producers

During Holy Week (*Semana Santa*) there was no sign of activity in the fields and the producers were worried because once again the credit was late. In the square of the *pueblo*, under the shade of a tree, a producer explained their anxiety.

"Before we adopted the Zapopan system of cultivation, we used to furrow in May, but for a long time now we have furrowed in March. This means that we have to fertilize and sow in April. This has never been understood by the institutions which always bring the fertilizer and seed when we don't need it. If we don't sow before the 21<sup>st</sup> of April we can't take advantage of the rainfall.

This situation has always been with us, so the majority of the producers collect seeds on their own initiative (*semilla china*) and we end up planting this local seed which is disinfected by us. With the *abono* (fertilizer) it is the same story. Those producers who have managed to keep fertilizer from the other cycle (the previous year) are ok. The others who have applied for a loan must wait, knowing that they have to sow before the end of April. Because we know that Banrural is always late and that we must sow on time, we have to get our own resources. We welcome the cash when this arrives [part of the official credit is cash to facilitate agricultural operations], but, because of these delays, we incur debts with money lenders who charge interest of 6% per month. So it is the money lenders of Nextipac who benefit from our credit.

You will know when the credit has arrived, because the producers will start to burn their seeds. The seeds from the bank (HYS) are not good from one year to the next. They don't germinate (*se pican*) and we can't use them to feed the animals because they are poisonous. We have to burn them. With the fertilizer we can get something back, there is always a demand in the *ejido* to buy *abono*. But we lose a lot with the seeds.

But not all producers have these problems. The producers operating with the Banobras bank are in a better situation, because they receive cash and can buy their own agricultural inputs (*insumos*).

We producers who work with Banrural, because we are always in need of cash, have to sell our maize to a middleman in Tesistan. Cristobal (*el Guero*) buys our *maize* at a lower price than CONASUPO (the state agency of commercialisation), but he pays cash. CONASUPO takes more than fifteen days to get the money to us and usually we have to go to a bank to cash the check. We have made 'el Guero' rich. I remember when he used to come into Nextipac with a loudspeaker, offering to advance us money in exchange for our next harvest in the field. Today he doesn't operate like that any more, because every day in the harvest period, there are always more than 30 trucks in front of his house waiting to be unloaded. We don't like this system, but what else can we do? The producers who work with Banobras are the authorities of the *ejido* and they don't protect our interests. Although the majority of the producers work with Banrural, our situation *les vale madre* (doesn't concern them)."

Political divisions in the *ejido* had resulted in different types of producers affiliating to different credit institutions, and this was one of the central problems to be tackled by agencies concerned with rural development. A rich producer explained the operations with Banobras as follows:

"In Nextipac we have six groups operating with Banobras. To operate as a group they have to be a minimum of three producers and a maximum of ten. After ten, the group is divided and a new group is formed. Each producer is responsible to the group, but the representative of the group is responsible to the bank. That means that if a producer doesn't pay his debt, the rest of the group have to pay it or the group won't receive a new loan.

So we have to be very careful about who we accept into the group. We are not interested in people who can't pay (*malos pagadores*). It is not difficult to avoid such people, because we all know each other in Nextipac. Our first responsibility is to make the group stable in the eyes of the bank. A person associates with the producers he knows best in order to avoid personal problems.

Credit is no problem for us. It's easy to get up to 10 million pesos because we just need the authorization of the regional bank manager. Above that amount it has to be approved in Mexico and that means waiting and a lot of paperwork. We normally need more than 10 million pesos in the agricultural cycle, so we have arranged a system with the manager of the bank. As he knows us, he calls some of his friends who supply inputs and they, thanks to the manager's approval, advance us seeds and fertilizers. This system works much better than the Banrural system and is quicker than the official system of credit. This is important for us, because we have to finish preparing the soil and applying the nitrogenous gas before the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, and to sow no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of April. We can't wait until May to sow because it's too risky. At the beginning of June the *milpa* has to be out to receive the rain, otherwise you have had it."

Don David, who was present at this interview, then said:

"That's the main difference between the producers in the *ejido*. Banrural delays our inputs and credits so we always face the risk of losing our production. If the first rain surprises the *milpa* before the plant has broken through, you will certainly have to buy new seed. The first rains are not dependable. Three or more days could pass between the rains and this makes the soil very hard, so the seeds which are germinating don't have the strength to break through the soil, so receiving the agricultural inputs on time makes the difference between a good or a bad harvest for us."

It was clear, that in Nextipac, differences in affiliation to the financial agencies had further fragmented the interests of producer. Such fragmentation had occurred at the level of individuals, families and groups. The dominant network (the Ortega, López and Ribera families) had organised their followers in credit groups, and had thus enhanced their economic influence. The Cardenas-Rosales families, on the other hand, had only managed to organise one credit group, so the majority of their network had to operate with Banrural. Moreover, the Ortega's effectively controlled the political structure of the *ejido* and were perceived as acting to undermine the interests of those producers who did not work with Banobras. The *ejidatarios* without representation were thus limited in the action they could take to put pressure on Banrural to stop the institutional delays in processing and delivering their credit. The social construction of the conflicts in Nextipac undermined the local organisation of production.

### What is Local History Made of?

Don David narrated the following history of his pueblo:

"Twenty years ago (1960), Nextipac was a very difficult place to live. The pueblo was divided into two groups, and families used to have gun fights with each other. When a person was shot dead the relatives would take vengeance and kill someone from the other family. This went on until families virtually disappeared or they had to leave Nextipac in order to survive. The families in conflict were the Godoy's from the Alacran barrio, and the Rosales from this side of the pueblo. Between these families no relation was possible and marriages were totally forbidden. To repay blood debts (*cobrase de una deuda*), these families used to hire gunmen (*pistoleros*) from La Barca and Ameca.

Today the *ejido* is calm but a lot of resentment (*asco*) still survives and while more contact exists between the families and marriages have taken place among ex-family enemies, the feelings are still with us."

## The Displaced Actor

As Don David explained the blood conflict between families, that originated at the end of the 1950's and continued into the 1960's, has still not been resolved, and its effects influence the social and political life of Nextipac. Don David's situation is much worse under the present president of the *ejido* and he feels displaced and dispensable since he finished his period as *ejido* president. For years he has been working to reorganise the political environment in Nextipac. He sporadically profited from this task, using in his favour the relationship with government agencies. Now, out of office, Don David is not the obligatory point of passage for the *tecnicos*. He is a member of the *ejido* no one needs to consult, except the social anthropologist. He is no longer strategically situated between the goal of the *tecnico* and the fulfilment of the SAM programme, but for the anthropologist he represents an alternative history (the counter interpretation). He continues his narration:

"The president of the *ejido* (Don Jose) killed one of the Cardenas because the Ortega's told him that his brother had been killed by a Cardenas. He is a Torres and was allied with the Godoy's and Ortega's. He only recently decided to build his house on this side of the community, even though he has had a plot here for several years. He was afraid of being killed. I have some problems with him, not just because of the past, but because he is authoritarian and likes to impose his opinions upon other people. In Nextipac several people make demands of me, and this means I have to be very careful politically. To give you an example, last week I had to reject a very good offer from the DECAL seed company, which offered me 40,000 pesos to use my plot as an experimental field. If I had accepted the offer, people could have said that I was not a real *ejidatario*, because I was renting my land. The reality in Nextipac is that we are still divided and suffering a lot, but today things are much more peaceful."

## The Indispensable Actor

Don Jose Torres was president of the *ejido* when I was doing the fieldwork. This position gave him the status of being indispensable. He was now the (obligatory passage point for the *tecnicos*) interventions and was supposed to represent all *ejidatarios*. A man of 47 years of age, he was directly involved in the former conflicts and personally carried out *una venganza* (a revenge killing). He was on the side of the Ortega-Godoy faction and was at the time seen as a political tool of the richest families (the Ortega's). Don Jose was a strong character. He had resources and could be characterised as a middle-income producer. Some producers believed that he was involved in corrupt practices involving state agencies, and that his only concern was to represent his personal interests and those of his political circle.

Don Jose told me his story as follows:

"When I was 17 years old, I had to shoot dead the oldest of the Cardenas family because he killed my brother. After that I had to live in hiding for 2 or 3 years because the authorities were looking for me. They eventually caught me and sent me to jail.

At that time, 25 years ago, the Rosales and Cardenas families owned Nextipac, and they had control of the pueblo's land for their livestock. They did not allow us to cultivate the land. During that period we had nothing to eat and the Rosales-Cardenas used to sit every day in front of the courthouse and from there shoot the *ejidatarios* who went to cultivate their field. This is why the pueblo rebelled against them. I, together with some hired gunmen forced the producers who followed the Rosales and Cardenas families to get out of Nextipac. If we were to place crosses in the corners of the street to remember our dead in this pueblo, it would look like a grave yard.

The Rosales and Cardenas fled the community and have only recently started to come back. The first thing they did was to complain about us, saying we had taken their land and rights as *ejidatarios*, and they accused us of stealing land.

This problem started in 1982 after I decided to clear up the community land reserve and give the Rosales land, but they rejected my offer. So I distributed that land among the sons of the *ejidatarios*. I had no authorization from the government for this action. The Rosales sent a letter complaining to the Agrarian Reform agency [this letter is in the *ejido* files] and the government started an enquiry. I was in a little bit of trouble at first but the local department of the Peasant Confederation gave me some help. They took the complaint directly to the Delegate of the Agrarian Reform in Jalisco who decided that everything was in order and according to the law.

After this setback, the Rosales accused some of us of being in possession of more land than the legal limit. As these allegations could cause us problems we decided to recommend that the *ejidatarios* with more than 8 hectares should divide their properties among their relatives and sons. This measure allowed us to present a very good case to the Agrarian Reform, and we told the government, that contrary to the allegations of the Rosales families, Nextipac needed more land.

These people had given bribes to officials of the Agrarian Reform to win the case. But, as we have better contacts with the head of the *Confederacion Campesina de Jalisco* [Peasant Confederation of Jalisco], with the Municipal President of Zapopan and with the head of the agricultural programmes of the SARH, I am not afraid of the Rosales group.

Don David, the former *ejido* president, has been manipulated by the Rosales. He is playing into the hands of the old Rosales, but David is a humble person only related by his mother to them. In the previous period he received my support as *ejido* presidential candidate. David replaced Jesus Alvarez, who made mistakes. He imposed a tax on the brick-makers of the

community and, as a result, the whole community turned against him and David took control of the *ejido*.

So, as I tell you, Nextipac started to progress only after the Cardenas-Rosales were expelled from the *ejido*. Gabriel Ortega bought a tractor and things started to improve for us. Today the *ejido* has practically no livestock because we don't have enough land, and when the cattle break the fences they go into the property of the sugar cane cultivators. As these are Orozco's (members of parliament) this creates a lot of problems.

In Nextipac the things of the past are still with us. Just to give you an example, last week someone shot at the Secretary of the *ejido*, fortunately they only aimed at his foot."

Don Jose's version confirmed the importance of the blood conflict in Nextipac. He claims that progress came to the community only after the Rosales and Cardenas had left, almost in justification of the family feud, because it brought 'progress' to the *ejido*.

### The Non-Indispensable Actor

How could we define the importance of this local conflict for or against development? To answer this question we should listen to another producer who considers himself 'outside' the political struggle - a producer who has never used the *ejido* office, and has survived without strong linkages with government agencies. He is of no direct significance to the political struggles going on in the *ejido*, nor is he somebody *tecnicos* would consider important for getting their policies implemented. Why does Don Eleuterio not accept government support, and consider himself a politically independent producer? He does not consider that he and his family belong to the group that holds the political power in the *ejido*, although, he acknowledges that during the 'old' conflict he sympathized with the Rosales-Cardenas:

"In Nextipac there are 7 or 8 families who have money and monopolize the *ejido* land. This happened because the Ortega's and López's managed to force the Rosales-Cardenas from the pueblo. The Godoy's were just the finger that pulled the trigger. They themselves have no money, they are nobody in Nextipac.

Once the Rosales-Cardenas were no longer here, the Ortega's took control and to this day retain control of the presidency and use the post just to make money for themselves. I don't belong to their group, but I speak with them and I know that they don't like my independence. If I have financial problems I go to Guadalajara because they won't give me money here. The Ortega's and López's are friendly with government officials, especially those from the bank and they control the whole access to resources in Nextipac. Between them, these 7 or 8 families own the 11 tractors of the *ejido* and it is from this group that the 20 producers come who use nitrogen gas in the cultivation of maize.

I remember once the SARH provided a tractor for the *ejido*, to be used by producers without machinery. As soon as the tractor arrived here, the Ortega's and López's took control of the machine, because according to them, it was their responsibility to organize its use. The driver of the tractor later told me that after a week in Nextipac, he was being used to work only on the land of those producers who already had tractors.

Gabriel Ortega and Juan López control the administration and distribution of fertilizer. In my case, I always received less than the amount I had asked for, but every time I complained, they said that that was the quantity the government had sent. Later I discovered that this was all lies, because included in the bill from the bank, was a charge for the fertilizer I had not received. The same happened with the seeds.

In the end producers either had to buy fertilizer and seeds from them, or ask for extra agricultural inputs from the bank. All this taught me to be suspicious of these people, and I decided to solve problems for myself. But today I have arrived at the situation that I have to sell land that I inherited from my father, because I need to buy a tractor. I am criticized here because I work as a labourer on others' plots. I need the money, because I am not receiving a loan from the bank. The bank said I owe them money.

