
The Receiving End of Reform: Everyday Responses to Neoliberalization in Southeastern Mexico

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Abstract: In southeastern Mexico, community forestry activities designed to join conservation and development experienced a significant institutional shift in 1992 when the federal government revised national policies and programs to conform to neoliberal economic and political designs. Mexico's embrace of neoliberalism produced revisions to the federal constitution that ended agrarian reform and created the possibility of dismantling the ejido, a form of collective property. This article builds upon the literature on neoliberalism and environment as well as studies on community forestry by examining the creative accommodations that rural producers have made in navigating Mexico's neoliberal turn. In contrast to previous work that emphasizes macro-level processes (eg, privatization of public natural resources) and local resistance, I employ Bourdieu's theory of practice to examine the symbolic and material dimensions of local responses to neoliberal policy reform. Drawing on research from nine communities in the state of Quintana Roo, I argue that local producers have accommodated neoliberal policies and programs by adopting hybrid logics, property regimes, forms of organization, and modes of exchange. Moreover, I contend that these creative responses constitute elements of a long-standing "culture of accommodation" to institutional change that predates Mexico's neoliberal reforms.

Keywords: neoliberalism, accommodation, governance, practice theory, Bourdieu, community forestry, Mexico

Introduction

Conservation and capitalism have co-existed prominently in rural Mexico since the 1970s when the federal government began promoting community based forestry enterprises as a means of encouraging local economic development and combating deforestation. Federal and state governments, foundations, aid agencies, and non-governmental organizations associated with the forestry sector and rural organizing sought to integrate conservation and development based on the idea that increased local incomes and economic stability would facilitate nature protection. This approach was particularly evident in the southeastern Mexican state of Quintana Roo beginning in 1983, when the national forestry department joined with Germany's development agency, GTZ, to establish a pilot community forestry initiative. The program drew from experiences with rural development projects in other parts of the country but explicitly set out to reverse the decline of the region's tropical forests and to protect habitat linking two large protected areas. Ultimately the community forestry initiative in Quintana Roo

became a model for integrated conservation and development projects in other parts of Latin America such as Guatemala and Ecuador.

Despite significant achievements in establishing permanent forest reserves and locally-managed enterprises, community forestry operations in Quintana Roo have faced myriad challenges stemming in large part from their hybrid governance structure. Across Mexico, land grant communities (known as “ejidos”) and their support organizations are neither private nor public, and thus face persistent, unresolved tensions between entrepreneurial desires and collective responsibilities. These tensions have become more pronounced over the last fifteen years in the wake of Mexico’s embrace of neoliberal economic and political reforms. The shift dramatically altered the country’s agrarian sector, bringing an end to agrarian reform and creating the possibility of dismantling the ejido as a collective property regime among other changes. While some initial forecasts predicted that community forestry enterprises, such as those in Quintana Roo, would disappear as a result of the reforms, they continue to play an important role in both rural economic development and regional conservation efforts. Yet, Mexico’s neoliberal policy reforms have facilitated several important changes to the ways communities approach both conservation and development. How exactly, then, did the national level institutional shift play out at the receiving end?

This article explores the creative accommodations that rural producers have made in navigating Mexico’s neoliberal turn. In contrast to previous work on neoliberalism and environment that emphasizes macro-level processes (eg, privatization of public natural resources) and local resistance, I employ Bourdieu’s theory of practice to examine the cultural and material dimensions of local responses to neoliberal policy reform. Drawing on research from nine communities in the state of Quintana Roo, I argue that local producers have accommodated neoliberal policies and programs in creative ways by adopting hybrid logics, property regimes, forms of organization, and modes of exchange. Moreover, I contend that these creative responses constitute elements of a long-standing “culture of accommodation” to institutional change that predates Mexico’s neoliberal reforms. From this perspective, processes of accommodation at the receiving end are neither purely voluntarist nor simply imposed from without but rather comprise durable practices derived from local interactions with state-sponsored development initiatives over multiple decades. Unlike resistance movements such as the Zapatista uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas, practices of accommodation emerge subtly and incrementally over time in the course of everyday interactions.

The article unfolds in six parts. The first section highlights three dominant themes in the literature on neoliberalism and environment—enclosure/privatization, the state as carrier of neoliberal reform, and contestation/resistance—to explore three points of inquiry that these themes suggest: hybrid logics and governance arrangements, local-level responses to state-sponsored initiatives, and accommodation. The second section introduces Bourdieu’s theory of practice as a conceptual frame for examining everyday responses to neoliberal reform. I present Bourdieu’s key concepts of field, capital, and habitus to gain a more nuanced view of the nexus between agency and structure including strategic and routine human actions and the cultural and institutional constraints shaping

those actions. The third section discusses the first type of accommodation to neoliberal reform by local communities: discursive. I situate dominant and shifting discourses on neoliberal policy reform in Mexico's agrarian sector in relation to community forestry activities in the state of Quintana Roo to examine how shifting logics of development produced a hybrid institutional and discursive arena rife with contradictions. Despite contradictions, these logics co-exist, inform, and challenge activities surrounding community forestry in important ways. The fourth section explores the second type of accommodation: spatial. I detail how community members established a combination of private and communal spaces in response to specific neoliberal policy reforms. The fifth section addresses the third type of accommodation: organizational. I explore how two communities established novel forms of internal organization and commercial exchange that enhanced the flow of capital while maintaining the security of collective resource ownership. In the sixth section, I extend my analysis to assess the extent to which the processes of accommodation to neoliberal policy reform among the community forestry ejidos in Quintana Roo represent long-standing practices constituting a "culture of accommodation" to state programs. I argue that processes of accommodation to neoliberalism are not so much a direct response to specific institutional reforms as a gradual accretion of practices in response to decades of state-sponsored development activities. In this sense, accommodation constitutes creative adaptation to state-led reform rather than passive acceptance.

Contours of "Actually Existing Neoliberalism"

In general, proponents of neoliberalism argue that unfettered markets are the best mechanisms for allocating goods and services within society. Such an approach seeks to minimize state-imposed regulations that might hinder flows of financial capital (Harvey 2005, Heynen et al. 2007). In abstract terms compiled by Castree (2008a:142), the strategies associated with neoliberal reform projects typically include all or most of the following: "privatization, marketization, deregulation, reregulation, [the creation of] market proxies in the residual public sector, and the construction of flanking mechanisms in civil society." The state plays a central role in establishing and/or regulating these six conditions and thus granting primacy to the market. Thus, regarding the first strategy—privatization—the state might attach private property rights to natural resources previously considered public or communal property (Castree, 2008a).

In framing this article, I highlight three themes that inspire further points of inquiry relevant to the neoliberal turn in Mexico: (1) enclosure/privatization, (2) the state as carrier of neoliberal reform, and (3) contestation/resistance. Regarding enclosure and privatization, much of the literature in critical human geography reflects Harvey's (2003) characterization of capital expansion as "accumulation by dispossession." Studies focus on water (Swyngedouw 2005, Bakker 2007, 2005, Perreault 2005, Roberts 2008), organic food (Guthman 2007), fisheries (Mansfield 2004, 2007, St Martin 2007), life patents (Prudham 2007), land reform (Wolford 2005, 2007), mining (Bury 2005), and conservation (Brockington et al. 2008), among others. In each case, state-led reform efforts seek to enhance market "efficiency" by redefining and stabilizing property rights via the transfer of resource access and control (land, water, fish, minerals) to capital

interests. In the case of rural Mexico, however, policy reforms strongly encouraged but did not mandate resource privatization, producing a mixture of quasi-private and communal spaces within communities. This suggests further inquiry on how hybrid logics and resource governance regimes emerge in practice and what social and environmental impacts such an amalgam might produce (Mansfield 2007, McCarthy 2005).

