Re-Imagining Food Systems in Mexico:
A Case Study of the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets

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ABSTRACT

RE-IMAGINING FOOD SYSTEMS IN MEXICO: A CASE STUDY OF THE MEXICAN NETWORK OF LOCAL ORGANIC MARKETS

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Over the past several decades, food systems around the world have come to be increasingly dominated by a 'conventional' model, wherein production is heavily dependent on industrially-produced external inputs, and trade is characterized by a globalized free market. However, alternatives to this model – that seek to challenge its hegemonic status and address its environmental, social, and economic shortcomings – are continuously emerging. While some of these alternatives are narrower in scope, others attempt more transformative change. One example of the latter category is the *Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos* (Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets), which strives to move beyond the boundaries of the mainstream organic and local food sectors by adopting the more holistic discourse of the food sovereignty movement. The process of translating this discourse into practice remains a work in progress. Significant achievements have been made on a number of fronts, most notably: new market opportunities have been opened for small-scale, ecological producers; attitudes and behaviours regarding both production and consumption have been shifted; and new institutions – that help enable and reinforce new values and behaviours – have begun to be constructed. Unsurprisingly, challenges exist as well. These include: significant reliance on donated resources; continued dependence on a relatively small group of leaders; the relative fragility of newly emerging institutions; and

a pervasive pessimism regarding the ability to scale up change within a context of political institutions perceived as corrupt, and beholden to agri-business influence. Although such challenges do constrain, to an extent, the efficacy of the organization, they do not by any means diminish the powerful impact of its work to demonstrate that alternative agri-food visions are possible.

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List of Abbreviations

CIIDRI	*Centro de Investigación Interdisciplinaria para el Desarrollo Rural Integral* (Centre for Interdisciplinary Research for Integrated Rural Development)
CONASUPO	*Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares* (National Company of Popular Subsistence)
FBC	Falls Brook Centre
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
INEGI	*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (National Institute of Statistics and Geography)
ISO	International Standards Organization
MasAgro	*Modernización Sustentable de la Agricultura Tradicional* (Sustainable Modernization of Traditional Agriculture)
MNLOM	Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets (*Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos)*
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PROCAMPO	*Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo* (Program of Direct Support to the Countryside)
PROCEDE	*Programa Nacional de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Solares Urbanos* (National Program for the Certification of Ejidal Rights)
SAGARPA	*Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación* (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food)
SENASICA	*Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria* (National Service for Agri-food Safety and Quality)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Research Problem

There are few things as fundamental to human survival as food. Millennia ago, our ancestors hunted game and gathered plants to meet their nutritional needs. Today, however, the ways in which we, as a species, feed ourselves have become significantly more complex. Our global food systems – or the processes by which we produce, process, distribute and consume food – bear little resemblance to the ancient hunting-gathering model, and instead more closely reflect the influences of the 10 000 year old Agricultural Revolution, the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, and the rise of globalized trade networks based on the principles of free market capitalism.

The modern combination of industrialized agriculture and free trade is generally referred to as the 'conventional' food system model, as it is via this system that the majority of the world's population currently meets much, if not all, of its food needs.[1] Some defining characteristics of the conventional model include: extensive use of industrial inputs such as genetically modified seeds, agrochemicals, oil, irrigation systems and other machinery; highly specialized, large-scale monocrop production; significant involvement of transnational corporations in production and distribution; and vast distances between the sites of production and consumption. By adopting these food system elements – all in some way based on the industrial capitalist notion of maximizing productivity – humans have been able to significantly increase the world's available food supply, creating possibilities

1 Marsden and Murdoch (2006) rightly argue that, in reality, the contemporary agri-food sector is far too complex to be considered one monolithic 'conventional' structure on the one hand, with a set of less dominant 'alternatives' on the other. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this thesis, both the terms 'conventional' and 'alternative' will be used to facilitate discussion, with recognition of their limitations.

to meet and exceed our nutritional requirements in ways that could not have been dreamt of by our hunting-gathering forbears.

However, in spite of dramatic advances in the amounts of food able to be produced, the conventional food system model has been subject to intense criticism for contributing to a range of problems, including (but not limited to) over-exploitation of natural resources, unequal distribution of food and persistent food insecurity, under- and over-nutrition and their related health impacts, erosion of local food cultures, and the declining viability of rural communities around the world. Responding to these issues, a wide range of alternative food initiatives have been developed that offer both producers and consumers a chance to opt out – to varying degrees – of the conventional system.

One of today's most prominent manifestations of alternative food ideas is organic agriculture, which emerged in the 1940s just as the processes of food system industrialization and commercialization were accelerating. In its early days, organic agriculture tended to be viewed as a philosophically grounded social movement that stood in stark contrast to both the industrial and free market nature of the dominant food system paradigm (see Allen and Kovach 2000; Vos 2000), and it was generally associated with ideals such as the promotion of small-scale family farms that showed a preference for mixed farming, external input minimization and locally based distribution systems (Hall and Mogyorody 2001; Rigby and Bown 2003). However, over the past two decades, the organic sector has experienced extremely rapid growth, and this has sparked suggestions that the mainstream organic sector is increasingly resembling the conventional food system model in terms of its structure and outlook on society-nature relations (see Buck et al. 1997; Goodman 2000; Guthman 2002).

Just as the organic sector experienced rapid growth in the 1980s and 90s, the notion of supporting local food systems has exploded in the first decade of the 21st century, and

the local food movement now rivals the organic sector in terms of its popularity as a food alternative. Some of the major driving forces behind the trend toward eating locally include: a reduction in 'food miles' and the negative environmental impacts associated with the long distance trading of food (Morgan et al. 2008); the protection of small-scale family farms (Henderson 2000); local economic development (Renting et al. 2003; Seyfang 2006); and concerns about industrially-produced goods resulting from food scares such as the outbreak of mad cow disease (Morgan et al. 2008; Roberts 2008). Similarly to what has occurred with organics, as the local food movement grows, its heterogeneity increases and, today, a mainstream local food sector that exhibits many of the same traits as the conventional food system model exists alongside a wide variety of more holistic or alternative initiatives.

The explosion, and ensuing mainstreaming, of both the organic and local food movements has resulted in a great deal of public debate regarding which one (if either) represents the most appropriate strategy for building sustainable food systems. As is logical, a number of initiatives have emerged that attempt to combine the two. Touted as 'beyond organic', 'postorganic' or 'local food plus', these initiatives provide alternatives to the conventional food system, while at the same time pushing the boundaries of both the mainstream organic and local food sectors. Projects include: a rebirth of farmers' markets and farm gate sales; the proliferation of community supported agriculture (CSA) and organic and/or fresh produce box delivery programs; the growing Slow Food and Fair Trade movements; the development of a number of alternative labeling strategies that include ecological, social, and geographical criteria; and the increasing use of the 'food sovereignty' concept as a guiding force in alternative food system discourse (see Allen et al. 2003; Renting et al. 2003; Guthman et al. 2006; Howard and Allen 2006; Moore 2006; Seyfang 2006; Desmarais 2007; Friedmann 2007).

Although they are extremely diverse in nature, in a general sense beyond organic initiatives

"seek to construct and portray alternatives to the construction and reproduction of hegemonies of food (and agriculture) in the conventional food system" (Allen et al. 2003: 62). They tend to mirror the organic movement's concern for the ecological impacts of industrial agriculture, and also the local food movement's critique of long distance trade networks. In addition, in line with the early days of the organic movement, there is often a focus on smaller scale farming, avoidance of monoculture, minimization of external inputs (particularly non-renewable energy sources), and socio-cultural concerns such as the treatment of farm labour. However, although they may offer a more holistic vision, even beyond organic initiatives can be constrained in their ability to address all the shortcomings of the conventional food system model.

Currently, limited information is available regarding both the opportunities and challenges that characterize beyond organic endeavours. A number of empirical studies have been conducted on beyond organic food system initiatives; however, these have been focused on a limited number of contexts – including Toronto (Friedmann 2007), California (Allen et al. 2003; Guthman et al. 2006), the United Kingdom (Seyfang 2006) and the European Union (Renting et al. 2003) – all of which are located in the Global North. Because the structure of alternative food systems is highly dependent on the historical, political, economic, social, and ecological conditions of the region (see Duram 2000; Allen and Kovach 2000), further case study research is needed to create a stronger basis for comparison and generalisabilty of results. In particular, there is a need to add experiences from the Global South to the conversation about the kinds of contexts in which beyond organic food systems can thrive.

1.2 Research Purpose and Scope

This study addresses the need for further case study research on beyond organic food systems. More specifically, the study's overall purpose is to improve understanding

regarding the processes by which new subjectivities – willing and able to construct more sustainable alternatives to the conventional food system – are created, and what can be done to facilitate the emergence of these subjectivities and to create spaces within which they can act.[2]

Because of the particular absence of relevant research from Southern contexts, the Mexican experience with food system alternatives is used as a case study. In Mexico (and indeed much of the Global South) high rates of rural poverty have left communities and ecosystems especially vulnerable to many of the aforementioned problems associated with the conventional food system model. Industrial-style agriculture has been adopted primarily by the country's wealthiest landowners, whose over-use of resources has significant environmental impacts. Those who have continued to practice lower-input subsistence-based production have found the viability of their farms dramatically challenged, both by competition from their larger-scale Mexican counterparts and by a free market flooded with imports from the United States. In the absence of both other livelihood options and an adequate social safety net, substantial numbers of Mexico's rural poor have been abandoning their land and families and migrating north. Those remaining have had to contend with under-populated communities, a resource base in decline due to over-exploitation and climate change, and a lack of institutional supports and services, all of which render food production a significant challenge.

On the consumption side, Mexico has become increasingly dependent on food imports, particularly inexpensive, industrially-produced goods from the United States. This dependence has left its population highly vulnerable to fluctuations in international

2 The notion of subjectivities refers to the complex web of influences within which an individual (or subject) comes to be formed. Drawing heavily on the work of Foucault (which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2), subjectivity can be thought of as "the way we are led to think about ourselves", and it is closely tied to our perceptions of what constitutes acceptable thought, discourse and action (Mansfield 2000: 10).

commodity prices that, for example, caused the 2006-2007 'tortilla crisis', during which the food security of millions of people was significantly diminished. In addition to increased vulnerability to food insecurity, dependence on food imports has also accelerated Mexico's 'nutrition transition', or the shift toward increased consumption of fats, sugars and highly processed foods. As a result of this dietary transition, Mexico is now faced with what the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) have called the 'double burden' of disease – so-called because individuals within a single household experience health problems related to both food insecurity and obesity (see Kennedy 2004; FAO 2006). Indeed, in spite of persistent food insecurity, obesity-related illnesses have become so prevalent that Mexico is now the world leader in childhood cases of type 2 diabetes.

In the face of such problems on both the production and consumption ends of the food chain, Mexican producers and consumers have begun to take part in the global search for food system alternatives. For example, along with many other Southern nations, Mexico has become an important supplier of organic foods, and many Mexican producers are also entering into Fair Trade networks as a means of accessing alternative markets. Although in recent years there has been significant growth in internal demand for organic goods, particularly in urban centres such as Mexico City, both the certified organic and Fair Trade options have remained predominantly export-oriented.

Those seeking more nationally-focused alternative food system options have been largely guided by the aforementioned notion of 'food sovereignty', defined by the Vía Campesina (2007) in its Declaration of Nyéléni as "the right of all people to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own agricultural systems." Within Mexico, alternative food initiatives focused on food sovereignty include the national campaign *Sin Maíz no Hay País* (Without

Corn There is no Country), which seeks to protect native corn varieties and the viability of the country's small-scale *milpa* producers, and projects led by the Zapatista movement in Chiapas aimed at ensuring that communities maintain self-sufficiency in food production as a means of assuring political independence.

One alternative food initiative that takes a food sovereignty approach, and also has a strong emphasis on the concept of organic agriculture, is the *Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos* (Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets, or MNLOM). Founded in 2004, this network, that now includes 20 markets and a number of fledgling projects around the country, is the focus of the case study presented in this thesis. Those involved in this network have identified a lack of research and information on the local organic sector in Mexico as one of many factors constraining its development. With this in mind, the research presented in this thesis, conducted in collaboration with Mexico's *Universidad Autónoma Chapingo* and members of the MNLOM, provides data and analysis that seeks to help the organization, and other similar alternative food initiatives, thrive. Specifically, the research purpose is to explore the extent to which a beyond organic initiative (in this case the MNLOM) is able to offer a viable, transformative alternative to more conventional food system channels.

1.3 Research Objectives

This research has five objectives:

1. To establish how people's attitudes and behaviours may change over the course of their participation in the MNLOM, and the processes by which these changes occur;

2. To assess the degree to which participation in the MNLOM contributes (or not) to positive socio-economic changes for small-scale producers;

3. To identify where decision-making power in the MNLOM is concentrated and how this relates to communication and governance within the organization;

4. To explore the extent to which the MNLOM represents the notion of economic activity embedded within social relations and ecological context, and;

5. To assess the degree to which participants in the MNLOM are scaling up their actions – for example to the level of local, state and/or national policy.

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into nine chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature in order to provide a theoretical framework within which research results can be interpreted. Chapter 3 offers contextual information about Mexico that serves as a background for the discussion of results. The research framework, design, and methods are outlined in Chapter 4. Research results are then presented and analyzed in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 5 provides a detailed description of the case study organization (the MNLOM), offering information about its membership base, objectives, activities, and impacts. Chapter 6 examines organizational governance, and explores the MNLOM's efforts to institute participatory structures of decision-making and management. Chapter 7 then focuses in detail on the subject of participatory guarantee systems (PGS) – an alternative form of organic certification gaining increasing traction around the world, and an important priority for the MNLOM. Finally, Chapter 8 discusses issues of public policy, with a focus on how civil society organizations, such as the MNLOM, can (or cannot) engage in policy-making processes in a way that supports their alternative food system work. Following these thematic discussion chapters, Chapter 9 provides some concluding thoughts that draw together the observations and findings presented throughout.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores some of the literature relevant to the research question in order to lay the groundwork for the data analysis that will be presented in following chapters. A starting point for this literature review will be a discussion of some of the theoretical work surrounding the opposing concepts 'the conventional' and 'the alternative'. First, the ways in which conventional, or mainstream, ideas and world views may be created and maintained will be outlined, with a focus on Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, and Foucault's concept of governmentality. This will be followed by a presentation of some key ideas regarding how and why alternative ways of thinking about and acting in the world may be constructed. Specifically, the theoretical perspective of political ecology will be introduced as an example of how conventional discourses can be challenged and the creation of new forms of societal organization facilitated. Some concepts from the field of alternative economics will also be outlined briefly.

The general discussion of the relationship between the conventional and the alternative will be followed by a more focused and detailed consideration of how tensions between the two play out within the arena of food systems. To begin with, the conventional food system model, its defining characteristics and the major critiques levied against it will be described. The most prominent alternative models will then be presented – specifically, organic agriculture, local food systems, and the so-called beyond organic movement. Finally, the concept of food sovereignty will be introduced as the manifestation of the beyond organic movement most relevant to the research presented here. The food sovereignty paradigm

will be considered with specific reference to the concepts of diversity, autonomy, equity and embeddedness, each of which will be an important theme throughout this thesis.

2.2 Construction and Maintenance of the 'Conventional'

Hegemony

A first step in developing a theoretical framework within which the research can be situated is to consider how mainstream or conventional ways of conceptualizing and acting in the world come to exist. A useful starting point for this discussion is Gramsci's work on the concept of cultural hegemony. Part of the Italian Communist movement in the early part of the 20th century, Gramsci wanted to understand why his party was not able to garner more support, particularly from the masses of marginalized people who would theoretically have benefitted from a Communist revolution (Forgacs 1988). His desire to explain this Communist failure led him to develop the idea of cultural hegemony, which refers to the ways in which dominant classes construct an ideological consensus that comes to be accepted by those who are privileged by it as well as those who may be oppressed by it.

Eagleton (1991: 16) explains that "[t]o win hegemony, in Gramsci's view, is to establish moral, political and intellectual leadership in social life by diffusing one's own 'world view' throughout the fabric of society as a whole, thus equating one's own interests with the interests of society at large." Control of the economy is of the utmost importance to this process; however, a variety of socio-cultural institutions, including educational and administrative systems, language, the media and organized religion, contribute as well. Also central to the creation of hegemony is the idea that a dominant group will allow certain concessions to the masses in order to make them complicit participants in a hegemonic order. For example, corporations will grant certain rights to unions thereby pacifying potential unrest and essentially gaining their consent to their own domination (Forgacs, 1988).

According to Gramsci, when hegemony is achieved, the general population will accept a dominant worldview similarly to the way that devotees accept the doctrine of a particular religious faith. Average citizens will not have a clear or rational sense of why they stand by this worldview and reject alternatives – including those that might offer them greater advantage. Instead, the

> man of the people thinks that so many like-thinking people can't be wrong… and he remembers, indeed, hearing expounded, discursively, coherently, in a way that left him convinced, the reasons behind his faith. He has no concrete memory of the reasons and could not repeat them, but he knows that the reasons exist, because he as heard them expounded and was convinced by them. The fact of having once suddenly seen the light and been convinced is the permanent reason for his reasons persisting, even if the arguments in its favour cannot be readily produced (Forgacs 1988: 339).

From Gramsci's perspective, the message of the European Communists fell largely on deaf ears because the liberal capitalist system had achieved the status of hegemony.

Symbolic Violence

Although it does not contain specific reference to Gramsci, the work of Bourdieu addresses similar ideas regarding how dominant worldviews come to exist and be maintained. Indeed, Burawoy (2008: 3) notes that the absence of Gramsci from Bourdieu's bibliographies is somewhat strange, given that "[t]he parallels in their intellectual perspectives are striking." One of the main things that, according to Burawoy, sets the two apart is that, while Gramsci's concept of hegemony allows for the idea that dominated classes may be aware on some level of their own domination yet still submit to it because of their deep-rooted faith in a hegemonic ideology, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence assumes that domination is invisible.

