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At the Whim of the State: Neoliberalism and Nongovernmental Organizations in Guerrero, Mexico

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This paper examines the relationship between the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the Chilapa region of Guerrero, Mexico. I argue that the Mexican state via SEDESOL has effectively harnessed NGOs to perform as regional pillars of neoliberal reform initiatives. The intimacy of this relationship raises serious questions for those who see NGOs performing as vehicles for furthering local or regional “autonomy.” Instead, I argue that regional NGOs are key role players in the deepening incorporation of communities into the global industrial economy.

Este artículo examina las relaciones entre la Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL) y las organizaciones no-gubernamentales (ONGs) en la región de Chilapa, Guerrero, en México. A lo largo del texto, demuestro que el Estado Mexicano y SEDESOL utilizan ONGs para que éstas funcionen como pilares del programa neoliberal en la región. Esto contradice la función de las ONGs como instancias que permiten a las comunidades rurales obtener más autonomía. En los hechos, empero, y según lo sostengo, las ONGs de la región fundan bases importantes de la economía capitalista global.

For the past decade or so, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have drawn considerable attention to their efforts to make life better in the developing world. NGOs are intermediary resource-bearing entities that link beneficiaries to often distant donors (Carroll 1992:11), and in this capacity, their presence in rural communities is arguably all the more important in this era of structural adjustment programs. While analysts disagree about the propriety of neoliberal reform initiatives and the nature of the impact that NGOs have on the rural poor, few would chal-

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lenge the contention that there is an intimate relationship between neoliberalism and NGOs.

How do we assess this relationship? How do NGOs conflict with or support neoliberal development initiatives? Analysts of various persuasions concur that globalization under neoliberal terms heralds portentous economic and political consequences for the developing world (e.g., Friedman 2000; Hardt and Negri 2000; Wolf 1982; Wallerstein 1974), yet there is considerable debate as to the real effect of NGOs on this process. Some scholars see NGOs as vehicles for “alternative development,” “autonomy,” and “resistance”—concepts that have become key points of reference in the ensuing analysis. “Alternative development” is generally defined as a non-capitalist, more egalitarian and communal form of political economy (Kothari 1993; Paktar 1995). “Autonomy” has multiple meanings but generally implies local control over territory, resources, and the development agenda, as well as control over political decision-making, law enforcement, and legal codes (Nash 2001). “Resistance” is most often defined as effective contestation of state power, neoliberalism, or global capitalism (Scott 1985; Zamora 1995). These concepts are currently in vogue within anthropology and have been widely applied to the study of NGOs, indigenous peoples, and semi-subsistence agriculturalists, most notably in the case of southern Mexico and the Zapatista uprising (see Collier and Quaratiello 1994; Nash 2001). Indeed, case studies documenting NGO resistance to the neoliberal agenda in Chiapas are well known to anthropologists (e.g., Ronfeld et al. 1998). Some scholars argue that an alternative development based on indigenous autonomy and abetted by NGOs is both practical and desirable (Nash 2001). Similarly, like-minded analysts find real evidence for agency in the actions of the rural poor (Sahlins 1989) and trumpet their potential for “resistance” to global capitalism (Scott 1985).

If we were to take eastern Chiapas as a microcosm of rural Mexico, we would indeed see a picture of NGO activists and their rural counterparts facing down neoliberalism. However, when we survey the cross-cultural literature on NGOs, the picture is not quite so clear. Equally extensive are studies documenting “neoliberal” NGOs complicit with structural adjustment programs or other pro-market forces (e.g., Annis 1988; Bebbington and Thiele 1993:51; Ferguson 1990; Hardt and Negri 2000:35–37; Smillie 1995; Wood 1997). Indeed, my research does not support the notion that alternative development, autonomy, and resistance to capitalist state power are being effectively championed by NGOs, indigenous people, or anyone else.¹ Rather, I advance the argu-

1. This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research conducted in Chilapa from May 31, 1999, through June 25, 2000.

ment that regional NGOs are largely financial dependencies of the Mexican state's powerful Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL) and have been harnessed by that branch of the federal government, unwittingly or not, as the regional pillars of neoliberal reform initiatives.

This paper examines how SEDESOL and NGOs operate in the economic hinterland of the small urban settlement of Chilapa de Alvarez, a municipal *cabecera* and regional marketing center located in the east-central highlands of Guerrero, Mexico. Chilapa's hinterland is populated by small-scale agriculturalists living in villages of forty to two thousand residents, the majority of them in extreme poverty. Social stability in the region is affected by the presence of two sporadic guerrilla movements, banditry, and village land conflicts. Along with the rest of the state, Chilapa is currently experiencing economic and institutional convulsions that threaten to tear apart the region's social fabric. A patronage system that had maintained political stability in the rural sector for over half a century has ended in bankruptcy, leaving elites unable to continue underwriting the arrangement. This crisis has compelled the government to find a less costly regulatory mechanism to fill the institutional void. The chosen solution to this problem is the creation of "nongovernmental organizations."

I argue that regional NGOs are best viewed as government dependencies operating as fundamental pillars of neoliberal economic restructuring. The NGOs examined in this study are largely government-financed and implement projects designed or approved by the state, sometimes even performing the functions normally associated with government bureaucracies.

NGOs have emerged in the region with the stated intentions of ameliorating the poverty and inequalities that fuel political instability. NGOs are currently involved in the promotion of human rights, democratization, poverty alleviation, and economic development. Although many members of these organizations are highly critical of the Mexican government's neoliberal development project, the programs that they administer all further the economic restructuring that began in 1982 and that continues to this day. NGOs sustain the project of economic and institutional reform by broadly advancing the government's agenda, most particularly in two key arenas: legal reform and economic development.

Over the course of the past decade the Mexican government has intensified the pace at which it has implemented economic policies known as neoliberal reform. This entailed reducing or eliminating international trade barriers, domestic subsidy programs, and other regulatory mechanisms protecting economically marginal sectors of society from otherwise ruinous competition but that are too costly for the state to sustain. Under the new model, the deleterious socioeconomic

effects of the state's abrupt withdrawal from key sectors of the economy are to be mitigated by attracting foreign investment and by identifying economic niches of comparative advantage. However, observers recognize that no significant foreign investment will be forthcoming until legal reforms render contracts and other elements of civil and criminal law consistently enforceable. Any hope for an adequate regulatory framework to protect business investments and trade is inconceivable without an independent, transparent, and powerful judiciary (Castañeda 1993:385).