A related theme contemplates the role of states as carriers of neoliberal reform in conjunction with down-scaling, administrative decentralization, deregulation, and reregulation. Critical geographers tend to emphasize macro-level changes linked to trade agreements or broad policy agendas, such as the Washington Consensus (Wainwright and Kim 2008, Essex 2008, Perreault 2005, Martin 2005, McCarthy 2004). However, since reform processes tend to be fragmented and contested, it raises questions regarding the ways in which agrarian communities receive, challenge, and help to shape the application of neoliberal policies and programs in specific contexts. Several recent studies offer detailed ethnographies of such encounters among diverse actors and the tensions, negotiations, and adaptations that they produce within the context of conservation/development endeavors (eg, Li 2008, Escobar 2008, West 2006, Kosek 2006, Tsing 2005, Agrawal 2005, Moore 2005, Haenn 2005, Braun 2002).

The literature also highlights how marginalized groups such as indigenous peoples have resisted efforts to privatize and commodify natural resources. In Perreault's (2005) work on rural water governance in Bolivia, for example, government attempts to privatize water use rights provoked a national level movement by peasant irrigators to maintain water as a public resource (see also Bakker 2007, Goldman 2005, Sawyer 2004). Mexico is well known for the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in response to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Harvey 1998). However, an exclusive focus on resistance removes from view those settings where neoliberal policies and programs are partially or wholly assimilated and the everyday processes by which such accommodations are constructed.

Although the Zapatista rebellion presents an important example of overt resistance to neoliberal reform, the literature on community forestry in Mexico (and agrarian affairs more generally) emphasizes the successes, challenges, and adaptations that communities have made in their attempts to maintain locally-managed forestry enterprises in the face of institutional change (eg, Bray et al. 2005, Bray and Merino 2004, Primack et al. 1998). Several studies have examined community-based forest management as common property regimes operating within competitive markets (eg, Antinori and Bray 2005, Alatorre 2000, Merino 1997). Related work focuses on the impact of community politics on the collective management of natural resources (eg, Klooster 2000a, b, Nuijten 2003b, Haenn 2005) as well as the construction of official knowledge by state agencies and forestry communities (Mathews 2005, 2008). Most of the contemporary literature on Mexican community forestry addresses the country's shift toward neoliberalism including some studies that identify the internal organizational and political adaptations that I highlight below (eg, Taylor 2003, 2001, 2000, Taylor and Zabin 2000).

In building on this and related work, I emphasize how specific policies and programs facilitate diverse local level changes—in both cultural and material terms—that significantly impact power relationships associated with community forestry. The literature emphasizes how neoliberalization at different scales is path dependent (Brenner and Theodore 2002) and embedded within specific institutional contexts (Peck 2004, Peck and Tickell 2002), creating hybrid social constructions comprising “a complex and contested set of processes, comprised of diverse policies, practices, and discourses” (Perreault and Martin 2005:194, see also Mansfield 2007, Bridge and Jonas 2002). Thus the social processes associated with responses to neoliberalization feature frictions, negotiations, conflicts, and adaptations where hybrid, often contradictory logics and rule systems—policies, practices, and discourses—interface. My analysis centers on a context (Quintana Roo, Mexico) that features not so much protest and resistance as accommodation. Moreover, as has been the case with neoliberal reform in many places, agrarian communities in Mexico, for the most part, currently interact with an absentee rather than a constrictive, authoritarian state.

Practice Theory and Everyday Responses to Neoliberalization

Practice theory as discussed by Bourdieu and others (eg, Ortner 1999, 2006, Sewell 2005) provides a useful set of heuristics for analyzing everyday politics. It captures the discursive and institutional constraints but also the long-standing practices associated with everyday life. Moreover, it is both relational and contextual. In this section, I present a conceptual frame for analyzing everyday responses to neoliberalization using the vocabulary of Bourdieu’s theory of practice.

The social theoretical weave that I present seeks to intertwine critical political economic and poststructural perspectives on power in ways that maintain the reciprocity or mutually constitutive relationship between agency and structure. This is the core contention and challenge of practice theory—the need to overcome rigid, artificial analytical dichotomies that favor either human action/behavior or social structure/culture (Ortner 1999, 2006, Sewell 2005).

Central to Bourdieu’s theory of practice is the interpretation of power relationships as long-standing practices tied to specific institutional and cultural contexts. A dominant thread in Bourdieu’s writings compares everyday social interaction to theatrical plays (or games) that reveal underlying power relationships. Thus, in *Distinction*, for example, Bourdieu (1984) examines the formation of social class relationships based in part on observations of how individuals make judgments and choices regarding matters of taste—clothing, food, wine—or enact polite behavior. Thus everyday aesthetic preferences and choices reflect cultural practices charged with meaning in terms of how actors understand their relationships to one another.

Bourdieu refers to these durable dispositions as “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Habitus combines elements of both agency and structure—historically and culturally defined tendencies and practices informing a

“practical sense” or logic [le sens pratique]. Actors may be more or less aware of the rules or logics of the game as they pursue long-standing, culturally-defined practices or routines. Thus, although Bourdieu’s rendering of habitus has been critiqued as overly deterministic and devoid of intentionality (Sewell 2005, Ortner 1996, 2006), it still presents a way to bring the subject back to the center of analysis without relying solely on voluntarist notions of agency.

For Bourdieu, the term capital simultaneously represented both a power relationship and a power resource. In this sense, individuals’ dispositions (habitus) derive, in part, from relative endowments of different forms of capital, which, in turn, help to define their historically evolving “positions” within social settings. Actors exchange and accumulate capital (material and virtual) in the course of everyday social interaction. Bourdieu (1986) described three forms of capital including economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital constitutes material and financial assets while cultural capital encompasses symbolic goods, skills, and titles such as educational credentials. Social capital comprises a means (set of relationships) by which actors accrue economic and cultural capital as a result of participation in culturally embedded networks. Although Bourdieu’s presentation of different forms of capital seems to portray social life in overly mechanistic and economistic terms, his analysis of capital flows emphasizes historically-derived differences among actors’ material and symbolic “endowments,” the relationality of social exchanges, as well as the constant unfolding or processual qualities of power dynamics (Wilshusen 2009a).

To capture the structural bounds that shape social life, Bourdieu linked habitus and capital to the concept of “field.” Fields are arenas of struggle in which actors attempt to accrue or control economic and cultural capital. The term could include actor networks but also captures formally institutionalized relationships based on explicit codes or rules as well as non-formalized, customary relationships structured by cultural norms, discourses, or practices. The dominant or subordinate positions that individual and group actors hold within a field are determined by their relative endowments of economic and cultural capital. As a result, the character and configuration of fields constantly shift as power relationships change.

In addition, as both a structural and cultural heuristic, fields present certain “logics” and thus define the domain of struggle. In other words, even though both dominant and subordinate actors may challenge one another for resource control, they all tacitly accept that the “rules of the game” and certain forms of contestation are legitimate while others are not (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Swartz 1997). In his empirical studies, Bourdieu used the term field to characterize domains of social interaction—the “artistic field” and the “academic field,” for example. Thus as a cultural and institutional form, he referred to the state as “the bureaucratic field,” featuring legalistic/technocratic rationalities, formal administrative practices, and control of diverse forms of capital (Bourdieu 1999).

As with habitus, Bourdieu’s use of the term “field” is often seen as overly deterministic, leading to the inevitable reproduction of social inequalities (Sewell 2005).

Yet, field, as a heuristic construct, does not necessarily refer to a monolithic sphere of constraints. In my analysis, I emphasize that fields represent the constantly shifting, socially-constructed nature of the cultural/institutional spheres of human experience. I examine the extent to which fields present fragmented, hybrid, and contradictory logics and rules as well as how these fault lines shape everyday politics. Most importantly, fields should be understood not as fixed constraints but rather spheres of interaction (processes not things).