In Nextipac, as a result of the conflict, the powerful families have land extensions of 24 to 30 hectares of land, but the poorest families have only 1 hectare. Some time ago a lady from the Agrarian Reform came to investigate this situation, and the powerful families fictitiously divided the property among their relatives and sons, some of whom had never been *ejidatarios*. Nothing came out of this investigation. Next year I am thinking of going back to the bank, because I don't want problems with the agrarian community here. In my opinion, all these problems have their roots in the fight between the Rosales-Cardenas and López-Ortegas."

Don Eleuterio sees in the outcome of the conflict the basis of social differentiation in Nextipac, and the origin of the present political arrangements, based on controlling local institutions and relations with government agencies.

### **Is State Intervention Part of Local History too?<sup>4)</sup>**

I have presented three different accounts of a local family conflict: a blood conflict that involved everyone in the community. This disruptive period, in the end, established the institution of *caciquismo* (local bosses) which consolidated the Ortega family as the dominant family in Nextipac. State intervention turned out to be part of this history of the local community. The success and legitimacy of the gun-battles depended on how many families were convinced by the Ortega case that the Rosales-Cardenas had prevented agricultural modernisation and political participation in Nextipac. Conflicts in Nextipac had been centred around issues of resource control and government contacts. The Ortega's had established themselves as the

only representatives of the *ejido* in their dealings with the state. They controlled the agenda of local issues and negotiated with government agencies over the implementation of policies.

The Ortega's image as progressive actors was created as a result of their contacts with the state. During the 1930's the government promoted a programme to use fertilizers in the Tesisitan Valley (Zapopan). The programme was supported by the National *ejido* Bank which provided loans to producers to buy machinery, animals and to improve the infrastructure of the *ejidos*. After 4 years of operation the effects of this programme radically altered the lives of some peasant families. The impact of the programme resulted in improved agricultural practices. Families like the Ortega's were able to use their local political influence to monopolize the benefits of modernization and present themselves as innovators. Later, during the 1960's, the government mounted another campaign to provide technical assistance to the producers, and to diffuse the use of fertilizers. Local community conflicts can be seen as an important contingency preceding agricultural modernisation that provided the social conditions for producers who had been able to establish privileged access to resources and authority in the *ejido* to advance. During the 1960's the aim of the modernisation programme was more the diffusion of agricultural technology than land distribution.

Understanding the history of gun-battles and family blood feuds of Nextipac, is necessary for any official trying to implement an agricultural policy. Without this local translation of development sequences, it is impossible to see how the Ortega's could have increased their own interests with each 'new' government intervention. In this sense, state modernization programmes had to work with those producers who were in a position to act as innovators, and these were usually the producers controlling the political process in communities like Nextipac. In the process, their political control was reinforced and consolidated in a changing relation between state and *ejido*.

However, this situation remained highly unstable politically, because the Rosales-Cardenas continued to bear malice towards the Ortega's and were therefore constantly trying to erode the political framework of the *ejido*, trying to discredit the Ortega's in the eyes of government agencies so that the government would one day transfer recognition to them.

## Credit

The affiliation of producers to different credit institutions was directly associated with local politics in Nextipac. This was a major obstacle to incorporating large numbers of producers into the process of rural development in the community. This was confirmed by Don Jose Torres (the *ejido* President) when I asked what had happened to the credit from Banrural:

"I don't know anything about that credit. I have to wait for the *tecnico* from the SARH to come to my house and tell me when I may go to collect the

agricultural inputs from the bank. There is no point in going there and putting pressure on the Banrural personnel. That is not my job, it's the responsibility of the *tecnico*, because no one listens to me in the bank office."

Don Jose's comment that it was the agricultural agency's (SARH) responsibility to put pressure on the financial agency, prompted me to investigate how the credit system worked in practice. I wanted to assess to what extent *ejidal* pressure was important in the delivery of credit, so I went to the bank to see for myself.

The rainfed district's *tecnicos* arrived at the Guadalajara office of Banrural at around 10am. Some *ejidal* presidents arrived with them. Immediately, presidents and *tecnicos* exchanged ideas about the best way to present the *ejido*'s petitions and the best way to ask for an increase in *ejido* loans and to obtain extra time for those producers who had been unable to totally repay their loans. The *ejido* presidents were able during these discussions to put pressure on the *tecnicos* or fieldworkers to get what the *ejido* producers wanted. In some ways they were setting the agenda for the SARH field staff in their dealing with bank officials. Some *ejido* presidents, prior to the meeting at the bank, had gone to the head of the unit who was writing reports in his office. The presidents of the *ejidos* were very active in presenting their communities as important contributors to the agricultural plan, and therefore sound units in financial terms.

Observing the interactions over credit, I concluded that it was important for an *ejidal* president to be present when the SARH fieldworkers dealt with the bank. Important decisions were made at these meetings relating to credit. A president who attended such a meeting was in a position to know immediately the quantity of the loan and the date of the money's arrival, which helped lessen anxiety and helped them to plan their agricultural tasks better. The field personnel of the SARH also liked the presidents of the *ejidos* to be there with them at the bank. It was an opportunity to show the producers that it was the bank personnel and not the *tecnico* who was responsible for the credit delay. Some of the *tecnicos* pointed out that after the *ejido* presidents started to go to the bank they noted an immediate improvement in their working relations with producers.

The complaint that Don Jose was not interested in trying to get credit into the *ejido* more quickly was justifiable, as he was not a Banrural client, and did not go to the presidents to plead their cause at the bank. He argued that it was not his fault that Banrural was inefficient. In fact, Don Jose saw no individual benefit in putting pressure upon the official system. To do so was time consuming, and would directly benefit the opposite political group in the *ejido*. Thus, producers affiliated to Banrural found themselves without a political representative to defend their interests with the official agency.

One of the main obstacles to a more equal development in the locality was the Ortega family's ability to control the local political system, and to block or delay official credit, thus demobilising the institutional context from reaching the opposite network in Nextipac.

## Actors' Ties with Corruptive Practices

The case of Nextipac shows a dominant local group participating in the modernisation of agriculture, and at the same time contributing to *ejido* inequalities. Local politics and credit have been the main motors of this process. This polarization was one of the central problems faced by the implementors of the SAM programme, not least because the SAM document perceived *ejido* producers as a homogeneous group who collectively promoted their interests. This was not the case in Nextipac. Nor did the way in which agencies operated according to an institutional time table rather than according to the local agricultural calendar, help to improve the situation of the poorest households. On the contrary, it served to reproduce existing social relations. The advantages of agricultural modernisation offered by the SAM were not received by the more needy sectors of the *ejido*, even when some of these producers were integrated into the official network of services.

After the producers had harvested their maize, they had to deal with the corruption of institutional agencies which squeezed producer benefits. Don Iginio described some of the usual situations which a producer like himself experienced due to the existing distribution of political power.

"For me it is better to sell my maize to CONASUPO [the state agency for commercialisation], but this is not an easy thing to do. You have to learn how to deal with the official system. Everything starts with the arrival of the truck at the depot. The analyst comes to the truck and takes between five to six samples of the grain to test for humidity. Each sample weighs around 20 kilos. The analyst fills his bag because he never returns the tested grain. After the test he comes to us and starts to bargain. The first thing he will say is that the grain is no good; that it is too humid (up to 60 or 70%), arguing that the maize is not up to CONASUPO requirements.

The analyst can reject the maize, and if he does that, the only solution for us is to sell the grain to the middleman in Tesistan (Cristobal), who pays us less per ton than CONASUPO, and as I have to pay the price of transport and the time of the driver waiting at the depot, it is much better for me to give a *mordida* (bribe) to the analyst. I need to pay two to three thousand pesos to get my maize accepted. After the payment, the analyst will look again at the grain and reduce the percentage of excess humidity to an acceptable level (20% or 30%)."

Don Eleuterio adds:

"CONASUPO makes it its business to reject the grain. Last year they rejected 30 tons of mine. So I had to take the maize to Cristobal Alvarez. He gave me 15,000 pesos per ton, but, as I had to take the maize from Santa Cruz to Tesistan I lost 7,000 pesos in transport. I can assure you, there is an agreement between Cristobal and CONASUPO. The agreement is that CONASUPO rejects maize so Cristobal can buy. *El Guero* (Cristobal) then sells to CONASUPO at the official price. His business is to mix good and bad maize and sell that to the government. We don't have

trucks, and so to sell the maize we have to contract transport. The drivers always take the maize to Cristobal because they say that with CONASUPO they have to wait long hours and never get paid the same day. Transporters need their money quickly, so they take the maize to the middleman in Tesistan and only tell you later. But we need money to pay the labourers or for the machinery, so even we have to sell two or three tons to the middleman to keep the harvest going. The solution would be for CONASUPO to pay us the same day we deliver the maize."

Internal community conflicts and the operational procedures of the agencies constitute a context which has to be altered if the producers' social and economic position in Nextipac is to be improved. In the next section I want to evaluate the effect of the technical assistance programme during the period of the SAM programme.

### The District's Official Representation of Zapopan

In the *Actas Municipales de Programacion y Evaluacion* (Official Minutes of Municipal Meetings to Evaluate Programmes), Nextipac is represented as a calm and not so visible *ejido*. When I examined these documents to see the degree of participation of the *ejidos* during the SAM programme, I found no substantial participation of Nextipac at the meetings. As this was the level at which communities met different agencies and could openly ask for improvements, or even criticize the authorities, the relative silence of Nextipac was surprising. In general, the minutes from Zapopan were dull. They showed, on paper at least, a municipality free from social and political problems; a total contrast with the minutes of other municipalities under study. After I became familiar with the case of Nextipac, it became clear to me that either the meetings, or the writing of the minutes had been manipulated. However, it must be said, that among producers there was a clear lack of motivation to participate in meetings with government officials.

Not only did Nextipac seem a calm, unproblematic *ejido* according to district's documents, it also seemed to avail of the ideal conditions for implementation of the SAM policy. All the basic preconditions for the agronomic approach were present there. It was an *ejido* of the metropolitan area of Guadalajara in which no communications or access problems existed, and producers usually presented themselves as an example of innovation.

The representation of Nextipac as a calm, promising *ejido* is sharply contrasted with the views of the *tecnicos* and the producers. The appearance of calm presented in the official reports and official minutes did not reflect the social and political reality of the producers. Their demoralisation, and lack of confidence in state agencies was a feeling based on their own experiences.

According to my survey, of the 47 producers interviewed in Nextipac, 26 said they had not received technical assistance. This high proportion (56%), unassisted after seven years of district operations, not only pointed to the limitations of SAM,

but also to the lack of effectiveness of the whole rainfed policy. The producers who denied receiving technical assistance pointed to a degree of failure on the part of fieldworkers in implementing the SAM policy. On the other hand, the *tecnicos* in the field unit had their own interpretations of the reasons for the failure. Let us first consider the *tecnico's* point of view.

### The *Tecnicos'* Views of Zapopan

When the *tecnicos* of the Zapopan unit discussed their work, they always expressed keen awareness of the political relations between producers and the district. They considered it very difficult to work in this municipality. This was because, according to them, producers were *grillos* who knew how to manipulate policy and the *tecnicos*. The personnel complained that producers were always putting them under pressure, and this situation created feelings of insecurity that prevented them from carrying out institutional policies.

"In Zapopan, people outside of the Ministry have more influence than the *tecnicos*. They have the power to get *tecnicos* transferred from one area to another, or even to make life in the district very difficult for us. So, our first rule here is not to antagonise the local authorities or the dominant political groups. But one should also resist manipulation by these people, whose only interest is in getting benefits for their own personal gain. Here in Zapopan even the head of the unit has to be a *grillo* and this makes him very important within the district and with the regional representative of the Ministry."

The political nature of their job puts constraints on fieldworkers, but could also turn in their favour. In the SARH district, the Municipality of Zapopan was considered an important place for personnel to make long term political contacts with high ranking authorities of the National Confederation of Peasants, or the Jalisco PRI via the President of the Municipality. Nevertheless, the SARH staff considered Zapopan the most difficult political place in the district, and Nextipac as one of the most critical points of the municipality. One of their major problems was gaining the trust of the producers.

"It is very difficult to win the *confianza* of the producers here. In the *ejidos* there are key people (*personas claves*) who we have to win over so they can spread *confianza* among the others. But this work is hard in Zapopan, because producers don't believe in the government any more. If we want to do a good job in these communities we have to dedicate our whole time to that. But our economic insecurity in the Ministry does not provide any incentive to do so. In other words, the Ministry behaves as though it pays us and we act as though we are working (*El Ministerio hace como que nos paga y nosotros hacemos como que trabajamos*)."

The *tecnicos* complained about the lack of institutional backing in their confrontations with producers or the actions of other agencies. They rejected

producer criticism, because they said producers always expected government personnel to solve all their problems.

"It is true that producers in Zapopan expect more from us, but they don't value our technical advice. The only thing which concerns producers here is getting credit. So they give much more importance to the bank than to us. If we were to rank the agencies, I feel sure that the bank would be first, second would come insurance, then the agrarian reform and last the SARH. The only thing that makes us different from the other agencies is that, having more personnel, we are seen more in the field. So, we are the ones to receive all the complaints but none of the credit."

In the mind of fieldworkers, the political situation added to this problem. As one of them pointed out, the political character of the Municipality compels the supervisor of the district to go to the *ejidos* and promise wonderful programmes, thereby creating expectations among the producers.

"But, after the meeting, the supervisor and his promises usually disappear and it is we *tecnicos* who have to confront the anger and disillusion of the producers. These supervisors should know the financial constraints of the district before they go to the field and make empty promises. They should realize that with this type of action they are increasing the mistrust of producers towards the Ministry and, in the long term, they are damaging the relationship between producer and *tecnicos*. If we don't perform better, it is because the district expects unrealistic things from us."