Elsewhere (Kyle and Yaworsky 2000; Yaworsky 2002) I have reported how these legal reforms are championed throughout the Chilapa region by a government-financed human rights NGO. The universal conceptions of human rights posited by this group dovetail nicely with government efforts to replace the patron-client ties that pervade rural Mexico. Irregardless of whether patron-client ties manifest themselves as the "impunity" of mestizo elites or the "customary law" found in indigenous communities, the state has an interest in replacing them with uniform legal codes, an independent judiciary, and the rule of law. Through the work of this NGO, a standardized conception of civil, human, criminal, and agrarian rights is promoted throughout the countryside. It also mediates conflicts exacerbated by the recent agrarian reform laws, acts as an oversight committee for Mexico's powerful military and police forces, and works to reduce the monopolies and corruption rampant in Guerrero's political and business circles. Under the generic label of "human rights," the NGO promotes freedom of speech, humane internal security practices, impartial justice, and lawful dissent. This activism protects both individuals and groups from arbitrary or illegal acts committed by the state or third parties. Human rights NGOs have the net effect of creating a legal system and business climate in Guerrero that is increasingly attractive to foreign investors. Human rights is thus a handmaiden to the overall reform project.

In this article, I intend to focus on how SEDESOL and NGOs promote economic development in Chilapa. They advance government economic policy through their focus on poverty alleviation and rural development. They do this by aiding communities in finding areas of comparative advantage in the global economy; through the support of regional micro industries; through the funding of temporary employment projects; and via the promotion of ecologically responsible economic practices. All of this contributes to the government program of trade liberalization (and political stability) by providing some sort of (highly subsidized) economic activity for local communities. This program has been only partially successful, as the opportunities for profitable eco-

conomic activity in the region remain minimal. Given that rural communities in the Chilapa region hold few, if any, trump cards of “comparative advantage,” SEDESOL/NGO programs have as much to do with maintaining basic welfare and political quiescence as they do with promoting competitive economic activity. As deforestation and erosion increasingly affect the region, SEDESOL transfers “natural” resources (viz: trees for reforestation, immature maguey, seedlings) into Chilapa as much as it transfers financial assets. Regional development in this case refers to subsidy-dependent development targeted at an increasingly populous and intractably impoverished rural sector. Nevertheless, these inputs provided by the SEDESOL/NGO alliance are indispensable for local production and help underwrite political stability in a region that is potentially explosive. Indeed, without these subsidies it is hard to imagine how rural communities could survive in the region (Kyle 1995).

Such was not always the case. The municipio of Chilapa entered the twentieth century as a largely self-sufficient agricultural region (of 556.8 square kilometers) that imported minimal amounts of essential consumer items from elsewhere in Mexico. By the 1960s, population growth and a shift to imported fossil fuel based agricultural technologies shattered the insular and autonomous character of the regional economy (Kyle 1995). Today in the municipio of Chilapa (population, 102,853 in 2000)² production in both rural and urban sectors of the economy requires capital, agricultural inputs, and technologies derived from the state (Kyle 1995). This process of growing dependency affects marginal rural communities absorbed into neotechnic modes of production throughout the developing world.

Unfortunately, much of the classical literature that examines the relationship between the state and rural poor (e.g., Wolf 1966) obscures this growing dependency by focusing instead on the state’s “extractive capability” in draining off surpluses produced by villagers. While the study of state mechanisms for accessing agricultural surpluses is an important subject in its own right (Wolf correctly notes that states are built on surplus extraction), currently, rural zones in southern Mexico are characterized by the increasing presence of governmental agencies distributing targeted subsidies. However, there is a lack of anthropological investigation concerning the mechanisms through which the state distributes inputs into the rural sector, a curious state of affairs given the extent to which marginal agrarian communities in neotechnic economies are now reliant on governmental inputs.

2. All population figures are drawn from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geographica, e Informática (2001).

Neoliberal Reforms

Since the inception of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in 1929, political stability in Mexico's rural sector has been buttressed by land reform initiatives, which later in the century were augmented by a complex array of subsidies made possible by the nation's petroleum industry. Both public and private lands were turned over to the rural poor to create a large sector of smallholders linked to the government via patron-client ties. Subsidies and wage and price controls permeated this system, all made possible by the government's abundant supply of petrodollars. As long as land was available for redistribution and petroleum prices on the world market were high, legitimacy and order were maintained. But by the early 1980s, land suitable for redistribution to Mexico's expanding population grew increasingly scarce. Petroleum prices fell in 1981, and by 1982 Mexico was unable either to finance its vast subsidy system or to continue payments on its enormous foreign debt. The debts were renegotiated on the condition that Mexico take steps to shrink government spending and open its market to outside competition, which in practical terms meant scaling back or eliminating the subsidy system that had sustained fifty years of economic and political stability. Currency devaluation, privatization of industry and agriculture, and a renewed emphasis on raising revenue were to accompany the austerity program. In sum, these policies, which would come to be known as "neoliberal reform," would include the onset of short-term stabilization policies under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund; the implementation of longer-term structural adjustment programs derived from the World Bank; institutional reform in the countryside; an end to land redistribution; and a diminished economic role for the peasantry. Concomitant with this project of "economic surgery" would be the delivery of "anesthesia" for the rural poor vis-à-vis targeted compensatory subsidies.

The new neoliberal development model had no real provision for the continuation of a subsistence- or semi-subsistence-oriented class of small-scale agriculturalists, Mexico's famed *campesinado*, or rural peasantry. These poor agriculturalists who made up a large part of the ruling party's constituency, especially in the destitute southern states of Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca, were considered to be essentially irrelevant as a real productive group given the new development agenda. More specifically, they were now to be treated as recipients of welfare rather than as viable and competitive producers (Fox 1994:259).