The remainder of this article empirically examines everyday responses or accommodation to neoliberal reform through the lens of Bourdieu's theory of practice. The first type of accommodation—discursive—relies mainly on the concept of field to better understand the inherent tensions created by the collision of contradictory logics and rule systems: collective versus neoliberal natural resource management. The second type of accommodation—spatial—details how rural producers appropriated elements of both collectivism and neoliberalism in response to a federal land titling program, consolidating internal distributions of economic capital in the process. The third type of accommodation—organizational—analyzes the formation of entrepreneurial sub-groups and an internal timber exchange within certain ejidos. Again, I use Bourdieu's presentation of social and economic capital to examine how these creative responses impacted everyday politics. Finally, I use the concept of habitus to explore the extent to which these discursive, spatial, and organizational responses constitute elements of a “culture of accommodation” evident in long-standing practices that pre-date neoliberal reforms.

Forests as Trees: Collectivism Meets Neoliberalism

This section explores the overarching and shifting meta-narratives or logics that have framed agrarian affairs, forest policy, and community-based forest management in Mexico since the early 1980s. To illustrate these dynamics, I focus mainly on debates surrounding the bureaucratic field of agrarian policy development. As I noted above, fields present logics—defining discourses and modes of thought—that characterize a domain of social interaction. The logic of a field presents certain taken-for-granted assumptions regarding legitimate action. My main point in this section is that policy compromises negotiated at the national level facilitated local constructions of hybrid, and in many ways contradictory, logics of action for forestry ejidos and their support organizations, producing unresolved tensions in everyday practice. I first contrast the logics of collectivism and neoliberalism and then examine how local actors accommodated elements of the two approaches in their daily activities.

Community Forestry as State-led Populism

Community forest management in Mexico emerged within the context of, but also in response to, regimes built around state-centered development. Although state agencies were still viewed as central to regional development, in the late 1970s administrators began signaling support for policies and programs that would both empower communities and enhance production. The issue of equity emerged as an important message coming

from what was widely perceived as an authoritarian state. In remarks to Mexico's national association of foresters in 1976, Undersecretary of Agriculture (and future presidential candidate) Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (1976:14) emphasized this theme of distributional justice.

“[Mexico is] presented with the opportunity and need to join forces among the different types of forest property owners as well as the financial agencies, industries, and investors that currently run the [forestry] industry. [That opportunity and need] refers to the democratic and equitable participation [of all sectors] in the distribution of benefits generated by forest exploitation.”

The language of reform used by Cárdenas and others argued that “the true owners and users of the forest” should have greater management power. The passage of the 1986 Forest Law [Ley Forestal] marked the culmination of more than a decade of community-level organizing aimed at devolving forest management responsibilities to ejidos following some twenty-five years where forests on ejido lands were controlled by state-owned enterprises (Klooster 2003). The 1986 law reaffirmed the importance of the ejido as a collective natural resource management entity. It transferred management responsibility from concessionaires to ejidos and their support organizations. Legal responsibility for technical services passed from the state to specially sanctioned for-profit, communal associations [sociedades civiles]. Thus, a major power shift occurred where forestry ejidos gained formal control over the means of production and state-owned forest industries lost their ability to fully control supply.

In Quintana Roo, the pilot community forestry initiative (known as the Plan Piloto Forestal) that ran from 1983-86 shifted forest management from a state-run enterprise—Maderas Industrializadas de Quintana Roo (MIQRO)—to ten ejidos following the expiration of a 25-year forestry concession. The Plan Piloto program built on existing community level organizations that had been encouraged during the 1970s by the agrarian reform ministry. It was instrumental in helping the ten communities to establish local forestry enterprises based on twenty-five year management plans. The close of the Plan Piloto Forestal in 1986 inspired the creation of a second-tier producer association as a means of ensuring continued economic and political collaboration among the ten communities. The Sociedad de Productores Forestales Ejidales de Quintana Roo (hereafter the “Sociedad”) continues to provide technical support in forest management as well as political representation for nine member communities (the tenth ejido withdrew from the association in 1996). The Sociedad finances its operations mainly through a combination of community payments (fees for technical services) and federal government grants.

As I discuss further below, community forestry in Quintana Roo (and Mexico generally) was set up largely around a logic of collectivism. The organization and governance approach drew on the precedent of the ejido, which emphasized elected leadership, collective ownership, and communal decision-making. Moreover, although community forestry enterprises had a clear market orientation, they were governed

collectively with daily operations run by an elected executive who responded to the ejido assembly.

The Logic of Neoliberal Reform

In sharp contrast to the advocates of community forestry, neoliberal reformers saw the ejido system as the Achilles' heel of proposed market-centered policies and programs that gained prominence in the late 1980s. Critics argued that the country's agrarian code—which provides the legal basis for the ejido—stifled private sector investment and bred uncompetitive production practices (Randall 1996, Cornelius and Myhre 1998). The writing of Luis Téllez Kuenzler (1994:12), one of the principal architects of neoliberal reform in Mexico's agrarian sector, exemplifies the rationale behind the shift to market-centered development.

“The modernization of the countryside required a redefinition of the role of the state in agrarian activities, both in the policy arena and in its direct intervention via governmental agencies. In the policy arena, the need for a more flexible institutional environment was evident so that producers might fully realize their production potential. In particular, it was necessary to modify constitutional article 27 and its regulations in order to eliminate uncertainties regarding land tenure associated with land distribution, guarantee decision-making and administrative freedom for ejido members [ejidatarios], and permit the transfer of agricultural plots. These measures permit more efficient utilization of natural resources, discourage local land concentration [minifundismo], create new perspectives for ejido members, and enhance family well-being in the countryside.”

As I discuss further below, Téllez's view—while influential in the reform process—represented a more “hardline” stance regarding collective land tenure compared to other “softline” factions that supported change without discarding the existing ejido governance structure (Cornelius and Myhre 1998). However, Téllez's version of neoliberalism was strongly represented in key aspects of the constitutional and statutory revisions that appeared in 1992 including an emphasis on (1) private property and private enterprise (the disaggregation of existing collective property and collective enterprises) and (2) the retraction of state “interference” in community affairs (deregulation). I touch briefly on each in turn.

The cornerstone of the agrarian sector reforms of 1992 centered around changes to Article 27 of the federal constitution, formally ending agrarian reform and altering the legal underpinning of the ejido (collective land grant) system to permit the privatization and disaggregation of collective property. Under the Constitution of 1917 and the Agrarian Code of 1936, ejido lands were inalienable. The revisions to agrarian law made it possible for (but did not compel) ejido assemblies to dissolve their communal landholdings and obtain private property titles to the individual plots of land. Changes to the constitution and the agrarian code also allowed foreign and/or domestic corporations

to own land in Mexico and enter into commercial partnerships with ejidos, both of which were illegal before 1992 (Cornelius and Myhre 1998, Randall 1996).

Regarding retraction of the state, the changes to agrarian law also signaled the final phase in the dismantling of associated programs and responsibilities carried out by the agrarian reform ministry. Particularly during the height of state-led development from the 1960s until the late 1980s, agrarian reform officials oversaw development activities in individual ejidos, participated formally in assembly meetings, encouraged the formation of ejido unions, and facilitated access to state-run banks. Over time the ministry shifted from a highly paternalistic role to one that deferred to elected ejido authorities but still facilitated access to loans and programs. Although the withdrawal of the state from community affairs was gradual in many respects, revisions to the Agrarian Code (1992) restructured the ministry in significant ways. While the agency continued to exist, its mission changed dramatically to emphasize certification of ejido land rights and land titling (a national program known as PROCEDE). Some of the legal changes were more subtle, but significant nonetheless. The 1936 Agrarian Code, for example, stipulated that formal acts (decisions) by ejido assemblies had to be ratified by agrarian reform officials and that ejido rightsholders [ejidatarios] had to personally work their own agricultural parcels rather than sublet them to others. Under the 1992 revisions, both of these requirements were removed (Cornelius and Myhre 1998).