The lack of trust among producers seemed to be furthered by their own doubts about what they had to offer. "To be honest", said one,

"In Zapopan producers can improve their agricultural technology by themselves and if they need us, it is just for reassurance that what they are doing is ok. The more market orientated, about 20% to 30% of the producers, have very high levels of agricultural technology. The other 60% or so follow only half of our recommendations, and the rest, either because they don't have economic resources, or through negligence, don't apply our recommendations at all."

Other *tecnicos* more bluntly argued that it was impossible for them to provide a more efficient service while unlike the bank, they lacked the means to compel producers to follow their recommendations. Another argument put forward to explain the lack of follow-up of their recommendations was the behaviour of the bank which, according to them, did not provide the *ejidatarios* with enough credit to purchase the level of inputs recommended in the technological package; so their technical assistance could not deliver the expected results.

In general, the *tecnicos* concluded that their bad performance in Zapopan was a result of the specific conditions of the Municipality; all of which worked against the development of *confianza* between producers and fieldworkers.

## Producers' Perceptions of the *Técnicos*' Performance

The *técnico* from the SARH was seen as being part of the local political context, i.e. he was seen to favour the dominant political group. Many producers felt that the *técnicos* were simply not available to them, others expressed strong criticisms of their performance.

In exploring the social field in which technical assistance had been operating in the *ejido*, I asked the producers if they knew the name of their *técnico*. I thought this would be an indicator of the degree of *técnico* involvement in the *ejido* and of the producers' personal *confianza* or trust. At the same time, a more general question was put, asking whether producers thought they had received technical assistance, under the assumption that it was possible to provide a kind of technical assistance without other commitments. The result of these questions are presented in Table 3.

The replies indicate that the degree of trust between producers and *técnico* was low. Despite this, more than a third of the sample acknowledged having received technical assistance, indicating that a significant number of producers had some sort of contacts with the Ministry. To explore the nature of these contacts further, I analyzed assistance - what it meant to those 20 people who claimed to have received it, and how they perceived their relation with the *técnicos*, considering that only seven of the 20 respondents receiving assistance actually knew the name of the *técnico*. The large number of producers who, in spite of receiving technical assistance, did not know the name of the *técnico*, suggested that the relationship between producers and *técnico* was of an impersonal nature and could be a factor affecting the technical assistance programme.

Table 3: *Producer Perceptions of the técnico and of the Technical Assistance Programme*

	YES	%	NO	%	N
Do you know the name of your <i>técnico</i> ?	7	15%	39	85%	46
Have you received technical assistance?	20	44%	26	56%	46

To establish an indication of the level of *confianza*, the 20 producers under the programme were asked where they would go for assistance in a case of crop or livestock emergency (see Table 4).

Table 4: Producers' Attitudes towards Technical Assistance in an Emergency N=20

	Relatives Neighbours Friends	<i>tecnico</i> SARH	They solve the problems themselves	Don't know
Where do you get assistance in an emergency?	9 45%	7 35%	3 15%	1 5%

Producers showed preference in favour of seeking advice from their families or friends. However, if the responses of the whole group are examined, then 13 out of the 20 producers (65%) responded that they would not use the *tecnico*'s services in an emergency. The reasons can be seen in the Table 5.

Table 5: Why Producers don't use Technical Assistance in Emergencies

I don't know where to find the <i>tecnico</i>	5	39%
Because <i>tecnicos</i> don't give good advice	1	8%
They never came to see our crops	1	8%
Don't know	6	46%

N=13

As one can see, the majority did not know where to find the *tecnico*, or did not know why they would seek such aid. In these responses only two producers clearly rejected technical assistance. The question then becomes why *tecnicos* do not reach producers or convince them of the benefits of their services. This seems partly to be related to problems of communication, to limited access to information and a limited presence of *tecnicos*. It may also relate to the fieldworkers' own observation that their knowledge does not contribute much more than what the producers already know. Further interviews with producers also pointed to another factor, namely that the access to *tecnicos*' services is monopolized by certain sectors of the *ejidatarios*.

### Producers' Views About SARH Institutional Performance

Don Felipe Vidal said: "It is a rare opportunity when we receive a visit of the *tecnicos* from the SARH. I would like to have more technical help to produce maize". Don Bernardo Olivares added: "The *tecnicos* from the SARH always promise to help us, but they never come to see our crops and I wonder if there is a way to say this to the proper authorities". Don Jose Rivera, a producer with a good economic position, who belonged to the dominant sector of the community stated: "I have never had technical assistance from the SARH, but that doesn't worry me, because I believe that every producer has to know his soil and obtain the necessary resources for himself. I use the bank PROMEX, and they lend me money without asking me to insure my crop."

Thus, some producers, although critical of the technical service, would like to

receive help on a more regular basis. Others though consider agricultural difficulties to be a matter of personal responsibility. This last position challenges the right of government to intervene in producers' conditions and suggests that nothing is wrong with the existing set of institution-producer relations. Such a stance suggests that the dominant producers would only accept technical assistance to improve general conditions, but would not support any intervention that would affect a more equal distribution of resources and allocate power more democratically in the community.

The coexistence of these two different perceptions of the role of government intervention creates problems for the implementation of a rural policy, especially for the SAM, which tended to see *ejidatarios* in an a-historical way, and as a homogeneous group. Therefore, issues of local political control must be understood as part of the process affecting the achievement of rural policies. Contrary to official assumptions, the implementation of rural policies is not a neutral act and they do not benefit all producers equally. In Nextipac some producers saw fieldworkers as collaborating with the dominant group. Don Carlos Alvarez summarized this attitude:

"The *ejido* is controlled by a group of producers who manipulate community meetings and vote only in favour of things that benefit them. That is why I don't go to the meetings any more. The opinion of the *ejidatarios* has no value in Nextipac. During the SAM, the bonus scheme (subsidies) gives us extra financial help. The bonuses are administrated under strict card control. But there are still producers who don't know about the scheme. The lack of information is because the bonuses were under Banrural control, and their field inspector used to charge us a commission, because according to him he had to do extra paper work to claim the subsidies for us.

The inspector and the *caciques* worked closely in the *ejido* to redirect some of the benefits of the SAM to themselves. The field inspector from ANAGSA (the agricultural insurance agency) was always asking us for money to report healthy hectares as affected ones. All this was done in agreement with the President, but something must have happened between them, and the inspector was removed from the community.

The *tecnico* from SARH is controlled by the *caciques*. Last year the *ejido* was allocated a water tank. This never arrived. It was sold by the *tecnico* for 10.000 pesos to the *cacique* group. We don't have technical assistance, I don't know the name of our *tecnico*. When people need advice or money they go to see the *cacique*. *Caciques* are producers who have more land than the rest of the *ejidatarios* and make profit from selling fertilizers to the other producers who then pay more for them than in Guadalajara. These people have very good political relations with the inspectors and the *tecnico* and it is they who have benefited most from government help because they have the political control of the pueblo."

Don Carlos presents a reality in which political control of the *ejido* by one group of *ejidatarios* has stopped agencies from reaching the more needy producers. He believes that the agencies have supported the continuation of unequal social relations

in the community. This reinforcement, which may be an unintended consequence from the government's perspective, is certainly not seen as being politically neutral from the viewpoint of the subordinated producers. In Nextipac, agricultural technology was not the bottleneck affecting producer accumulation, rather it was the encapsulation of the ejidatario labour force within the local political power relations prevailing that determined their ability to achieve progress and economic development.

In this context, the fieldworker, armed with the 'agricultural technological package' had not the capacity to deal with the '*ejido* social problems package'. Without *confianza* between agencies and grass roots producers, fieldworkers could not contribute to removing those obstacles that mitigated against producer's self determination. The SAM failed to rearrange the existing set of political and economic interactions at local level. The new 'era of agricultural production' during the 1970's was unable to bring into communities like Nextipac a new political legitimacy for people's participation and a more equal distribution of resources and benefits. In the end, technocratic intervention was unable to separate itself from social conflicts and people's memories of their own past.

## Conclusion

The main objective in this chapter was to show that the nature of agricultural policy (SAM) did not coincide with the complex and diverse character of the social factors operating at local level in Mexico (in this case Nextipac). These social factors turned out to be central to producers' responses to the SAM, as well as to the producers' creation of strategies and their individual perceptions of risks and trust. The political activity, or lack of activity, of '*ejido* authorities' when representing the community, made clear that they were unable, in their contacts with the state, to represent the full range of economic and political interests that existed at local level. Although these social factors may be of historical origin and political in nature, the point is that technocratic policies alone can never be sufficient to achieve particular objectives, such as self-sufficiency in grain.

In principle, any state policy can always be interpreted in alternative ways. The experiences and beliefs of producers form their political and institutional reality. Their ideas, actions and projects are also partly influenced by the social context in which they are assessed. Thus the implementation of SAM in Nextipac was not simply a reflection of how the policy implementation had to proceed. The process of policy implementation underlined the way in which the *ejido* had achieved a degree of development in accordance with the local politico-institutional requirements. Similarly, we saw how the family vendettas were essential to the conflict over resources, although they did not uniquely determine the outcome of this conflict, nor the representations which the actors held about the role of the state and rural development.

I want to conclude by saying that when a rural policy is implemented, the

emerging outcome of the policy is partly assembled by the experiences and beliefs of the producers. This social component may be a simple matter of trust and respect among the different actors. Nevertheless, the assessment of the fieldworkers' skill and commitment are usually associated with their perceived status as 'outsiders' to the community. This factor plays an important part in the interface between fieldworkers and producers.

In Nextipac, no firm boundary can be drawn around the social issues used by producers in the course of translating the SAM policy to their own reality. No clear distinction divided internal and external factors. When a policy effects the social life of people, then an analysis of policy implementation and a look at community conflicts helps us to understand the importance of local events in rural development.

Policy implementation is more of a social construct than most academics or government policy makers have been willing to admit. This is not just a dispute about whether local groups influence rational policy in the process of policy implementation, or whether national policy always manages to incorporate local groups and people into a system of central control. I found a focus on the different actors' speech-acts in the study of policy implementation a useful way to examine why policy does or does not achieve its objectives. This perspective may have some implications for policy formulation and policy implementation. The Nextipac case suggests that policy decision makers should take into account the impact of social and political influences on apparently 'technocratic' agronomic approaches.

## Notes

1. The sample covered approximately one third of the total households in Nextipac and was carried out during 1983-1984.
2. Tractor mechanization in Zapopan increased between 1950 to 1960 by 85.6%, then during the 1960-1970 decade the level of mechanization decreased to 52.6%, and later between 1970-1982 dropping by 14.2%.

In 1970, Jalisco's government formulated its Sub-regional and Municipal programme to organise the allocation of public resources. The aim was to support a policy of economic poles to create jobs, distribute income and social welfare (DEEJ, 1973).

In 1975 the Agricultural Plan of Jalisco pointed out that changes in cropping practices had resulted in a decrease in the production of peanuts and camotes (sweet potatoes) during 1960-1971, whereas the production of vegetables had increased, as had the production of *agave* for tequila. Maize, nonetheless, still constituted the most important crop in the region with 87.4% of the total area under cultivation (DEEJ, 1975). This was a source of concern for the planners who wanted an increase in the production of crops with more commercial value.

In summary, during the 1970's, government policy was: "to take control of nature and embark upon an era breaking with the natural inertia of geography and history in order to modify the traditional forms that have enclosed the people of Jalisco in its physical environment" (DEEJ, 1973).

3. The level of technology was based on sample survey data for one third of the households. In order to measure the level of household technology I assigned a value to each of the 7 agricultural operations, according to the technology involved in each of the 7 operations: *barbecho*, *rastreo*, *siembra*, *fertilizacion*, *escarda*, *deshierbe* y *cosecha*. I assigned equivalent values to each operation (14 points). The rationale behind the specific values assigned is as

follows: all producers use some degree of modern inputs. However, it is in the use of tractors, animals, family labour or wage labour that differences can be noted. On this basis, households scoring between 98 and 84 points were households with a high technological level, using tractors, improved seeds and wage labour. Households with 56 to 83 points have an intermediate level of technology, usually combining the use of tractor (rented), animals, wage labour and family labour, according to specific circumstances. Households with 14 to 55 points have a low level of agricultural technology: they combine the use of improved or local seeds according to conditions such as credit, market demands or local knowledge about the expected rainfall; they usually use animal and family labour in the production process, although, in the peak periods of production, they sometimes contract wage labour or organize working groups which operate on a reciprocal basis.

4. For an extended analysis of the history of the community of Nextipac, see Arce (1986).

## 7. THE *EJIDO* LOMAS DE TEJEDA: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (SAM) AND LOCALISED SOCIAL NETWORKS

### Images

There I was, in the main square of Tlajomulco, one of the municipalities of District No.1, observing the modern agricultural machinery standing on the cobbled streets in front of the sun-dried brick houses. In the spaces where the households used to keep their livestock, large sheds had been erected as garages for the machinery or converted into grain store-houses.

The three most important buildings were the church, the new market, still under construction, and the municipality hall. The church constructed with sun-dried bricks, represented the colonial past, quickly disappearing. The municipal hall had, after a fire, been renovated with modern bricks and concrete. The future, without any doubt, was represented by the radical design of the central market: A building, which in contrast to the traditional architecture, delivered a cold sense of functionality, which broke my image of what I expected to find in a Jalisco provincial town.