Even if there had been some sort of central role envisioned for the rural poor during structural adjustment, the financial assets that previously underwrote subsidies directed to them were no longer readily

available. In short, the traditional pillar of political stability in rural Mexico—a complex of intertwined economic subsidy programs, land redistribution schemes, and political patronage networks—no longer could be sustained. Institutional transformation in rural Mexico would now require creating new organizations compatible with the disbursement of diminished and more narrowly targeted subsidies.

Initial Programs

Such a transformation occurred early in the administration of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994), when the federal government arranged a political agreement that targeted subsidies at the rural sector in exchange for quiescence. These direct transfers required the formation of new social organizations, many of which conform to Carroll's conception (1992:11) of an NGO. The Programa Nacional de Solidaridad (PRONASOL) would become the main link among existing producer organizations, the new generation of NGOs, and the government. PRONASOL began operating on December 2, 1988, the second day of President Salinas's term of office. The basic outline for PRONASOL grew out of Salinas' doctoral dissertation (1982), based on fieldwork conducted in rural Puebla and Tlaxcala during the 1970s. Salinas's dissertation outlines the political motivations guiding his thinking during the development of the PRONASOL program. Fieldwork convinced the future president that existing poverty relief programs were not garnering enough political benefits for the government. He discovered that villages receiving the highest amounts of state development spending remained centers of discontent directed at the government. Salinas (1982) attributed this to corruption that siphoned off funds and a lack of local input in the selection of appropriate relief programs. He noted organizational reforms that could presumably remedy such problems and bolster popular support for the government. These reforms would include greater accountability, transparency, and a greater selection of micro-development projects afforded to communities. The official PRONASOL discourse was to be framed in less Machiavellian terms, using generalities such as "experience in direct democracy" and "social modernization" (Salinas de Gortari 1993).

Regardless of Salinas's initial motivations, analysts have conjured up a bewildering array of interpretations regarding PRONASOL in action (see Cornelius et al. 1994:5). Many of these interpretations are not mutually exclusive. These varying characterizations reflect not only PRONASOL's internal complexity and multiple agendas; they also arise from case studies that examined how PRONASOL has in fact played out in Mexico's vastly different socioeconomic regions. Dresser (1991; 1994:144) argues

that PRONASOL provided the political conditions necessary to sustain the neoliberal economic model. I concur with her assessment. The strategy involved deployment of a novel, demand-based, carefully targeted, poverty reduction program combined with neoliberal economic policies and neopopulist welfare programs (Dresser 1994:154). Although PRONASOL functioned as a highly targeted palliative to offset the social costs of economic restructuring, it simultaneously fulfilled Salinas's graduate-school-era dream of serving the regime's political ends.

The original PRONASOL revamped previous federal revenue-sharing programs and combined them with innovative rural development efforts inspired not only by Salinas's doctoral dissertation but by the success of NGOs as well (Hernandez and Fox 1995). PRONASOL directed resources to turbulent zones, and for a period in the early 1990s it re-legitimized an unpopular PRI. The projects undertaken generally required the formation of local solidarity committees that in turn selected from a standard menu of possible community improvement projects, such as electrification or road paving. While PRONASOL appeared to decentralize, initially it centralized massive discretionary funding power in presidential hands, particularly during the late 1980s and early 1990s. NGOs in Chilapa quickly sprang up to access these funds, and a new set of institutions and relationships evolved against the backdrop of a reforming PRI. These semi-autonomous NGOs are currently responsible for implementing government-financed programs (e.g., temporary employment public works projects) that in the past would have been the responsibility of the state alone. The recipients of PRONASOL funds included both official and nonpartisan social movements. This deepening relationship between the state and independent social movements became quite noticeable in the mid-1980s. It is variously known in Mexico as *concertación social* (social liberalism) and is a characteristic feature of current state-NGO relationships in Chilapa.

Institutionalizing Social Development

The PRONASOL programs were relabeled and placed under the jurisdiction of the brand new Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, SEDESOL, in April of 1992. Today, these programs continue to serve as fundamental pillars of political and economic stability in Guerrero.³ The Region Centro of Guerrero, in which Chilapa is located, garners by far the largest amount of SEDESOL development money statewide, followed by the

3. Salinas (2002:851–852) makes it abundantly clear that heading off a rural insurgency was a *causa sine qua non* for his administration, and that SEDESOL was the means to achieving this end.

Table 1 Major SEDESOL Ramo 26 “Desarrollo Social en Regiones de Pobreza” Programs in Chilapa, 1999–2000.

Program	Links in Chilapa	Comments
1. PET	NGOs	Large-scale presence
2. FONAES	NGO	Artisan training
3. <i>Credito a la Palabra</i>	Ayuntamiento, NGO	Fertilizer program
4. <i>Productivo de la Mujer</i>	NGO	Productive projects, swine-raising
5. <i>Fondos Regionales Indigenas</i>	130 villages, NGOs	Large-scale presence
6. <i>Jornaleros Agricolas</i>	Casa de Campesino	Over 10,000 laborers annually
7. <i>Coinversion Social</i>	NGO	Small presence

Source: Yaworsky (2002).

Costa Chica (INEGI 1997). The Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL 1999) had determined which regions in Guerrero were in need of immediate poverty relief and supplemented this with a list of municipios that also form priority regions. The municipio of Chilapa de Alvarez received a “Very High” rating in terms of poverty and marginality indices. It thus became a priority municipio for SEDESOL poverty relief programs. Also receiving “Very High” marginality ratings were the neighboring municipios of Ahuacuotzingo, Atlixac, Mártir de Cuilapan, and Zitlala. Tixtla was the only nearby municipio that received a “Medium” marginality rating.

As a consequence of this assessment, SEDESOL advanced considerable resource transfers to the Chilapa region (much of which is transferred through NGOs). Currently, SEDESOL programs fall under the jurisdiction of three of the ministry’s major administrative divisions: Ramo 26: Desarrollo Social y Produccion en Regiones de Pobreza; Ramo 20: Desarrollo Social; and Ramo 33: Fondos Municipales. A fourth, Programa Intersectoral (PI), drawing on resources from diverse ministries, also operates in Chilapa. Ramo 26 has targeted Chilapa with eleven programs, all to be administered, at least in part, by local NGOs. Ramo 20 funds five programs involving NGOs operating in Chilapa. Ramo 33 and the PI each have one program operating in the municipio, both run by the *ayuntamiento* (municipal government). Table 1 (below) outlines Ramo 26 programs operating in Chilapa during 1999–2000. Note that the table documents an NGO link between most SEDESOL programs and beneficiaries.