Essential to the invisible domination of symbolic violence is what Bourdieu refers to as

'doxa'. The idea of doxa is that one particular manner of being, way of doing things, or organizational structure is seen by people not as one choice among many, but as the only possibility available, as the natural order of the world. This stands in contrast to orthodoxy, in which a particular set of ideas is dominant but others exist on the fringe, and heterodoxy, in which a variety of sets of ideas may co-exist simultaneously (Bourdieu 1977). According to Bourdieu, people are said to have a doxic relation to the world when they are incapable of recognizing the arbitrary nature of the structures that guide their ideas and behaviours and, in essence, govern their lives. As he explains:

> Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents' aspirations, out of which arises the *sense of limits*, commonly called the *sense of reality*…which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order (Bourdieu 1977: 164, italics in original).

The objective chances to which Bourdieu refers are associated with what he calls 'fields' (spaces or arenas of activity bounded by geographical, cultural and socio-economic factors), while an agent's more subjective aspirations are reflective of what he calls his or her 'habitus' (a complex set of mental and physical habits, or dispositions, inculcated over time into the mind and body of an individual). It is the relationship between the two that, along with the material and cultural capital possessed, determine how a person will navigate the world or, as Bourdieu often put it, 'play the game'. The field on which people play determines what game rules apply, and their habitus allows them to play by those rules, even though they are unable to consciously identify them. While a myriad of forces collectively contribute over time to the construction of a person's habitus, two of the most important influences are family and schooling (Bourdieu 1977).

Bourdieu (1977) notes that groups that find themselves at an advantage within a particular organizational structure will seek to ensure that the arbitrariness of that structure remains invisible, particularly to those disadvantaged by it. To return to the game analogy, the winners strive to maintain systems of rules that allow them to continue winning. Such rules are maintained through a variety of formal mechanisms, including educational and legal systems; however, they are also supported by less obvious symbolic systems, most notably language, but also styles of dress, mannerisms of movement and accents (Bourdieu 1977). In their discussion of Bourdieu's work, Mahar et al. (1990: 5) explain that these symbolic systems serve a highly political function, in that they "attempt to legitimate domination by the imposition of the 'correct' and 'legitimate' definition of the social world." Members of dominant groups will have the 'right' style and speak with the 'right' accent, and this allows them "[t]o be seen as a person or class of status and prestige [and therefore] to be accepted as legitimate and sometimes as a legitimate authority. Such a position carries with it the power to name (activities and groups), the power to represent commonsense and above all the power to create the 'official version of the social world'" (Mahar et al. 1990: 13).

Governmentality

One final concept that should be mentioned in this discussion of how mainstream ideas, opinions and behaviours come to be constructed and maintained is Foucault's governmentality framework. Like Gramsci, Foucault is generally absent in Bourdieu's writings, and Callewaert (2006) suggests that this is, at least in part, due to Bourdieu's disapproval of what he perceived as an excessive relativism in Foucault's work. Indeed, whereas Gramsci and Bourdieu both explicitly criticize dominant groups for their purposeful oppression of the masses, Foucault presents a seemingly more value-neutral descriptive analysis of how governable subjects are created within modern liberal society.

According to Foucault, one of the defining features of the modern liberal social structure is that people's ideas and behaviours are no longer governed primarily by direct forms of state control. Rather, they are shaped by a myriad of technologies and programs existing at multiple scales that undertake to "conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide responsible for what they do and for what happens to them" (Foucault, cited in Rose et al. 2006: 83). Foucault maintains that, within the modern liberal paradigm, this guide is essentially internalized, as a society produces subjects who willingly fulfill its aims because they believe that in so doing they themselves will be fulfilled. Evoking both Gramsci and Bourdieu in his discussion of governmentality, Agrawal (2005: 217) explains that "modern forms of power and regulation achieve their full effects not by forcing people toward state-mandated goals, but by turning them into accomplices."

Central to the idea of governmentality are the concepts of knowledge and power, the relationship between the two, and the ways in which they affect technologies of government and the creation of subjects. These themes are developed with specific reference to environmental issues by the eco-governmentality or environmentality framework. Working from this perspective, Agrawal (2005) argues that effective environmental governance must involve the creation of space at lower scales for social interaction and decision-making regarding natural resource management. Through this process, environmental subjects can be created who do not need to be governed coercively, but instead can actively participate in governance, which, following Foucault, is based on "the devolution of decision-making to local networks of self-governing actors, coordinated through multi-layered institutional structures" (Dupuis and Goodman 2005: 367).

The eco-governmentality or environmentality perspective is a particularly useful lens for some of the work presented in this thesis because it:

> attends carefully to (1) the formation of new expert knowledges; (2) the nature of power, which is at the root of efforts to regulate social practice; (3) the type of institutions and regulatory practices that exist in a mutually productive relationship with social and ecological practices…; and (4) the behaviours that regulations seek to change, which go hand in hand with the processes of self-formation and struggles between expert- or authority-based regulation and situated practices (Agrawal 2005: 229).

Each of these elements will be considered at various points in the following chapters.

2.3 Challenging the 'Conventional', Constructing 'Alternatives'

Each of the three concepts (hegemony, symbolic violence, and governmentality) discussed above implies that conventionally-held ideas, worldviews or organizational structures are imbued with a great deal of power that can render them exceedingly difficult to challenge; however, none of the three frameworks presented holds that the creation of alternatives is impossible. On the contrary, both Gramsci and Bourdieu were active in political movements that sought to shift conventional ways of thinking and organizing the social world – Gramsci through his participation in the Italian Communist Party, and Bourdieu through activist work aimed at challenging the neoliberal paradigm. Similarly, governmentality scholars such as Agrawal demonstrate that subjectivities can be changed over time, and that their work in exposing the power dynamics involved in governance has the potential to facilitate that change.

There is a general consensus among the aforementioned theorists that space for the construction of alternatives tends to be created as the result of some kind of crisis erupting within the conventional system. A parallel can be seen here to the work of Kuhn (1962) who, referring specifically to scientific research, argues that 'paradigm shifts' occur when a critical mass of anomalies that cannot be explained by existing theory emerges. A new

paradigm must then be developed that will incorporate the still functioning aspects of previous theory while at the same time adequately explaining the anomalies.

A similar process can occur with respect to more general forms of societal organization. To return to Gramsci, in order for a 'counter-hegemony' or alternative worldview to emerge, a number of factors must be in place. In addition to a crisis of the conventional system, it is necessary that the "material conditions for solution [of that crisis] are already present or at least in the course of formation" (Forgacs 1988: 200). In other words, if Kuhn's analogy is to be followed, there must be some acceptable proposal for addressing the problems or anomalies that have become evident. Secondly, those presenting an alternative proposal must be organized into a highly cohesive group capable of presenting an ideologically united front. Finally, the key concepts of the new alternative must be communicated effectively to the masses. This requires that a clear message be repeated tirelessly and, most importantly, that the alternative movement avoid the trap of "creating a specialized culture among restricted intellectual groups" and instead "in the process of elaborating a form of thought superior to 'common sense' and coherent on a scientific plane…never forgets to remain in contact with the 'simple'…Only by this contact does a philosophy become 'historical', purify itself of intellectualistic elements of an individual character and become 'life'" (Forgacs 1988: 331).

Political ecology

If the complementary concepts of hegemony, symbolic violence and governmentality provide a useful framework for understanding how conventional ideas and worldviews are created and maintained, the school of thought known as political ecology offers an excellent lens through which to view the processes by which alternatives to the conventional may be constructed. Benjaminsen et al. (2010: 648) note that "political ecology has typically

questioned and deconstructed a certain taken-for-grantedness on environmental issues…" The perspective is relevant because it actively seeks to develop discourses that run counter to the mainstream, but also, more specifically, because it focuses attention on the kind of environmental, social and economic sustainability and justice issues that are at the heart of this thesis.

First named by anthropologist Eric Wolf, journalist Alexander Cockburn and environmental scientist Grahame Beakhurst, 'political ecology' emerged in the 1970s as an interdisciplinary theoretical perspective that sought to counter then dominant ideas regarding environmental degradation. A broad-based and in many ways diverse group, those who labeled themselves political ecologists were held together primarily by their Marxist-based critique of the modernization paradigm, which treated environmental destruction as a result of underdevelopment, 'backwards' cultural attitudes and practices, insufficient or improper adoption of modern technologies and excessive human population growth (see Peet and Watts 2004; Robbins 2004). In contrast, from the point of view of political ecology environmental degradation was perceived as being about the relationships between societal structures and natural resource control, between poverty and environmental exploitation, and between local communities, the regions within which they are located, the nation-states to which they belong and the global economy in which they participate (Blaike and Brookfield 1987).

Although it always included distinctly political elements, it was not until the 1990s that political ecology as a sub-discipline took on the actively political agenda with which it is often associated today. This agenda is based, according to Atkinson (1991: 13) "on the conviction that our current way of life is unsustainable, and that if our grandchildren are to inherit a world worth living in then we are going to have to radically change the way we live and the way we relate to the rest of nature in general." Taking this conviction as

a starting point, current political ecological research tends to focus on the kinds of social change required to create a more sustainable world, the kinds of changes that are presently occurring, and how new processes of change can be facilitated and directed. Warner (2010: 539, italics added) draws on the work of Robert Cox to suggest that political ecologists are not concerned with 'problem-solving', but rather with 'critical theory': "While the purpose of the former is to solve the problems posed 'within the terms of the particular perspective which was the point of departure', critical theory suggests the possibility of choosing a different perspective from which 'the problematic becomes one of *creating an alternative world.*'" Framed in the light of the previous discussion of the conventional, political ecology can be viewed as being largely about challenging hegemonies and unveiling the existence of doxa in order to make possible the creation of new subjectivities.

Citing David Harvey (2009), Wainright (2010: 508) notes that "one of the fundamental requirements for building a radically different world is to transform our 'mental conceptions of the world'." In an effort to do this, many researchers espousing a political ecology position have focused their studies on questions related to food and agriculture. Specific topics that have received a great deal of attention include: the Green Revolution, and the processes by which governments and agribusiness transferred a modern Western technological package to producers in the South (see Low and Gleeson 1998); systems of land tenure and the ways in which they can influence farming practices, particularly how inequitable systems can contribute to soil erosion (Blaikie 1985; Grossman 1997; Foster and Magdoff 1998); the processes by which individual producers make decisions about land management, farm technology, pesticide purchasing and application and the hiring of labour (Awanyo 2004; Robbins 2004); and the impacts of regional, national and international policies (such as the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs, or SAPs) and global commodity markets on producer behaviour (Awanyo 2004; Vasquez-

Leon and Liverman 2004; Moseley 2005). The conclusions drawn from these studies point to the need to address issues of structural inequalities, in terms of both power and income, in order to create more sustainable food and agricultural systems specifically, and a more sustainable world in general.

Because of its explicitly normative and activist orientation, political ecology has been criticized for being "a sort of anti-science, convinced of its veracity and truth claims long before the research begins" (Vayda and Walters 1999, in Watts and Peet 2004: 17). Although they themselves take a political ecology approach, Benjaminsen et al. (2010: 654) echo a similar concern, cautioning that political ecologists must be careful to "avoid uncritical reproduction of 'anti-capitalist', 'anti-globalisation', or 'anti-neoliberal' environmental narratives…" These critiques are directly addressed by Watts and Peet (2004: 18), who insist that *any* theoretical perspective is necessarily informed by certain assumptions and judgments and that, far from romanticizing anti-capitalist or anti-globalisation movements, much political ecological research has in fact exposed "the limits of a naïve invocation of the local community as a theatre of governance." In addition, Warner (2010: 539) suggests that the ways in which political ecology demonstrates the linkages between ecology and emancipatory social change and presents "possibilities for exploring alternative worlds" are necessary given the current rapid pace of ecological destruction. Following that logic, and taking into account Bourdieu's concerns about the invisible nature of conventional thinking, the normative and consciously political nature of political ecological research can be viewed as an asset, as it may help to expose the arbitrary nature of dominant political economic and environmental discourses.

Alternative economics

As noted above, one of the primary concerns of political ecological research is to

demonstrate the possibility of alternative worlds. Because the work presented here focuses on alternative forms of production and consumption and alternative market arrangements, a brief exploration of some key ideas about alternative economics is relevant. The first of these ideas is that the current dominant economic paradigm – that of an individualistic, profit-driven, free-market capitalism – is not simply the natural state of affairs, but rather a consciously chosen strategy that has been adopted and implemented by interested parties. To return to some of the ideas discussed earlier in this chapter, the free-market capitalist paradigm can be viewed as having won hegemony as a result of "deliberate policy, conscious of its own ends, and not the spontaneous, automatic expression of economic facts" (Forgacs 1988: 210).

One of the most important thinkers in terms of elucidating the consciously constructed nature of what he refers to as 'market society' is Karl Polanyi. Writing at the time of the Second World War, he describes how Western society experienced a 'great transformation' from systems that had traditionally been based on some combination of reciprocity, redistribution and subsistence production (or 'householding') to one founded on free market principles (Polanyi 1944). Polanyi explains that this transformation was very carefully planned and involved the organized dismantling of institutions such as common property holdings, and the corresponding construction of new institutions, notably a market for labour and property, which allowed for the commodification of both human beings and land (Polanyi 1944). These changes were brought about by a series of specific policies and programs implemented over the course of centuries. One small but illustrative example of such policies was the British government's 1624 decision (highly controversial at the time) to lift a ban on usury, or the charging of interest for money loaned. Rogers (2000: 159) argues that this signaled "the nascent retreat of God and morality from the social world"

and its replacement with an economic rationality that relied on cost-benefit analysis and the maximization of profits as a guiding force.

It is precisely such narrowly-defined economic rationality that political ecologists, and others interested in alternative economics, seek to challenge in their efforts to pursue environmental sustainability and social justice. As Patel (2009: 8) puts it, in order to truly address present-day crises, we "need not only a new way of mooring our expectations of our society and our economy, one based on richer assumptions about human nature, but also a different ideology governing the exchange of goods and services." Central to the new assumptions about human nature called for by scholars such as Patel is the idea that humans are not merely self-interested, utility-maximizing, profit-seeking rational beings, but instead are best conceived of as members of complex social systems whose economic choices are deeply embedded in social relationships and ecological contexts (see Polanyi 1944; Bourdieu 1998; Siebenhüner 2000; Patel 2009).

One expression of this kind of alternative economics is Bourdieu's (1998: 40, italics in original) reference to an "*economics of happiness,* which would take note of all the profits, individual and collective, material and symbolic, associated with activity (such as security), and also all the material and symbolic costs associated with inactivity…" In other words, both profits and costs that are externalized within the market society paradigm would be internalized. Of particular interest to Bourdieu (1977) are potential profits and costs in what he calls symbolic or cultural capital. This capital includes things such as smiles, handshakes, compliments, and insults, which Bourdieu argues have a close relationship to economic capital, and indeed can be translated into it, but tend to be ignored within classical economic frameworks. This position is consistent with Polanyi's notion of embeddedness (which will be presented later in this chapter) and is echoed by Agrawal (2005: 18) who,

following Foucault, asserts that "[t]he rational calculus of costs and benefits travels only a short distance in explaining the constitution of the subject itself."

Another challenge to the conventional economic discourse is put forth by Schumacher's (1999) discussion of Buddhist economics. Within that framework "the economy must be designed to provide all members of society with a sufficiency of material well-being through livelihoods that are inherently satisfying, that do not harm others materially or spiritually, that involve the individual in service to his community, and therefore contribute to the purification of character…" (Ophuls 2000: 369). The underlying message is that economics should be about meeting needs, rather than maximizing profit. With its direct reference to Buddhist philosophy this perspective brings a kind of spiritually informed morality, the rejection of which was exemplified by the aforementioned legalization of usury, back into economic discourse. Like an economics of happiness, it also turns the primary assumptions of conventional economics – in particular the idea that humans can best be conceptualized as self-interested profit-seekers – on their heads.

2.4 Conventional and Alternative Food System Discourses

While the preceding discussion touched briefly on the subject of food and agriculture, it was primarily an overview of a number of fairly general theoretical ideas. These ideas will play an important role in informing the work presented in this thesis; however, the remainder of this chapter will focus more specifically on reviewing food system literature in an effort to develop a more targeted, issue-specific, and to some degree practical, framework within which to situate research results. It must be noted that, although a dichotomy between conventional and alternative food system models will be created in order to facilitate discussion, in reality the contemporary agri-food sector is far more complex and heterogenous, and definitions of 'conventional' and 'alternative' are highly

contested, and in many cases blurred or overlapping (see Goodman 2000; Marsden and Murdoch 2006; Sonnino and Marsden 2006; Morgan et al. 2008).

The conventional food system model

One of the pillars of the conventional food system model is industrial agriculture, which has its roots in the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century. This period was marked by a general movement away from small-scale artisanal production of goods towards a model based on integrating industrially-produced inputs into production processes, as well as increasing economies of scale. In terms of agriculture specifically, von Liebig discovered that the application of chemical elements, most notably nitrogen, to crops could lead to significant yield increases, thus sowing the seeds for widespread adoption of chemical fertilizer use, and Mendel's research on plant genetics laid the groundwork for the development of high-yielding varieties and genetic modification (see Leyva Galán and Pohlan 2005). Following the Second World War, a second round of scientific discoveries led to the development and application of chemical pesticides. For example, the now infamous DDT was discovered in 1939, and a number of chemicals developed for wartime use, such as the defoliant Agent Orange, were adapted for agricultural purposes in the postwar years (see Carson 2000; Leyva Galán and Pohlan 2005).

The FAO notes that, in addition to correcting nutrient deficiencies and controlling pests and disease with chemical inputs, conventional agriculture also addresses water deficiencies with irrigation, uses physical structures to combat soil erosion, and relies on tillage to manage soil structure. Furthermore, the conventional agricultural model today can be characterized by the common use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), high levels of mechanization, large-scale monocrop production (often without substantial rotation

schedules), and substantial reliance on external energy sources (see Bird 1988; Altieri 1998; Morgan et al. 2008).