Discursive Accommodation: Hybrid Logics, Shifting Fields

Obvious tensions and contradictions surface when contrasting the governing logics of neoliberalism and collectivism. Whereas neoliberal policies emphasized individuals and small producer groups as their main economic subjects, collectivism focused on the role of ejidos and ejido associations. As a result, the collectivist foundations of community forestry reaffirmed communal property and decision-making while the neoliberal policy reforms promoted the disaggregation of these collectivities into private property holdings and individual and/or family choices. The language of neoliberalism evident in the Téllez quote stresses “modernization” and “efficiency” via increased individual freedoms, clearly defined property rights, and free exchange. By contrast, the language associated with collectivism, exemplified by the Cárdenas quote, speaks of equity and collective resource control by devolving management responsibility to the “true forest owners.” On one level, these quotes illustrate the unresolved tension between entrepreneurial desires and collective responsibility that marks a core conundrum of community-based conservation/development in rural Mexico. At the same time, however, the two logics co-exist and interface within the same locally enacted bureaucratic field. As one of the primary formal institutions that define the bureaucratic field of community forestry in Mexico, changes to national forest policy illustrate this hybridization of neoliberalism and collectivism. Moreover, the example highlights the dynamic and shifting nature of fields.

In 1992, with Luis Téllez Kuenzler serving as Undersecretary for Agriculture, the Mexican government heavily revised the national forest law to fall in line with neoliberal designs. In contrast to the 1986 forest law, which emphasized community forestry

enterprises, the 1992 law promoted the development of forest plantations, commercial partnerships between ejidos and the private sector, creation of small private forestry operations, and the deregulation of forestry technical services, harvesting, transport and sale of wood products. As with the changes to the constitution and agrarian code, the revised forest law emphasized clearly defined property rights and deregulation to encourage private sector investment. At the same time, since agrarian law facilitated but did not mandate the dissolution of ejidos, collective property and resource management regimes remained as the foundation of the forestry sector. Additionally, a key compromise provision in the revised agrarian code required ejidos to maintain rather than divide collective holdings such as rangelands and forests.

Interestingly, the 1992 forestry law prompted a significant increase in unregulated logging and a backlash from community forestry advocates, which ultimately led to another revision of the national forest law in 1997 (Bray et al. 2005, Klooster 2003). The 1997 law reinstated many regulations that had been dismantled by neoliberal reformers and created subsidy programs that promoted both collective forest management and small enterprise development. Between 1996 and 2001, the nine ejidos included in this study received US\$1.13 million (2001 dollars; US\$1.38 million adjusted to 2008) in federal and state support for projects focused on forest inventories, management plans, handicraft workshops, timber marketing, and tree nursery maintenance, among others.

In the wake of these policy reforms, local discourse presented similar hybrid constructions that embraced elements of both collectivism and neoliberalism. In general, local leaders in Quintana Roo's community forestry sector embraced an "entrepreneurial" strategy [una estrategia empresarial] in dealing with development challenges. During 2000, for example, the Sociedad carried out a series of workshops in most of its nine member ejidos to solicit input regarding the organization's successes and failures. The association's elected leaders and technical staff proposed a significant organizational restructuring to improve efficiency on all fronts: financial, technical, and political. The following quote from a senior member of the organization's technical staff exemplifies this line of reasoning:

"If the Sociedad is going to survive, it must become much more entrepreneurial. It can't depend only on ejido payments [for technical services] and government support. The Sociedad should develop its own set of enterprises—such as timber extraction and transport—and charge the ejidos for those services. Also, the technical services part of the organization should be administratively separate from the political part. We should set it up as a firm [un bufete] and charge fees based on the services we provide." (Interview from May 12, 2000)

At the same time, none of the restructuring proposals sought to completely transform the association from a campesino organization with a collectivist governance system into a private capitalist firm. Numerous workshop participants made reference to the association's importance in terms of collective representation. During one public meeting in February 2000, a community leader commented on the urgency of making organizational changes ("We have to do something right away ... otherwise nothing is

going to happen. I've heard this story too many times before.") but also pointed out that, "We must take care of our organization [nuestra Sociedad]. Our organization keeps us strong." (Meeting from February 18, 2000)

The intersection of the logics of collectivism and neoliberalism in these and similar discussions did not produce rival factions or confrontational debates regarding the two approaches' apparent incompatibilities. Rather, participants tended to construct responses that could potentially increase efficiency without compromising collective security. Ultimately, the 2000 restructuring process—which was first initiated in 1994—lost momentum in the face of more immediate fiscal problems. The following email message sent by the Sociedad's president in 2008 suggests that the entrepreneurial approach continues to dominate thinking in what has become a constantly recurring but unresolved discussion on how to restructure the organization.

"I have been seeking support to continue the restructuring project at the Sociedad with the idea of giving it an entrepreneurial turn [un giro empresarial]. I am administering financial support to create a holding facility and marketing fund for forest products. ... I would also like to identify contacts for offering environmental services through a private foundation as well as obtain a fleet of extraction, transportation, and secondary processing machinery so we can rent them to member ejidos and others in order to generate more income. For me it is clear that we cannot depend solely on technical services fees; they do not allow us to sustain ourselves as an organization." (Email of February 27, 2008)

Breaking Up Is Hard To Do: Spatial Accommodation and Hybrid Forms Of Property

Like the Sociedad, the nine ejidos that comprise the community forestry association's membership draw on both the logics of collectivism and neoliberalism in their everyday affairs. In particular, in the course of managing collective resources such as land and timber, ejidatarios (rights holders within ejidos) have creatively accommodated specific neoliberal policy changes in ways that complement their desires for both small enterprise development and collective security. In this section, I focus on practices of spatial accommodation where ejidatarios reaffirmed long-standing tendencies of maintaining hybrid property arrangements in response to the federal government's land titling program, PROCEDE. I illustrate how, in the process of rejecting the opportunity to dissolve collective holdings, the nine ejidos adopted a combination of formal and informal responses that in some cases led to the *de facto* subdivision of communal lands within the legal shell of the ejido. For the most part, however, these responses maintained pre-existing property arrangements and thus reinforced established distributions of economic capital among ejidatarios.

Of all the changes encoded in the neoliberal policy reforms of the early 1990s, the possibility of dissolving communally held land grants (ejidos) and creating privately owned holdings under Article 27 of the Mexican constitution has garnered the most scholarly attention (eg, Nuijten 2003, Vásquez 2004, Haenn 2006, Perramond 2008).

The modifications to Article 27, which removed the legal platform guaranteeing the inalienability of ejido lands, set the stage for a potentially massive redistribution of land ownership as part of the land titling program, PROCEDE. In response to the legal reforms, ejido assemblies had three broad choices: (1) petition the government to dissolve an ejido and divide its assets among legally registered rights holders [dominio pleno], (2) maintain the ejido intact and participate in PROCEDE (including certification of rights and land titling), or (3) do nothing—maintain the ejido as it was and refuse participation in PROCEDE. Those ejidos that chose to participate in PROCEDE were presented with three possible outcomes including (1) certification of individual agricultural plots and common property rights, (2) certification of households [solares] and delineation of settlements [áreas urbanas], and (3) demarcation of ejido boundaries.