The above table outlines an extensive Ramo 26 presence in Chilapa.

I now turn to a brief discussion of the Ramo 26 programs active in Chilapa during the years 1997–2000.

Bolstering the Regional Wage-Labor Market through Temporary Employment

During the 1960s, many rural communities around Chilapa were chiefly agricultural settlements whose residents augmented their income via petty craft production. Today, most of these communities are hybrid agricultural/working class outliers dependent on Chilapa's wage-labor markets, both urban and rural. These wage-labor portfolios are crucial for the survival of the rural poor, and it is precisely these income-earning projects that are heavily subsidized by SEDESOL's Programa de Empleo Temporal (PET). Aside from providing employment, the program simultaneously bolsters subsistence agriculture, cash cropping, and petty craft production by paying participants to engage in these activities.

In terms of the number of beneficiaries served, the PET is perhaps the most important Ramo 26 initiative operating in Chilapa. It targets unskilled laborers in marginal zones and is designed to reach peak operational levels during those months in which local productive activities are scarce. For Chilapa, this would be the dry season months of November through April, although in practice PET funding extends beyond these dates. The program pays workers 90 percent of the daily legal minimum wage. It allows several local NGOs the role of identifying useful workfare projects and then assigns these NGOs the responsibility of hiring laborers and overseeing the project. Sanzekan Tinemi is the NGO most active with this program. In 1997, the PET earmarked 270,000 pesos⁴ for this NGO's artisan work in seven communities; in 1998, 320,000 pesos to residents of seven communities; and in 1999, 570,000 pesos for eleven communities. Each community had approximately fifteen employees for a total of 161 employees in eleven communities in 1999. Similar payments, amounting to twenty-six pesos per day per individual, were issued to villagers participating in reforestation projects with Sanzekan Tinemi. From July through December of 1999, reforestation laborers were paid six days a week for an average weekly income of 156 pesos. Meanwhile, a smaller organization, the Unión de Comuneros Nahuas de Atzacoyaloya, Guerrero (UCNAG), ran PET initiatives in the

4. All figures are given in Mexican pesos, which in 1999 were trading 9.70 per U.S. dollar. The official daily minimum wage in Chilapa during 1999 was 26 pesos, although residents from rural areas of Atlixac reported to me daily wages as low as 20 to 25 pesos. The basic foodstuff, Maseca brand maize, costs 3.6 pesos per kilo. The less common Contri brand maize can be purchased for 2.0 pesos per kilo.

vicinity of the nearby village of Atzacaloya, paying employees about twenty-five pesos a day. During 1998, there were approximately 300 temporary employees in this program working in eight villages.

Augmenting *Minifundismo*: Credit by Word of Honor

Concurrent with SEDESOL's underwriting of wage labor is a continued commitment to propping up the region's long-standing practice of small-scale agriculture. This is accomplished in part through Crédito a la Palabra, Ramo 26's rural financial loans program. It originated in the early 1990s, when Mexico reorganized its rural finance system. According to Myhre (1998:42), borrowers in Mexico were at that time classified by repayment records and prevailing regional economic conditions. This led to a four-tiered system of potential borrowers. At the top are those deemed profitable, and these borrowers receive large-scale loans from Mexico's commercial banks. The second tier consists of productive and likely to be profitable commercial farmers, also serviced by commercial banks. The Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural (BANRURAL), a government enterprise that had withdrawn from many areas of rural Mexico, attends to the needs of the third-tier producers, whose output is lower than the second tier but are potentially profitable. Crédito a la Palabra attends to the needs of the bottom tier of producers, those deemed unworthy of formal credit from existing banking institutions (Myhre 1998:42).

The program provides collateral-free loans to small-scale agriculturalists (those cultivating twenty hectares or less) in marginal zones. The program is a stimulus for the production of basic grains (maize and frijoles) and targets those without access to bank loans. In 1999, Crédito a la Palabra was lending a maximum of 500 pesos to local campesinos. This obviously is not the type of loan that will finance major capital investments (e.g., the purchase of tractors, etc.). It is basically a stopgap to finance production systems based on household manual labor. Other anthropologists in southern Mexico report that the funds are used as pocket money by cash-strapped families (Collier and Quaratiello 1994).

In Chilapa, this program works with the Savings and Loan NGO Matotlanejtikan Tomin (Making Money), which in 1999 administered the transfer of funds to at least 793 individuals in twenty-seven communities in the municipios of Ahuacutzingo, Chilapa, and Zitlala. Local farmers also collaborate with the ayuntamiento of Chilapa by using Crédito a la Palabra to underwrite a fertilizer distribution scheme administered by the municipal government, a program that began in the wake of the dismemberment of the government's primary fertilizer parastatal. This program is the most important source of fertilizer currently operating in the

region. Villagers form committees that apply for fertilizer through the ayuntamiento/SEDESOL apparatus. Meza Castillo (1994:44) estimates that 75 percent of the region's communities receive fertilizer through this program. Typically, farmers receive their fertilizer in July and are not required to pay for it until the following February, with no interest charged.

The program began in 1993-1994, in the context of the upcoming presidential election. According to Bartra (1996), the state government decided to "fertilize" the vote in Guerrero. To accomplish this, they inundated rural municipalities with 100,000 tons of ammonium sulfate financed via interest-free credit, without transport charges, and at a cost 27 percent below market rate (Bartra 1996). Even these numbers understate the magnitude of the subsidy. Bartra (1996:177) reports that in 1993-1994 the program functioned as an outright fertilizer giveaway, as campesino repayment rates were as little as 0.3 percent in some Guerrero municipios. Because municipal governments have some discretion in determining eligibility among potential beneficiaries and repayment of funds is not strictly enforced, there does appear to be leeway for a tacit quid pro quo exchange of fertilizer for political favors.