Looking beyond the production itself, conventional food networks tend to be associated with a free market perspective, wherein prices are determined by supply and demand, and profit maximization is a primary goal (see Polanyi 1944; Hatanaka et al. 2006; Guthman 2008). Relying on the notion of comparative advantage, the global agricultural sector has also become characterized by increasing transnational trade. Thus, today there is often substantial physical distance between the sites of production and consumption. In addition, a relatively small number of transnational corporations have come to dominate the global trade of both agricultural inputs and outputs (see Morgan et al. 2008).

The main reason for reliance on industrial farming and the free market as organizing features of the conventional food system is that they are consistent with a productionist paradigm, which Lang (2003: 3) notes is "focused on unleashing the productive capacity in the food supply chain (particularly the land) and [aims] for quantity and efficiency of output, defined in terms of yield, throughput and profitability." Initially, this paradigm permitted the feeding of a rapidly expanding urban population in Europe (Polanyi 1944), while today it is touted as a means to keep exploding global populations from starvation (see Morgan et al. 2008). While the necessity of relying on the conventional model as the only way to feed the world may be open to some debate, Lang (2003: 3) explains that, at least to an extent, this paradigm "has been immensely successful. Output has risen dramatically. Even though hunger is persistent, it should be stressed that many more mouths are being fed. This is an heroic advance."

Criticism of the conventional model

While the increases in productivity achieved through the conventional agri-food model

are not unimportant, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) notes that there is now "widespread realization that despite significant scientific and technological achievements in our ability to increase agricultural productivity, we have been less attentive to some of the unintended social and environmental consequences of our achievements" (IAASTD 2009: 3). As such, in spite of its advances in terms of productivity, the conventional model is also the subject of a great deal of criticism.

Perhaps the most obvious critique of conventional agricultural production relates to the direct environmental problems caused by extensive agrochemical application. These problems include contamination of soil and groundwater, declining soil fertility, increasing resistance of pest and weed populations, destruction of communities of beneficial insects and plants, and a host of human health problems that arise from contact with poisonous chemicals (see Bird 1988; Ikerd 1993; Altieri 1998; Carson 2002).

Although the problems associated with extensive agrochemical application tend to receive a great deal of attention, other elements of the conventional agriculture paradigm are equally environmentally damaging. For example, an increasing reliance on a small number of high-yielding and/or genetically modified crop varieties decreases genetic diversity, poor irrigation techniques lead to soil salinization, and the practice of monoculture production – along with a separation of livestock from cropping systems – drastically reduces soil organic matter and overall biodiversity. As a result, agroecosystems become much more vulnerable to pests, diseases, and other environmental stresses, such as water or nutrient deficiency, and this creates a cycle of increasingly heavy dependence on agrochemicals (see Altieri 1998; Rigby and Bown 2003; Leyva Galán and Pohlan 2005). Additional environmental problems associated with conventional agriculture include overuse of oil

and water resources and the fact that the production, processing, packaging and distribution of food are major sources of global greenhouse gases (see Rigby and Bown 2003).

In addition to causing widespread environmental damage, the conventional food system model is also criticized for contributing to a host of socio-economic problems. For example, high levels of agro-industrial corporate concentration mean that producers find themselves in the position of 'price-takers', paying increasingly high amounts for industrial inputs, while at the same time receiving diminishing returns for their harvests (see Campbell et al. 2006; Hatanaka et al. 2006). Because these harvests tend to be of monoculture crops and destined for export, farm income is highly vulnerable, not only to potential crop failure, but also to commodity market fluctuations at the global scale (Rigby and Bown 2003). As Morgan et al. (2008: 70) argue, in the context of the conventional food system model "it is difficult to see anything other than a disempowerment of the producers." This disempowerment has ripple effects for their families and communities, contributing to an overall decline in the quality of life in rural areas (see Ikerd 1993; Sumner 2005).

The socio-economic problems associated with the conventional food system model are particularly pronounced in the Global South, where local production is often undercut by the dumping of low-priced food from Northern countries, notably the United States (see Morgan et al. 2008; Pimbert 2008). Influenced by the agro-industrial lobby, Northern governments provide heavy subsidies for agricultural production, making it almost impossible for Southern producers to compete. Conversely, even if they wanted to, Southern governments have been constrained in their ability to protect local agricultural sectors, largely by internationally-mandated macroeconomic policies such as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (see Barkin 2006; Morgan et al. 2008). A related agri-food issue that reflects North-South inequality is the relatively recent trend towards 'landgrabbing', or "large-scale acquisitions of farmland in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and Southeast

Asia", generally by wealthy private investors located in the Global North (Cotula et al., 2009: 3).

Problems such as dumping and landgrabbing are just two examples of contributing factors to decreasing levels of food self-sufficiency and increasing levels of food insecurity in the Global South. Indeed, in spite of global increases in agricultural productivity, in 2009 the FAO reported that the number of people suffering from chronic hunger and malnutrition had climbed to a record 1.02 billion (FAO 2009). Ironically, at the same time, over-consumption of fats, sugars and processed foods is leading to record levels of heart disease, diabetes, and other related illnesses, not only among wealthy consumers, but in food insecure communities and households as well (see Roberts 2008).

One final critique of the conventional food system model has less to do with specific impacts of production or trade practices and more to do with the underlying philosophy of society-nature relations that guides food production and consumption patterns. Specifically, the conventional food system model has faced criticism for being characterized by the kind of disembeddedness that Polanyi (1944) argued is characteristic of free market, industrial societies in which social relations tend to be subsumed by market rationality. Following Polanyi, Goldschmidt (1998, cited in Sumner 2005: 306) argues that, in the current conventional food system paradigm, "financial gain [is] the single overriding aim of the productive process." Similarly, land and its produce are conceptualized primarily as commodities, and the vast distances between food production and consumption weaken the social linkages traditionally associated with an embedded food economy. Polanyi (1944) cautioned strongly against this kind of excessive commodification, and Roberts (2008: xii) suggests that, within this framework, "food cultures that once treated cooking and eating as central elements in maintaining social structure and tradition are slowly being usurped by a

global food culture, where cost and convenience are dominant, the social meal is obsolete, and the art of cooking is fetishized in coffee-table cookbooks and television shows."

Organic agriculture

One way in which many of the concerns about the conventional food system have been addressed has been through the organic agriculture movement. The term 'organic agriculture' first came into use in the 1940s in North America, Europe and Japan to refer to production without the use of synthetic chemicals, but today there are many interpretations of its meaning (Vos 2000). As Allen and Kovach (2000: 223) explain, manifestations of organic agriculture principles are the products "of historically specific social formations, with particular ecological, economic, and political characteristics." As a result, any specific definition of organic agriculture will tend to vary depending on local context.

One commonly used general definition developed by Lampkin (1994, cited in Rigby and Bown 2003: 3) is that organic agriculture is based on the creation of:

> integrated, humane, environmentally and economically sustainable production systems, which maximize reliance on farm-derived renewable resources and the management of ecological and biological processes and interactions, so as to provide acceptable levels of crop, livestock, and human nutrition, protection from pests and disease, and an appropriate return to the human and other resources.

A similarly broad definition is provided by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), which defines organic agriculture in terms of four principles, noting that it should: 1) sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible; 2) be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them; 3) build on relationships

that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities; and 4) be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment (IFOAM 2011). Although these definitions leave a great deal open to interpretation, they do provide a reference point from which to discuss the organic sector. Another reference point commonly used to define organic agriculutre are certification standards, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

As noted above, this sector first emerged in the 1940s as a response to the growing industrialization of agricultural production that characterized the postwar period. The movement grew slowly and, in the 1960s and 70s, organic farming overlapped to an extent with more widespread social struggle against problems such as consumerism, urbanization and environmental destruction (Vos 2000). During this era, the organic movement tended to be associated not just with the avoidance of agrochemical application but also with a more holistic alternative perspective on society-nature relations and the economy that stood in stark contrast to the productionist ethic (Allen and Kovach 2000). For example, beyond simply eschewing agrochemical use, organic farming tended to be (and to some extent still is) associated with the promotion of small-scale family farms showing a preference for ideals such as mixed farming, polyculture, and locally-based input and distribution systems (Hall and Mogyorody 2001; Rigby and Bown 2003).

In the 1980s, the organic sector began to experience extremely rapid rates of growth in terms of the numbers of farmers engaged in it, the amount of land under organic cultivation, and the income generated by organic sales. This boom was largely the result of a number of food safety scares that led to growing consumer demand for products perceived as safe and healthy (Winter 2003), but also related to growing general concerns about environmental sustainability. As a result of increasing demand, organic producers often receive a price

premium for their goods, thus providing financial incentive to engage in organic agriculture. Today, it is estimated that almost 35 million hectares (or 0.8% of global agricultural land) are cultivated organically by approximately 1.4 million producers, with an additional 31 million hectares dedicated to organic wild collection (Willer and Kilcher 2010). In financial terms, sales of organic goods in 2008 were estimated at approximately 50.9 billion US dollars, up more than 100% from 2003 levels (Willer and Kilcher 2010).

Local food networks

Just as the organic sector experienced rapid growth during the 1980s and 90s, the notion of supporting local food networks has exploded in the first decade of the 21st century.[3] One reason for a renewed focus on the local is that it addresses a range of ecological problems not dealt with by organic agriculture alone, particularly those associated with long distance food trade, or 'food miles' (Rigby and Bown 2003; Moore 2006; Seyfang 2007). Indeed, the negative impacts associated with food miles, principally the burning of fossil fuels and emissions of greenhouse gases, are often cited as the primary reason for re-localizing food systems.

Another argument in favour of locally-based food initiatives is that they can act as "engines of rural economic dynamism" (Goodman 2003: 1), and thus make valuable contributions to local economic development. Indeed, Henderson (2000) notes that one of the main drivers of alternative food networks in the United States is a desire to help protect family farms and maintain the integrity of small-scale local rural economies. Similarly, Renting et al. (2003: 398) found that, in the EU, alternative food initiatives are often "active attempts by producers to recapture value in the supply chain in ways which can hopefully ameliorate the conventional problems of the price squeeze", and in a study of a British alternative

3 In spite of its growing popularity, in contrast to the organic sector, actual data regarding levels of production, consumption and income earned within local food networks is exceedingly difficult to come by (Renting et al., 2003).

food initiative, Seyfang (2006: 386) determined that, for the producers involved, "turning towards the local market was a means of stabilizing incomes and self-protection," while for consumers it was an effective means of increasing local circulation of their food purchasing dollars, thus creating a multiplier effect.

In addition to ecological and economic benefits, a renewed focus on the local has been touted as a means of re-incorporating a social element into the economic relations surrounding food (Moore 2006; Seyfang 2006). Sage (2003: 48) explains that this process "conveys principles of social connectivity, reciprocity and trust" and "seeks to mediate self-interest in place of a concern for the wider common good." As a result, it allows individuals to feel part of a larger community. This desire for personal connection with fellow human beings has been found to be an extremely important element of local food networks (Allen et al. 2003; Guthman et al. 2006). For example, Moore (2006: 422) notes that "the personal, facework connection…was of paramount importance" to buyers at an Irish farmers' market, who felt that it helped them deal with the alienation of industrial food systems. Similarly, Seyfang (2006: 391) notes that "there is a sense of community growing around [a British local organic food cooperative] which nourishes its members."

Criticism of the organic and local labels

While the organic and local food sectors represent two alternatives to the conventional food system model, they have also been subject to criticisms of their own. For example, organics has been criticized for being inaccessible – both to small-scale low-income producers for whom certification is difficult (Gomez Tovar et al. 2005; Mutersbaugh 2005), and to low-income consumers who cannot afford to pay the premiums generally attached to organic foods (Guthman 2003). Similarly, local food networks have been accused of exacerbating North-South inequality as Northern countries eschew imports from Southern producers

(MacGregor and Vorley 2006; Seyfang 2006), and for ignoring issues of power and income inequality at the local level (see Hinrichs 2003; Winter 2003; DuPuis and Goodman 2005).

These and other specific critiques of the organic and local food movements will be explored further in following chapters; however, in a general sense they are all related to one underlying idea – that initiatives claiming to offer an alternative to the conventional food system model may instead reproduce many of the characteristics of that same system, particularly as they grow in scale. This argument – commonly referred to as the 'conventionalization thesis' (Buck et al. 1997) – has been most thoroughly developed in relation to the organic sector, likely because its growing popularity preceded that of local food networks, but in many ways it is now relevant to discussions of both the organic and local food movements.

As alluded to above, the conventionalization thesis emerged to suggest that, as it has grown in proportions, the organic sector has become increasingly similar to the conventional sector in terms of its structure and outlook on society-nature relations (Buck et al. 1997). It is argued that conventionalization has brought the productionist ethic, which the organic movement initially sought to reject, to organic production, distribution and consumption, and that this threatens to dilute the more progressive aspects of the organic movement and inhibit its ability to respond to many of the problems associated with the conventional food system model (Goodman, 2000). The increasing involvement of transnational agribusiness in the organic sector is generally considered the driving force behind conventionalization, as it sets conditions that "undermine the ability of even the most committed producers to practice a purely alternative form of organic farming" (Guthman 2004: 302). Allen and Kovach (2000: 225) explain that "flat or falling profits that result from competition will tend to force farmers, input suppliers, processors, and retailers to speed up production, cut costs, and increase the rate of product sales." Based on this analysis, a parallel argument

could easily be made regarding local food networks, as transnational companies such as Wal-mart control ever-increasing shares of the market for locally produced foods, thus diminishing the degree to which buying local necessarily corresponds to a direct producer-consumer link.

Other food system alternatives

Concerns about the conventionalization of both the organic and local food sectors has resulted in a great deal of debate regarding which one, if either, represents the most appropriate strategy for addressing the problems associated with the conventional model. As is logical, a number of initiatives have emerged that combine elements of both concepts, and incorporate a number of other aspects as well. These initiatives include a rebirth of farmers' markets and farm gate sales, the proliferation of community supported agriculture (CSA) and organic and/or fresh produce box delivery programs, the Slow Food Movement, Fair Trade networks, and the development of a number of alternative labelling strategies that include ecological, social, and geographical criteria (see Allen et al. 2003; Renting et al. 2003; Guthman et al. 2006; Howard and Allen 2006; Moore 2006; Seyfang 2006; Friedmann 2007).

Although they are extremely diverse in nature, in a general sense these initiatives "seek to construct and portray alternatives to the construction and reproduction of hegemonies of food (and agriculture) in the conventional food system" (Allen et al. 2003: 62). They mirror the organic movement's concern for the ecological impacts of agriculture, but also address other issues such as food packaging and transport, corporate and institutional control of food systems, social injustice, and the productivist ethic that underlies conventional food production and consumption chains (Allen et al. 2003; Renting et al. 2003; Moore 2006). In addition, although the degree to which they are able to do so is often constrained, they

tend to strive for solutions that are not simply market-based, but rather involve more holistic attempts to reconstruct society-nature relations around ideals of environmental and social sustainability (Renting et al. 2003; Seyfang 2006).

2.5 The Food Sovereignty Paradigm

One manifestation of this push to challenge the conventional food system, as well as alternatives that have been subject to processes of conventionalization, is the food sovereignty movement. Coined in 1996 by the global peasant movement Vía Campesina, the term food sovereignty is commonly defined as "the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods, respecting cultural and productive diversity…the right to produce our own food in our own territory…[and] the right of peoples to define their agricultural and food policy" (Desmarais 2007: 34). Patel (2009) suggests that the rise of the Vía Campesina (which today represents an estimated 150 million members in 69 countries) and its food sovereignty agenda represents a direct defiance of the market society hegemony discussed earlier in this chapter. As such, it is relevant to discussions of food production, distribution and consumption, while at the same time speaking to broader issues of global ideological shifts. The remainder of this chapter will provide a more detailed (though not exhaustive) outline of the food sovereignty perspective, highlighting the closely interrelated concepts of diversity, autonomy, equity and embeddedess, which will be returned to throughout this thesis.

Food sovereignty and diversity

In a general discussion of sustainable development, Barkin (2006: 99) argues that "sustainability…is about the struggle for diversity in all its dimensions." When it comes to food systems, perhaps the most commonly considered indicator of diversity is the biodiversity of agroecosystems. Conventional food production has demonstrated

a tendency towards decreasing agrobiodiversity, as monocropping limits the number of species and varieties grown, and intensive application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides reduces or eliminates rich populations of insects, non-crop plants and soil micro-organisms (see D'Souza and Ikerd 1996; Altieri 2000). In contrast, small-scale subsistence-based producers, whose agroecosystems by their very nature tend to be highly diverse, form the basis of the food sovereignty movement (see Altieri 2011). This implicit link to biodiversity is made explicit by the inclusion of natural resource protection as one of the movement's guiding principles. Often a vague term, within a food sovereignty framework natural resource protection specifically refers to maintenance of natural soil fertility, avoidance of monoculture and agrochemical dependence, and a complete rejection of genetically modified organisms (Pimbert 2008).

Perhaps even more important to food sovereignty advocates than biodiversity are processes of democratization that facilitate the co-existence of a diversity of ideas. Indeed, Pimbert (2008: 54) notes that the first of thirteen elements put forward by Vía Campesina's 1993 Consensus of the Peoples was the notion of 'radical pluralism' premised on the idea that "the dissolution of cultures and peoples in order to integrate them into one design on the terms of the old western project of domination is stopped." Returning again to food, the promotion of pluralism directly implies the ability for producers and consumers to engage in food systems that are, unlike the conventional model, not monopolized by a small number of powerful actors.

Food sovereignty and autonomy

Like protection of diversity, fostering the autonomy of nations, regions and communities is often cited as an important element of sustainability in general, and sustainable food systems more specifically (see Chambers 1987; Nederveen Pieterse 2001; Barkin 2003;

Harris 2003). Within the conventional food system model, actors at the global scale – including transnational agribusiness and multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Standards Organization (ISO) – increasingly usurp the decision-making ability of those operating at a more local level, particularly producers (see Barkin 2003; Mutersbaugh 2005; Cavalcanti 2006). A food sovereignty framework seeks to reclaim that autonomy. As Patel (2009: 122) explains, "[i]t isn't a call for a specific set of rights so much as a call to be able to set the terms of value" particularly the value of resources basic to survival such as land, water, seeds and culture.