As with other regions of the country, most of Quintana Roo's ejidos opted to formally delineate boundaries, define household lots and urban areas, and establish common property rights but decided *not* to formally delineate and certify their agricultural lands. Publicly available data from the federal government's final report on PROCEDE (2006) indicate that 273 out of 277 ejidos participated in Quintana Roo, representing 51,714 "beneficiaries." Interestingly, only 4,678 of those individuals (9%) opted to formally certify their rights to agricultural parcels while 31,229 ejidatarios (60%) chose to certify their rights to communal lands (RAN 2006). As of mid 2007, six ejidos (2%) had legally dissolved their collective holdings in favor of private property. In each case, the ejidos were located in urban areas (eg, Chetumal), coastal tourism zones (eg, Isla Mujeres) or both (eg, Playa del Carmen) where active real estate markets provided strong incentives for privatization (RAN 2007). The small number of communities that refused to participate fell into two categories: those facing inter-ejido land disputes and those citing possible political or economic repercussions. Additionally, officials reported that non-participating ejidos either deeply distrusted government or expressed concerns that involvement in PROCEDE would lead to new property taxes even though agrarian policy has no such requirements (Maria DiGiano, personal communication, September 1, 2009; Interviews from March 20, 2000 and November 18, 2001).

Not surprisingly, ejidos elected to participate in those components of PROCEDE that enhanced tenure and financial security as well as local autonomy and opted out of those elements that tended to reduce internal decision-making flexibility and challenge local power structures. In Quintana Roo, this selective participation produced limited legally-binding spatial realignments but did reduce boundary conflicts among ejidos. Nor did the program significantly clarify individual property rights, promote external investment, or increase production efficiencies as national level reformers had intended. At the same time, however, PROCEDE unintentionally encouraged some ejido assemblies to adopt internal agreements regarding internal land distribution. As I discuss below, these agreements often conformed to neoliberal ideals in certain ways while reaffirming collective tenure security in other ways. In what follows, I briefly summarize the experiences of the Sociedad's nine member ejidos, including more detailed discussion of two examples.

Given important differences among the Sociedad’s member ejidos—including total area, extent of forest commons, population, number of rights holders, and authorized annual timber harvest volumes—communities have pursued forestry differently and also have adopted diverse internal property arrangements (Table 1). Those ejidos with the largest forest commons and the highest annual timber harvest volumes have invested more in the development of community forestry enterprises (CFEs) compared to lesser endowed ejidos that either contracted third parties to harvest their timber allotment or decided to abandon forestry altogether (Table 2).

Table 1: Member Ejidos of the Sociedad de Productores Forestales Ejidales de Quintana Roo

Ejido	Area (Ha.)		Population (2000)	Ejidatarios (2006)	Authorized Volume (m ³)	
	Ejido Total	Forest Commons			Mahogany	Tropical Hardwoods
Botes	18,900	8,000	1,771	298	341	1,217
Caoba	68,553	32,500	1,535	311	301	2,745
Chacchoben	18,450	6,000	1,140	294	135	960
Divorciados	12,000	1,500	961	187	22	491
Manuel Avila Camacho	12,000	1,500	829	189	--	--
Nuevo Guadalajara	28,500	6,000	1,390	276	--	--
Petcacab	46,000	32,500	947	206	2,000	3,927
Plan de la Noria Poniente	9,450	5,000	228	52	--	--
Tres Garantías	43,678	28,000	820	105	718	3,488
<i>Total</i>	<i>257,531</i>	<i>121,000</i>	<i>9,621</i>	<i>1,918</i>	<i>3,016</i>	<i>12,828</i>

Sources: Field work, 2000-06. INEGI (2000).

Historically, most ejido assemblies distributed agricultural plots by family under agrarian law decades prior to the neoliberal policy reforms. Common areas, such as forests, were managed by the ejido’s executive committee on behalf of all ejidatarios, with any economic benefits divided equally among rights holders. Thus, the selective participation of most ejidos in PROCEDA suggests, in part, that a majority had already accommodated individual and family needs to the constraints of collectivism. This was the case with all nine of the Sociedad’s member ejidos. They all demarcated ejido boundaries, delineated settlements and house lots, and certified common property rights. Each assembly declined to formally delineate and certify rights to agricultural plots (Table 2).

The individual freedoms touted by reformers like Téllez did not entice ejidatarios from the Sociedad’s member communities to formally abandon collectivism. Producers saw significant risks and limited benefits in seeking legal titles to private property. As one ejidatario remarked in 2000, “With the price of corn and other products so low, we can barely manage as it is. At least now the government provides some support to ejidatarios. As an individual, I would never be able to get a loan from a bank” (Interview from June 2, 2000). In addition to risk aversion, however, other observers suggested that ejidatarios’ decisions to avoid formal certification of agricultural plots had

a lot to do with internal politics and conflict avoidance. One of the Sociedad’s technical staff observed in 2003,

“For ejidos to certify agricultural plots, it would force certain individuals to openly address inequities that have occurred in the distribution of farmland over the years. In many communities, the families that have dominated ejido affairs are also the ones with the best lands” (Interview from June 27, 2003).

By sticking with the status quo, ejidatarios maintained access to both the quasi-private spaces found in family-controlled agricultural plots and the communal spaces containing valuable forest resources. In doing so, they avoided bureaucratic hassles, financial risk, and internal conflicts. Moreover, collective lands [tierras de uso común] remained inalienable under the 1992 Agrarian Law so those holdings would most likely either return to the public domain or transfer to a private commercial association [sociedad mercantil] if a forestry ejido opted for dissolution.

Table 2: Spatial and Organizational Accommodations of Sociedad Member Ejidos

Ejido	Production Status	Mode of Production	Land Distribution		Work Groups	Timber Exchange
			Agricultural Lands	Forest Commons		
Botes	Active	Sub-contract	Family plots	Intact	No	No
Caoba	Active	CFE	Family plots	Intact	Yes	Informal
Chacchoben	Active	Sub-contract	Family plots	Intact	No	No
Divorciados	Active	Sub-contract	Family plots	Intact	No	No
Manuel Avila Camacho	Inactive	n/a	Family plots	Intact	n/a	n/a
Nuevo Guadalajara	Inactive	n/a	Subdivided	Subdivided	n/a	n/a
Petcacab	Active	CFE	Family plots	Intact*	Yes	Formal
Plan de la Noria Poniente	Inactive	n/a	Family plots	Intact	n/a	n/a
Tres Garantías	Active	CFE/groups	Family plots	Intact	Yes	Informal

Sources: Field work 2000-06.

*Work groups subdivide annual cutting area.

Although the Sociedad’s nine member ejidos participated partially in PROCEDE and rejected avenues that would convert collective holdings into private property, two communities—Nuevo Guadalajara and Petcacab—developed internal agreements that liberalized property arrangements but also maintained the legal façade of the ejido. Nuevo Guadalajara went the farthest of the nine ejidos toward disaggregating their collective lands by extending the distribution of family plots to include the forest commons, even though agrarian law dictates that common lands must remain intact. In this case, however, long-standing internal conflicts led ejidatarios to divide all of the community’s land. As one of the ejido’s leaders noted in 2000, “we could never agree on how to make it work as an ejido. There was too much conflict. So we decided to divide things internally to avoid any further problems” (Interview from April 28, 2000). The arrangement allowed Nuevo Guadalajara’s members to maintain virtual private property rights but also gain access to public programs. At the same time, the agreement to divide

the forest commons contravened agrarian law and thus in 2000, the Sociedad was unable to work with a group of ejidatarios interested in restarting forestry activities because timber extraction permits could only be granted to an ejido.

In Petcacab, community members maintained the ejido's large forest commons intact but adopted measures permitting semi-autonomous producer groups (discussed below) and, in some cases, individuals to claim temporary control over harvestable trees located on an assigned tract within the annual harvest area [área de corta]. Under this hybrid arrangement, the ejido's elected leader solicited an annual timber harvesting permit on behalf of all sub-groups but group leaders organized harvesting and milling in conjunction with the Sociedad in order to maximize individual and group autonomy. Group leaders thus referred to work being done on "my plot" or "my trees" and tended to subvert collective responsibilities such as helping to maintain the communally owned sawmill.