During my fieldwork, each beneficiary received 350 kilos of ammonium sulfate or, less commonly, other mixtures. This quantity of fertilizer is sufficient to treat one hectare of soil. Although the total cost amounts to 160 pesos per person, fertilizer is still a heavily subsidized product: 350 kilos of ammonium sulfate purchased at the local development NGO warehouse (Sanzekan Tinemi) or other businesses would cost the buyer 420 pesos.

Harnessing Laborers for National Markets

Participation in the regional economy alone will not support the annual budgetary needs of most rural households. Large-scale seasonal migration tied to performing wage labor in northern Mexico is a basic economic prop for large swaths of the rural population. The Programa Nacional de Jornaleros Agrícolas is designed to streamline this process and, it is hoped, improve living conditions for migrant workers. This program works with federal, state, and municipal authorities, producers, rural organizations, and beneficiaries. Locally it aids in transporting migrants to and from work camps located primarily in northern Mexico. It also registers names and destinations of workers so that family members may reach them in the event of an emergency. From September 1998 to February 1999, this program oversaw the transportation of 9,982 Chilapan migrant agricultural workers, the vast majority of whom were destined for the state of Sinaloa. During the same months in 1999-2000, the program organized the transport of 7,312 Chilapan migrant workers. It also

processes an additional 3,000 migrant laborers who originate from the nearby municipios of Ahuacutzingo, Atlixac, Martir de Cuilapan, Tixtla, and Zitlala. The local office is called the Casa de Campesino located in Chilapa. It serves as both the program's local administrative office and the regional transport hub for migrant workers. Representatives of agribusinesses in northern Mexico meet with local village leaders at the *Casa de Campesino*, where they negotiate labor contracts. Migrant workers converge, sign contracts, and depart for the labor camps via busing arranged and financed by the employers. Every November, eighteen to twenty buses a day depart loaded with workers. Migrant laborers from Guerrero and Oaxaca constitute the bulk of the workforce in the agricultural work camps of Sinaloa, Sonora, Baja California, and Baja California Sur. Guerrero is also the origin of the majority of laborers sent to the states of Michoacan, Jalisco, and Colima.

In work camps nationwide, the program helps with stoves, *molineros*, *panaderias*, and *tortillerias*. The program also operates a temporary employment program in Chilapa with an unknown number of participants. Chilapa is one of four localities in Guerrero that has been targeted by the program.

Other Programs

Several other SEDESOL programs warrant mention for their significance as links between the Federal government and Chilapa's rural economy. According to Fox (1994:181), Fondos Regionales Indígenas is the only SEDESOL subprogram that actually tried to transfer resource allocation decision making to nongovernmental organizations. Ramo 26 put up the financing and Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) became a key administrator. INI and SEDESOL sought to turn local development decision-making over to autonomous regional producer councils, thus bolstering existing organizations. In Chilapa, the Consejo Regional Indígena de la Region Centro serves as an interlocutor among the Fondos Regionales office, NGOs, and various producer organizations. Villages that have never received regional funds in the past are allotted 70 percent of the available financial resources, while the remaining 30 percent go to underwrite established projects. No one organization can receive more than 10 percent of the funds, and the benefiting organization is obligated to finance 25 percent of the project. The Fondos Regionales center must report all financial transactions monthly to the state SEDESOL delegation. These funds are currently financing at least seven NGOs in Chilapa. The Fondos Regionales center opened in Chilapa in 1990 with a budget of 50,000 pesos and by 1999 it was operating with an allotment of 1,274,000 pesos. These resources underwrote 120 agricultural and ar-

tisan projects with participants from 130 communities in ten municipios (Fondos Regionales archives, 2000).

The Fondo Nacional de Empresas de Solidaridad (FONAES) was created in 1991 and focuses on poor women, ensuring that 50 percent of projects include females. In Chilapa, FONAES works primarily with the NGO Sanzekan Tinemi. The Programa Productivo de la Mujer works with the woman's NGO Titekitoke Tajome Sihuame (TTS). The women's program finances swine-raising and other productive enterprises designed to benefit rural women. Five smaller Ramo 26 programs also provide training and small subsidies to NGOs in Chilapa.

Ramo 20 oversees poverty relief and development through its Programa de Abasto Rural, Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanos, and through the local office of the INI. The parastatal Distribuidora Conasupo (DICONSA) already had an established compound in Chilapa and longstanding involvement in underwriting rural stores; its fleet of transport vehicles provides logistical support for NGO development projects. It was particularly influential in Chilapa during the 1980s; however, it has lost its relative prominence with the growth of SEDESOL. In fact, in 1995, DICONSA was itself incorporated into SEDESOL as a sub-program. Forty-seven DICONSA rural stores service Chilapa, and another forty-three service hinterland areas of Ahuacuotzingo, Atlixac, and Zitlala. The stores offer basic foods at prices comparable to those in urban settings, as the transport costs are subsidized by the Mexican government. INI is now a dependency of Ramo 20 and currently administers programs through Procuracion de Justicia, a *becas* office, and in coordination with the Fondos Regionales center. Through Procuracion de Justicia, SEDESOL/INI funds ten regional NGOs, including four that operate locally: the Centro Regional de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos "José María Morelos y Pavón" (100,000 pesos in 1999); Altepétl Nahuas (100,000 pesos); TTS (75,000 pesos); and UCNAG (64,000 pesos). See Table 2 for a summary of Ramo 20 programs in Chilapa.

Ramo 33: Fondos Municipales works mainly through the local ayuntamiento. In 2000, Ramo 33 directed 4.1 million pesos directly to the ayuntamiento for 181 separate public works projects involving electrification, road maintenance, housing, education, and health. (*Diario Guerrero Hoy*, April 27, 2000). The ayuntamiento also runs local temporary employment projects, many of which are probably funded by SEDESOL's Ramo 33 which is a major source of financing for the ayuntamiento.