At 8 kilometres from the municipal town, we find the *ejido* of Lomas de Tejeda. The *ejido* consists of 1.295 hectares of land, distributed among 105 families. In their oral history, the producers recall that around 1800 a wave of people from Los Altos de Jalisco arrived in the community and that surnames such as Nuño, Gonzales, Marquez and Chavez have their origin there. Producers are proud of this connection and attribute to this inheritance their entrepreneurial desire for progress. This entrepreneurial spirit is expressed in the fact that many producers combine their agricultural activities with trade. There are 40 heavy trucks in the *ejido* and they control the transporting of cargo for the whole municipality of Tlajomulco. Since 1948, the *ejido* of Lomas de Tejeda has been involved in government-promoted export cultivation, first peanuts and later sorghum. Since the decline of export opportunities, maize has once again become the major crop grown in the *ejido*. Producers are obviously proud of what they have achieved: "We usually start to work at four or five in the morning ploughing the land, while the rest of the municipality is still asleep". They are equally proud of their capacity to innovate: "If we see that some new idea is good, almost immediately all the community follows it". Lomas de Tejeda is not an homogeneous *ejido*, since there are internal differences in its social and economic stratification. Yet, the family is still an important focal point for the organization of agriculture and business.

These are some of the characteristics of Lomas de Tejeda, which contributed to the selection of the *ejido* for a pilot project under the SAM. This project is the central topic of this chapter.

## Social Construction of a Project

The contribution of a social constructivist analysis to development studies is its focus on social actors experiencing development situations. This approach allows us to ask questions about the social relevance of agricultural development projects in society. Are these 'projects to transform society' or just a particular 'technocratic strategy' (Elwert and Bierschenk, 1988)? Are these projects formulated to expand people's existing choices or just another institutional restriction which sets priorities for the allocation of resources?

This chapter argues that the meanings of development projects are to be found within the social networks, rather than in the specific cycle, of a project. Focusing on the social networks of a project represents a shift away from project cycle appraisal analysis common to development studies. Such a perspective concerns itself with the peculiarities of the project's social situation and with the social construction of the project from the point of view of the participation of different actors. The latter's interactions, transactions and interfaces are not seen in this approach as the inevitable outcomes of a specific mode of state organisation; nor the results of the material way production is organised (Adams, 1990; Porter, Allan and Thompson, 1991).

On the other hand, explanations of people's reactions to projects in terms of their resistance to uni-dimensional expressions simplifies how social situations are constructed. This type of perspective has blocked for too long the importance of the possibilities that actors' practices generate, when they combine different sets of relationships, interests and notions. In fact, actors' practices construct a local social field that provides the range and meaning to the project *modus operandi*. Among other things, this allows actors to form social networks within the 'project community'. The significance of these networks in a particular project situation depends on the local distribution of power and on the modes of legitimation available to the actors.

## The Social Life of a Project

My analysis begins, then, from the premise that a rural project is constituted of a complex set of relationships, interests and ideas that are socially defined by the different actors involved. This process stimulates the formation of heterogeneous and often conflicting views about intervention at local level. These views are the outcome of how actors' perceive their possibilities for manoeuvre and discourse within the social field of the project. Actors are, in their own right, able to provide a mapping out of the possible effects of the project, and to propose alternative strategies. They also contribute through their local interactions to the setting up the instrumental activities of the project, reducing in practice the existing choices of the experts in charge of project implementation. In this way, the implementation of project procedures involves the local translation and understanding of a number of

social, situational, cultural and institutional conditions. These constitute the social life of the project which penetrates the political and administrative contexts of the project. Internal and external factors fuse together making it difficult for the experts to predict outcomes and manipulate situations. The blueprints and guidelines of the project become too simple to predict the 'realities' of rural transformation. Critical problems arise at the phases of inducement, transformation and sustainability of a project, each phase generating new 'properties' from the social interactions, transactions and interfaces within the social field. These properties set in motion a battlefield, in which actors' struggle for the right to define the identity of these emergent social forms and commitments. Hence a struggle for control is set off through the activities and social constructions operating within the project.

### The Project Assumptions

In this chapter, I analyze the social life of one of the SAM's 'pilot modernisation pilot projects' in Western Mexico. The project aimed at improving maize production through the incorporation of new rainfed agricultural technology and involved Mexican and Hungarian 'know-how'.

In 1980, a Hungarian technical mission followed the 1977 visit of the then Mexican President López Portillo to Eastern Europe. The arrival of the Hungarian agricultural experts in Mexico was perceived as a 'technical intervention' that would provide practical legitimacy to the SAM policy of grain self-sufficiency, launched in March 1980.

Perhaps it is important to ask why Mexican political decision makers opted to ask the advice of 'socialist' agricultural experts. This decision was, it seems, designated to convey the message that the Mexican government wished to present itself as independent of the technical influences of the USA. In implementing the SAM the government also wanted to show a strong political commitment to solving the technological bottleneck among Mexican rainfed cultivators. Politically, the need to increase rainfed maize production was associated with both the national and international situation of Mexico at that particular moment. Thus, the 'modernisation' of rainfed rural production and the introduction of 'Hungarian (socialist)' technology became two significant symbols within a nationalistic discourse that articulated the Mexican Food Policy (SAM) and the need for food security.

This new development discourse was expected to become a catalyst of different Mexican interests. It was symbolically oriented to touch a popular notion of 'Mexicanhood' in development: namely the generally negative feelings against the 'gringos' (Americans), and the populist historical version that peasant interests have been the cornerstone of the Mexican revolution. The Hungarian government, probably unaware of the political and cultural significance of this scientific and technical cooperation, assigned the task of implementing the Mexico-Hungary agreement to the agrarian cooperative *Agrover*.<sup>4</sup>

From the moment of their arrival, the Hungarian experts identified Mexico's rainfed agricultural problems as lying with the organisation of production, rather than due to a lack of technology. Hence, *Agrover* proposed that the production of maize should be organised collectively. This was the Hungarian 'ready-made' contribution to solving local rainfed agricultural problems. As the Hungarian technical strategy was heavily based on the use of modern agricultural inputs and homogenisation of production practices, for the project implementers these two factors became a central aspect of the project.

Hungarian technical management was directed at realising the full potential of the soil in selected areas in order to increase production. The technological package approach, which characterised the SAM as a whole, thus found its ultimate expression in the *Agrover* project. The technological optimisation of production slowly became the main 'mode of project operation'. In this, the standardisation of agricultural practices was a technical means to achieve better productivity, as well as to constrain the producers' ability to make individual decisions. The Hungarian management system assumed that the criteria of efficiency should be somehow linked to the requisition of the producer's will. With these assumptions, the inducement phase of the project focused on deploying among producers the notion that cultivators could benefit economically from handing over to the project experts the organisation of labour and the capacity to make productive decisions.

The rationale for the collective organisation of the project was, paradoxically, founded on a particular assumption about the level of commoditization of Mexican society. *Agrover* based its strategy on the assumption that the impact of commoditization in rural Mexican society was complete and totally consolidated, and it was taken for granted that value-relations among producers could be entirely expressed in monetary terms. While it was acknowledged that the commoditization had resulted in social discontinuities and socio-economic differentiation - totally outside of the producers' control - the project nonetheless claimed that these discontinuities could be bridged by using the same idiom of money. Therefore, the jargon of money-benefits was viewed as the means to realise the 'new transformation', which included the transfer of production control from cultivators to project administrators.

In practice, this meant that the project offered cultivators a rent for the use of their land during the period of project implementation. The project would make use of the producers' labour, for which they would be paid a wage according to legal regulations. As the administrators emphasized at the end of the harvest, after all costs had been covered, the remaining benefits would be distributed among the cultivators participating in the project. The separation of the rural producers from their agricultural land was not expected to have a dramatic effect on the life-world of the cultivators. Such a 'planistrators' (see Apthorpe, 1970) perception of 'reality' was adopted with total disregard for the historical economic context of land and capital scarcity, which had for generations forged the reality of the small Mexican cultivator.

The experts realised that socio-cultural factors could influence the producers' reactions to the project design and implementation. So they actively involved themselves in identifying political, economic and environmental constraints to intervention. In doing this, they came face to face with the issue of social control. Thus the experts realised that the capacity to achieve project goals was going to be defined in the sphere of social relations, which implied that the issue of power then acquired central significance in relation to 'management control'.

Management control was established in the realm of rural producer participation. In line with project assumptions, participation was defined as the instrumental involvement of the cultivators in the process of social development that would produce no problems for management so long as the project operated according to the logic of the perceived commoditization of social relations and marketing strategies prevailing among producers in Western Mexico. In short, participation was seen, uncritically, as a 'social fact' capable of being manipulated through the offering of monetary rewards.

Hence, the paradigmatic dimensions of this project were the issue of how management control was conceptualised, and how the cultivator's source of power was seen as controllable. The rural producer's reality was considered as venal and producer participation thus had to be organized 'from above'. Project decision makers defined a strategy of intervention based on theoretical assumptions of how society was supposed to work. This reification of producers' social relations led them to deny the significance of differential responses to capitalist penetration in the agrarian sector of Western Mexico.

### From Project Origins to Project Arrangements

During the agricultural cycle of 1980-1981, *Agrover* (the Hungarian Cooperative) started its operations in the Municipality of Jocotepec in Jalisco. The Hungarian experts were 'located' within the complex administrative web of Mexican government institutions. Difficulties in coordination among the different government agencies of the Ministry of Agriculture (SARH), the Ministry of Agrarian Reform and the Agricultural Bank (Banrural) forced the programme into serious administrative problems during the initial period in one community. Evaluating this first experience, FIRA - the government financial agency for agriculture - concluded that the project should continue in another rural community but that changes in the administrative environment should be introduced, so as to avoid situations that had led to tensions within the management of the project (Wessman, 1982).

Following this evaluation, the government decided that FIRA should be the only agency involved in the handling of the 'Hungarian project'. Instructions were issued to FIRA to select a new site where the rainfed technology could be tested. According to one FIRA official, the agency decided to carry out this experiment in an area 'representative of maize production in Jalisco'. Moreover, as he explained:

"We wanted to test the effectiveness of the Hungarian technology, so we selected an area showing some problems with the production of maize".

The agricultural community of Lomas de Tejada was identified as having a thin layer of agricultural soil. But, as the official acknowledged, this was not the only *ejido* with this kind of problem, there being several communities in Jalisco with the same thing. In subsequent interviews with officials, a second important consideration became a significant factor for the agency, and that was the 'behaviour of the producers as credit subjects'. In this regard, Lomas de Tejada had an excellent record: first, because of its contacts with commercial banks and, second, because, from the 1960's onwards, rural producer credit had grown constantly.

Other lesser considerations, such as access to the area, were also part of the selection process. The most decisive consideration, however, was the agency's pre-condition that the selected area should be a community where producers had unanimously accepted the project. During the inducement phase of the project FIRA visited potential locations and explained the project to producers, tested their responses and eliminated those *ejidos* where many doubts were expressed, as these might eventually turn into opposition to the project.

In the end, Lomas de Tejada was the *ejido* that came nearest to fulfilling FIRA's selection criteria. The agency, therefore, opted to implement the project there. A FIRA fieldworker remembered his first impressions of Lomas de Tejada producers:

"They were receptive to change and eager to experiment with new techniques. Even so, I was worried that they were too politically motivated.

They were too close to the influence of Guadalajara city and, in this sense, they were more difficult to control than other peasants of Jalisco, who lived in more isolated conditions."

The FIRA fieldworker went on to say that organizing the project was very difficult, because producers bargained their affiliation according to their individual interests and, as the official admitted: "We had studied the locality from a technical point of view, but had ignored the social and political dynamic of the *ejido*".

To use Lomas de Tejada as a 'type-site' for the project, the agency had to offer inducements to overcome the producers' lack of confidence (*confianza*) in the project and gain their affiliation. FIRA persuaded producers by means of an insurance that covered 80% of the producers' loan. The insurance was negotiated on terms that, in the event of project failure, producers would receive the equivalent of 3.3 tonnes per hectare. This insurance was provided by ANAGSA (The State Insurance Company). An even more significant offer, however, was FIRA's commitment to finance the sinking of three wells which would transform a section of the *ejido* from rainfed into irrigated land.

A FIRA representative explained that during the inducement phase and for most of the first year, the Mexican officials had to pave the way for the Hungarians, so they could come and practice their technology.

## The Other Side of the Coin

The producers' perception of the inducement phase of the project was different. They claimed that the government had sent FIRA and *Agrover* to Lomas de Tejada because it was well known that this *ejido* had the highest productivity in the Municipality (between 4 to 7 tons per hectare): "They knew we produced good maize. That was why the government sent the *gabachos* [the foreign experts] here". Other producers argued that the *Agrover* project was sent to the community because the regional government of Jalisco had political confidence in the *ejido*: "they knew that we were supporters of the *Liga Agraria* (Agrarian League) and the PRI". An important part of the political power of the municipality was concentrated in this *ejido*. A Lomas de Tejada producer was the top leader of regional PRI and the presidency of the Confederation of Tlajomulco *ejidos* was given to the ex-*ejidal* president of Lomas de Tejada. These and other political relations were used to bring development to the *ejido*.

According to the producers, when the FIRA official arrived in the *ejido*, they organised several meetings with members of the community which led to the agreement to carry out the pilot project for a period of three years. The agrarian community was made up of 105 *ejidatarios*. Of these, 97 joined the project, of whom 11 committed only half of their land to the project because they were already receiving credit from Banrural and could not terminate their financial commitments overnight. The rest of the producers, who were receiving credit from the International Commercial Bank, contributed all their land to the project.

In this way the project took control of 500 hectares of rainfed *ejido* land, and the Hungarian field experts selected the land upon which they would work. This action motivated some friction with those producers who did not participate in the project, who questioned the knowledge of the experts and the significance of the project. As one of them said: "I didn't participate because the Hungarians only wanted to incorporate half of my land in the project, and leave me the land with more stones in it". The FIRA fieldworker confirmed that this kind of friction had existed. "Unfortunately" he said, "the nature of the project made the Hungarians reject all those plots where stones could halt the introduction of machinery".