In summary, the diverse spatial accommodations made by the Sociedad's member ejidos suggest an incremental liberalization of both property relationships and control of economic capital. During the 1980s, when community forestry supplanted state-sponsored industrial forestry as the dominant paradigm, conservation and rural development advocates—including many community members—relied heavily on the logic of collectivism as a means of empowering the "owners of the forest" [los dueños del bosque]. Although most of the Sociedad's nine ejido's established community forestry enterprises within the constraints of the ejido governance structure, they also faltered repeatedly in the face of internal divisions among competing families. The neoliberal institutional shift in the early 1990s helped reaffirm existing configurations of quasi-private and collective lands but also facilitated novel adaptations regarding land and resource tenure that attended to political divisions. While the internal disaggregation of ejido lands in Nuevo Guadalajara proved to be an exception, most of the Sociedad's member communities developed flexible resource management approaches similar to the system adopted in Petcacab. In so doing, they disseminated resource access and control to sub-groups, families, and individuals while leaving the remnants of collective property regimes more or less intact.

Organizational Accommodation: Hybrid Governance Regimes and New Modes of Exchange

Compared to the revisions to Article 27 of Mexico's constitution, other changes to agrarian law have received much less attention but have precipitated significant local responses nonetheless. During the agrarian reform period beginning in the 1930s, the ejido governance system—including the ejido assembly and an elected executive committee—administered development activities. The president of the executive committee served as the ejido's legal representative for all official transactions. On paper, ejido governance procedures were democratic, including monthly assembly meetings, regular elections, an internal oversight committee, and external checks and balances by the agrarian reform ministry. In practice, the system presented numerous opportunities for elite control by powerful families, misappropriation of communal

resources, and interference by state agencies. As a result, internal conflicts were common (eg, Klooster 2000 a, b).

In revising the nation's agrarian code, reformers made a subtle but important change that transformed collective governance practices in the Sociedad's largest forestry ejidos. Under Title 4, producer groups are legally permitted to form profit-seeking associations independent of the ejido assembly and executive committee. The change was intended to promote small enterprise development but also facilitated internal reorganization in unintended ways. Prior to the revisions, state agencies, NGOs, and other external actors promoted the formation of cooperatives and producer groups but these entities ultimately responded to the ejido assembly. With the changes to the agrarian code, producers can legally form commercial groups that operate independently from the ejido assembly.

In this section I discuss the formation of semi-autonomous commercial groups and the emergence of internal timber exchanges within two of the Sociedad's larger forestry ejidos—Petcacab and Caoba. My main point is that these two organizational accommodations to neoliberal reform constitute hybrid constructions that have liberalized natural resource governance and shifted internal power dynamics. As such, this discussion builds on existing work, including my own, that examines the impacts of commercial groups on ejido governance and community forestry enterprises (eg, Taylor 2003, Wilshusen 2005).

Work Group Formation as Liberalized Governance

The emergence of semi-autonomous forestry groups (known locally as “work groups” [grupos de trabajo]) within the Sociedad's largest ejidos occurred in the mid 1990s following the changes to agrarian law described above (see Table 2). The initial impetus for forming groups stemmed from producers' desires to more directly control the economic capital derived from their share of the ejido's annual timber harvest. In examining the formation and development of work groups, I compared the experiences of Petcacab and Caoba during the period 1999 to 2006.

In Caoba, three groups emerged in 1997, representing the community's principal factions. One of those groups subsequently subdivided, creating a total of seven work groups ranging in size from 137 to 10 individuals. Three of these groups (68% of ejidatarios) were legally registered with government agencies and could thus operate as independent commercial interests, including administration of loans, grants, and timber sales. The remaining four groups also operated independently but were legally required to carry out commercial transactions via the ejido.

Organizational accommodation produced even greater internal division in Petcacab compared to Caoba, including eleven groups formed mainly around family clans. Several of these groups further sub-divided into “sections” representing individual families. Section leaders (usually heads of households) managed their own timber profits but otherwise participated as members of a work group. As of 2006, three of the eleven

groups (41% of ejidatarios) were legally registered as commercial associations while the rest employed the legal status of the ejido to complete transactions. Different from Caoba, several ejidatarios (8%) chose not to affiliate with a group. In both cases, groups were not entirely autonomous because they continued to collectively manage their forests in line with a 25-year plan and annual harvest permits under the aegis of the ejido (Wilshusen 2005, Taylor 2001).

In comparative terms, the formation of work groups produced differing degrees of change with respect to natural resource governance. In both cases, most decision making about forest management shifted from the ejido's executive committee to a council of work group leaders. As such, the ejido's elected leadership and assembly (comprised of all rights holders) lost a considerable amount of power. As one older ejidatario from Caoba remarked,

“It used to be that when someone rang the bell to call an assembly meeting, everyone would show up shortly thereafter. Nowadays we're lucky if we meet once or twice all year. ... The comisariado [ejido executive committee] doesn't have the same importance as it once did. Now they just sign off on whatever the [work group] leaders tell them to” (Interview from July 20, 2000).

Ejidatarios in both communities indicated that the formation of groups distributed resource control and decision making power in ways that tended to diffuse conflicts. Another ejidatario from Caoba described the change in these terms,

“When we operated as an ejido, each leader took a turn as president and took advantage of the powers that came with the job. Now that we're in groups, political control is more evenly distributed and we don't have to worry so much about competing. ... Folks used to fight to become ejido president. Now we have a tough time rounding up a candidate” (Interview from January 26, 2000).

Caoba's shift in natural resource governance was less extensive than Petcacab's. In Caoba, two large groups (65% of ejidatarios) dominated forest management activities. They each formally elected executive committees and functioned as ejidos within an ejido. Given a per capita timber volume of just under one cubic meter (valued at US\$200 in 2000), work group leaders in Caoba carried out forestry activities almost exactly as they had when the ejido executive committee oversaw timber harvests, including hiring of a manager [jefe de monte] and numerous seasonal employees.

In Petcacab, a more complex set of arrangements emerged. Like Caoba, two groups (23% of ejidatarios) developed formal procedures that mimicked those of the ejido but they competed with an array of individual timber buyers (discussed below) and other, less formally organized groups. With one of the largest annual timber harvests in the region and a per capita allotment of 7.3 cubic meters in 2000 (valued at US\$1,460), Petcacab's ejidatarios tended to minimize the collective aspects of forest management. As a result, all aspects of timber harvesting, transport, and sale were divided among groups and individuals. In addition to temporarily sub-dividing the annual harvest area

(discussed above), Petcacab's ejidatarios distributed all labor responsibilities including delineation of lots, tree spotting, felling, and moving logs to a central logyard based on the size and timber volume of each group. Some groups invested in machinery such as trucks and skidders while others sub-contracted with private interests or teams from other ejidos to carry out these activities. Groups also took turns using the ejido's sawmill and were responsible for paying laborers and covering maintenance costs.

This decentralized approach to internal organization and decision making helped diminish domination by local elites but also contributed to production inefficiencies, miscommunication, and tensions among groups. One of the Sociedad's senior technical staff explained the multiple levels of division in Petcacab in the following terms,

"I really can't understand the social processes that are occurring. What is clear is that to the extent that (group) members lose confidence in their leaders, something has to give. People [la gente] defend more what they feel is theirs compared to something that they claim rights to as a member of a group or community. ... I think that the ejidatarios are thinking more like small private property owners [pequeños propietarios] than community members [comuneros], because with the latter there is a lack of definition regarding property. Under these conditions, it worries me to think about what will happen if we continue to promote the creation of profit-oriented enterprises within ejidos" (Interview from July 2, 2002).