The PI in Chilapa is also administered directly out of the ayuntamiento. It runs the Programa de Educación, Salud, y Alimentación (PROGRESA), providing direct cash payments to Chilapa's poorest rural families, ostensibly to underwrite health, nutrition, and education. PROGRESA (launched by the administration of Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León in 1997)

Table 2 SEDESOL Ramo 20 “Desarrollo Social” Programs in Chilapa, 1999–2000.

1. <i>Abasto Social de Leche</i>	NGO	Channeled through rural stores
2. <i>Abasto Rural</i> (DICONSA)	NGO	Major presence since 1980 93 rural stores in region Warehouse in Chilapa
4. FONART	NGO	Supports woven palm industry
5. INI	NGOs	Major presence, 100% of funds for local human rights NGO are derived through this program

Source: Yaworsky (2002).

had a municipal budget of approximately 42 million pesos in 1999. Direct untargeted transfer of these PROGRESA funds to Chilapa’s population would put about 420.00 pesos per capita annually into each resident’s hands. Trejo and Jones (1998) suggest that PROGRESA monthly stipends average about 370 pesos nationwide. In addition to cash transfers, breakfast is provided to first and second graders, and vaccinations given to needy children. The program covers pregnant women, children under the age of five, and primary school-age children. It is a program uninvolved with capital investment schemes, limiting its activities to direct caloric and financial transfers to the rural poor. After the 2000 presidential election, PROGRESA was relabeled Oportunidades by the Vicente Fox Quesada administration.

SEDESOL and NGOs

The term NGO has been used to describe both national and international organizations based either in the developed or developing world (Bebbington and Thiele 1993:7). Scholars often distinguish between “northern” NGOs and “southern” NGOs; i.e., northern NGOs are headquartered in affluent, industrialized nations, while southern NGOs are those indigenous to developing countries. This paper addresses southern NGOs that share organizational and operational features identified in Carroll’s (1992) *Intermediary NGOs: the Supporting Links in Grassroots Development*. Carroll (1992:9) noted that the term NGO has been used to describe hundreds of types of organizations, ranging from political action committees to private businesses and sports clubs. His work went on to identify and examine three organizational types relevant to the present study: the grassroots support organization (GSO), the membership support organization (MSO), and the primary grassroots organiza-

tion (PGO). Carroll (1992:11) defines the GSO as an intermediary development entity that links donors to beneficiaries without being elected by (or otherwise directly accountable to) the beneficiaries. An MSO is similar, with the added provision that it is accountable to its base membership. A PGO is a village or household-level workgroup of base members supported by the MSO or GSO (Carroll 1992:11). Approximately twenty locally based GSOs and MSOs (along with their dependent PGO workgroups) are currently promoting development initiatives in the Chilapa region.⁵ The fact that most of these organizations are financially dependent on the state is interesting, but does not bar them from the NGO category as defined by Carroll.⁶

Most of Chilapa's NGOs receive extensive financial support from SEDESOL and operate various temporary employment and micro-development projects. SEDESOL, along with INI and the *Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, y Desarrollo Rural* (SAGAR), provides 100 percent of the financing currently earmarked for Chilapa's women's NGO, 100 percent for the local human rights NGO, and 60 percent for Chilapa's major development NGO, Sanzekan Tinemi. SEDESOL alone provides 50 percent of the finances for the reforestation carried out by NGOs in Ahuacuotzingo, Chilapa, and Zitlala. Much of the rest comes through the Mexican state via the Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales, y Pesca (SEMARNAP). SEDESOL also assists the *Consejo Comunitario de Abasto* (CCA) in maintaining the chain of ninety-two rural stores in Chilapa and its hinterland.

Virtually all NGOs in Chilapa and some from neighboring municipios are members of the Regional Indigenous Council. The primary ob-

5. All of the local NGOs were legally constituted as either non-profit *Asociaciones Civiles* (AC) or SEDESOL-affiliated *Sociedades de Solidaridad Social* (SSS). MSOs tended to be configured as SSS's, while GSOs were ACs. In terms of leadership selection, the MSO/SSS type of organization often met conventionally accepted norms of democratic practice. Periodic elections were held that allowed even the poorest PGO members to vote their conscience. Conversely, GSOs/ACs were never designed to be formally accountable to beneficiaries, and among them there were major differences in how they interacted with the rural poor they represented. The leadership and cadre of some of the local GSOs clearly demonstrated ethical behavior that in any conventional terms was beyond reproach. Other GSOs maintained patron-client relations linking self- (or government-) appointed caciques and the rural poor. The leader of one such cacique-type GSO/AC had, to the best of my knowledge, about half the population of his home village wishing him dead.

6. As this dependency on the state seems counterintuitive for an NGO, Fisher (1997: 447-448) notes an alternative array of acronyms to capture greater variation in NGO composition. Among these alternatives are the government organized nongovernmental organization (GONGO), and the quasi-autonomous nongovernmental organization (QUANGO). While such acronyms are perhaps more accurate, for simplicity's sake, I have chosen to use the more familiar acronym "NGO."

jective of the council is to pressure SEDESOL into reclassifying Chilapa as an area of immediate attention, a classification that would qualify for more SEDESOL funds than can be obtained by municipios classified as other priority regions. The target audience of this lobbying consists of high officials in SEDESOL. The *Consejo Regional Indígena de la Región center*, representing some twenty-five organizations, is intended to have more negotiating muscle with the authorities than can be derived by any one organization on its own. Chilapa's largest NGO, Sanzekan Tinemi, works directly with a number of SEDESOL programs, among them PET, FONAES, Crédito a la Palabra, and Coinversion Social. In early 2000, Sanzekan Tinemi was receiving approximately 70 percent of its SEDESOL funding through the PET, headquartered in Chilpancingo. Another 15 percent was coming from FONAES, also headquartered in Chilpancingo. Of the major local development organizations, only one is divorced from the local SEDESOL Fondos Regionales chain; instead, this particular NGO is entirely funded by the government of the state of Guerrero. It is unclear where the state government derives its funds to underwrite the NGO in question. I suspect that the money may indeed originate from SEDESOL, but this of course needs to be investigated.