The producers' representations of why they had been selected as the project location was clearly incongruent with the agency's assertion that Lomas de Tejada met the physical criteria of an adequate location. The producers' experience and knowledge of Mexican affairs led them to 'read' in the arrival of the project, the central government recognition that they were both economically viable producers of maize and politically loyal supporters. In the view of the producers, this recognition empowered them to question the legitimacy of technocratic considerations on the basis of their own experiences and social practice as cultivators. This discrepancy of knowledge and meaning between the administrators of the project and the producers became the social ground where the issue of project control (management) was located.

The end of the inducement phase was marked by the setting up of organisational arrangements and the signing of a legal contract between FIRA and some producers from the *ejido* Lomas de Tejada. The contract stipulated that rural producers would allow the Hungarian experts to try out their technology for a trial period of three years on their land, so as to increase the local production of maize.

## **A Reconsideration of the Inducement Phase**

The inducement phase allowed the administrators to set the normative framework for intervention. In this the effects of commoditization among rural producers were used to justify a form of management which considered the knowledge of rural producers as redundant. Their relation to land was seen as just a survival link, and stripped of any meaning that might connect land to relations of power, local knowledge and organisational traditions. The project form of management control appeared to perceive rural producers as passive recipients of externally imposed circumstances over which they had no control. In this sense, project intervention was conceptualised no differently from other types of external intervention and money was seen as the universal means to ease the transfer of control over production from the producers to the administrators. The project assumed that producers had ceased to regard agriculture as a relevant experience in their life-worlds. The assumptions of the interventionists provided no scope for discussion about producer participation within the project and this contributed to sowing seeds of conflict between the technical 'experts' and the rural producers.

## **The Process of Transformation**

So far, this chapter has dealt with the process of project inducement and the notions employed to define the 'model of intervention'. In contrast, the process of transformation deals with the implementation phase of the project and with bureaucrat and producer responses. The objective in this section is to analyze the process of social change emerging from institutional intervention.

The use of technological packages in the implementation of the project reduced rainfed production to a particular 'recipe'. This recipe approach disregarded any previous mode of transformation, and with it the body of knowledge, skills, orientations, experiences, and patterns of social interaction of rural producers. National political pressure for an increase in rainfed production encapsulated technical change in a linear representation and disconnected change from social, cultural and institutional situations. Rural producer responses to the project were an unwelcome challenge to the authoritative construction of rural change and 'progress'.

The nature of the interaction between producers and technocrats became a power struggle about whose knowledge was going to lead the pathway to progress.

Empirically, the project's conflictive communication was centred around the meaning of particular work tasks. Actors managed to identify and use cultural images from their own experience of agricultural production. They translated their alternative interpretations into practical terms to achieve an increase in production. The resulting agricultural technology emerged from a process of interaction between 'expert' knowledge and producer experience, in which elements of the new alternatives and the old ways, beliefs and images were reconstructed as contributions to the project or the life-world of the rural producer.

In the course of the project, opposing views around the meaning of work tasks became symbolic representations of a conflictive context of social action. The focus on working practices became a practical discourse, which disguised the underlying conflicts and could justify the need for experts to intervene or for producers to resist. The process of project transformation constituted a social field where the social construction of the 'facts', by experts and rural producers, threw up two contrasting systems of knowledge or agricultural know-how.

Agricultural transformations cannot be separated from a producer's behaviour and culture. Different conceptualisations and understandings of project 'facts' indicated that the transformation phase is a highly volatile moment in the social life of a project. In this case, project management was not convincing in diffusing technical systems among the rural producers. On the contrary, it was this 'black box' approach that generated strong opposition of interests at community level. The three years of the project were surrounded by social discontinuities embedded in the social forms, cultural values and technologies of project administrators and rural producers. It is these sort of gaps that lead us, finally, to critically examine the relevance of adopting agricultural technological packages in programmes like the SAM. The confrontation of alternative technologies opened up within the social life of the project and the *ejido*, a question mark about the 'social practicality' of change.

### Conflicts over Agricultural Practices

Two sets of representations were important in the project: The FIRA's perception that the Hungarians demonstrated discipline and devotion to the project, and the producers', which was that the Hungarians had much to learn because they did not know how to make use of local soil humidity to cultivate maize.

Producers acknowledged that the Hungarian system of applying fertilizer as they ploughed the land was an improvement on existing practices, but they were less convinced that an increase in herbicides was the way to control weeds. They claimed that this was expensive and ineffective, a judgement that was related to their experience with their own *beneficio practice* and their objections to its elimination. In *beneficio practice*, local cultivators sow in furrows, which when well cared for prevents the seeds from rotting, and stops the weeds from competing with the maize. Moreover, constant maintenance of the furrows provides good support for the roots

of the plant, helping it resist the strong winds. This practice is labour intensive. The project, to reduce costs, eliminated furrows altogether, selecting a hybrid maize more resistant to the winds and combatting weeds with herbicides. This made the *beneficio* practice superfluous. Producers argued that *beneficio* could not be evaluated simply in terms of labour productivity. According to them, it was good for soil conservation and weed control. It prevented the 'soil from becoming hard'. "The Hungarians", they said, "eliminated the *beneficio* and now we have to use machinery to open the hard soil every year".

FIRA acknowledged that the Hungarian *tecnicos* did not know the Mexican tradition of using the humidity of the soil for seed germination and that they became worried when producers started to sow deep (12 to 13 centimetres), because their manuals recommended sowing maize seeds at depths of not more than two or three centimetres.

Knowledge again arose as an issue over the practice of burning the maize stalks after the harvest. According to the producers this was done every two or three years to control pests and soil diseases. This practice was successfully stopped by the Hungarians, because, according to them it mineralized the soil. The Hungarian practice of mulching the stalks into the ground to produce nitrogen, brought the project into conflict with the few cattle dealers of the *ejido*, who used to use part of the maize stalks as free fodder for their animals. The majority of the community supported the experts in this confrontation, and together, they managed to terminate the influence of the livestock group.

The most significant area of conflict between producers and project administrators was over the organisation of labour. The labour of producers was needed for agricultural tasks by the project and this was paid for according to legal requirements, a state of affairs which provoked criticism from those producers who had supplied more land because, according to them, this increased the costs of the project. "Everything we did for the project was paid for, as if the land was not ours". Another criticism was that the project only rented (*maquila*) the tractors of a small group of producers "in spite of the fact that we have more than twenty producers with tractors, only six or seven got the benefits of the *maquila*". FIRA argued that this was not true, and that they were obliged to organise ploughing with the tractors available at any given time. "As many producers didn't want to work for the project, preferring to work on their own land first, we had to decide with whom we were going to work".

Producers recalled that during the first year of the project it rained during March, and because of this the community decided to sow at the end of that month. When the Hungarians learned of the community decision, they opposed it arguing that according to their agricultural calendar, sowing should take place in June. The Hungarians, with great difficulty, since they did not speak Spanish, explained that they were experts in rainfed maize production and that the *milpa* (maize plant) could not resist a month and a half in the soil without irrigation. One of the producers said:

"It was difficult to convince the *gabachos*, but we let them know that we were not just *temporaleros* (seasonal labourers), and that we knew how to use the humidity in the soil to make the seed germinate. We had two meetings and finally, even after they agreed, their disbelief made them write a letter saying that sowing was taking place against the technical advice of *Agrover*."

According to the producers, the harvest was excellent that year due to the good *temporal*. It surprised the Hungarians, and Lomas de Tejada became a model community. It was visited by representatives from Jalisco and authorities from Mexico, and, in the words of the producers: "Even the television came to film our good harvest. Everybody was talking about the wonders of Hungarian technology, while in the *ejido* we knew the truth - we had taught the Hungarians in that first year".

By the end of the first year, the social life of the project forced the experts to acknowledge the complexities of intervention and the significance of the social and cultural dimensions of agriculture. The process of transformation illuminated, with its contradictions, the enormous relevance of cultivator knowledge and the vitality of their position in society. Nevertheless, centres of public validation such as Mexican TV, came to the community and with its power delivered to the country 'the magical achievements of Hungarian technology'. These images of 'progress' justified the disregard for local agricultural knowledge and located the significance of the project far beyond the control of producers or local bureaucrats. The cult of 'modernisation' broadcast to the nation the mystical force of foreign technology and government intervention. What producers or bureaucrats might admit in private, from now on, was not accepted in public. The project had been declared a success. The process of project transformation from pilot to model of successful intervention generated an extension of the FIRA network of power into the whole system of agrarian agencies in Mexico, particularly on how to transform the Mexican bureaucracy into a highly efficient group of government implementers.

### **The Project as a Social Field: Climate, Social Networks, and Struggles**

Most of the project tensions of the first year continued into the following year, and some of them intensified. FIRA explains the origin of some of the conflicts as a result of the way in which the agency had affiliated producers to the project. "At the beginning of the project, we had to treat producers very well. The result was that they started to believe in themselves too much and they began to control us". They decided to correct this situation and:

"to let the producers see that they had to operate according to the same rules as other FIRA projects. We let them know that we would not deliver all their demands immediately. Producers were treating us as their labourers and those who were making the greatest number of petitions to the agency were the leaders against the project."

The producers who had disagreements with the project focused their criticisms upon the unjust organisation of agricultural tasks, saying that not all producers had the same chance to work for the project. The other main complaint was that producers did not receive enough information from FIRA about how their money was administered. The FIRA fieldworker complained that if "the accountant's report was delayed for institutional or technical reasons, producers demanded it as their right as members, just to create a problem. If the payment for the harvest was delayed, that was hell." But the producers presented a different version of the conflict. One of the participants in the project said:

"The *tecnicos* never explained how our money is spent. In fact we are not considered to be important in the project and finally, when the benefits are not what they promised us, the *tecnicos* never explain what has happened. We don't demand much, just a paper with the information on costs of production and profits per hectare, so that everybody knows what is going on."

During the second year, the project continued working the land collectively and the project increased the area cultivated to 700 hectares. The Cultipack, one of the machines most heavily criticised by the producers proved invaluable because that year the rains were late and the soil was like cement. This second year of the project (1982-1983) was affected by a poor *temporal* which reduced the production of maize. There was also an unexpected emergency caused by a plague that compelled the Hungarians to fumigate from the air. These two elements affected the profit of the harvest. Some producers, for the first time in their lives, could not repay their loans to the bank and they ascribed *la droga* (the debt) to the inefficient administration of the project (FIRA).

### The Final Year of the Project and Producers' Reactions

By the beginning of the third year in Lomas de Tejada, an important group of producers had turned against the project. FIRA recognized that problems started to disrupt the project at the end of the second year when a group of the producers wanted to leave the project and take back their land.

In the end, three groups of producers emerged, a) those in favour of continuing to work the land collectively with the project, b) those who wanted to continue receiving Hungarian technical assistance but wanted to work their own plots and administer their economic resources and c) and those who wanted to totally withdraw from the project. This latter group was unhappy both with FIRA administration and with the new technology.

In this final phase of the project, the general feeling of the producers was, that in spite of the effectiveness of the Hungarian technology, the cost per hectare made it impossible for the producers to use it. They argued that the increase in maize production had not brought them economic benefits; that the high costs per hectare had cancelled out any benefits from the increase in production, "Even a *tarugo*

(idiot) can increase maize production with those levels of agricultural inputs, but it takes a clever peasant to reduce costs while increasing production". Opposition to the project can be better understood from the data in Table 1, which shows that the cost per hectare of maize in the project increased 30 percent from 1981 to 1982, whereas the value of the crop increased by only 24.5 percent, indicating that the costs of production were higher than the commercial benefits. The solution to this would have been to increase the tonnage per hectare. Unfortunately, 1982 was a bad agricultural year, and production decreased by half a tonne per hectare. This represented a 13 percent drop in value compared to the previous year.

These circumstances severely affected the profits expected by producers. The profits of the project were compared to conditions for producing corn in other *ejidos* by FIRA/Agrover (see Table 1) but in the end, project performance was unable to fulfil the promise of sustained profit. The decline in the cost/benefit ratio between 1981 and 1982 was 6.15 percent. What is even more interesting is that in 1983, which was an average agricultural year for climate, the profit to cost ratio was 19.6 percent less favourable than in 1981.

In conclusion, it is possible to suggest that the project was partly a victim of the exceptionally good weather conditions of 1981, which raised producer expectations. But, as weather conditions changed, the Hungarian technicians were unable to reproduce the earlier benefits. Thus, producers started to question whether the project resources had been used improperly.

Table 1: Comparative Data for Three Agricultural Cycles: Project FIRA-Agrover 4 (in thousands of Mexican Pesos)

	1981		1982		1983	
	Project	Region	Project	Region	Project	Region
Production ton/hect.	4.33	2.35	3.80	1.85	4.5	3.0
Value of Production	28.361	15.392	37.633	17.575	86.400	57.600
Cost/hect.	15.831	10.000	22.360	15.200	60.000	45.000
Profit/hect. without subs.	12.530	5.392	15.272	2.375	26.400	12.600
Profit/hect. with subs.	15.981	8.842	17.821	5.375	29.400	13.600
Relation profit/cost	1.79	1.53	1.68	1.15	1.44	1.28
Price/ton	6.550	6.550	9.903	9.500	19.200	19.200

Source: Document FIRA/Agrover

Producers perhaps more justifiably argued that the problems were caused by the excessive use of agricultural inputs, and by the cost of wage labour. These two

factors made producers unwilling to cultivate maize on collective land. One producer, openly expressing his feelings, said:

"In the *colectivo* the crop is not my responsibility, so I don't bother with its condition. If the *milpa* has *zacate* (weeds) or any other difficulty, I pretend not to see it, because in the end, all the expenses and profits are divided in equal terms, without taking into account whether production was better in one plot or the other. The Hungarians don't understand the differences in the soil and they put the same level of agricultural inputs on all the land, regardless, which is a waste of money."