Very closely tied to the ability of a nation, region or community to make its own decisions is its ability to feed itself. Following the logic of food sovereignty advocates, Barkin (1998: 31) suggests that regions should retreat "into more insular patterns [of economic activity] to exercise control over the ecosystems that they are called on to husband, to produce more of their basic needs, and to diversify productively" so that they are more able to participate in the global economy on their own terms. In addition to higher levels of self-sufficiency, political engagement is also key to achieving autonomy. As such, the Vía Campesina and the food sovereignty movement born out of it have always made clear that they represent a *citizen* movement making political demands and lobbying local and national governments as well as multilateral organizations (see Pimbert 2008; Patel 2009). This distinction is particularly important in terms of a comparison to the organic or local food movements, within which activism is often associated primarily with consumption, as opposed to more direct civic engagement.

Food sovereignty and equity

Just as the political ecology perspective claims that "social justice…or the increasing global lack of it, is the most pressing of all environmental problems" (Pepper 1993, cited

in Low and Gleeson 1998: 169), the food sovereignty vision is as much about addressing socio-economic and power inequities as it is about food. Patel (2009: PP) notes that the slogan that emerged from the Vía Campesina's 2008 meeting in Mozambique was "[f]ood sovereignty is about an end to all forms of violence against women", and he suggests that this is indicative of the movement's desire to "put society's most pervasive inequality of power front and center." Indeed, the food sovereignty discourse is filled with reference to equity, not only framed in terms of gender, but also equity for the South, for rural regions, and for small- and medium-scale producers of food, all of whom tend to find themselves marginalized within the conventional food system model (see Desmarais 2007; Pimbert 2008). The very existence of the food sovereignty movement can be seen as indicative of establishing new powers for the historically marginalized global peasant population, and the growing influence of the Vía Campesina represents a powerful platform for critiquing inequitable practices such as the aforementioned dumping and landgrabbing.

Food sovereignty and embeddedness

One final concept that is a touchstone for work on alternative economics in general and alternative food systems more specifically is embeddedness. As noted earlier in this chapter, theorizing about embeddedness is generally traced back to Polanyi (1944: 46), who suggested that "the outstanding discovery of recent historical and anthropological research, is that man's economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships." In other words, human behaviour tends to be naturally driven primarily by social obligations and relationships rather than by material self-interest.

While the conventional food system is generally considered to be based on the disembedded principles of cost-benefit analysis and a narrow definition of profit maximization, the food sovereignty movement specifically rejects that market society paradigm and replaces it

with a strong focus on the value of social relationships and community-building. The food sovereignty framework also explicitly rejects the conceptualization of food, and the resources necessary for its production including soil, water and labour, as commodities. As the Vía Campesina asserts, "food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade" (Vía Campesina, cited in Pimbert 2008: 44). Patel (2009: 124) makes the important clarification that food sovereignty advocates "are not proposing to abolish markets or world trade entirely; they just want it to happen without domination. They want a social control of markets to reclaim some value from what free markets destroy." Similarly, they want the environmental and social costs of food production to be included in its price (Pimbert 2008), thereby helping to re-embed food markets into their socio-ecological contexts.

2.6 Summary

This review of the literature on the construction and maintenance of conventional worldviews, the emergence of alternatives, and the ways in which tensions between the two play out with respect to global food systems has presented a number of interrelated concepts that will serve as touchstones for the following chapters of this thesis. The interrelated ideas of hegemony, symbolic violence and governmentality help explain why the realm of what is perceived as possible – from the micro level of the individual to the macro of global societal structures – tends to be highly constricted, even in the absence of a direct authority exerting power through force. Yet in spite of this constriction, alternatives to conventional ways of thinking about and acting in the world can and do emerge. Here the concept of political ecology, which seeks to understand the processes by which alternative worlds may be created, is useful. Its situation of global economic and political power structures at the center of analysis of environmental sustainability, its explicitly normative and activist stance, and the considerable attention it pays to issues of agricultural production and food

systems makes it an ideal theoretical perspective for this thesis. In addition, the political ecology framework dovetails with relevant ideas about alternative economics, specifically with regard to the conceptualization of humans not as primarily self-interested rational profit-seekers, but rather as subjects deeply embedded within social and ecological systems.

Finally, this literature review sought to ground ideas about the relationship between the conventional and the alternative by discussing them specifically within the context of food systems. The conventional food system model based on industrial production and free market capitalism is presented as having won global hegemonic status; however, the environmental, social and economic crises it has provoked have created space for the emergence of alternatives such as the organic, local food, and beyond organic movements. In some instances these alternatives significantly challenge the tendencies of the conventional model, while at other times they show a tendency to become subsumed within it. Although it may be subject to similar pressures towards reproducing conventional food system characteristics in spite of itself, the food sovereignty movement is presented as a potentially unique challenge not only to conventional ideas about food, but also to broader conventional thinking regarding global structures of socio-economic organization. With its focus on promoting diversity, autonomy, equity and embeddedness, the food sovereignty concept provides an excellent complement to the more general theoretical concepts introduced earlier, and helps round out the framework within which research results will be presented in this thesis.

Chapter 3: The Mexican Context

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents some background information about Mexico, providing context for the research results that will be presented later in the thesis. It begins with a general discussion of the country, including details regarding its geography and climate, and demographic makeup. This section is followed by a brief overview of some key events in the country's history and a number of select elements that are important to its cultural identity. The chapter continues with a description of Mexico's economic history, briefly summarizing the pre-colonial, colonial and revolutionary eras, and then focusing on more recent decades marked by neoliberal policies and repeated economic crises. Following this general discussion of the Mexican economy, the country's agricultural sector is examined more specifically. Mexico's agrarian history is summarized, and the crisis that has been facing the rural sector, particularly in recent years, is explored. Finally, the chapter presents some of the alternative agri-food initiatives that are emerging in Mexico, beginning with its generally export-oriented organic and Fair Trade sectors, and then turning to Mexican manifestations of the global food sovereignty movement.

3.2 Basic Data

Land and climate

The only Latin American country in North America, Mexico borders the United States to the north, and both Guatemala and Belize to the south (see Figure 1). The largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world, its territory covers a total of just under 2 million square kilometers. Because of its significant size, Mexico is characterized by a variety of climatic zones, ranging from predominantly arid areas in the north, to the temperate high altitude areas of the central states, including Mexico City, to the hot, humid regions of dense vegetation in the south (INEGI 2011).

Figure 1: *Map of Mexico (Source: University of Texas, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection)*

Largely as a result of its climatic diversity, Mexico is considered the fourth most biodiverse country in the world (Villa Issa 2008). Approximately half of the country's landmass is covered by forest, while 12% is classified as arable land and an additional 40% is used for pasture. Of the soils used for agriculture, the majority suffer some level of damage from erosion, while salinization in irrigated areas and overall declines in organic matter and fertility are also problematic (Villa Issa 2008). In addition to agricultural production, the most important natural resources present in the country are oil, natural gas, timber, and minerals such as gold, silver and copper (INEGI 2011).

People

According to the 2010 Census, the population of Mexico is 112 million people, 51% of whom are female, and 49% male (INEGI 2011). The vast majority of Mexicans live in urban areas, with the Mexico City area alone home to over 20 million people – almost a full fifth of the country's population. Approximately 25% of Mexicans live in rural areas, with this percentage significantly higher in the southern states such as Chiapas and Oaxaca (Villa Issa 2008). Slightly more than 6% of the population reports speaking an Indigenous language, with the greatest concentrations of Indigenous people being found in the southern and south-central states of the Republic (INEGI 2011). With 56.8% of its inhabitants under the age of 30, Mexico can be characterized as a relatively youthful country, with a rate of population increase of 1.8% (INEGI 2011).

In 2010, Mexico received a score of 0.75 on the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI), placing it slightly above the average for Latin America, and 56th in the world (UNDP 2011). Factors contributing to Mexico's relatively high HDI ranking include a life expectancy of 76.7 years (UNDP 2011), literacy rates of 91 and 95 for females and males respectively, and an average per capita income of 10 000 USD (World Bank 2011).

While its HDI score places Mexico in the category of countries with high human development (UNDP 2011), a 2010 study by the National Council for Evaluation of Social Development Policies (CONEVAL, for its initials in Spanish) found that 44.2% of the population still lives in what it refers to as 'multidimensional poverty', meaning they lack access to one or more basic social services and have an income below the 'economic well-being line'.[4]

4 Multidimensional poverty is defined specifically by CONEVAL (2010: 13) as "lacking in at least one of the following categories: education, health, social security, housing quality, basic services available in the household, and nourishment (social deficiencies) and having an income less than the economic well-being line."

The most common services found lacking in 2010 were access to social security (64.7% of the population) and access to health care (40.7%). Poverty in Mexico is most pronounced in rural areas, which are home to just one quarter of the Mexican population, but a full 60% of those living in extreme poverty (World Bank 2005). In the case of the Indigenous population the situation is more dire, with 61% of the country's rural Indigenous people living in conditions classified as extreme poverty (IFAD 2011).

3.3 Mexican History and Culture

Pre-Colombian civilization

Prior to the 1517 arrival of Hernán Cortés, the territory of present day Mexico "had enjoyed almost three thousand years of high civilization, cultural achievements, and the successive rises and falls of many states and empires" (Hassig 2006: 17). Some of the more prominent cultures to emerge over the course of Mexican history include the Olmec, Teotihuacan, Toltec, Maya, and Mexica (or Aztec). Each of these peoples developed their own unique (though sometimes overlapping) systems of language, art, agriculture, architecture, engineering, commerce, governance, and religion. However, in spite of this rich cultural diversity, by the time of Spanish colonization, the two dominant Indigenous populations were the Mayans, whose empire occupied the Southern part of the Mexican landmass and extended into the northern regions of Central America, and the Aztecs, whose capital Tenochtitlan was located in what is today known as Mexico City.

Dating back as far as 2000 BC, the Mayan civilization is well-known for its advances in written language, mathematics, astronomy, calendar-making, and for the building of pyramids, such as those located in Palenque, Tulum, Uxmal and, most famously, Chichen Itza. It is also recognized for its well-developed agricultural techniques, which were centered around the *milpa* system. Still practiced extensively today, *milpa* agriculture

involves the mixed cultivation of corn, beans and squash (along with some other vegetables) using lengthy fallow periods and regular crop rotations. The centerpiece of the *milpa* was, and still is, corn, which figures prominently in Mayan religious beliefs. Indeed, the god and goddess of corn play a principal role in Mayan mythology, for example appearing as key characters in the 16th century document the *Popol Vuh* (Anonymous 1998), which is commonly considered the Mayan equivalent to the Bible.

For the Aztecs, corn was also the foundation of agricultural practice. However, although agriculture was important, Aztec civilization is perhaps more commonly associated with very rigid systems of social stratification, the practice of human sacrifice, high levels of militarization, and the extension of an imperial empire that ruled many Indigenous groups across central Mexico (see Wolf 1999; Pohl and Robinson 2005; Hassig 2006). In his ethnographic study of Aztec culture, Wolf (1999: 189) explains that the Aztec state "had its beginnings in a poor and marginal grouping of mercenaries", but that it quickly evolved into "a formidable political and military power." In contrast to the relatively decentralized Mayans, the Aztec empire functioned as a "centralized and centralizing state" (Wolf 1999: 189); however, it is often referred to as a 'hegemonic empire' because, like the Romans, the Aztecs allowed conquered lands to maintain a relatively high degree of autonomy in return for the understanding that they would pay tribute to the centralized power. This strategy freed the military to focus its energies on continued expansion, rather than direct control of individual territories (Hassig 2006)

Conquest, revolution, and revolution revisited

The Spanish conquistadors' first contact with Mexico's Indigenous population occurred in March, 1517, when they encountered the Mayans of the Yucatan peninsula. This meeting marked the first time since their arrival in the 'New World' that "the Spaniards encountered

cities, states, and organized resistance" (Hassig 2006: 45). The degree of resistance with which they were met was even greater when they confronted the Aztecs in Tenochtitlan. At the time of contact, that city had a population of approximately 200 000 people, similar to Paris, and was often compared to Venice because of its extensive system of canals and impressive architecture (see Snooks 2003). Aided by many of the peoples living under Aztec domination, Spanish forces led by Cortés eventually defeated the Aztecs in 1521 (Pohl and Robinson 2005).

Between 1810 and 1821, a revolution for independence from Spanish authority took place in Mexico. During the early years of the War of Independence, the revolutionary forces – consisting of a loose coalition of peasants, workers, and others frustrated by perceived abuses perpetrated by the colonial regime – are characterized by Guedea (2000: 120) as generally "violent, disorderly, and destructive." Nevertheless, following two decades of chaotic civil war, Mexico officially achieved independence from Spanish rule. Notably, while the Declaration of Independence of the Mexican Empire was signed by "the most distinguished members of the capital's elite, former autonomists and malcontents as well as the leading royalist commanders…not a single former insurgent was to be found among the signatories" (Guedea 2000: 130). Perceived capture of the revolution by elites, along with disorganization amongst various insurgent groups, rendered the construction of a new, independent nation an exceedingly difficult task.

Indeed, the first decades of independence were marked by a high degree of instability in both the economy and government. This began to change significantly, first with the 14 year presidency of Benito Juárez (1858-1872), and then during the almost 35 year rule of Porfirio Díaz. The so-called 'Porfiriato' "gave Mexico a generation of unprecedented peace and stability" (Knight 1986: 15); however, the era was also characterized by *cacique* (or regional boss) domination and corruption, a democracy that increasingly resembled

dictatorship, growing socio-economic inequality, and an economy dominated by foreign investments and interests (see Knight 1986; Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993). These problems sowed seeds of discontent, particularly in rural areas, that helped sparked revolution in 1910. Led by a number of key figures (who often opposed each other) – including the relatively conservative Fransisco Madero, the more radical Pancho Villa, and peasant advocate Emiliano Zapata – the Revolution is generally considered to have ended with the drafting of a new constitution in 1917.

Post-revolutionary Mexico

Ironically, although Mexico's Revolution was, partially at least, propelled by a desire for increased democratization, soon after its end the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI) came to power and installed what Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa famously referred to as "the perfect dictatorship" – perfect because it was not generally perceived as a dictatorship. Reding (1991: 256) suggests that, in the early decades of its rule, the PRI's authoritarian tactics and highly controlled 'electoral' system were tolerated because the party was "seen as the embodiment of Mexican nationhood and a bulwark against foreign domination. Moreover, the working classes saw the [PRI] president as a powerful mediator capable of checking the avarice of the rich through land reform and legislation that protected labor rights." However, with both the rise of neoliberal policies and the strengthening of pro-democracy movements around the world in the 1980s, that view began to shift (see Reding 1991; Camp 2007; Holzner 2010). As a result, pressure from both within and outside of Mexico led to a gradual process of democratic reforms, culminating in the election of an opposition party president – Vicente Fox – in 2000.

While the reforms of the 1990s did lead to the eventual creation of a multi-party system

in Mexico, Cleary and Stokes (2006: 33) suggest that there is a "striking persistence of anti-democratic attitudes" in the country, and "ample evidence that many Mexicans remain skeptical about democracy." Given the country's long history of autocratic rule, it is perhaps unsurprising that newly constructed democratic institutions remain somewhat fragile, and prone to exhibiting some of the characteristics of Mexico's non-democratic past, including a tendency toward authoritarian leadership, clientelistic politics, (sometimes violent) repression, and systemic corruption (see Pimentel 1999; Merrell 2003; Cleary and Stokes 2006; Holzner 2010; Hilgers 2008). Indeed, Camp (2007: 73) argues that "Mexicans have very low levels of respect for political institutions of any sort and the persons associated with them, such as bureaucrats and politicians. This may be explained by their belief that most government agencies and their representatives are corrupt. Indeed, they believe corruption is the single most important obstacle to achieving democracy in Mexico." Such mistrust translates into low levels of participation in electoral politics and low levels of belief in political efficacy, or the ability to effect political change (see Cleary and Stokes 2006; Camp 2007).

Nevertheless, in spite of the significant challenges facing fledgling democratic institutions in Mexico, Spink et al. (2008: 236) suggest that there is still "cause for optimism, with strengthening of beliefs in democracy and a greater participation in both representative and participatory activities" (Spink et al. 2008: 236). In particular, if participation in formal electoral politics may remain low, there is evidence that increasing space is opening for participation in politics via civil society (see Foweraker 1990; Stahler-Sholk 2007; Loeza Reyes 2008; Holzner 2010). Examples of this trend have included massive citizen protests against 2006 presidential election results that were widely perceived to have been fraudulent and against current president Felipe Calderón's ineffectual strategy to deal with the drug wars engulfing the country. Such demonstrations have been made possible in part because

increasing media independence and transparency of information have helped create a more informed populace, while stronger protections of civic rights empower people to express their opinions with less fear of reprisal.[5]

Mexican culture and identity

As was alluded to above, corn, or maize, has deep spiritual and socio-cultural meaning for both historical and contemporary Mexican culture. Indeed, Mexicans are often referred to as *el pueblo del maíz* (or people of corn), a reference to the Mayan creation story, in which human beings are fashioned from corn by the gods, as well as to the country's status as centre of origin for the crop, and its importance to their national diet (see Lind and Barham 2004; Foster 2010; Fitting 2011, El Pueblo del Maíz 2012). In 2010, the centrality of corn to Mexican culture was conferred official global recognition, when the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added Mexican cuisine to its list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, noting that the many Mexicans who participate in the corn-based "traditional food chain" possess "knowledge and techniques" that "express community identity, reinforce social bonds, and build stronger local, regional and national identities" (UNESCO 2012).