Sanzekan Tinemi: A Closer Look at Chilapa's Largest NGO

Sanzekan Tinemi is a membership-support organization that lists 1,262 members. Sanzekan Tinemi can trace its roots back to 1980, when a government development agency promoted the creation of the CCA and associated rural committees in Chilapa. The objectives of the CCA (Sanzekan Tinemi's immediate antecedent organization) centered on maintaining rural stores and buying fertilizer wholesale. After 1982, the CCA concentrated on fertilizer acquisition and the maintenance of a steady supply of consumer goods to rural communities through association with the government, which provided infrastructural support. Serious power struggles with regional bureaucrats arose in the late 1980s, culminating in a CCA-led occupation of a parastatal's main regional distribution center. This incident provoked enough anxiety in elites to implement local reforms favoring the CCA. This reform strengthened the CCA and gradually produced Sanzekan Tinemi in 1990. Simultaneously, a wave of abrupt privatizations in the early 1990s coincided with the sudden growth of a regional NGO network. It was against this backdrop of the selling off of public industries and the rise of PRONASOL funding opportunities that Sanzekan Tinemi was born.

Sanzekan Tinemi was functionally divided into divisions known as *areas*. These areas were devoted to (1) crafts production that aided regional communities in the development and marketing of palm prod-

ucts; (2) reforestation; (3) a rural women's organization; (4) a savings and loan program; (5) aid to producers, primarily through fertilizer sales; (6) technical assistance; and (7) rural stores, originally organized by parastatals and the CCA. By 1995, some of these areas (i.e., the women's organization, the savings and loan, the CCA) had detached and formed independent NGOs. However, Sanzekan Tinemi and her daughter organizations continued to collaborate, especially in training and workshops. The daughter organizations were all located in the same complex of warehouses and offices that housed Sanzekan Tinemi proper. The CCA rural stores counted ninety-three retail outlets located in Chilapa, Ahuacuotzingo, Mártir de Cuilapan, Tixtla, and Zitlala. The savings and loan area (now known as Matotlanejtikan Tomin) drew clients from forty-four communities in several municipios (Ahuacuotzingo, Chilapa de Alvarez, Mártir de Cuilapan, Quechultenango, and Zitlala) and financed itself through SEDESOL. By the time of my fieldwork, (1998–2000) Sanzekan Tinemi itself consisted of three areas: a crafts area, reforestation, and fertilizer sales. Membership was on the rise during this period, jumping from 1,096 members in 1999 to 1,262 members in 2000. Sanzekan Tinemi beneficiaries were dispersed primarily in the municipios of Chilapa, Ahuacuotzingo, Mártir de Cuilapan and Zitlala. The artisans area was receiving heavy financial backing from SEDESOL and, in the past, from the Interamerican Development Bank. Sanzekan Tinemi's reforestation initiative had planted over 660,000 trees in fourteen communities in four municipios. In addition it had planted 1,050,000 maguey plants in seven communities located in four municipios. The maguey planting was designed not only with the idea of starting up mescal production, but with the goal of lessening erosion and giving local campesinos temporary employment opportunities. The area directing aid to producers (chiefly via fertilizer sales) was by 1995 working in twenty-two communities, being financed primarily through SEDESOL.

Because the projects financed through Sanzekan Tinemi typically must conform to the guidelines established by SEDESOL, the state has considerable influence in the overall direction of regional economic development. The presence of some external NGOs and foreign donors in the funding matrix merely reinforces the reality that local communities have become dependent on external subsidies for their very survival, a consideration often lost in the rhetoric of autonomy and resistance that is so ubiquitous in NGO studies.

Artisan Subsidies

The Sanzekan Tinemi artisans area is named "Titetitkite Sanzekan," Nahuatl for "we continue to work together." Amidst the privatization of

parastatals in the early 1990s, it had replaced a now defunct parastatal as the major local institution directly supporting Chilapa's woven palm industry. This industry arose in the 1930s when a technique to braid strands of *zoyate* (palm) leaves was perfected by a local entrepreneur (Kyle 1995). The braided strands, known as *cinta*, became the basic component of a variety of products, including baskets, handbags, placemats, and sombreros. When decorated with dried zoyate leaves or acrylic yarn, these products proved to be marketable in regions external to Chilapa. By 1978 it was estimated that 42,154 part-time artisans were present in the municipios of Chilapa, Mártir de Cuilapan, and Zitlala, seventy-two percent (30,455) of whom were residents of Chilapa municipio (Meza Castillo 1994:32).

The artisans area began in 1992-1993 with four village-level workgroups. Since then, subsidized craftwork has expanded to include products based on other materials, such as maize. Twenty-six workgroups with 510 members operated in 1996. The number peaked in 1997 when thirty-two workgroups with 662 members were affiliated with Sanzekan Tinemi. By 1998, only thirty-two workgroups with 525 members were listed in Sanzekan Tinemi roles. The numbers rose slightly in 1999 to thirty-two workgroups with 543 members (Sanzekan Tinemi archives, 2000). SEDESOL was the primary government agency financing the Sanzekan Tinemi artisan area with money provided largely through the PET and FONAES.

Workgroups associated with Sanzekan Tinemi's artisan area are legally constituted as SEDESOL solidarity-style committees, with the tripartite leadership structure (president, secretary, treasurer) common with that organizational type. Approximately 70 percent of the allotted PET funds and 100 percent of the FONAES funds (about 30,000 pesos annually per workgroup) are placed in a rotating fund for each group. The group members will purchase raw materials drawing on money from the fund. The other 30 percent of the PET funds go to Sanzekan Tinemi for administrative costs. Sanzekan Tinemi would then purchase the finished products and sell them wholesale to client businesses in both national and international markets.

SEDESOL funding usually commences in the month of July and ceases in late or mid-December. On paper, SEDESOL receives reports indicating that group members are allotted 26 pesos a day, six days a week, for a hypothetical weekly income of 156 pesos, as if there were no 70/30 percent split. The villagers must re-apply each year for funding, and documents finalizing the yearly allotment must be signed by the group, Sanzekan Tinemi, SEDESOL, and Guerrero state government officials. In 1997, there were 270,000 pesos available for artisan support in seven communities. In 1998, 320,000 pesos were allotted to

seven communities, and in 1999, 570,000 pesos for craft work in eleven communities from four municipios, directly benefiting 186 families. In total, 64,500 artisan items were produced through the Sanzekan Tinemi-SEDESOL arrangement in 1999. Total sales in 1999 amounted to 409,897 pesos. Roughly 57 percent of the product was sold nationally while 43 percent was destined for international markets (Sanzekan Tinemi archives, 2000).