Opposition to the project brought an attempt by the Bank and FIRA to re-establish control. They threatened troublemakers with no future credit and compelled them to pay back the balance of their debts immediately. The final phase of the project (1983-1984) was charged with tension and the organisation of the agricultural cycle was carried out under the coercive and authoritarian direction of a bank *tecnico*. This period coincided with FIRA's decision to withdraw its more specialised personnel to the regional office, assigning new and less experienced fieldworkers to the project.

### Producer Networks and the Process of Project Internalization

It was in this context that the election of *ejidal* authorities took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 1983. The election became transformed into a community referendum on the project. Three electoral lists were presented. The first list contained the names of producers who supported the project and favoured maize production under collective conditions. They represented the interests of the bank in the community and were producers who had acquired heavy debts with the bank as a result of their machinery purchases. A second list was made up of those who favoured *Agrover*, but wanted to work their own plots whilst maintaining the supervision of the *tecnicos*. Their aim was to reduce production costs and increase their participation in the project. A third and more radical list was of those who wanted to terminate the project and the financial relationship with the bank Banco Internacional.

The group representing bank interests polled only 11 of the votes in the election. The group who wanted to retain the technical assistance but recover their right to work their plots individually got 24 votes. But the election was won by the group who wanted the termination of the project, with 27 votes.

Faced with this situation, the *tecnico* of the bank increased his threats to cut off credit to all those producers who abandoned the collective. Ultimately, the contradictions forced the project to re-organise into three separate categories of producers who were under FIRA administration but not necessarily under its control: those who kept their land in collective production (*los colectivos*); those who retained the technical assistance of the project and operated with bank, but worked their own plots (*los semi-colectivos*); and those who had broken with the project (*los libres*).

In order to stop producers transferring their affiliation from the *colectivo* to the *semi-colectivo* group, the *tecnico* of the bank denied credit to six or seven producers in order to demonstrate what could happen to producers opposing the project. This show of strength on the part of the *tecnico* was a big mistake, because it generated a totally new dynamic, in which the contradictions between producers and agencies were no longer focused upon the benefits of the project or the contribution of Hungarian technology. The issue now became that of power - who had the right to control the project decisions? The bank, FIRA, or the producers? Producers denied credit already had contacts to obtain alternative loans. They turned to the SERFIN bank for help. They mortgaged their private land as guarantee, and with this surety the bank was more than pleased to provide them with credit. The SERFIN bank had been trying unsuccessfully to enter Lomas de Tejada for a long time. The project conflict thus allowed this financial institution to establish itself as an alternative to the Banco Internacional; a fact that provided more strength to the producers in their battle against the project.

The project had planned to increase the area under collective cultivation from 700 hectares to 1,500 hectares in the third year. The conflict made this impossible. In order to make up the difference the Hungarian project had to rent land from a different *ejido*. In that final year, 36 producers continued to work collectively and 56 worked semi-collectively. Producers continued to complain about the small economic benefits received. They blamed the *ejidal* president in office at the time of the project's arrival and the Banco Internacional *tecnico*, as the actors mainly responsible for the level of conflict in the *ejido*. The Hungarian *tecnicos*, because they were foreigners, and unable to speak the language, managed to keep themselves out of the conflict. However, in private, they argued that the project had run into troubles, not because they were using too many agricultural inputs, but because the price of maize had not kept pace with the price of agricultural inputs.

At this stage of the conflict, producers were determined to end their affiliation with the Banco Internacional, and started to circulate rumours that the *tecnico* was receiving bribes from producers who were afraid he would stop their credit. These rumours increased, and people openly discussed this corruption as taking place in concert with the *ex-ejidal* president, who they claimed was sharing the illicit profits. Producers said that the *tecnico* had been poor when he had arrived in Lomas but after only three years possessed a pick-up and two houses in Guadalajara, one of which he had given as a present to his father. Producers made allegations that the *ex-president* of the community had bought a new pick-up with money that the Banco Internacional was paying him to organise a campaign against the SERFIN bank.

In one of the interviews, a producer told me how the Banco Internacional had charged him extra payments. In 1982 he had refused to pay what they were asking of him. He had gone to see the general accountant of the bank who had confirmed that they were charging him 10,000 pesos extra. This was done on the instruction of the manager of the Tlajomulco branch. "This is my experience," he said "so can you imagine what has been happening to the other people here? I am sure that the majority of us paid more than we should have."

True or not, the story tells us something about the degree of conflict between the bank and the producers. The dissatisfaction with the *tecnico* worsened, until it became critical. The situation finally blew up during the *Reunion Anual de Balance y Programacion* (Annual Meeting of Evaluation and Programming), organised by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1984. This meeting was attended by the different producer factions, by FIRA, the Agrarian Reform, the *tecnico* from SARH, the fieldworker from the Banco Internacional and the head of the SERFIN bank, who arrived later. The meeting started with an evaluation of agricultural activities and the discussion centred on the main problem of the *ejido*: the wish to change the existing financial arrangements from Banco Internacional to SERFIN.

One group, represented by the *ex-ejidal* president, argued that they should continue operating with Banco Internacional because they knew now how to work with that institution. The other group mentioned some of the bad experiences producers had had with the bank, and recommended a change to SERFIN. This position was supported by the current *ejidal* president, the leader of the *Liga Agraria* and by the majority of the producers.

In view of the situation, the representative of FIRA intervened in the discussion and reminded the producers that whatever their decision with respect to the banks, the bank which operated in the *ejido* would have to give credit to the whole productive unit (*ejido*) so that agricultural inputs could arrive on time and provide the credit to pay for the machinery that FIRA had already acquired. He then proceeded to say that the transition would not be easy administratively, and would involve a lot of paperwork. FIRA would have to start afresh learning how SERFIN operated. In the end, however, the decision had to be taken by the producers. The FIRA regional representative suggested that, in order to avoid the same type of conflicts arising again, producers should employ an administrator to be paid by the community.

One of the producers replied that the *ejido* had been united until the bank *tecnico* had started with his dividing practices. The *tecnico* contested this accusation in a tough manner and said that the responsibility for the conflict lay with the producers' lack of responsibility. A young producer of 22 years, got up and said to the *tecnico*: "all this is the result of your corruption!". Tension was high and only the intervention of some people of the community stopped a physical confrontation. The young man left the assembly shouting that if the community continued with the Banco Internacional, he would no longer be an *ejidatario*, because he was tired of "shameless and despotic officials (*funcionarios sinverguenzas y despotas*) who only come here to exploit and insult us".

After this incident, the bank fieldworker left the meeting and things calmed down. The producers in favour of a change of bank tried to get the community to decide by voting. The other group tried to prevent this. Finally, however, the meeting voted, with 81 producers in favour of changing to SERFIN, and eight producers wanting to continue with Banco Internacional. Observing all this was the *tecnico* of the SARH, who was delighted to see the problems FIRA was having in

controlling the producers. The *ex-ajidal* president was evidently upset, and the FIRA representative obviously worried about the consequences of the *ajidal* decision for the future of the project.

A week after these incidents FIRA attempted to reverse this decision, calling a meeting in the Guadalajara office to reconcile the *ajido* factions and explore the possibility of maintaining the financial relationship with the Banco Internacional, but the producers rejected this offer. Banco Internacional started to delay handing over the money from the harvest in a clear attempt to force a new meeting, where they could attempt to revoke the community's decision. Finally, however, in the second week of April 1984, the bank paid the producers, even though the money had been deposited in the Tlajomulco branch on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February. The credit for the agricultural cycle 1984-1985 was delayed as a result of the bank transfer, but the producers, who were determined not to be stopped by the 'dirty tricks of the bank', had started to furrow with their own resources.

When the Hungarian *tecnicos* left the community, Lomas gave them a farewell *fiesta* thanking them for their technical assistance. When my research came to an end FIRA was in doubt as to whether to continue the project under FIRA supervision or to withdraw it.

## Conclusion

The case of Lomas de Tejada helps us to understand why producers do not trust agencies. Their lack of *confianza* in the project was based on disparities of objectives among the actors.

FIRA was given the responsibility for selecting a location to test Hungarian technology in Mexico. The financial nature of the FIRA agency led to the credit record of a community being established as one of the most important criteria for selection. The agency knew that this would make it easier to secure financial backing from private banks, and the producers would repay the credit. In effect, this resulted in choosing a community with a proven production record, Lomas de Tejada. This decision, although acceptable from FIRA's point of view, created problems for *Agrover* later, during the implementation process.

*Agrover* came to Mexico to demonstrate that the Hungarian technological package could substantially increase maize production, through the combined use of high yield varieties of maize and chemical inputs. Besides, their objective was to show that the crop could be profitable under 'modern collective conditions' of production. In an *ajido* like Lomas, where a relatively good level of crop production existed prior to the project, the Hungarians were confronted with the challenge of how to increase production in a significant way. As the project only resulted in minimal increases in production, producers were able to complain that the technological package proved too expensive for them to adopt. Producers were not interested in producing maize at any cost. They were concerned with reducing costs, increasing profits, and having control over the process of production on their plots.

The disparity of objectives was a result of the agency's use of financial considerations as the main criteria in organising the project. The agency assumed that such considerations could serve as practical guidelines to the implementation of the SAM strategy. This assumption proved to be fundamentally wrong and at variance with producers' reality. FIRA's assumption that an *ejido* related to the market would be a more secure location for the implementation of this SAM project proved wrong. In the case of Lomas, the *ejido's* integration into the market and the producers knowledge of institutions, allowed the community to resist pressures from the bank, and enabled them to mobilize a social network to resist agency mechanisms of control.

In this context, had the project been more participatory, allowing the producers to contribute in the decision making process, perhaps the conflict could have been avoided. However, it could not have reconciled the conflicting interests of the producers, public and private agencies. In their zealous efforts to create a show-case for agricultural development, the implementers did not ask themselves whether this *ejido* actually needed the experts' contributions. The experiences with the project demonstrate the determination of producers to resist government solutions when these do not take cognisance of local knowledge and experience as being able to contribute to the process of rural development.

## 8. MAKING SENSE OF ENTANGLEMENTS OF BUREAUCRATS AND RURAL PRODUCERS IN AGRICULTURAL INTERVENTION

In concluding this book I wish to re-assess some of its main arguments. Throughout the preceding chapters we have presented an extended case of state intervention in Mexico, the Mexican Food Policy (SAM). We explored the process of formulation, implementation and outcomes. In doing so, different levels of formulation and implementation have been taken into account. The analysis started with the process of policy formulation at the level of the national Ministries (Chapter 2). The analysis then shifted to the lower-level bureaucracies involved in SAM: the actors in the district (Chapter 3) and the field-units (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 formed the bridge between the SAM policy and the actual implementation. Chapter 6 and 7 focused on the interface between fieldworkers and rural producers. In these chapters, cases were presented of SAM implementation, in two *ejidos* in Jalisco. While Chapter 6 emphasised the local contingencies that impinged on the policy implementation, Chapter 7 highlighted the social life of a project.

The Mexican Food Policy (SAM) was introduced in 1980, with the aim of achieving self-sufficiency in basic grains, in particular maize. It was directed to transforming the conditions of rainfed producers by providing technical assistance, subsidized credit and better access to fertilizers, pesticides and improved seeds. The SAM coincided with a re-organisation of agricultural administrative agencies, which aimed at a better coordinated and more effective policy implementation. This was accompanied by a shift from a political to a technocratic approach. In this process, the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SARH) emerged as the main agency responsible for the implementation of SAM.

The objective of this study was not to assess the pitfalls or successes of the SAM policy as such. Rather, SAM was chosen as a case for studying the dynamics of processes of policy formulation, implementation and outcomes. State intervention emerges as an interactive process in which bureaucrats and rural producers attribute intentions and meanings to existing institutions, social groups and agricultural policies. This process reconstitutes in practice the existing political boundaries between state and society and allows actors to internalise, utilise and transform the social consequences that arise with the implementation of rural policies. In this way, the present study depicts in many ways the complex and multi-faceted dimensions of the interface between the administrative framework and rural producers at the point of policy implementation.

In this concluding chapter, the nature of state policy formulation and implementation as social processes will be elaborated. We shall then assess theoretically the role of actors in these processes and examine the methodological implications of an actor-oriented approach. After this, we shall discuss how larger social processes and actors' room for manoeuvre interconnect. In this way, we shall try to go beyond the often perceived incompatible dichotomy between 'structures'

and 'actors'. This leads us to emphasize the importance of empirical contingencies in the study of policy intervention. The chapter concludes by delineating the implications of this study for an agenda for future research.

## **The Relation between State and Society**

This book has dealt with state agricultural intervention. It has addressed the question of how we can characterise and describe state practices in relation to agricultural producers. We hope that we have shown that this is possible through the use of an actor-oriented approach. The next question then is what is the relevance of these data for our conceptualisation of the state in relation to society?

First, let us reconsider several existing instrumental and organisational representations of state/society relations. An instrumental, functional representation of state/society relations is found in the Marxist tradition. According to this view, the state is perceived as entailing an instrumental relationship between capital (the ruling class) on the one hand and the practices of the state bureaucracy on the other. The state functions as an instrument for promoting the interests of the dominant sector in capitalist society for resolving crises of capital accumulation. This perspective has been used by de Janvry in his influential book on the agrarian question in Latin America (1981). This Marxist interpretation of institutions and processes in development sociology has been thoroughly criticised for its functionality by, among others, David Booth (1985). Norman Long specifically criticises the view of state policy as responding to the unplanned character of the crises of capital accumulation on which de Janvry's theory is built (Long, 1988, 111-4).