Internal Timber Markets as Liberalized Exchange

The internal subdivisions within the Sociedad's larger ejidos precipitated new modes of exchange that further exacerbated the social complexities highlighted above. Petcacab's ejidatarios developed a vibrant futures market centered on the sale of timber volume that was ultimately copied to a certain extent in Caoba. Because of its high value, the main form of economic capital in play was mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*). In 2000, timber exchanges occurred informally where cash-poor ejidatarios sold all or part of their 7.3 m³ of volume to local buyers with access to financial capital. One of the few regulations imposed by ejidatarios dictated that only rights holders from Petcacab could buy and sell timber. During 2001, 57% of the ejido's authorized mahogany volume was actively traded. Three buyers controlled 29% of this total (Wilshusen 2005).

Initially, exchanges took place via a simple transfer of cash for a handwritten receipt indicating how much volume had been sold for a determined price. Individuals sometimes sold the combined volume for their family group as much as three years in advance (volume for 2008 was sold in 2005). In 2000, timber buyers paid an average of US\$ 125 per cubic meter of standing volume. In some cases they paid as little as US\$ 90. By contrast, the average sale price to external buyers for most forestry ejidos in the region was US\$ 200. Once sawn, a cubic meter of mahogany was worth on average between US\$ 335 and US\$420, which translated to a potential profit of about US\$ 310. In 2000, two buyers controlled 90 m³ and 77.2 m³ of standing volume, which carried a base value of US\$ 18,000 and US\$ 15,440 respectively. Both individuals ultimately sold

the wood as sawn timber, netting a potential profit of US\$ 37,800 and US\$ 32,425. In contrast, one family of eight, with an initial volume of 58.4 m³ (valued at US\$ 11,680) sold its entire allotment to buyers, producing about US\$ 913 for each family member.

By 2006, timber exchanges in Petcacab had become more formalized. Buyers and sellers jointly registered exchanges with a newly hired secretary who maintained a detailed database to ensure that sellers had not overdrawn their allotted timber quota. Two of the three buyers mentioned above continued to dominate the local market however new actors also emerged including one family group that had not historically participated strongly in community affairs but had accrued financial capital between 2000 and 2005 by reinvesting forestry profits in harvesting and woodworking machinery. Timber volume data from 2006 illustrate the relative change in accumulations of economic capital. In 2001, Petcacab's total permissible mahogany harvest increased, generating a per capita volume of 9.5 m³. For the 2006 harvest season, one of the two timber buyers mentioned above controlled almost twice the amount of volume compared to 2000 (168.7 m³ up from 90 m³) while the other buyer held slightly less than in 2000 (70 m³ down from 77.2 m³). Most significantly, a work group that administered 156.6 m³ in 2000 more than doubled its holding to 364.6 m³ for 2006, indicating a surge in purchased volume on top of the increase in the total amount of timber harvested.

The experiences of Caoba and Petcacab with respect to organizational accommodation illustrate both differences and dynamism in local responses to neoliberal policy reforms between 1999 and 2006. Ejidatarios in Caoba maintained much of the collective governance system intact even as they decentralized decision making through the formation of work groups. Collective forest management practices remained the same with the two largest groups claiming most of the key positions related to harvesting, milling, and transporting wood. Instead of taking turns controlling the ejido executive council, Caoba's two largest groups established a power sharing arrangement. The remaining groups received their portion of timber profits but were otherwise marginal participants in forestry activities. As a result, natural resource governance practices shifted to some extent with the diminished importance of the executive council and ejido assembly but local power dynamics remained relatively stable. Although individuals engaged in some timber sales, transfers of economic capital (cash for timber volume) were limited to a small number of informal exchanges.

In sharp contrast, ejidatarios in Petcacab constructed complex natural resource governance procedures and an active internal exchange in timber futures. Unlike their peers in Caoba, community members in Petcacab maximized individual and group autonomy and largely eschewed collectivism. The emergence of timber buyers, entrepreneurial groups, non-entrepreneurial groups, and unaffiliated individuals produced a highly decentralized and dynamic decision making environment, vibrant internal exchanges of economic capital, and shifting power dynamics. While some local elites—such as the two timber buyers mentioned above—adapted to liberalized governance and maintained positions of dominance, other actors swung from being marginal participants in forestry to developing into key players with significant endowments of economic capital.

Practices of Accommodation: A Longer View

Although neoliberal policy measures facilitated unintended local responses such as the formation of work groups and creation of an internal timber exchange, the underlying practices that enable accommodation (or resistance) come from a deeper cultural repertoire. When viewed from a broader historical perspective, the three types of accommodation that I have presented unfold incrementally over time and thus do not represent a simple set of reactions to one wave of institutional change. Rather, I argue that discursive, spatial, and organizational accommodations are path dependent, meaning that practices related to natural resource governance persist over time, resurfacing repeatedly in local responses to multiple waves of state-sponsored reform. This is especially evident when examining modes of local organization and resource governance over time. Thus, even as the overarching logics of reform and the specific contents of responses change—as with the shift from collectivism to neoliberalism or the move from ejido to work group governance—certain practices persist. It was in this sense that Bourdieu used the term *habitus* to capture the “durable dispositions” of actors as they respond both creatively and routinely, in this case, to shifts in the bureaucratic field of agrarian policy making. I contend that these durable dispositions and practices comprise elements of a “culture of accommodation” to state-led reform efforts. In what follows, I support this assertion by illustrating how work groups emerged in the wake of earlier attempts to organize local producers including cooperatives, credit groups, and specialized “production units.”

Over the period from approximately 1930 through 1980, state-led development in rural Mexico experienced an incremental “loosening” in which local producers gained progressively more control over natural resource governance. This process of devolution emerged in the wake of multiple waves of state-sponsored policy reforms in which the agrarian reform ministry established different types of commercially oriented groups of ejidatarios. In most cases, these groups were formal or semi-formal entities that combined an economic development mission with a communal governance structure modeled after the ejido. Over some five decades, this hybrid organizational form emerged repeatedly.

Beyond the creation of communal land grants like Petcacab and Caoba in the late 1930s, the federal government’s first efforts to organize rural producers [campesinos] in Quintana Roo centered on the creation of 70 community-based cooperatives, the majority of which were dedicated to chicle extraction (chewing gum resin) from the region’s forests. Coupled with the creation of ejidos, this first wave of agrarian reform reallocated land and resources to rural producers but also established a government-controlled production system. Moreover, chicle cooperatives, such as the ones formed in Caoba and Petcacab, joined most ejidatarios within a communal decision making structure under which local leaders (separate from the ejido executive committee) organized chicle extraction, processing, and transportation. While federal officials controlled all financial aspects of chicle production, local producers gained valuable experience and training that would, in part, enable the shift to community forestry in the 1980s.

A second precedent for the formation of work groups and decentralized governance can be found in the creation of “credit groups” [grupos de credito]. By the mid 1960s, the federal government encouraged ejidatarios to set up credit groups for activities such as livestock production as a means of diversifying local economies (the state maintained tight control over the far more lucrative timber trade). State-sponsored credit groups joined certain families, provided lines of credit, facilitated purchase of livestock, fencing, and other materials, and, in some cases, encouraged the creation of new settlements within ejidos to support the new enterprise investments. This was the case in Caoba, where the agrarian reform ministry and the state-owned regional agricultural development bank organized 30 community members within a credit group during the second half of 1967. The bank fronted the necessary funds and resources to clear pasture, purchase heads of cattle, build fencing, and relocate families to a new settlement called San José de la Montaña. While the livestock group operated for several years, it contributed to a rift with families that remained in the ejido’s main settlement and ultimately became mired in debt. Most importantly, the credit group’s activities prompted repeated challenges from the ejido assembly because it sought to operate independently from the rest of the ejido. In one instance, the group claimed profits from mahogany harvested from newly-cleared pasture while the ejido assembly contended that the money should be divided equally among all members. A similar fate befell the livestock credit group in Petcacab.