Reforestation and Mescal Production

In 2000, Sanzekan Tinemi's reforestation project was probably the single largest consumer of PET funding in the region. Nine hundred and seventy two individuals were drawing thirty pesos a day, six days a week, (180 pesos a week), fifty-two weeks a year, for a yearly income of 9,360 pesos (roughly \$930 U.S.) through this program (Sanzekan Tinemi archives, 2000). Some communities are reforesting fairly large areas (forty-four hectares apiece) with allotments of 88,667 plants per community for 1999. Other communities were reforesting between twenty to twenty-three hectares with an annual input of plants ranging from 40,000 to 46,000 per site. The remaining participating communities were reforesting between twelve to seventeen hectares each with 24,000 to 34,000 plants. In 1999, PET paid out at least 1,089,000 pesos to help finance this regional reforestation program. During that year, a total of 329 hectares were covered with 660,001 plants, benefiting 1,414 families. At least 200,000 trees are known to have been replanted in the Sanzekan Tinemi communities alone (Sanzekan Tinemi archives, 2000).

The area devoted to reforestation has begun to produce maguey for use in the burgeoning mescal industry. Despite legal prohibitions that were not repealed until 1986, small-scale mescal production has a long history in the region, but the product's range has been limited to a small circuit serviced by itinerant merchants vending from plastic water jugs. Today, there are twenty-eight distilleries in the region, six in Chilapa, ten in Zitlala, nine in Ahuacutzingo and three in Mártir de Cuilapan. By the mid-1990s, annual production in these four municipios was estimated to be 11,473 liters (Meza Castillo 1994:38). The increasing popularity of tequila in the United States, combined with expanding local demand, precipitated extensive exploitation of maguey in Guerrero that led to serious depletions of the plants in some regions. In this context, Sanzekan Tinemi entered an accord with SAGAR in 1993 and obtained 140,000 maguey (*Agave angustifolia*) plants from Oaxaca and distributed them in twenty-three communities in the region. In 1994, another 120,000 Oaxacan magueys were planted, the majority of which did not adapt to the region and thus perished. Yet despite this setback, the maguey re-

forestation initiatives continue to expand into new communities throughout the region.

Conclusions

It is clear that SEDESOL and other state ministries have carefully orchestrated a development regime in Chilapa that effectively incorporates rural peoples and nongovernmental organizations into government programs. State centrality waxes strong even while the PRI's fortunes wane. I agree with Bartra's (1996) characterization of the central government as a "persistent rural leviathan." It is not by whim that this has occurred. Population growth in the Chilapa region has outstripped the resources available locally that in the past did sustain self-provisioning (Kyle 1995). Through the early to mid-twentieth century, many rural communities throughout Chilapa (and elsewhere in southern Mexico) maintained a degree of defacto political autonomy based on geographic isolation and their ability to produce essential foodstuffs independent of state subsidies. Massive population growth, increases in transport efficiency, and the adoption of neotechnic agricultural systems obliterated this scenario (Kyle 1995). A growing reliance on external inputs effectively incorporated these previously autonomous rural areas into a dependent and subordinate position in the wider industrial economy.

Peasant communities that in the past opportunistically opened or closed (as described by Skinner 1971; and Wolf 1957) in response to the circumstances in the wider society now can effect real "closure" only if they are prepared to accept massive economic dislocations, most probably involving widespread starvation and depopulation. Although some (e.g., Cancian 1992:162–164) suggest that a limited closure has been attempted by select rural peoples after the 1982 debt crisis, this closure is best explained in terms of the increasing ubiquity of occupational multiplicity in the countryside. Integration into the global economy under neoliberal terms has left many rural *Guerrerenses* little option but to commit themselves to a survival strategy based on wage labor via cyclical migration and government-subsidized microindustries augmented by small-scale farming and animal husbandry. This phenomenon of increasing rural dependency and transformation is not limited to Guerrero; it has been well documented in both Chiapas (Cancian 1992) and Oaxaca (Cohen 1999).

Given these crucial transformations in the demographic, technological, and economic makeup of Mexico, it should come as no surprise that elites and rural populations would develop institutions and specific forms of organization that adapt to the realities of structural adjustment in the emerging global political economy. Much of the "associational rev-

olution” of the late twentieth century signifies a revamping of patronage networks and other subsidy channels to adapt to these new demographic and economic realities. One cannot overemphasize the extent to which residents in rural Guerrero have come to depend on these subsidy programs, particularly those involving transportation, commodity prices, agricultural inputs, and petty commodity production (Kyle 1995). NGOs do not challenge this dependency; rather, they merely represent a shift in the way government subsidies are administered and allocated. NGOs are subsumed within a dendritic-like subsidy network linking state ministries and rural households, and elites control the flow of resources through this system. From the perspective of rural peoples, the main task of NGOs is to access state subsidies, a process that merely highlights the growing dependence of the rural poor on externally derived fossil-fuel-based technologies. The significance of this observation leads me to conclude that the claims of NGO-inspired autonomy should be greatly tempered or dismissed.

These basic social and demographic realities compel regional residents to access inputs from external sources or suffer an ecological and economic catastrophe. As such, the region’s “development” can quickly disappear should federal agencies alter current funding priorities. In reality, we have an NGO sector highly dependent on the state. In Chilapa and its hinterland, through SEDESOL, associated ministries, and NGOs, the government has financed craft production, reforestation, credit unions, temporary employment, services for migrant workers, and the creation and maintenance of a human rights center. These inputs taken as a whole constitute a subsidy that is absolutely necessary in sustaining the region’s population to the extent that state resource transfers now rival locally grown maize as the cornerstone of the regional economy. This process is undoubtedly not limited to the Chilapa region, yet the phenomenon has generally been overlooked in the academic literature inspired by the initial eruption of NGOs or the emergence of PRONASOL.

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