A second focus on state/society relations stems from the neo-Weberian tradition. Authors such as Grindle (1977, 1980, 1986; Grindle and Thomas, 1991) and Migdal (1987) have adopted an institutional/organisational perspective to the state. In these studies, there is a shift away from the role of the state in the process of capital accumulation or economic modernisation to a consideration of the various ways in which state leaders successfully or unsuccessfully attempt to shape society by establishing powerful departments and agencies vis-à-vis sectors of the population. Grindle describes and analyses state bureaucratic conflicts at the level of policy makers in Mexico. She depicts the bureaucracy as composed of political networks that compete for clients in order to enhance their own political influence and careers. She moves from the homogeneous view of bureaucracy as portrayed by Weber to a more dynamic representation of how bureaucrats compete in their everyday practices. However, her view awards too much of an endogenous dynamic to the authority of state representatives. Migdal interprets the relation between state and society as part of a fundamental breaking point in the analysis of institutions and people. His perspective is more sensitive to the impact of societal forces on the state bureaucracy. However, in his organisational approach he over-emphasises the negative effects of conflict within the state agencies, arriving at the conclusion that

states tend to grow weaker and society stronger.

These types of analysis are helpful in focusing on the dynamics of bureaucrats' interactions. As such, they underline the need to study and document processes of organisational contradictions within the state. Nevertheless, the view offered of the relation between state and society remains shallow. They continue to work within a research tradition that treats state activity as something fundamentally different from the actions of people outside the bureaucracy. The danger is that by conferring state representatives too much ability and capacity to shape society, this perspective loses sight of the effects of local negotiation and conflict at the critical points of policy implementation.

In this vein, the work of Theda Skocpol (1979, 1985) represents a path-breaking stand against the simple conceptualization of the state as either an instrumental reflection of social and economic interests or composed of endogenous organizational processes of conflict within the bureaucracy. In her analysis she links conflicts and crises in the bureaucracy to social processes in the society at large. Her work suggests that state organisations have a powerful capability of learning from and using these processes to rebuild themselves in the wake of bureaucratic contradictions or social upheavals.

The work of Skocpol presents a refreshing view on the relation between state and society. However, while the historical dimension of her work allows her to link larger social processes to state organisation, her approach does not provide a methodology for gaining an understanding of the everyday practices of policy implementation in contemporary development situations. It is here, I believe, that the actor-oriented approach can make a significant contribution to our understanding of state/society relations.

### **State as a Social Carrier of Rural Development**

In this book state intervention was analyzed as a field intersected by a series of social processes. The empirical data presented throughout the different chapters show that the process of formulating and implementing SAM was indeed influenced by economic and overtly class interests. In this sense, the case of SAM could be understood as maintaining and reproducing the existing social and economic relations in Mexican society. The case material also demonstrated the influence of administrative reform, bureaucratic conflicts and routines on the processes of policy formulation and implementation. However, it became clear that these factors by themselves far from illuminate the dynamics and diversity in local outcomes of policy implementation. The formulation and implementation of SAM was neither a mere expression of contradictions in Mexican society, nor a simple reflection of the political and economic 'needs' of the state bureaucracy. Such representations lose sight of the meaning and importance of local conflicts and negotiations between state representatives and rural producers. From the analysis in this book, then, policy formulation and implementation appear to have a socially-contested and negotiated

character and emerge as socially-constructed processes.

The important role played by local negotiations between state representatives and other actors was earlier illustrated in the study of the dynamics of knowledge interfaces in rural Mexico (Arce and Long, 1987; 1992). In the present case study, which also refers to the implementation of the SAM in Mexico, a variety of social actors - bureaucrats, rural producers and other parties - are shown to be involved in the social construction of policy implementation, in such a way that the apparently 'external' and 'internal' domains of state intervention are merged.

The perspective developed in this book is that the state can be represented as a 'social carrier' of rural development. For instance, the state may disseminate among producers the seeds of modernisation, but it cannot ensure the growth and shape of the crop, nor, for that matter, how the yields are going to be socially and physically consumed. State agencies are social entities which implement certain courses of action. This capability to do things has the effect of reorganising everyday practices and social life in specific political moments of interaction between bureaucrats and local producers. Nevertheless, all the various actors play an important role themselves as the filters and introducers of new courses of action in their situations.

It is important to recognise, however, that the state is not the only social carrier in processes of rural development. In fact, there are many social carriers, both institutional (e.g. producers' organisations, banks, market associations) and non-institutional (e.g. confederations of households, kinship or customary groups). This book argues that processes of state intervention must be explored empirically in order to identify and describe the relevant social carriers in development.

## Actors in Rural Development

The analytical approach adopted aimed to examine the relationship between human action and state policy formulation, implementation and outcomes. Our first task was to recognise that development must be understood in terms of actors' actions. Behind this lay the notion that we should not underestimate actors' choices and responsibility, nor should we assume that institutions are the only carriers affecting the organisation of society.

These notions raise the issue of human agency, based on the premise that the individual has the knowledge and capability (see Giddens, 1984) to understand social experiences and to solve the riddles of everyday life. The individual recognises himself/herself in his/her social practices within specific situations. Nevertheless, as Long (1989:225) has suggested, agency must be translated culturally if these processes are to be fully important for actors' actions.

In the preceding chapters we have seen that actors working in state agencies accumulate valuable experiences vis-à-vis the agricultural producers. Being the *frontline of the government at local level*, their administrative involvement with contrasting and often conflicting sets of cultural, social and economic interests generates a body of knowledge based upon these personal experiences made up of

the 'social dust of the field'. As we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, these experiences usually lead frontline state representatives to develop their own views while devising strategies on how to practice rural development.

Rural producers also construct their own everyday 'projects of society', which cannot be specified in advance. They are able to reject some interventions, while accepting others. Through this, they improve their skills of negotiating. The extent to which they accept a state policy involves a complex interface between local knowledge and the characteristics of the new rural context proposed by the policy. Producers cannot be represented as passive subjects of state intervention. State policy cannot avoid coming into contact with the character, restrictions and capabilities of rural producers. Active participation of local people in their struggle for survival and their significant contribution to the shaping of local reality involve the entanglements of bureaucrats and rural producers.

In this book, the Mexican Food Policy (SAM) became the contested means of rural development. The way SAM was internalised and translated into actors' life-worlds generated anxiety, discussion, and reflection. Whereas SAM implied a social construction of actors, it came to be conceived in this study as a social field made up of a series of related actors' actions and experiences.

These axes of everyday experience problematize any single theoretical explanation of 'the role' of state intervention in Latin America. An essential characteristic of our analysis is that state intervention cannot be seen as a set of patterned interrelationships between entities, institutions or tendencies totally devoid of actors' presence and action. Instead, state intervention was perceived of as a process that was part and parcel of the action of actors.

One important implication of this perspective is that it allows us to recognise diversity as the material condition of rural development practice. By studying actors and their policy contexts we can perceive the significance of diversity in rural practices. For example, we documented the substantial variations among front-line workers in the ways they organised and implemented state-sponsored policies. In seeking to explain this, the study followed fieldworkers implementing agricultural policies (see Chapter 4). We pursued this line of inquiry as a way of transcending a simple analysis of discourses and practices. While these latter certainly constitute an important part of the reality of rural development, they must be complemented by a careful exploration of changing forms of power and authority and patterns of 'fieldworker discretion'. These arise from the institutional experiences, social backgrounds and interactions of front-line workers and rural producers and cannot be reduced to the logic of discourse or the workings of economic and political structures.

## **Concepts and Methodology**

Understood as a social construction of actors, rural state intervention provides a field for analyzing the ensemble of actors' responses to social processes and external

influences, i.e. how they link influences from the state, markets, technological development, limits and possibilities of the natural environment, local political processes and changing relations at the household level. Hence the methodological stance taken in this book allows us to deconstruct state intervention to the level of actors' actions. Rather than reifying state action, as a functional and predictable policy system or a hierarchical structural formation, this approach permits us to appreciate the human dimension and significance of state intervention in the restructuring processes of agricultural localities.

In the study we have seen how SAM policy and state intervention was constituted, organised and implemented in the context of bureaucratic culture, viewed as a domain of everyday practices and administrative routines. This was one way into the analysis of rural state intervention, but we also needed to observe and analyze actors' social backgrounds and situated social actions, in order to get a firmer grip on actors' practices that shaped the outcome of the SAM. It was through these observations and analyses of the everyday life of rural policy actors, that the contributions of an actor-oriented approach could be demonstrated.

As Long has suggested, an actor-oriented methodology allows us to focus on the "face-to-face encounters between individuals or units representing different interests and backed by different resources" (Long, 1989: 2). This idea, which Long characterises as rural interface, permits us to find, identify and describe critical points where actors' actions are situated and temporarily defined. These actions are dependent on the agency of the actors. Agency in this study was represented in the styles by which actors embodied, internalised and translated the influences of state, market, technology and culture. The particular translation of contextual influences shaped human action and provided actors with a cognitive chart to organise, ensemble and respond to the influences in their lives (see Long, 1992: 16-43).

In the book we have tried to develop such a perspective in more detail since we argue that it is necessary to deconstruct actors' actions in relation to the life-worlds of the actors involved in the process of policy implementation. Our approach attempts to reveal which forms of action mediate the relations between bureaucrats and producers, identifying which are admissible and appropriate to their situation. Actors' actions are embodied within ideological and culturally-specific meanings of authority, and are part of the social construction of power. In recalling these situations, the study did not present social interface as a general form of discontinuity, but rather as a principle through which one could reveal how 'projects of society' are organised in practice by actors according to the political and cultural meanings they attribute to them. It was because of this that we placed a lot of importance on the compilation of life-careers and life histories, social network and social situational analysis, and actors' account of social events. As such, this perspective and methodology belong not just to an interface approach, but more generally to an attempt to comprehend the transformations of actors' experiences in shaping the world.

It was in actors' life-world settings such as individual biographies, actors' accounts of their *ejido* and institutional surroundings, actors' different interpretations

of policy, and in the observation of actors' differential responses, that we were able to identify actors' practices and feelings as the central human dimension of rural development policy.

This approach implies that understanding rural state intervention involves both serious empirical (ethnographic) work at the local level and a wider sociological framework of analysis capable of dealing with specific configurations of administrative practice, the elaboration of 'discourses' on development, and the ways policies and projects are internalised by the various actors concerned with them.

In this study concepts such as life-world, room for manoeuvre, internalisation and translation of social processes are actor-oriented concepts. These analytical devices were specifically useful for understanding those social processes that linked situationally institutional operations and actors' strategies and interpretations.

### Explaining the Metaphor of Entanglements in the Title of the Book

At this point we wish to explain our métaphor of 'entanglements'. This metaphor depicts the complexities surrounding actors' everyday trivialities and the way they link with other actors and actions to constitute society. Are these links just rational, strategic or discursive? Of course not, since it is the contingency of how these elements are entangled that constructs society.

As we have shown in this book, the practices of fieldworkers and rural producers are both instrumental and expressive of actors' economic and political interests in policy implementation. But the roots of actors' instrumental practices can be traced back into their life-histories, values and knowledge, wherein one can recognize the diversity of speech-acts (Chapter 4) that constitute the medium by which they translate and interpret policy. Without any doubt, this translation influences the nature of the entanglement between bureaucrats and rural producers, generating a configuration of contingencies that includes contextual entities and other actors' actions.

In this configuration actors organise social networks wherein conversations, shared memories, circulation of knowledge and the embodiment of culture actually takes place. This active process of assembling individual actions and the convergence of actors' engagements are both characteristics of the entanglement. This metaphor, we believe, can enhance our perspective on how reality is socially constructed. By screening off these situational entanglements we can understand better how and why 'reality' is constituted by degrees of disorder, emotional feelings, inconsistencies between actors, and room for manoeuvre between fieldworkers, rural producers and other parties.

The metaphor raises the question of whether it is possible to construct an analysis capable of producing 'knowledge for action', and whether the study of diversity necessarily remains a kaleidoscopic perspective unable to identify persisting and consistent patterns in social processes<sup>1)</sup>. Another of our reservations concerning the study of social processes is the assumption made in recent work that social

practices are mainly constructed around discourses (see Apthorpe, 1984, 1986; de Vries, 1992). This line of analysis suggests that empirical evidence about actors' practices and interfaces can be simply derived from studying discourses. This view presumes that discourses are the filters of action. The metaphor of entanglements, on the other hand, conveys the idea that human action and interaction cannot always be represented by discourse. The notion of actors' knowledgeability does not imply that their practices are always linguistically correct, argumentatively precise or manipulatively effective. Social processes are outcomes of entanglements of actors who find themselves situationally and emotionally contesting or negotiating values and trying to shape their reality through practices and relationships that can be mutually antagonistic or might lead to consensus. The explanation of social processes, then, requires an ethnographic approach that takes us beyond discourses by linking actual practices to the personal, cultural, and historical predispositions of actors in their struggle to organise relationships in society. Although discourses are part of actors' accumulated knowledge from their experiences, they form only one element of the multiplicity of factors shaping social practices.

In short, entanglements propel one into the intricacies of social process. This implies that it is necessary and possible to verify empirically the practices that are founded upon the human phenomena of our everyday ceremonies and on how we organise, share and dispute the elements that constitute our social life.

### **Internalisation and Translation**

In order to explore the relationship between actors' life-worlds and state intervention, it was essential to work out a conceptual approach for analyzing actors' actions and the strategic ways in which they deploy development discourses and organisational practices within the implementation setting, thereby shaping the process of intervention at the *ejido* and institutional level. In order to do this, we placed a high degree of relevance on actors' internalisation and translation of state intervention.