While corn represents an element of Mexican culture that dates far back into the nation's

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5 It should be noted that, in spite of a shift towards greater political plurality, and freedom of information and expression, evidence of repression against opposition (either directly by state agents, or by other actors) remains. Prominent examples in recent years have included: the 2006 protests in San Salvador Atenco (in Mexico State), which resulted in a violent police reaction that became the subject of a formal human rights investigation at the national level; the 2006 occupation of Oaxaca City by the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (or APPO, for its initials in Spanish) that resulted in the deaths of dozens of protestors (as well as an international journalist) and received harsh criticism from a number of international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International; and the 2009 assassination of anti-mining activist Mariano Abarca Roblero in Chiapas. Similarly, although media may be freer than was the case prior to democratization, in the last decade almost 70 Mexican journalists have been murdered – a trend that PEN International notes is related to both drug-related violence and government corruption, and that amounts to "an assault on the dignity and rights of all Mexicans and a blight on Mexico's reputation internationally" (PEN International 2012).

Indigenous roots, many other cultural icons and symbols are drawn from the colonial period. One notable example is *la Malinche*, the Indigenous woman whose relationship with Cortés produced a child, thereby converting her into "the progenitrix of the *mestizo* race in both a real and symbolic sense" (McBride-Limaye 1988: 1). A complicated figure, *la Malinche* is commonly considered a representation of motherhood, but also of betrayal and submission to domination (see Paz 1961; Ordiz Vásquez 1992; Messinger Cypess 1991). Referencing Octavio Paz' famous essay *Los Hijos de la Malinche* (The Sons of *la Malinche*), Ordiz Vásquez (1992: 529) argues that: "the Mexican of today is the result of an original violence produced by the forced submission to a foreign culture; he is the son of *la Malinche*, of the violated mother, and thus he renounces his origins." According to Paz (1961: 78), such trauma to the national psyche creates a tendency to believe that "there are only two possibilities in life: either [one] inflicts the actions implied by *chingar*[6] [to betray, to ruin, to screw] on others, or else he suffers them himself at the hands of others."

Like Paz, Mexican philosopher Samuel Ramos suggests that the effects of colonization, along with continued foreign domination post-independence, have done significant harm to the Mexican national identity. Specifically, he argues that it contributed to the creation of an inferiority complex that encourages "Mexicans to be mistrustful of each other, weakens their spirit of solidarity and social cooperation, and leaves them feeling restricted to only their individual resources" (Ramos 2007: 114). Indeed, a survey by Camp (2007) found that Mexicans tend to exhibit relatively low levels of trust in their fellow citizens. Similarly, a recent study of global youth concluded that, when compared to their international counterparts, Mexicans exhibited "record distrust of all of their national institutions", with only one third trusting the media, 19% the legal system, and 14% the police (Reynié 2011: 73).

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6 The verb *chingar* is commonly used in Mexican slang, and its linguistic origins are generally attributed to the name *Malinche*.

Notably, although levels of reported trust in state-run institutions, and in the average fellow citizen, were low in Camp's study, when it came to the institutions of the family and the church, Mexicans reported trust levels of 92% and 75% respectively. Faith in family and religion is sometimes associated in Mexico with the Virgin of Guadalupe, another emblem of the meeting of Spanish and Indigenous culture who serves, to an extent, as the oppositional female counterpart of *la Malinche* (see Lafaye 1974). However, while traditionally the latter was viewed in a relatively negative light, and the former idealized as an icon of stoicism and hope, more recently, feminist scholars have critiqued such interpretations as both racist and misogynist, and have suggested that *la Malinche* in particular should be considered a figure of much more personal agency than is generally ascribed to her (see Pratt 1993; Kaminsky 1994; Maldonado 2004). Similar attempts to free the Mexican cultural identity from negative stereotypes have been made by, for example, questioning the validity of traditional perceptions of Mexican *machismo* (see Guttman 1996).

While a fuller exploration of Mexican culture and identity lies well outside the scope of this chapter, the issue of the country's relationship with its powerful northern neighbor, and most prominent present-day cultural 'other', is one final topic that merits mention here. As Morris (2004: 1) explains: "From the direct and personal (i.e. visiting the U.S., having family and friends in or from the U.S., or working with people from the U.S.) to the more abstract and impersonal (i.e. working for a U.S. company, producing or consuming U.S. products), Mexicans encounter *los Estados Unidos* on a daily basis, at virtually every turn, without having to leave the country." In many ways, the complexities and contradictions inherent in Mexico's relationship with the United States mirror the various interpretations of *la Malinche*. The likes of Ramos and Paz have suggested that the power imbalance that characterizes Mexican-American relations contributes to an inferiority complex in the Mexican psyche, and Mexicans perceived to excessively admire American culture are

sometimes referred to as *malinchista*, a reference to an apparent betrayal of their country. However, while oppression and exploitation have been, and continue to be, part of the Mexican-American story, that narrative is also being increasingly contested by those who suggest that more empowering alternatives are possible (see Pizarro 2005).

3.4 The Mexican Economy

A brief economic history

In the centuries following colonization by Spain, the economy of the Mexican territory was dominated by agricultural production and, to a lesser extent, the exploitation of mineral resources. The fight for independence that, as described above, occurred in the early decades of the 19th century was largely motivated by the concentration of this resource-based economy in the hands of a small Spanish elite (Merrell 2003). However, the desire for greater economic justice that inspired many to take part in the Revolution did not materialize. Rather, along with dictatorial governance, increasing economic inequality contributed to the Mexican Revolution, which promised not just political, but also economic reforms (Merrell 2003).

Post-Revolutionary options for economic growth were somewhat hampered by the Great Depression; however, in the 1940s, Mexico embarked on a large-scale, state-led economic development program. Based on the related priorities of industrialization and import substitution, economic policies during the 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s "included a system of tariffs for protecting domestic industries, an array of government-run monopolies (including petroleum, telecommunications, and electricity), and government intermediation for the financing of Mexican firms" (Fourcade-Grouinchas 2002: 557). From the perspective of macroeconomic indicators, these policies were highly successful, and with low inflation

and annual GDP growth averaging 6%, this period is often referred to as the 'Mexican miracle' (see Fourcade-Grouinchas 2002).

It is important to note that the macroeconomic growth that characterized the period of the so-called Mexican miracle was uneven in nature, and its benefits eluded significant segments of the population. The 'miracle' also turned out to be relatively short-lived. Indeed, heavy borrowing during the 1970s meant that, when global interest rates rose towards the end of that decade, debt repayment became increasingly difficult for the Mexican government. Fourcade-Grouinchas (2002: 558) notes that, as a result, in 1982 Mexico announced it could no longer make its international debt payments, thus giving it "the honor of inaugurating the beginning of the Third World debt crisis."

Pursuing the free trade paradigm

Heavily burdened by a debt it could not afford to pay, Mexico was forced to adopt a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As was the case in many debt-ridden developing countries at the time, the SAP involved "the imposition of fiscal and monetary austerity, and the beginnings of a gradual and selective opening to free trade and other market mechanisms" (Fourcade-Gourinchas 2002: 559). This economic liberalization process began to accelerate rapidly in 1988, when Carlos Salinas became president, and culminated in Salinas' implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and the United States in 1994. Although it was accompanied by a number of other supporting policy measures, the signing and implementation of NAFTA was viewed by many as a definitive sign that Mexico had wholeheartedly adopted neoliberalism as a governing philosophy (Cypher and Delgado Wise 2010).

Cypher and Delgado Wise (2010: 7) argue that, although the initial shift to neoliberalism

may have been somewhat reluctant, in the end "[n]o nation in Latin America, probably no nation in the world, more fervently adopted the [neoliberal] Washington Consensus… [and n]o other nation has held to the precepts of the consensus with more determination than Mexico, right up to today." Indeed, the first two elections following the introduction of a multi-party system saw the right-wing National Action Party (PAN) come to power, and its leaders (first Vicente Fox, and later Felipe Calderón) followed in Salinas' footsteps, eschewing policies that could be perceived as protectionist, and favouring instead a consistent trend toward ever-increasing market liberalization (see Merrell 2003).

In spite of its dominance, however, the degree to which a neoliberal approach has been an effective strategy for Mexican socio-economic development is the subject of much heated debate, with significant evidence pointing to its shortcomings. For example, during the 1980s, when neoliberal policies began to be implemented, real wages as well as GDP saw a decline, and by 1994 the Mexican trade deficit had reached 7.1% of GDP, well above the IMF warning line of 5% (Cypher and Delgado Wise 2010). While GDP saw growth again following the 1993/94 crisis, Mexico still did not do well relative to its fellow partners in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In 1980, before joining the OECD, Mexico's GDP was equal to 47% of the member nation average, while by 2005 this figure had declined to 34% (Cypher and Delgado Wise 2010).

Perhaps the most striking critique of Mexico's neoliberal turn though is not its macroeconomic impacts, but rather its repercussions in terms of income equality in the country, or rather the lack thereof. Indeed, the growing concentration of the country's wealth in the hands of a small elite, and the corresponding descent into poverty of a record number of Mexicans has led increasingly to calls for change. This desire for change has manifested itself in radical forms, for example through the Zapatista uprising concentrated in the southern state of Chiapas, but was also evident in a more mainstream way when, in 2006, left-

wing candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador – who campaigned in part on a promise to renegotiate the terms of NAFTA – very nearly won the presidency.

The most recent crisis

With record numbers already living in poverty, Mexico found itself highly vulnerable when the global financial crisis of 2008/2009 occurred. That year, the country was forced to take out a loan of 47 billion USD from the IMF, its manufacturing sector contracted by 16% (more than had been the case during the 1993/94 economic crisis), unemployment increased significantly, the peso suffered dramatic depreciation, and the GDP decreased by almost as much as it had during the years of the Great Depression (OECD 2009; Cypher and Delgado Wise 2010). In a 2009 report on how the global crisis was affecting Mexico, the OECD (2009: n.p.) noted that "[t]he rise in uncertainty [caused by the crisis] has depressed business and consumer confidence to record lows, which, coupled with tightening credit conditions at home and abroad, is bearing on consumption and investment." They further pointed out that "[d]espite the slowdown in activity and declining commodity prices, inflation has remained persistently high as prices of tradables and food are adjusting with a lag." In other words, while the economy contracted, prices of consumer goods, including food, rose, thereby making it increasingly difficult for poor, and even lower-middle class Mexicans, to meet their nutritional needs. As a result, the economic crisis was dubbed by many the 'tortilla crisis'.

3.5 The Agricultural Sector in Mexico

A brief agrarian history

The birthplace of domesticated corn, which went on to become one of the most important crops in the world, the territory of Mexico has a long history as an agricultural power. As

mentioned above, both the Mayan and Aztec cultures had thriving agricultural sectors, and food production – particularly in the case of corn – was seen for centuries as both a productive activity and a deeply spiritual endeavour (see Márquez Berber and Almaguer Vargas 2011). The centrality of agriculture to Mexican cultural and economic life continued throughout the pre-Hispanic era and into more modern times. As was generally the case around the world, up until the early years of the 20th century, "the Mexican economy depended almost exclusively on *el campo*[7]" (Villa Issa 2008: 2). Indeed, prior to the 1910 Revolution 72% of the population worked in the agricultural sector, and in the first decades of the century agricultural production was the largest contributor to the Mexican GDP (Villa Issa 2008). During this period, land ownership was highly concentrated, with 97% of the country's farmland in the hands of less than a thousand individuals or businesses, and 3.5 million *campesinos* living as landless peasants (Villa Issa 2008).

The plight of these masses of landless rural dwellers helped propel the Mexican Revolution, at the heart of which was the promise of land reform. Although the process was a slow one, over time significant land reform did take place. For example, between 1930 and 1940, the percentage of the *campesino* population without any land title declined from 68% to 36% (Hewitt de Alcántara 1978), and in the ensuing decades, more than half of Mexico's arable land was gradually transferred into the hands of small- and medium-scale producers. The cornerstone of Mexico's post-Revolutionary land reforms was the development of the *ejido* system – a form of semi-communal land tenure for small-holder producers that was enshrined in the country's 1917 constitution. Perramond (2008: 357) explains that, within the *ejido* framework, "members neither owned nor held title to land; rather, they had usufruct rights to the land and waters redistributed by the Mexican government…"

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7 The term 'el campo' translates literally to 'the countryside' and makes reference to rural regions and the people who inhabit them.

In addition to land reforms, the middle decades of the 20th century were also characterized by extensive efforts on the part of the Mexican state to modernize the country's agricultural sector. During these years, the national government funded massive irrigation programs, created structures to facilitate access to farm credit, subsidized the prices of industrial farm inputs, and invested heavily in agricultural research and development (Hewitt de Alcántara 1978; Villa Issa 2008). However, rather than help improve the productivity of *campesino* agriculture, these state supports were almost exclusively focused on larger-scale operations. As Hewitt de Alcántara (1978: 30) argues, "the tendency of rural policy [during this period of modernization] was to polarize the agricultural sector, leaving subsistence-based producers without federal support, and focusing instead on food production in irrigated oases that were increasingly dominated by the private sector."

Without effective programs of support for the majority of the country's producers (i.e. its *campesinos*), overall agricultural productivity in Mexico stagnated or declined, and by the 1960s the country needed to begin importing basic grains in order to meet its consumption needs (Villa Issa 2008). Whereas agriculture had once been the engine of the Mexican economy, a new focus on oil and gas development, and other industrial endeavours, saw the rural sector begin to lose its relative importance. Consequently, food production gradually became a smaller part of the nation's GDP, and food imports gradually began to increase (Villa Issa 2008). At the same time, the wealth that was being created in the agricultural sector "became concentrated more and more in the hands of an extremely small portion of the Mexican rural population" (Hewitt de Alcántara 1978: 28). In spite of this general trend, it is worth noting that the 1960's also saw the creation of Mexico's National Company of Popular Subsistence (CONASUPO) – an institution dedicated to regulating the markets for staple crops and ensuring access to basic foods through a combination of subsidies and price supports (González Dávila 2010).

Against a backdrop of state supports that primarily, if not exclusively, focused on a wealthy minority of producers, and overall declining agricultural productivity, Mexico entered the aforementioned economic crisis of the early 1980s and embarked on an IMF-enforced SAP. In terms of the agricultural sector specifically, the three main planks of this new neoliberal paradigm were: a decrease in state programs, subsidies, and price supports for agricultural development; a removal of protective tariffs designed to favour national food production; and constitutional amendments designed to reverse the post-Revolutionary land reforms by allowing *ejiditarios* to sell the rights to their land and its resources on the free market (Calva 2001; Rivera and Whiteford 2008). This liberalization accelerated in the 1990s when, as Villa Issa (2008: 9) explains, "the political economy in the country, and consequently in the countryside, suffered definitive transitions designed to substantially eliminate systems of protection and replace them with free market mechanisms that would allow Mexico to enter the globalization process." Part of this trend included the 1999 dismantling of the aforementioned CONASUPO, which, until then, had been the main bastion of agricultural support focused primarily on more marginalized producers (see Yúnez-Naude 2003).

A crisis in 'el campo'

By the first decade of the 21st century, the importance of the agricultural sector had decreased to just 3.4% of Mexico's GDP (Villa Issa 2008). According to the 2005 agricultural census, approximately 20 million hectares of land were dedicated to agricultural production, with the most important crops being cereals (26%), fruits (18%), pasture (16%) and vegetables (13%). While the productivity trends for staple foods, particularly corn and beans, were downward, vegetable production showed growth (Villa Issa 2008). This is indicative of a general shift toward a focus on higher value export crops, which tend to be input-intensive, particularly with regard to water, and away from the basic foodstuffs required to feed the

national population. It also highlights the relative success of Mexico's medium- and large-scale producers, for whom investment in intensive vegetable production is viable.

In spite of – or perhaps because of – the economic dominance of Mexico's larger scale producers, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that 82% of the country's agricultural workforce is still classified as small-scale and subsistence-based. According to Villa Issa (2008: 103), these producers are defined as those who "possess rural production units that, due to their size, profitability, productivity and organization, generate income less than, or at best equal to, the average rural family's necessities in terms of food, clothing, housing, health, education and maintenance of production." As alluded to above, although they represent a strong majority of the country's farmers, these producers have consistently been marginalized within the Mexican political economy.

In recent years, this marginalization has reached epic proportions as Mexico's pursuit of neoliberal agrarian policies has "favored the export-driven, large-scale corporate producers of fruits and vegetables, while the small-scale farmers, traditionally producing grains for the domestic market became more and more disenfranchised" (Rivera and Whitehead 2008: xvii). Unable to compete against highly subsidized, industrialized, large-scale American and, to a lesser extent Canadian, production, Mexico's *campesinos* have faced a significant decline in the viability of their production and, as such, their livelihood. Evidence of this problem includes the fact that, within the first decade of NAFTA's implementation, 600 000 Mexican producers of basic grains ceased production (Gómez Cruz and Schwentesius Rindermann 2008). The World Bank (2005) notes that a lack of access to credit and capital,

along with increasing input prices, significantly hinders the ability of Mexico's small-scale resource-poor producers to maintain production.[8]

Not surprisingly, the declining viability of *campesino* agriculture has been accompanied by rising rates of poverty in Mexico's rural areas. The most recent data finds that 57% of the country's rural population lives in moderate poverty and an additional 28% in extreme poverty, meaning that access to food is insufficient (IFAD 2011). For this substantial majority of the rural population, average monthly income per capita in 2008 was calculated at just 1321 pesos, significantly less than income for the urban poor, and well below the poverty line established by Mexico's Social Development Secretariat (SEDESOL) (CONEVAL 2008). Of that income, the majority comes from government transfer payments, along with remittances sent from migrant workers, while actual agricultural production makes only a very small contribution (Pfeiffer et al. 2009).