Beginning in the late 1970s, a third wave of state-sponsored organizing within ejidos built on experiences with both cooperatives and credits groups, producing what were known as specialized “production units” [unidades de producción]. Community members and agency representatives began using the term “work group” at this juncture as the number and types of groups expanded. In Caoba, for example, agrarian reform ministry officials provided credit to support cattle-raising work groups [grupos de trabajo ganadero] as well as groups focused on bee-keeping. Specialized production units also emerged within newly established community forestry enterprises in both Caoba and Petcacab in the early 1980s. As with the other types of groups, agrarian reform officials created “forestry production units” including divisions with responsibility for timber extraction, administration, and machinery respectively.

In line with a national initiative aimed at stimulating economic diversification and consolidation at the local level, agrarian reform representatives sought to formalize governance procedures within production units to match similar efforts aimed at improving ejido administration. As part of the requirements for receiving lines of credit, the elected leadership for each production unit established formal procedures [reglamento interno] governing their operations. Government officials sought primarily to put in place strict accounting standards to prevent misuse of funds, equipment, and other resources. Similar to credit groups, the creation of production units allowed sub-groups of ejidatarios to manage their own small enterprises. At the same time, disagreements regarding collective responsibilities to the ejido assembly under agrarian law continued to produce internal conflicts.

In each of the three examples discussed above—chicle cooperatives, credit groups, and production units—the agrarian reform ministry sought to both empower and control rural producers in a manner that progressively devolved more decision making power to the local level. Both chicle cooperatives and credit groups operated under the tutelage of the agrarian reform ministry while the production units had greater latitude in decision making. These experiences with local organization and modes of natural resource governance directly informed producers' approaches in creating forestry work groups following the neoliberal policy reforms of 1992. In both Caoba and Petcacab, producers adopted collectivist governance practices while simultaneously seeking to liberalize or deregulate capital flows. This deregulation within a collectivist framework allowed producers to overcome long-standing stalemates within ejido assemblies regarding the use of communal resources. Thus, in line with understandings of path dependency mentioned above, ejidatarios tended to replicate many of the formalized organizational forms and governance practices introduced by the state. For example, in 2000, several forestry work groups adopted formal operating procedures modeled after the collectivist tenets of the ejido even as they sought to minimize communal responsibilities.

Responses to state-sponsored efforts to organize and formalize community development activity produced a range of practices that attended to the fault lines of local power dynamics. The pursuit of credit groups and production units, for example, allowed certain factions—such as the cattle raising group in San José—to separate themselves from the larger group and avoid potentially violent conflicts. At the same time, participation in state programs allowed ejidatarios low risk access to economic capital. On multiple occasions, chicle cooperatives, credit groups, and production units defaulted on loans that the federal government ultimately forgave or only partially recovered because sub-groups within ejidos had insufficient collateral. Working in sub-groups helped to address inter family conflicts and gain access to state-controlled funds without discarding the collective securities of the ejido.

Fault Lines of Power: Accommodation as an Accretion of Practices

In contrast with much of the literature on neoliberalism and environment generally and capitalism and conservation specifically, my analysis suggests that attempts to institute neoliberal reforms can result in fragmented policies and partial accommodation by agrarian communities. Just as importantly, in this case, neoliberal reform did not produce a sudden and complete transformation at the local level but rather represented one of many historical waves of state led institutional changes that evoked local responses within the context of existing political histories and cultures.

The three types of accommodation to state-sponsored reforms that I have discussed regarding community forestry in Quintana Roo, Mexico, point to three important conclusions regarding processes of neoliberalization and environmental governance. These conclusions relate to (1) locally constructed, responses to neoliberal reform (creative accommodation), (2) the merging of logics, property arrangements, and governance regimes in everyday practice (hybridity), and (3) the incremental emergence

of cultures of accommodation (path dependency). Bourdieu's theory of practice offers a specific vocabulary capable of capturing both the material and symbolic dimensions of the everyday power dynamics evident across all three of these dimensions—particularly his presentation of field, capital, and habitus.

First, the collective experience of the community forestry association and nine member ejidos discussed in this article suggests that in spite—and in part because—of complex internal political dynamics, rural producers responded to institutional reforms in highly creative ways. In situating accommodation in relation to writings on resistance, I do not mean to suggest that producers never engaged in acts of resistance or that they uncritically accepted the contents of neoliberal policies and programs (acquiescence). Rather, I emphasize practices of accommodation to capture the creative agency that occurred on the receiving end of reform. In each of the nine ejidos, local actors grappled with the complex specifics of neoliberal reforms in ways that made sense within the context of each community's political history. Thus, for example, the configuration and practices of work groups in Petcacab differed in important ways from those in Caoba. Interestingly, the relative lack of state presence in ejidos during the post-reform period permitted community members to construct hybrid discourses and experiment with novel property arrangements, governance regimes, and modes of exchange (some of which ran counter to agrarian law).

Second, in all cases, creative accommodation produced complex hybrid arrangements that were not intended by national level reformers. Moreover, as I discuss throughout the article, these hybrid responses constitute a progressive liberalization of everyday affairs at the receiving end—both in material and cultural terms—and have had important impacts on local power relationships. To the extent that hybrid accommodations have favored entrepreneurialism, individual tenure claims, semi-autonomous sub-groups, and freer modes of exchange, they also have contributed to the persistence of long-standing power relationships and have exacerbated local economic differentiation. However, neither the Sociedad nor its member ejidos has entirely discarded the logic of collectivism. As a result, the focus on entrepreneurial approaches depends on collectivist governance structures (the association and the ejido), quasi-private spaces within ejidos complement but do not replace common property (with one exception), and semi-autonomous groups and internal timber markets endure by virtue of collective holdings.

Third, an examination of long-standing dispositions and social practices linked to responses to neoliberalization suggests that, in addition to “cultures of resistance,” one also finds “cultures of accommodation.” I have argued that the everyday practices associated with cultures of accommodation have emerged over decades in response to state-led development programs. The types of practices in question are often informal exchanges situated within local fields of play where individuals and groups respond both intentionally and routinely to constantly unfolding opportunities and constraints. In the example that I offer, work groups represent a certain liberalization of natural resource governance but their structure and administration replicate those of collectivist entities such as the ejido, cooperatives, credit groups, and production units. Thus while

neoliberal policy reforms shaped these opportunities and constraints to some extent, local practices such as the formation of entrepreneurial sub-groups emerge repeatedly in the context of struggles, negotiations, and alliances among local individuals and families. Ultimately the term “culture of accommodation” seeks to capture the historical trajectory of this creative process of partial assimilation of discourses, practices, and organizational forms.

The hybrid discursive, spatial, and organizational accommodations that emerged at the receiving end of reform in Quintana Roo, Mexico highlight the importance of carrying out ethnographies of neoliberalization. Conceptually, I have captured everyday responses to neoliberalization in terms of locally situated social processes that intersect with broader fields of play—in this case the shifting bureaucratic field of agrarian policy making in Mexico. Bourdieu’s heuristic constructs—field, capital, and habitus—provide a vocabulary for examining the dynamic, micro processes of everyday politics (actor-centered, reciprocal) while accounting for the historical, cultural, and institutional forces that shape social interchange. Metaphorically speaking, Bourdieu’s theory of practice uncovers a “geological” view of everyday politics in the sense that everyday interactions—both purposeful and routine—produce friction along innumerable fault lines. These tensions may produce “normal” or regularized responses in accord with long-standing practices (political cultures) where power relationships appear settled over time, building up like layers of sediment. This understanding of power as relatively stable suggests that social differences and inequalities tend to be reproduced over time even as the friction of daily encounters generates periodic shifts in power relationships and incremental social change. Everyday politics in this sense unfolds as accretions of practices rather than sudden transformations. The ongoing accommodations to neoliberalization in Quintana Roo, Mexico represent one set of examples of the myriad ways in which local producers creatively respond to this constant unfolding.

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