We sought to argue that invariably state interventions are interpreted in different ways by actors. Moreover, the beliefs that rural actors and bureaucrats hold are undermined and transformed in the processes of negotiation that the representatives of the state have to enter into, both within the state and in society, in order to implement policies. State policy implementation acts as a bridge between government representatives, the regulation of markets, and rural producers' interests. In the process of negotiating policy implementation, actors socially construct new values, perceptions of progress, images of development, forms of political participation and labelling. This process transcends the actors' own language and categorical boundaries of thought, and allows them to give practical meaning to rural policy implementation.

When writing of the actor's process of internalisation and translation, we mean the ways in which they accord validity to their images of reality and their personal

transmutations from individual life experiences, actions, and beliefs to a specific definition of the world and the organisation of a project, upon which they can act.

Internalisation and translation processes should be important notions in any analysis of rural change. However, these processes must not be viewed independently of politically - and institutionally - situated life experiences in which actors participate and struggle with social meaning and the construction of organisational solutions to their problems.

The importance attributed to processes of internalisation and translation reinforces the view that the analysis of state intervention should focus on the everyday practices of social actors, their capacity to internalise and translate the technical and political factors embodied in a policy process, and the ensuing negotiations and interactions among the social actors. This perspective, while studying how actors advance their own interpretations for the solution of problems in rural development, at the same time, helps us to concentrate on how actors socially construct their livelihood projects at local level and how these processes relate to their social identity and sense of belonging.

### Power and Knowledge Revisited<sup>2)</sup>

The very practice of state intervention is built upon the perception that state representatives have the necessary social, economic and political authority to accomplish the implementation of an agricultural policy. Yet, as demonstrated in this book, in the everyday practice of implementing state policy this authority is often contested and a range of power conflicts emerge. While these conflicts are certainly related to differing interests, they are, as we have shown, also related to issues of knowledge.

The implementation of SAM was strongly surrounded by conflict. Part of these conflicts arose from contradictions built into the policy. The implementing state agencies were conceived to coordinate and implement technical assistance policies to improve the conditions of rainfed producers, while overcoming at the same time the contradictions generated by the policy of increasing maize production for the urban population. Furthermore, SAM was surrounded by institutional conflicts, ranging from the pursuit of interests by individuals or political networks within the bureaucracy to inter-agency competition. Apart from, yet related to, intra-bureaucracy conflicts, a number of conflicts emerged at the interface of policy implementation between fieldworkers and producers and among producers themselves. The collection and analysis of individual biographies, community and institutional histories revealed that the beliefs that rural actors hold are often undermined by the negotiations that the representatives of the state have to enter into, both within the institutional context and in society at large.

These conflicts contested the authority of state representatives (and in some cases the authority of *ejidal* officials) to implement the SAM, resulting in situations where fluid and volatile power relations emerged at the point of implementing the policies.

Interactions in policy implementation not only relate to the actual distribution of resources, but also concern degrees of legitimacy and credibility accorded to state representatives by rural producers. Hence, actors' strategies to accommodate, avoid or alter state intervention are part of the way in which power is built, contested, distributed and re-distributed in society.

At this point we need to address the problem of knowledge in relation to such conflicts of power. As we saw in Chapter 1, as an expression of culture, knowledge is manipulable and means different things to different people. The relation between 'outsiders' knowledge and different 'local rationalities' in constructing the 'reality' of development means that we need to reconceptualize actors' interactions within a political-institutional environment. These interactions are highly significant because they are linked to actors' interpretations and translations of economic and political elements and processes. These contribute to actors' definitions of particular situations and to the ensemble and organisation of their responses to state intervention. The relevance of actors' knowledge and interests led us then to investigate the key dimensions of the interface between rural producers and state officials implementing policies.

The focus of this study on actors' perceptions, life-worlds and biographies is used to challenge the notion of an inherent coherence in social life. By treating the 'reality' of rural development as a series of actors' explanations and actions, we inescapably confront the situationally located determination of knowledge (cf. Knorr-Cetina, 1981). Moreover, awareness that local knowledge does not constitute a common, homogeneous body allows us to give adequate attention to diversity and differential responses to state intervention. Focusing on how actors' practices have emerged, spread and finally become established in their particular environments provides us with a good position for describing and analyzing how actors understand their social and physical space, their positions in society and how they evolve their own representations of boundaries.

The study of the interfaces between state representatives and rural producers provides insight into the strategic ways in which actors deploy their discourses in development situations. It also throws light on the ways in which institutions and actors develop organisational practices within the policy implementation setting, shaping particular styles of intervention in local and institutional contexts. Nonetheless, we must remain aware that the interface between state representatives and rural producers is not an automatically given property of the conditions of intervention. It is an outcome of human (inter)action and actors' skills in organising the particular situation.

### **Actors, Social Processes and Contingencies**

The emerging framework of this book identifies social processes and not structures as the distinctive aspect of actors' social reality<sup>3)</sup>. It is this dimension that must be subject to detailed observation and theoretical interpretation. Social process analysis

may be defined as the study of actor's practices in constructing social life rather than of frozen actions in social structures. Social processes - and here we have been especially concerned with policy implementation - constitute the actors' context in which they reflect and develop concerns and strategies towards society. Through these processes actors enrol other actors into their networks and build projects of society. By following actors ethnographically we can describe and conceptualise their actions as culture interpreters and creators of new forms of legitimation for policy implementation. Rather than treating them as merely clients or interested observers of the processes of rural development, we consider them to be an integral part of these processes and the driving force in the organisation of contingency settings<sup>4</sup>).

Hence, instead of regarding an actor-oriented perspective as being mutually exclusive of and contradictory to the understanding of critical social processes, such as state or market intervention, the book suggests that, while certain social constraints are important in defining the range of actor choices, it is knowledgeable and capable actors who shape social action and decision-making processes.

The present study has opted for the description and interpretation of social experience as reflected in the field of rural development intervention. Processes of policy formulation and practices of government intervention, such as administrative reform and bureaucratic conflict, constitute part of the context of policy analysis, which we have to set out in order to contextualise actors' actions. Therefore, although such social processes propel actors to perform particular actions rather than others, these processes at the same time provide actors with a degree of freedom for action, that is 'room for manoeuvre' (Schaffer, 1984). They re-assemble, expand or contract existing practices and re-define their context, thus shaping the nature of the interfaces between state representatives and rural producers.

Throughout the book, it has been argued that social action should provide the starting point for the study of contemporary state intervention in the rural sector. This line of analysis builds upon theoretical work aimed at reconciling social process and actor perspectives. The present analysis should also enhance our receptiveness to the organisational features of local variation in the implementation of agricultural policy. By giving due attention to diversity, the book argues that state intervention is a social space where actors must mediate between general administrative rules and what they see as possible courses of action. Throughout much of the study, our data have strongly supported the current view that agricultural policies are a social construction of situational contingencies, using the idea of contingency here to characterise a related course of actions that exists not just as discourse, but rather as a series of practical capabilities that are potentially able to shape and re-organise the world.

The analysis criticises the use of a normative notion of social order, where state and civil society are presented as two clearly defined political domains. Drawing upon empirical evidence, we have argued forcefully for a greater recognition of social, cultural and political contingencies. And in recognising the significance of a series of contingent factors influencing the constitution of social processes and actors' actions, we are enunciating a different understanding of development

realities. That is, we challenge the coherence and structured order of economic and political realities as well as the existence of a single historical transformation process.

A policy implementation situation is thus conceived of as a situational process, in which authority, knowledge and power are socially constructed. This view links the locality to the state while allowing the actors in their everyday practices to contest the distribution of power and question the authority of the state's representatives to intervene.

The sets of contingencies surrounding social processes are by no means simply determined by the institutional context. The frontline worker can have a significant influence because s/he is responsible for policy implementation, and producers likewise may have an impact through their organised responses to intervention. This is important because processes other than state intervention are also occurring, independently and simultaneously. Furthermore, state regulations and operations are often undermined by the impossibility of implementing policies in a coherent and simple rational way. These contingencies are a twofold response to the discontinuities emanating from society and to the processes by which actors legitimate their actions (i.e. through the social construction of new values and new social interests). Nevertheless, we should not forget that most local change is the result of the secondary effects of state intervention and cannot be predicted by sociologists or controlled by planning experts.

### **An Emerging New Agenda for Research**

This book has discussed numerous aspects of policy implementation which present obstacles to the application of state policy. We have challenged the notion that the state is the main or only institution contributing significantly to rural development outcomes, emphasising the importance of contradictions and negotiations between state agencies, and between state representatives and rural producers. A critical overview of recent work on rural development (see Chapter 1) indicated the need for a revised conceptual and empirical agenda in the analysis of rural development. The basis for such an agenda is to be found in two main directions that explore issues of interface and room for manoeuvre. Both raise important questions about social processes, actors' actions, discourses and power.

The book has argued that knowledge confrontations affect the content of the social representation of projects (see Chapter 7), and how actors exercise power and transform or reinforce existing discourses. In fact knowledge is a property of agency which allows actors to construct socially the field of rural development.

One important theoretical issue we explored concerned the centrality of studying the distribution of power and legitimation in local contexts. This led us to examine the relation between state authority and the distribution of power at local level from a perspective that we have called the 'social life of rural development'. We also discussed disputes over knowledge, suggesting that these in fact reflect struggles for

legitimacy as well as conflicting interests and visions of the aims of rural development. Then, in Chapter 6, we illustrated how power relations were transformed in action at the *ejido* level, and the ways in which the discourses and practices of rural actors serve to sustain and enhance front-line workers' discretion or room for manoeuvre. This, we suggested, can have practical implications for rural project designers and implementors.

The book points, then, to the importance of negotiations and struggles over social interests and images in the processes of rural development. Within our general perspective we wish to propose that an analysis of power in rural development should be based upon the recognition of the following major points:

1. Research on state intervention practices in rural development requires a close examination of the ways in which relevant authorities a) try to condition rural actors' responses and b) affect their existing practices and modes of discretion through policy discourses.
2. Rural development situations are both shaped by, and shape, power relations. Given the fact that actors' everyday practices involve struggles against different forms of domination and subjection, it is important to study the polycentric local representations of power, and, at the same time, the ways in which actors' projects interlock in the construction of future social configurations of their society.
3. Research on state intervention in rural development should encompass the generation of counter-discourses and people's resistance. These localised struggles should be traced back to a wide range of local and extra-local contingencies, constituted by social processes and discourses, such as political democratisation, state intervention, gender and political repression, questions of local knowledge, intermediate technology, and the internalisation of agricultural commodities. This search for the 'genealogy' of local contingent formations constitutes one of the central themes of an interface approach. What is important here is to identify and describe actors' projects of society, those which actors' are continuously constructing through their everyday experiences. Here it is pertinent to show how actors are able to reject some interventions while accepting others; how they internalise and translate discourses at the level of the ordinary person, in order to negotiate the meaning of rural development in political terms. To what extent actors' are capable of improving upon their skills of negotiation is something that new studies will need to address.

To sum up, a crucial objective of future research should be to reveal the actual composition of power that results from situations of state intervention and the degree to which, under circumstances of state policy implementation, actors acquire power to keep, ignore, subvert, resist or change the existing ensemble of social contingencies.

Finally, the book's emphasis on state intervention also implies a certain view about the role of the state in the process of rural development, which it is well to make explicit before concluding. We believe that state intervention has a limited but potentially positive part to play in contemporary rural change. By virtue of policy formulation, implementation and administrative practice, the state filters out some choices open to rural actors but not others. State agricultural policies, such as SAM, have served in developing contexts to re-organise the existing capabilities of what is possible in society. The SAM policy selected institutional environments and discourses for social transformation, while exerting a contested influence upon people's everyday lives. Under these conditions, the capacity of the state to determine and control the outcome of the changes it helps to initiate is quite limited. But in so far as rural policies can put in place measures that permit diversity and maintain the discretion of rural people, rather than forcing its 'good intentions' down upon them, state intervention may provide necessary, although not all the sufficient, conditions for rural development to take place.

## Notes

1. In this respect it is interesting to mention recent innovative work in rural sociology that has tried to address the issue of diversity. We have in mind here the styles of farming research carried out by Jan Douwe van der Ploeg and his team in Wageningen, which takes us some way towards a proper recognition of how to deal with diversity. In this work, diversity shifts away from being viewed as a kaleidoscopic expression of life into the identification of morphological patterns, which are influenced by what Benvenuti (1975) calls TATE (Technical Administrative Task Environment), which interacts with groups of farmers. As promising as it may be, this perspective is often thwarted due to the tendency to leave out of the analysis significant social relationships within a particular cluster of a style of farming. In other words, ethnography is distilled out, in order to fit diversity into a more flexible, but nevertheless structural organisation of reality. See, for instance, Jan Douwe van der Ploeg (1990, 1993), who gives too much weight to the *patterns* of diversity and tends to lose sight of the self-organizing elements present in the culture that is embedded in local farmers' responses to external processes, as well as in the contradictions that construct and reconstruct state, market and technology. This position is highly problematic, in our view, since it simplifies the issue of how to deal theoretically with diversity.
2. See also Arce, A. with M. Villareal and P. de Vries (forthcoming).
3. It is not possible here to elaborate theoretically on what we mean by 'social processes'. *Distancing ourselves from more conventional usages, we wish to characterize social processes as sets of procedures and social actions that emanate from actors' 'centres of representation' (for example the university, state, farmers' organization, or cooperative society) that aim to shape existing 'projects of society' through tuning them to new conceptions and values. The strategies used include the penetration of critical institutions and domains in order to reorganize the distribution of knowledge and power; and the enrolling and translating of important existing actor-networks. We cannot here develop further this definition which would require detailed discussion of other usages in the literature. For a different but in some ways parallel conceptualisation of social processes, see Moore, S. (1975, 210-239).*
4. We use 'contingency' generally throughout the text to characterize situational but fragile ensembles that constitute what are conventionally called 'contexts of social action'.



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