In addition to influencing rural poverty levels, problems in Mexico's agricultural sector have also contributed to a decline in the country's food sovereignty, as total food imports have climbed gradually in recent years, thereby converting Mexico into a net importer of food. In terms of dollar value spent on food imports, between 1994 and 2004 this amount was calculated to be 90 billion USD – the equivalent of all foreign exchange earned from oil exports (Gómez Cruz and Schwentesius Rindermann 2008). In the case of corn specifically, Mexico has not been self-sufficient in production since the 1960s; however, in recent years dependence on imports has grown to record levels, with data estimating that, by the end of the 21st century's first decade, 35% of the country's corn was imported, primarily from the

8 With the recent climb in global corn prices, some small-scale producers have been able to benefit. Indeed, González Dávila (2010) notes that, between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of poor rural corn-producing households that were net sellers of the grain grew from 5% to 15% as a result of price increases. However, the number still represents a very small percentage of the rural poor, with Keleman et al. (2009) suggesting that, in spite of price increases, most small-scale producers are still unable to recover their costs of production through sales.

United States (González Dávila 2010). Higher dependence on imports has left Mexico's rural poor particularly vulnerable to spikes in global corn prices. Indeed, although half of the country's rural poor produce corn, the majority of households are still net importers of the grain, and the percentage of their meager income that was spent on corn climbed to 20% during the tortilla crisis of 2007 (González Dávila 2010).

Given the interrelated problems of a declining viability of *campesino* agriculture within a free trade context, increasing rural poverty, and decreasing food sovereignty and security, Gómez Cruz and Schwentesius Rindermann (2008: 14) suggest that "the option of continuing to live in the country's rural areas has been placed into question for the great majority of producers." Indeed, the numbers of people migrating away from rural areas increased sharply during the first decade of the 21st century. Whereas rural emigration levels in 1994 were 95% higher than in 1980, by 2002 they were a dramatic 452% higher (Villa Issa 2008). Based on 2002 data, 30% of these migrants ended up in the United States, while the rest found work in large-scale commercialized agricultural operations, primarily in the northern states, or in urban centres (Villa Issa 2008). By 2006, remittances from migrant workers totaled more than 20 billion USD, representing an increase of 354% from 2000 levels (Villa Issa). This income increases the capacity of rural households to pay for food, housing, and agricultural inputs; however, the social costs incurred are significant, and include disintegration of family units and cultural traditions (Villa Issa 2008).

The subject of policy responses to Mexico's rural crisis will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8; however, here it is worth reiterating that there is general consensus regarding their failure to adequately address the aforementioned problems facing the rural population. Even the World Bank (2005: 174), an institution often seen as favouring free market policy frameworks, argues that "agricultural liberalization policies [in Mexico] appear to have benefited in particular the more commercial farming, with little impact on the poor."

Programs such as PROCAMPO that, as will be explained in Chapter 8, are designed to mitigate damage to Mexico's agricultural sector resulting from trade liberalization are particularly ineffective, as "distribution of benefits is biased towards larger holdings" (World Bank 2005: 174). Based on these findings, the World Bank calls for a shift in agricultural policy in Mexico, noting that "[r]esolving the challenges faced by the agricultural sector, including increasing labor productivity, and ensuring that smaller farmers and the rain-fed sector can become more competitive, is…essential to rural poverty alleviation."

3.6 Alternative Food Movements in Mexico

The organic sector

Responding in part to this crisis in the Mexican countryside, and in part to some of the concerns about conventional agriculture discussed in the previous chapter, increasing numbers of Mexicans are turning to alternative agri-food options. To date, the most prominent of these alternatives is the organic sector, where, although demand has traditionally been concentrated in the Global North, Southern countries such as Mexico have become important suppliers.

The turn to organic production as an alternative livelihood strategy for Mexican producers began in the 1980s – the same time that neoliberal policies were beginning to impact the country's rural areas – and was largely fuelled by investment from foreign buyers, as well as in some cases by NGO projects (Gómez Cruz et al. 2009). The overwhelming majority of production during that period was coffee, although a number of projects in the northern states were dedicated to organic vegetable cultivation. Although the sector showed gradual growth during the 1980s, in the mid 1990s the speed of that growth began to accelerate to such a degree that, by the time the research for this thesis was conducted, the organic sector

was one of the most dynamic subsectors of Mexico's agricultural economy (Gómez Cruz et al. 2009).

Indeed, in contrast to the increasing challenges to the viability of Mexico's *campesino* agriculture, the country's organic sector has been characterized by high levels of success and expansion. Since 1996, the amount of Mexican land devoted to organic crops has grown on average by 33% annually, employment in the sector by 30%, and income generated by 29% (Gómez Cruz et al. 2008). As a result, by 2008 over 128 000 Mexican producers were cultivating more than 400 000 hectares organically[9] and generating approximately 400 million US dollars in income (Gómez Cruz et al. 2008). Approximately half of this production is accounted for by coffee, which is followed in importance by herbs, vegetables, cacao, and other fruit crops. Notably, two of the states with the highest rates of rural poverty – Chiapas and Oaxaca – account for almost half of Mexico's organic production (Gómez Cruz et al. 2008), and small-scale producers (farming 3 ha. on average), many of whom are members of Indigenous groups, are responsible for farming more than 90% of Mexico's organic land (Gómez Cruz et al. 2009).

In addition to being dominated by small-scale producers, largely in the most impoverished regions of the country, the Mexican organic sector is also overwhelmingly dominated by export-orientation. Indeed, approximately 85% of Mexican organic production is destined for export to foreign markets and, of the 15% that is consumed internally, only about one third is differentiated in the market as being organic (Gómez Cruz et al. 2006). In addition to the environmental implications of an export-oriented organic sector, the focus on meeting foreign demand also constrains the degree to which domestic organic markets are developed. According to Ortigoza (2010), such underdevelopment significantly inhibits the ability of organic agriculture to contribute to sustainable development in Mexico,

9 This figure represents slightly less than 3% of Mexico's total arable land (Gómez Cruz et al. 2008).

largely because many of the country's most marginalized, small-scale producers tend to be excluded from export-oriented initiatives.

Fair trade

Because the organic sector tends to be more heavily focused on the production end of the food chain, many Mexican producers are also turning to fair trade as a means of increasing the viability of their rural livelihoods. Often, though not exclusively, practiced in conjunction with organic agriculture, fair trade networks are defined by Jaffee et al. (2004: 169) as "alternative market system[s] that aim…to right historically inequitable terms of trade between the geopolitical North and South and foster more direct producer/consumer linkages." Producers cannot achieve fair trade certification as individuals, but rather must be part of a recognized producer association – in most cases a cooperative – in order to access this niche market.

Mexico has long been a global leader in the Fair Trade movement, with the Mexican Indigenous organic coffee cooperative UCIRI integral to developing the concept – along with the Dutch NGO Solidarity Foundation – in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although information regarding the actual number of Mexican producers engaged in fair trade is unavailable, 2004 data suggests that Mexican earnings from fair trade certified exports totaled 16.8 million USD (Tetrault 2010). While some producers certainly are gaining from fair trade price premiums, studies by Barham et al. (2010) and Méndez et al. (2010) found that actual improvements to household income as a result of participation in fair trade networks may be minimal at best. Reasons for this include low yields and low quantities sold per household. Additionally, because supply tends to outstrip demand in the fair trade sector, it is estimated that only 20-25% of fair trade certified coffee actually receives a price premium (Méndez et al. 2010). The potential for fair trade to address Mexico's rural crises

is also limited by its almost exclusive focus on coffee (and to a lesser extent cacao), and its export-oriented nature.

The food sovereignty movement

As discussed in Chapter 2, the notion of food sovereignty moves beyond both organic agriculture and fair trade, presenting a more radical holistic alternative to the conventional agri-food system model. In Mexico, like in many other countries around the world, the food sovereignty perspective is being looked to as an increasingly popular platform for confronting the aforementioned crises facing rural communities. Indeed, a growing number of Mexico's most important producer associations are officially aligning themselves with the leading food sovereignty promoting organization at the global level – the Vía Campesina.[10]

In addition to the significant participation of Mexican organizations in the international Vía Campesina coalition, Mexico is also home to a distinctly national movement for food sovereignty. Grounded heavily in a reverence for corn as a central pillar, not just of the Mexican diet and agricultural economy, but of the country's cultural identity as a whole, the Mexican food sovereignty movement can trace its roots, to an extent, to the 1994 Zapatista uprising for autonomy in Chiapas, which has encouraged Indigenous communities across the country to begin "actively engaging in coalitional resistance movements [centered on] on a reappropriation of corn as a marker of cultural identity" (Turner 2009: n.p.).

Since 2007, Mexico's food sovereignty movement has organized itself under the slogan "*Sin Maíz No Hay País*" (Without Corn There is No Country), and has defined its main objective as "defense of food sovereignty and the reactivation of the Mexican countryside"

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10 Mexican organizations affiliated with the Vía Campesina include the *Asociación Nacional de Empresas Comercialadoras de Productores del Campo* (ANEC), the *Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos* (CIOAC), the *Frente Democrático Campesino de Chihuahua* (FDCC), and the *Central Campesina Cardenista* (CCC).

(*Sin Maíz No Hay País*, 2011). Over 300 organizations are affiliated with the campaign, including all of Mexico's Vía Campesina members, NGOs such as Greenpeace, Oxfam, and *Semillas de Vida* (Seeds of Life), and producer organizations such as the *Consejo Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas* (National Council of Peasant Organizations). The Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets (MNLOM) is also an active participant in the *Sin Maíz No Hay País* campaign, with many of its member markets for example organizing activities to celebrate National Corn Day – an annual event dedicated to recognizing the importance of corn in Mexican society, which was created by *Sin Maíz No Hay País* organizers in 2009. In addition to that event, the *Sin Maíz No Hay País* coalition also engages in year-round education and advocacy work to protect the diversity of Mexico's traditional (or *criollo*) corn varieties, in part by campaigning against the introduction of genetically modified (and hence corporate-owned) corn seed to Mexican farmland.[11]

3.7 Summary

This chapter has presented several key themes and concepts that will be returned to throughout the remainder of the thesis and, like the ideas presented in the previous chapter, will help provide a framework for the analysis of results. The first part of this framework to be discussed in this chapter was the question of Mexican cultural identity. Although inherently difficult to define, one thing that is clear is that the legacy of multiple periods of colonization, as well as failed attempts at revolution and reform, have left a strong mark on the psyche of the Mexican people. Like any commentary on a national culture, the ideas presented are generalities, yet the degree to which they are repeated throughout the literature suggests that characteristics such as a tendency to mask true feelings, an

11 The planting of GMO corn is technically illegal in Mexico; however, in recent years, increasing numbers of permits have been granted to allow for experimentation with the crop.

ambivalent self-identity, feelings of inferiority, and a systemic mistrust of self and others do play a role in shaping life in Mexico.

In terms of Mexico's economy in general, and the agricultural economy more specifically, the two most notable trends in recent decades have been the decided shift toward neoliberal policies and the accompanying growth in poverty rates, particularly in the country's rural areas. For centuries an agricultural power, Mexico today faces a growing crisis of food insecurity and, with their livelihoods increasingly unviable, record numbers of the country's *campesinos* are being forced to migrate in search of work – a trend that has significant social as well as economic implications. In an effort to confront problems of poverty, food insecurity and massive migration, and to deal with other issues, such as environmental degradation and food sovereignty, producers and consumers in Mexico are exploring alternatives such as organic agriculture and Fair Trade market channels, and the country's food sovereignty movement has been gaining significant momentum as an avenue for civic engagement not just in food issues, but in the struggle for much broader societal change.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

> *"To engage in research grounded on an evolving criticality is to take part in a process of critical world-making, guided by the shadowed outline of a dream of a world less conditioned by misery, suffering, and the politics of deceit. In short, a pragmatics of hope in an age of cynical reason" (Kincheloe and McLaren 2005: 321).*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods that were used to carry out the research presented in this thesis. It begins with a discussion of critical theory (including its relation to participatory, action-oriented research), which was the overall theoretical framework that guided this study from beginning to end. The use of the mixed methods case study for research design is then presented. Following this general description, the specific methodologies used for data collection (surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participant observation and secondary sources) are discussed, including the reasons for the inclusion of each method and their benefits and potential drawbacks. The ways in which data was analyzed is then outlined. Finally, the chapter concludes with some thoughts on the subject of reflexivity and my position as an action-oriented researcher.

4.2 The Research Framework: Critical Theory

The research presented in this thesis was guided by a critical theory framework. Although they note that critical theory is inherently difficult to define because it exists in a multitude of forms, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005: 305) do suggest that "inquiry that aspires to the name 'critical' must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within the society. Research thus becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label 'political' and unafraid to consummate a relationship

with emancipatory consciousness." From the critical perspective then, research is not considered an activity that is confined within the boundaries of university walls, but rather as part of a living process of encouraging societal change. It must also be based on "a negotiated joint understanding of what the problem focus should be…in which both professionals and problem owners have a say in setting the issue the group will deal with" (Greenwood and Levin 2005: 60).

The ontology of critical theory is based upon the notion of historical realism, or the idea that reality is shaped over time by social, political, cultural and other factors (Neuman 2000). Epistemologically speaking, research findings interpreted within a critical theory approach are considered to be mediated by the values of both the researcher and research participants, and are thus seen as less objectively 'true' than is the case with positivist, or even postpositivist, research (Guba and Lincoln 2005).[12] Similarly, normative values and ethics are integrated into critical research processes in a way that is strongly frowned upon by positivists, and also excluded from postpositivist research (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Finally, in terms of measuring validity, critical theorists do not rely on the conventional benchmarks of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity, but rather focus on the degree to which the research process helps participants open up their critical consciousness and take action to improve their lives (Guba and Lincoln 2005).

Critical theory and action research

As alluded to above, one of the starkest differences separating both positivist and post-positivist research from critical research relates to the relationship between research and

12 Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 8) explain that both positivism and postpositivism are rooted in the notion that research can be used to test theories and increase a kind of objective understanding of the world, with the primary difference between the two perspectives being that positivists "contend that there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood, whereas the postpostivists argue that reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated."

praxis. By focusing on a call to action, those working from a critical theory perspective reject both the positivist claim that any subjectivity is inappropriate and the interpretivist notion that all reality is subjective.[13] Similarly, while positivists and post-positivists view action as "a form of contamination of research results and processes" (Guba and Lincoln 2005: 201), from a critical theory perspective action is an integral element of the research process.

Because of this focus on translating research into social and/or political change, the critical paradigm is closely tied to the notion of action research, which Greenwood and Levin (2005: 54) explain "aims to solve pertinent problems in a given context through democratic inquiry in which professional researchers collaborate with local stakeholders to seek and enact solutions to problems of major importance to the stakeholders." In sharp contrast to the positivist position, they assert that "either social research is collaboratively applied, or we do not believe that it deserves to be called research" (Greenwood and Levin 2005: 52). Although this kind of research is gaining popularity, using the example of anthropology, Johnston (2010: S235) suggests that action-oriented researchers must guard against the critique that "such research runs the risk of compromising the objectivity and integrity of anthropological research and transforms the role of anthropologist from scientist to social worker." Awareness of this issue is equally important in other disciplines within which critical research may be conducted.

Importantly, action research does not merely advocate the application of research results, but insists that this application take place in a collaborative manner. It is not just the researcher then who is responsible for interpreting results and translating them into action, but

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13 Although Greenwood and Levin (2005), Creswell (2003), and Neuman (2000) maintain this view of interpretivism, it should be noted that their perspective is not universal. Rather, others, such as Guba and Lincoln (2005), argue that interpretivists do consider action to be a meaningful and important extension of research. This discrepancy points to the issue of blurred boundaries between theoretical paradigms, and highlights the difficulty inherent in speaking of them in absolute terms.

rather the researcher in collaboration with local stakeholders. This view is consistent with critical theory, as "critical theorists, especially those who work in community organizing programs, are painfully aware of the necessity for members of the community, or research participants, to take control of their futures" (Guba and Lincoln 2005: 202). Because of this incorporation of multiple local stakeholders, action research also tends to be focused on concrete real world problems, for which research is required to help move toward solutions (Greenwood and Levin 2005). A useful way of viewing researchers working within this framework is Johnston's (2010: S236) idea of the "scholar advocate: a researcher, writer, adviser, expert witness, advocate, and, at times, a collaborative partner in consciously shaped political processes." It is important to remember, however, that working as a scholar advocate presents a number of significant challenges, including the need to negotiate with stakeholders who may hold a wide range of opinions on how research should be conducted, and the potential for community participants to overestimate the ability of a particular research project to effect desired social change (Reed and Peters 2004).

4.3 Research Design: The Mixed Methods Case Study

Yin (2009: 18) defines the case study method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." In an effort to achieve this in-depth understanding of complex events, the case study relies on a variety of data collection methods and allows space for the gradual focusing of research objectives over the course of the research process (Yin 2009; Neuman 2000). Because the research question guiding this thesis focuses, generally, on the need to better understand how new subjectivities around food production and consumption are developed and, more specifically, on how one organization is engaged in that work, the case study method is ideal.

In keeping with the critical, action-oriented, participatory framework described above, the organization that was the focus of the research – the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets (MNLOM) – participated directly in the design of the case study details. For example, although I originally proposed a qualitative case study, the MNLOM's desire to gather some quantifiable information to help them measure the current status and future progress of the organization's work, led to the decision to adopt a mixed methods approach.

Creswell (2003: 20) defines the mixed methods approach as one in which data collection "involves gathering both numeric information (e.g., on instruments) as well as text information (e.g., on interviews) so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information." This strategy was encouraged, not only by the MNLOM, but also by the Canadian agency that, at the time of research, was funding much of its work (CIDA), and the Canadian NGO administering those funds (the New Brunswick-based Falls Brook Centre, or FBC). All three actors felt that a mixed methods case study would help them gain a more holistic picture of the state of the local organic movement in Mexico (as represented by the MNLOM), including impacts that had been achieved and challenges to be met, and would also provide the MNLOM with a platform from which to seek future funding (and other) support.

Because of the very specific, targeted nature of the quantitative data sought by the MNLOM and supporting organizations it was decided that, although a mixed methods strategy would be employed, the focus would be primarily on qualitative data and analysis, with the quantitative element limited to certain descriptive statistics. As such, the research design could most accurately be described as a qualitative dominant mixed methods case study. In contrast to a study in which both qualitative and quantitative elements carry equal weight, "[q]ualitative dominant mixed methods research is the type of mixed research in which one relies on a qualitative, constructivist-poststructuralist-critical view of the research process,

while concurrently recognizing that the addition of quantitative data and approaches are likely to benefit most research projects" (Johnson et al. 2007:124). The decision to adapt the quantitative/qualitative balance of the research design to meet the practical needs of the target organization(s) is in keeping with the fact that a mixed methods approach implies a pragmatic research design that is less concerned with strict adherence to a particular methodological ideology, and more concerned with facilitating the solving of concrete, real world problems (see Creswell, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

4.4 Data Collection

A number of data collection methods were employed in order to meet the five research objectives outlined in Chapter 1. (These methods are summarized in Table 1, and elaborated upon later in this section.) To recap, the objectives these methods sought to address were:

1. To establish how people's attitudes and behaviours may change over the course of their participation in the MNLOM, and the processes by which these changes occur;

2. To assess the degree to which participation in the MNLOM contributes (or not) to positive socio-economic changes for small-scale producers;

3. To identify where decision-making power in the MNLOM is concentrated and how this relates to communication and governance within the organization;

4. To explore the extent to which the MNLOM represents the notion of economic activity embedded within social relations and ecological context, and;

5. To assess the degree to which participants in the MNLOM are scaling up their actions – for example to the level of local, state and/or national policy.

Table 1: Summary of data collection methods

Data Collection Tool	Population	Objective(s) Addressed
MNLOM Producer Survey	80 MNLOM producers in 10 member markets	Objectives 1-5
MNLOM Consumer Survey	48 MNLOM consumers in 3 member markets	Objectives 1, 3, 4, and 5
Semi-structured interviews with MNLOM producers	16 MNLOM producers in 7 member markets	Objectives 1-5
Semi-structured interviews with MNLOM consumers	8 MNLOM consumers in 3 member markets	Objectives 1, 3, 4, and 5
Semi-structured interviews with key informants	7 key informants collaborating in some way with the MNLOM	Objectives 1-5
Semi-structured interviews with small-scale conventional producers	10 producers in Mexico State and Veracruz	Objective 2 (providing some sense of comparison)
Focus group I (Defining Well-being and Success)	Chapingo local organic market producers and MNLOM leadership	Design of MNLOM producer survey
Focus group II (Appreciative Inquiry for Communication and Governance)	Attendees at MNLOM National Assembly	Objective 3
Participant observation	MNLOM members, other actors in Mexico's organic movement, as well as producers and consumers not engaged in the organic sector	Objectives 1-5, as well as provision of contextual information
Secondary sources	N/A	Objectives 1-5, as well as provision of contextual information

Table 2: Key moments in the research design process

Date	Activity	Actors Consulted
Oct.-Dec., 2008	Potential research purpose and objectives discussed.	• MNLOM leadership • MNLOM membership base (representatives attending National Assembly) • FBC
Feb.-Mar., 2009	Research proposal (including objectives and outline of methodology) refined and finalized. Interview guides established.	• MNLOM leadership • FBC
Mar.-May, 2009	MNLOM producer survey designed.	• Chapingo local organic market producers (via focus group) • MNLOM leadership • FBC
Apr.-May, 2009	MNLOM consumer survey designed.	• MNLOM leadership

The methods summarized above were designed and carried out over the course of four field visits to Mexico, with the bulk of data collection taking place during the second visit. (For a summary timeline of the research design process, see Table 2.) The first field period occurred between October and December of 2008, and was primarily a scoping trip designed to: re-establish relationships with contacts that had been made during the course of prior work in the region; establish new contacts; gauge the level of interest in the proposed research project; and gather feedback regarding that proposal. The main field period took place between February and December of 2009. During that time, surveys were developed and applied, interviews and focus groups were conducted, extensive participant observation was carried out, and locally-obtained secondary sources were consulted. Follow-

up field visits aimed at collecting any missing data and allowing research participants the opportunity to take part in the data analysis process occurred in April and June of 2010, and March and April of 2011. During these visits, I was based out of Chapingo (Mexico State), where the MNLOM headquarters are located; however, I visited markets and producers in Metepec (Mexico State), Puebla (Puebla), Tlaxcala (Tlaxcala), Xalapa, Coatepec and Xico (Veracruz), Oaxaca (Oaxaca) and San Cristóbal de las Casas (Chiapas), and also attended a number of relevant meetings and events in other parts of the country.

Surveys

Although they are not generally considered part of case study research design, surveys can be integrated into more traditional case study methodologies in a useful manner (Yin 2009). Most common in research governed by a positivistic framework, the great strength of the survey as a methodology is its ability to gather large amounts of descriptive information that can be analyzed statistically (Neuman 2000). In other words, surveys are useful when the goal of the research includes getting many people to answer many, relatively clear and concise questions. While they may include elements related to respondent opinions, they tend to be better suited to questions that focus on factual information and knowledge (Neuman 2000).

The survey applied to MNLOM producers for this study was designed during the first three months of the primary field visit. The design process began when I presented the concept for discussion in a focus group held in the Chapingo local organic market (see below for elaboration on focus groups). This discussion helped determine the key categories to be included in the survey to help measure the impacts of the MNLOM and its member markets. Based on these ideas, I developed a draft survey, which was sent in electronic form to representatives of the MNLOM markets, the organization's leadership, and to the

Canadian NGO financing much of the MNLOM work for feedback. This feedback was used to fine-tune the draft survey, and a second version was then sent to the same contacts for approval. This final version included a combination of closed questions, designed to obtain easily coded, clearly defined answers (Neuman 2000) and open questions, aimed at collecting richer answers to more complex questions (Neuman 2000). (For the full version of the MNLOM producer survey, see Appendix I).

The producer survey was applied in 10 member markets of the MNLOM (see Table 3). These markets were chosen because, at the time of data collection, they were the most regularly functioning and/or had been in existence for the longest period of time. (Two exceptions to this were markets in Guadalajara and Baja California Sur, both of which were well-functioning long-time MNLOM members but were excluded from the study due to the travel distance that would have been required to attend.) All surveys were applied face-to-face, which allowed for a high response rate as well as the use of probing questions (Neuman 2000). The main disadvantage noted in the case of face-to-face application of surveys is the potential for interviewer bias (Neuman 2000), an issue that will be explored further in the examination of reflexivity and the role of the researcher, below.

The process of applying surveys took place between May and November of 2009, with an attempt made to survey all producers at each participating market. Given time restraints – an additional disadvantage of the face-to-face survey (Neuman 2000) – and the fact that some producers were not present when visits were made to their particular market, this was not always possible. In cases where not all producers were surveyed, the decision regarding who to survey was made randomly, by starting at one market stand and working around the market in a linear fashion. Overall, the number of producers surveyed reflected

approximately one half of those participating in the 10 markets at the time of research[14]. In no case did a producer refuse to participate in the survey. The willingness to participate was likely a result of the support I had from the MNLOM, which gave the survey legitimacy in the eyes of producers. Indeed, the organization's coordination provided me with a letter of support, which was brought with me to each individual market.

Table 3: Breakdown of surveys applied to MNLOM producers

Market	# of Surveys Applied	Application Period
Chapingo	9	May and June, 2009
Puebla	3	June, 2009
Oaxaca – la Estación	7	June, 2009
Metepec	8	June and July, 2009
Tlaxcala	7	June and July, 2009
Oaxaca – Pochote	20	June-August, 2009
Xalapa	7	July, 2009
Coatepec	7	July, 2009
Xico	2	July, 2009
San Cristóbal de las Casas	10	November, 2009
Total	**80**	**May-November, 2009**

Table 4: Breakdown of surveys applied to MNLOM consumers

14 While the total number of MNLOM producers involved in fully-functioning markets was unavailable at the time, estimates put the figure at approximately 500. This number was heavily influenced by the more than 150 producers associated with the seasonally-operated local organic market in San José del Cabo (Baja California Sur) that, pirmarily because of its distant location, was not included in this study.

Market	# of Surveys Applied	Application Period
Chapingo	22	May-July, 2009
Metepec	13	May-July, 2009
Puebla	13	May-July, 2009
Total	**48**	**May-July, 2009**

As a complement to the survey conducted with MNLOM producers, a less extensive survey was also applied to consumers attending local organic markets in Chapingo, Puebla and Metepec (see Table 4). The design of this survey was conducted in collaboration with the coordinating committee of the MNLOM, in particular with its general coordinator at the time the research was conducted. The survey included both closed and open questions, and focused on demographic data, knowledge and opinions regarding organic agriculture and certification methods, purchasing habits of organic products, and general opinions regarding MNLOM markets. (For the full version of the MNLOM consumer survey see Appendix II). Consumers were approached randomly at each of the three markets to participate in this survey, and the majority of consumer surveys were applied by a research assistant (an undergraduate agroecology student at the University of Chapingo).

Semi-structured interviews

Unlike the survey, which does not traditionally form part of case study data collection, the open-ended semi-structured interview is generally considered one of the most important methodologies for case study research (Yin 2009). Indeed, in conjunction with survey data, the information gleaned from a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews forms

the backbone of this thesis. These interviews acted as an important complement to the more rigid surveys, as they: allowed the research participant to play a more active role in the research process, helping to guide discussion; created the space for people to express their opinions and views in an unrestricted manner, with the opportunity for probing questions to help clarify initial responses; and because of the face-to-face dialogue engaged in between interviewer and interviewee, helped engender the kind of trust that encourages participants to respond openly and honestly to the questions posed (Neuman 2000).

The first set of interviews was conducted with a total of 16 producers participating in 7 different MNLOM markets (see Table 5). In the case of Chapingo, where I lived and was thus most familiar with the local organic market, interview participants were selected by conducting a random draw that included the names of all market producers. In the markets I was less familiar with, I consulted with market coordinators to determine which producers to interview. These market coordinators had "formal or informal authority to control access to a site" and were therefore able to act as "gatekeepers" (Neuman 2000: 352), facilitating my contact with market participants, and helping ensure that I was able to select interviewees who would represent a cross-section of experiences based on factors such as length of time participating in the market, type of product sold (organic or natural, raw or processed, etc.) and scale of production. The themes discussed in the interviews with MNLOM producers included: motivations for participation in a local organic market; environmental, economic and social impacts of participation; participatory certification; market and MNLOM governance; and participation in social or environmental initiatives outside of the MNLOM (for a full list of interview themes, see Appendix III).

Table 5: Breakdown of semi-structured interviews conducted with MNLOM producers and consumers, conventional producers, and key informants

Category of Participant	Location/Description	# of Interviews
MNLOM Producer	Chapingo	5
	Puebla	2
	Oaxaca – La Estación	2
	Metepec	2
	Tlaxcala	1
	Oaxaca – Pochote	2
	Xico	2
	Total	16
MNLOM Consumer	Chapingo	2
	Puebla	2
	Oaxaca – La Estación	4
	Total	8
Key Informants	MNLOM co-founder	1
	MNLOM Market Coordinator (Puebla, Xalapa, San Cristóbal)	3
	Participatory Certification Committee Member	2
	SENASICA representative (Ministry of Agriculture)	1
	Total	7
Conventional Producers	Mexico State	9
	Veracruz State	1
	Total	10
Total		**41**

The second set of interviews was conducted with a total of 8 consumers participating in 3 different MNLOM markets. As was the case with the majority of the producer interviews, market coordinators assisted in the selection of consumer interviewees in order to ensure that a cross-section of experiences (length of time and regularity of attendance, amount of money and time spent, etc.) was represented. The themes discussed included demographic data, motivations for attending a local organic market, purchasing habits, opinions of the market and degree of participation (for a full list of interview themes, see Appendix IV).

The final two sets of interviews were conducted with key informants in some way connected to the work of the MNLOM, and with conventional producers. The key informant interviews, conducted with 7 participants, were designed to collect data regarding themes similar to those covered in the MNLOM producer and consumer interviews, thereby complementing that data. In contrast, interviews conducted with 10 small-scale conventional producers, primarily in Mexico State, were designed to provide some basis for comparison with the data collected from MNLOM producers (see Appendix V).

Focus groups

The focus group is a qualitative research method that involves conducting a discussion of a theme (or themes) with a small group of people selected according to certain criteria, such as participation in a common activity, living in a particular region, or use of a common product (Krueger and Casey 2000). Generally, focus groups should include between six to twelve participants, in addition to a moderator, whose role is to introduce issues, guide discussion, and ensure that all participants have a chance to share their opinions, with no one person dominating the conversation (Neuman 2000). The data that is generated from focus group sessions reflects the perspectives of individuals as they are shaped by a shared group dynamic (Hamel 2001). As such, the focus group method has been deemed useful for

assessing issues related to community dynamics, including levels of trust and willingness to work together (Bryman 2001). Focus groups can also be a means of measuring the impacts and effectiveness of a specific program or policy (Jackson et al. 2003) and can help "generate new ideas for hypotheses, questionnaire items, and the interpretation of results" (Neuman 2001: 274).

For the purposes of this research, the focus group method was used on two separate occasions. The first focus group was held at the Chapingo local organic market on April 4, 2009. An open invitation was extended to all participating producers and, in the end, eight producers participated (including the two market co-coordinators), along with one of the market's co-founders, for a total of nine participants. I acted as moderator. The primary goal of this first focus group was to generate ideas about the development of the aforementioned MNLOM producer survey. Specifically, the discussion focused on people's ideas about well-being – what the concept meant to them, and how they thought it could best be measured. Upon conclusion of the focus group discussion, all participants noted that the experience had been an enjoyable and enriching one, and results helped determine the construction of the producer survey.

The second time that the focus group method was employed was during a national assembly of the MNLOM held in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas in August, 2009. Meeting attendees, who represented all markets and market initiatives, were divided into five groups of six or seven participants for the purpose of the focus group discussion, and I rotated between the groups acting as moderator. The primary purpose of this focus group activity was to discuss the issue of communication and trust within individual markets, and within the network as a whole. An Appreciative Inquiry approach was used, wherein structured group discussions focus on citing positive experiences in an effort to generate constructive proposals for organizational change (Cooperrider and Whitney 2008). Following a one

hour discussion period, each group was given the opportunity to present the results of their conversation, and there was time for questions and final reflections.

Participant observation

Neuman (2000) notes that participant observation is an extremely useful form of data collection, particularly during field research conducted for case studies. One of the primary benefits of participant observation is that it allows the researcher to gradually develop an understanding of the subtleties of a particular situation, thus moving beyond superficial understandings and uncovering the core meanings that underlie particular processes or actions (Neuman 2000; Yin 2009). This deep understanding is possible because participant observation can take place over a long period of time, it provides large amounts of detailed information, and it allows for a gradual building of trust with participants. Creswell (2003) points out that participant observation can also provide the researcher with information that may not be shared in more direct forms of data collection, such as interviews, because of some discomfort on the part of participants. Some potential drawbacks associated with participant observation include the fact that the researcher may be viewed by participants as being intrusive; the researcher may observe private information that cannot be used in the study; the researcher may have difficulty keeping track of the vast amounts of detailed data that are available through participant observation and, perhaps most importantly; it may become difficult for the researcher to maintain the kind of distance required for careful analytical observation (Creswell 2003; Yin 2009).

Although the majority of the formal data collected for this thesis relied on the surveys and interviews described above, the value of the information gathered through more informal participant observation cannot be overstated. My role as a participant in MNLOM activities began prior to the decision to undertake the study presented here, when I worked for the

organization as part of an internship with the Falls Brook Centre. Indeed, it was during my yearlong work with the Falls Brook Centre and MNLOM (September, 2006-August, 2007) that the first discussions about the potential usefulness of a research project were held.

I remained an active participant in MNLOM correspondence during my year of doctoral coursework (September 2007-July, 2008), for example by presenting MNLOM work at an international IFOAM conference, and sharing results of an IFOAM workshop on participatory certification with MNLOM members. My participation became more direct during the multiple periods of doctoral field work, during which I had the opportunity to attend a number of national assemblies of the MNLOM, a series of workshops on participatory certification (including those designed to develop national regulatory standards not only for participatory certification, but for Mexico's organic sector as a whole), and other events such as local organic market anniversaries, national expositions of organic products, and conferences on rural development and agroecology where I, along with other MNLOM members, presented the experiences of local organic markets in Mexico.

In addition to these kinds of specific events, I also attended MNLOM markets almost every week while in Mexico, which allowed me to build relationships with both producers and consumers, and gain in-depth, detailed awareness about the atmospheres in the different markets, including the products available, pricing, and the various activities and social interactions that took place. Beyond simple attendance, I often assisted in the organization of market activities as well as with the work of network coordination. This role helped me further develop previously established relationships of mutual trust with MNLOM members, giving my research project greater legitimacy in the eyes of participants, and helping me ensure that the research would not simply be extractive in nature, but rather would focus on priorities established by participants and include an element of advocacy and support.

One final note regarding the value of participant observation is that, because I lived in Mexico for an extended period of time, I was able to observe many aspects of daily life that, although not always directly related to my research questions, added to my understanding of the Mexican cultural context. This process was exceedingly helpful in terms of adding depth to my knowledge of Mexican culture obtained from literary sources, and provided me with the kind of thick cultural description (Yin 2009) within which more specific research results can be situated.

Secondary sources

According to Yin (2009) secondary sources – including letters and memoranda, agendas and minutes of meetings, administrative documents, mass media reports and previously conducted formal studies – are a useful data collection method in almost every case study. Although they should be relied upon primarily to corroborate data obtained from more direct methods (Yin 2009), secondary sources are useful in that they provide the researcher with access to information that may be more thoroughly thought-out and carefully prepared than data obtained from primary sources and are a relatively unobtrusive way of collecting data (Creswell 2003). It is important to keep in mind that, although secondary sources are often in the form of written data, they may contain the same potential biases and omissions that can be associated with primary sources (Neuman 2000; Yin 2009).

While in Mexico, I was able to access a wide variety of secondary sources that were not available in Canada. Books, conference proceedings, research reports, journals and pamphlets all helped provide me with information relevant to my research questions. These sources, almost all in the Spanish language, were generally written by Mexicans involved in the local organic movement (or in some way with agroecological or organic production and/or consumption), with ties to research institutes, universities, government agencies or

NGOs. In many cases, the secondary sources used were written by people directly involved in the MNLOM. For example, I was able to collect information by looking at the internal regulations of a number of member markets, the constitution of the MNLOM itself, minutes from market and network meetings and email correspondence between MNLOM members. As was the case with participant observation, having access to these written records helped me develop an in-depth understanding of many of the subtleties of MNLOM functioning, including relationships within and between markets, patterns of communication, levels of trust (or mistrust), distribution of power and structures of governance.

4.5 Data Analysis

According to Yin (2009) one general strategy used for case study analysis is to develop a case description, in which data is organized around a series of themes. Although he suggests that this strategy is inferior to analysis that stems from a theoretical proposition laid out prior to conducting research, due to the participatory nature of my case study, the descriptive method was deemed most appropriate. Because the case study was a mixed methods one, two main modes of analysis were used to work towards the case description. The first was the tabulation of quantitative data gleaned from producer and consumer surveys and the generation of descriptive statistics using that data. Because of the closed nature of the questions involved, this mode of analysis was relatively straightforward and did not involve significant collaboration with research participants.

The second mode of analysis used was an iterative process of coding the data obtained from interview transcripts, notes from open-ended survey questions and my field journal. This coding was an ongoing process that began during the first field work period, and continued throughout all subsequent field periods as well as the writing of this thesis. Following Neumans's (2000) suggestion, while in the field I used open coding, in which information

is divided into broad categories on a regular basis in order to determine the major themes emerging from the data. As these themes became evident, axial coding was introduced. During this stage, connections between themes are made, with a number of narrow themes being combined into broader ones, and a number of broad themes being collapsed into narrower sub-themes (Neuman, 2000). Only after the data collection process was complete did I begin to adjust my initial coding results through a process of selective coding. In this final form of coding that took place during the writing of the thesis, I identified the most important themes and attempted to reorganize data around those themes. This process of data categorization was consistent with what Yin (2009) describes as explanation-building, a strategy often employed in case study analysis when the goal of research is to help explain how phenomena or organizations function, by developing narratives that include ideas about causation between different variables.

Attempts at participatory data analysis

As is consistent with the critical, participatory, action-oriented framework that guided this study, an attempt was made throughout the analytical process to seek feedback from research participants. For example, an initial report of results (in Spanish) based primarily on producer survey data was sent via email to representatives of all participating MNLOM markets as well as to the organization's central office to ensure that, even the analysis of this primarily quantitative data, was considered reflective of what participants perceived to be their reality. In the case of the more qualitative data analysis, informal conversations regarding analysis were held with MNLOM participants (primarily producers and coordinators) over the course of multiple field visits. Indeed, one two-month field visit was carried out after data collection was complete with the specific intent of obtaining feedback on initial analytic results, and a full draft of the thesis (unfortunately only in English) was sent via email to research participants and MNLOM leadership for comment. Finally, a

visit will be made following the completion of the thesis in order to share final results with the MNLOM so that participant feedback may be included in any post-thesis publications or presentations. During this visit, a Spanish translation of the key findings of the research will be provided.

Although these attempts to provide participants with opportunities to participate in data analysis were considered an important element of the research process, and many participants did express their appreciation of such inclusion, it should be noted that very few comments or suggestions were actually obtained. While this could be seen as evidence that the preliminary findings were perceived as valid, it could also be reflective of participants' lack of time to dedicate to data analysis and commentary and/or feelings on the part of some that their analytical capabilities might not be as valid as those of a researcher perceived to be a 'professional'. This second possibility would be consistent with findings by Reed and Peters (2004), who suggest that community collaborators may often be reticent when it comes to providing feedback on ideas put forward by a researcher, in part because they are busy with other activities, but also because they may feel that a 'research project' requires the use of academic jargon with which they are unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable.

Importantly, a potential lack of desire to take an active role in certain parts of the research process, such as data analysis, does not diminish the value of continued attempts at inclusivity. Rather, a "kind of 'in' and 'out' involvement is likely to permeate further stages of the research and challenges all participants – academic investigators, graduate research assistants, community co-directors and participants – to account for the differing timing and means of collaboration" (Reed and Peters 2004: 32).

4.6 Reflexivity and the Role of the Researcher

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005: 305-306) argue that, because critical research is often a

precursor to social and/or political action, researchers must "try to become aware of the ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research… [and] enter into an investigation with their assumptions on the table, so no one is confused concerning the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them to the research site." This argument echoes England's (1994: 82) call for reflexivity in research, which she defines as "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as a researcher." An essential element of critical research, being reflexive involves recognizing the positionality, biases and power dynamics that are created by factors such as a researcher's gender, age, race or ethnicity, and nationality. It is an ongoing process, and very important in terms of helping to avoid "colonizing" the voices and experiences of research participants (England 1994). Although it could be argued that reflexivity is important even for the most positivistic of researchers because pure objectivity is impossible to achieve (Neuman 2000), the applied nature of the research presented in this thesis makes attempts at reflexivity even more important.

Perhaps the most important element of my postitionality as a researcher is related to my motivations for conducting the work presented here. These stem from a series of personal experiences that have led to my deep belief in the importance of restructuring our food systems in a way that makes them more nourishing to our bodies and souls, our communities, and the Earth. The most recent, and perhaps most directly relevant, of these experiences was my work with the Falls Brook Centre and the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets. Through my involvement with these two organizations, I was able to actively engage in many levels of the building of local organic food systems, including the food production itself, marketing, public education, extension work, organic certification, and policy analysis and lobbying. I learned how fulfilling participation in alternative food systems can be, and saw how these systems can help contribute to local economic

development, community building, and environmental sustainability. I also saw how the development of these systems can be constrained: at a macro level, by international and national policies that favour conventional farming and export-orientation (even within the organic sector); at a meso level, by research and development and extension structures that mirror those policy priorities, a lack of organization and access to resources on the part of those seeking change, and challenges related to trust, communication and governance; and, at a micro level, by a lack of on-farm awareness and understanding of organic techniques, underdeveloped local marketing opportunities, and inadequate supply for consumers.

In addition to my awareness of, and participation in, sustainable food system initiatives, other important aspects of my postitionality include the fact that I am a young, white, middle-class woman of Canadian origin, who comes from a relatively urban background, has a high level of formal education, and for whom Spanish is not a native language. Based on this reflection, although I spent a great deal of time working with members of the MNLOM and supporting them in their efforts, my reality differed from theirs in a number of substantial ways. This was particularly true in the case of MNLOM producers, who are primarily rural Mexicans with limited economic resources and educational opportunities. While these differences created the potential for a wide gap in communication and understanding, this was mitigated to an extent by my length of time in the field, and my formal association with the MNLOM.

A final note on my positionality is that, although my research sought to be participatory from start to finish, it is impossible to deny that I found myself in the role of 'researcher' while others were 'research participants', with the former having connotations of both power and authority. Indeed, although there were a number of notable exceptions, there was a trend amongst research participants to treat me as a kind of authority figure, whose ideas about research design, methods and analysis should go unchallenged. This often

made achieving desired levels of participation difficult, and is consistent with Reed and Peters' (2004: 31) finding that:

> while approaches that emphasize the role of participants can help to undermine the authority of the researcher, they do not completely shift the power relationships that underlie the production of knowledge in academic disciplines. It is still most often researchers who initiate projects, define starting parameters, shape data collection and interpretation, and take the major role in writing up results. And we recognize that even in popular media, the power of authority on topical news and science subjects continues to rest with academics.

Chapter 5: Objectives and Impacts of the *Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos* (Mexican Network Of Local Organic Markets)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the case study organization – the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets (MNLOM). Some brief introductory information will be followed by a detailed profile of the producers participating in MNLOM markets. Based on survey and interview results, this profile will touch on the subjects of age, sex, levels of formal education and income, and will also offer descriptive data regarding production operations and household consumption patterns. The discussion of producers will be followed by a profiling of MNLOM consumers, which will include data on educational background, income, reasons for market participation, and consumption habits. The next part of the chapter will outline the main objectives of the MNLOM markets – promoting organic production and consumption, supporting small- and medium-scale producers and building social and environmental consciousness as well as community cohesion.[15] Finally, the idea of the network will be presented, with a description of its main objectives and organizational structure, and an examination of producer opinions regarding its work.

5.2 A Brief Introduction to Mexico's Local Organic Markets

The first local organic market project in Mexico began in the city of Guadalajara in 1996. Seven years later, in 2003, three additional markets dedicated to the sale of locally produced organic goods were opened in Chapingo (Mexico State), Xalapa (Veracruz) and Oaxaca (Oaxaca). By the time data collection for this thesis was undertaken, 13 fully functioning local organic markets were in operation in 8 states across the country; by the time of this

15 This chapter will provide a relatively brief, descriptive summary of the MNLOM market objectives, while the subject will be explored in further analytical detail in following chapters.

writing, the number had grown to 15. In addition to these markets, at the time of writing 11 local organic market initiatives existed in various stages of development. Some of these initiatives included intermittently held markets or occasional fairs, while others remained in the planning stages. By contrast, the markets considered to be fully functioning were those that had a fixed location and regularly scheduled market hours[16].

The markets are generally concentrated in the south-central region of the country, with the greatest number of fully functioning markets in the states of Mexico, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, Oaxaca and Chiapas (see Figure 2). This is consistent with the predominance of the southern states (particularly Oaxaca and Chiapas) in terms of Mexico's overall organic production (Willer and Kilcher 2010). Indeed, with the exception of one market in the popular tourist destination of San José del Cabo and a fledgling initiative spearheaded by the University of Chapingo's satellite campus in Bermejillo, Durango, local organic markets have essentially no presence in the north. Similarly, there is little presence in rural areas, with all 26 markets and market initiatives located in or near urban centres.

Although each of the MNLOM markets has its own particular vision, a recent study of how six of them were developed offered the following definition of their shared objectives:

> An ecological market is a place (micro-space) where direct contact between producers and consumers is promoted. It is a public space, accessible to all, in which the producers offer foods that they themselves have produced using clean (ecological) techniques, or techniques that are in transition toward that ideal. In addition, it is a space where consumers can find high quality food items, and learn the stories behind their production. In this way, a face is put on the food that consumers take to their homes, and this allows for a revalorization

16 Because the local organic sector in Mexico is currently highly dynamic, the number of markets and market initiatives is in a state of perpetual flux. Some projects encounter problems and cease to function, either temporarily or permanently, while others may be initiated, put on hold, and later begin again. This makes establishing the exact number of existing markets and market initiatives at any given moment difficult.

of that food and the work implied in its production. In many cases, the market is also a space for education and reflection about food consumption, and for the facilitation of interpersonal relationships that are closer, more human, and built more on solidarity, than is typical in a market setting (Escalona 2009: 227-228).

Figure 2: *Map of Mexico showing the location of the markets associated with the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets.**

* *The 15 markets that were considered to be fully functioning at the time of writing are indicated in red, while an additional 11 initiatives in various stages of development are indicated in yellow.*

By the end of 2011, the total number of producers and organizers associated with the MNLOM markets and initiatives was estimated to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1000. As such, the organization represents a very small fraction of the country's 400 000 organic producers. Nevertheless, it does occupy a relatively prominent position within Mexico's organic movement. For example, it was a founding member of the *Sociedad Mexicana de Producción Orgánica* (Mexican Society for Organic Production, or

SOMEXPRO) - a non-governmental coalition formed in 2007 to represent the interests of the country's organic sector. Indeed, SOMEXPRO's website features a link to the MNLOM homepage, and also hosts a section dedicated to Participatory Guarantee Systems - the alternative form of organic certification that, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, is currently being promoted in Mexico primarily by the MNLOM. Similarly, although the MNLOM is not directly represented on the government-run *Consejo Nacional de Producción Orgánica* (National Council for Organic Production, or CNPO), one of its co-founders does sit on that council as an academic/research representative (along with a total of 27 representatives from government, academia, and industry). In addition, many MNLOM producers and markets have close relationships with notable organic retailers, such as Green Corner and *Aires del Campo,* and the organization is a regular participant in organic conferences and trade shows at the local, state and national levels.

5.3 Producer Profile

Perhaps the most integral element of Mexico's local organic markets is the producers who participate in them, as their regular presence is the first requisite for a functioning market. The following information paints a picture of who these producers are.

Age, sex and marital status

The average age of the MNLOM producers surveyed for this study was 41 years. Forty-nine percent were married, while 42% classified themselves as single and 9% were either divorced or widowed. The average number of dependent children under 18 living in the household was one; however, when the 51.25% of those respondents who reported having no dependent children in the household were removed, the average increased to 2.

Sixty percent of the producers surveyed were female. The fact that female respondents were

a majority is notable given that 84% of respondents to the most recent national agricultural survey were men (INEGI 2011). Women were also highly represented in the organizational structure of both the individual markets and the MNLOM. Of the 10 markets visited, 5 had females in the role of president or primary coordinator, while another 3 markets had females acting as co-coordinators. In addition, at the time of research, both the General Coordinator of the MNLOM and its Technical Secretary (responsible for managing day-to-day operational issues for the organization) were female.

Formal education

Of the producers surveyed, 11% had ended their formal education at some point during, or upon completion of, primary school, while 40% had high school diplomas (see Figure 3). The most commonly reported level of formal education (at 43%) was some kind of post-secondary degree, either from a college or university. An additional 6% of respondents had post-graduate degrees. This stands in stark contrast to national-level data collected during the 2007 agricultural census, which found that just 4% of the country's producers had completed one year or more of post-secondary education, while the vast majority (75%) had a primary school education or less (INEGI 2011).

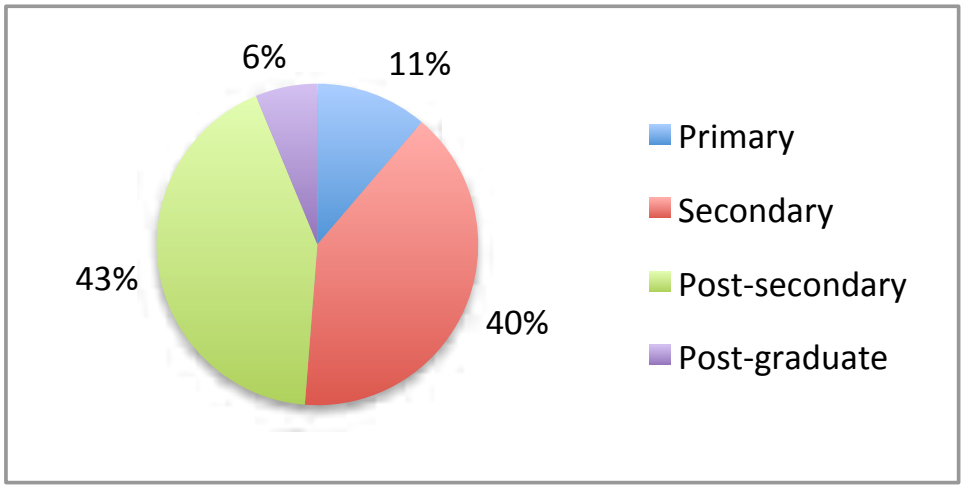

Figure 3: *Level of formal education of producers participating in the MNLOM*

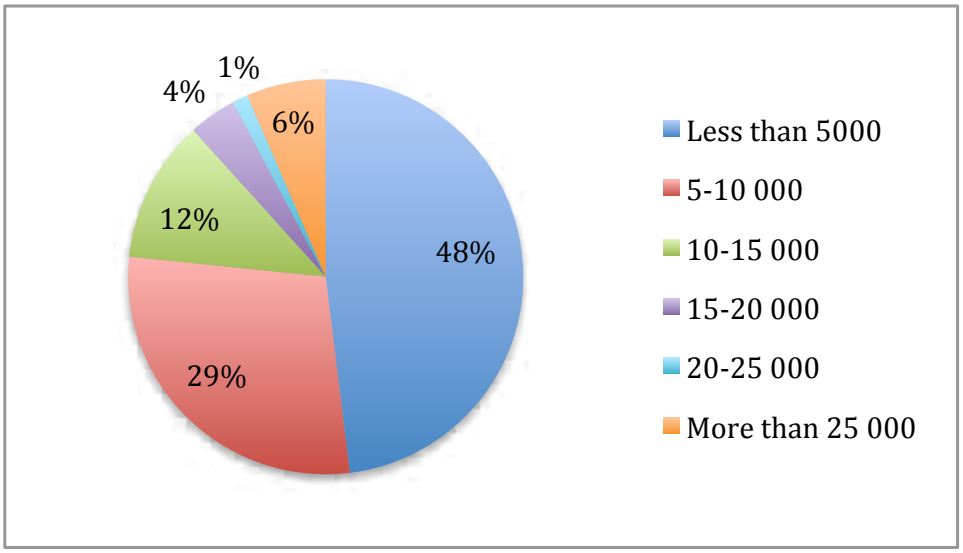

Figure 4: *Monthly household income (in Mexican pesos) for MNLOM producers*

Income

When asked about household income, almost half of those surveyed (48%) reported a monthly income of less than 5000 pesos (see Figure 4). This income level falls below the average base salary for a worker (6000 pesos/month based on 25 working days) calculated by the Mexican Institute for Social Security, or IMSS (INEGI 2011). Thus, although the MNLOM producers are dramatically above national averages when it comes to levels of formal education, they remain largely in lower income brackets. Slightly more than one quarter (29%) reported earning between 5 and 10 000 pesos, while the remaining quarter (23%) reported a monthly household income of greater than 10 000 pesos.

In almost all cases, the total household income reported was obtained from a combination of two or more sources, including multiple sales locations and various other forms of employment. By far the most common primary income source – cited by 27.5% of surveyed MNLOM producers – was sale through a combination of channels other than the local organic market, while the second most commonly reported primary income source was sale at the local organic market (see Figure 5).

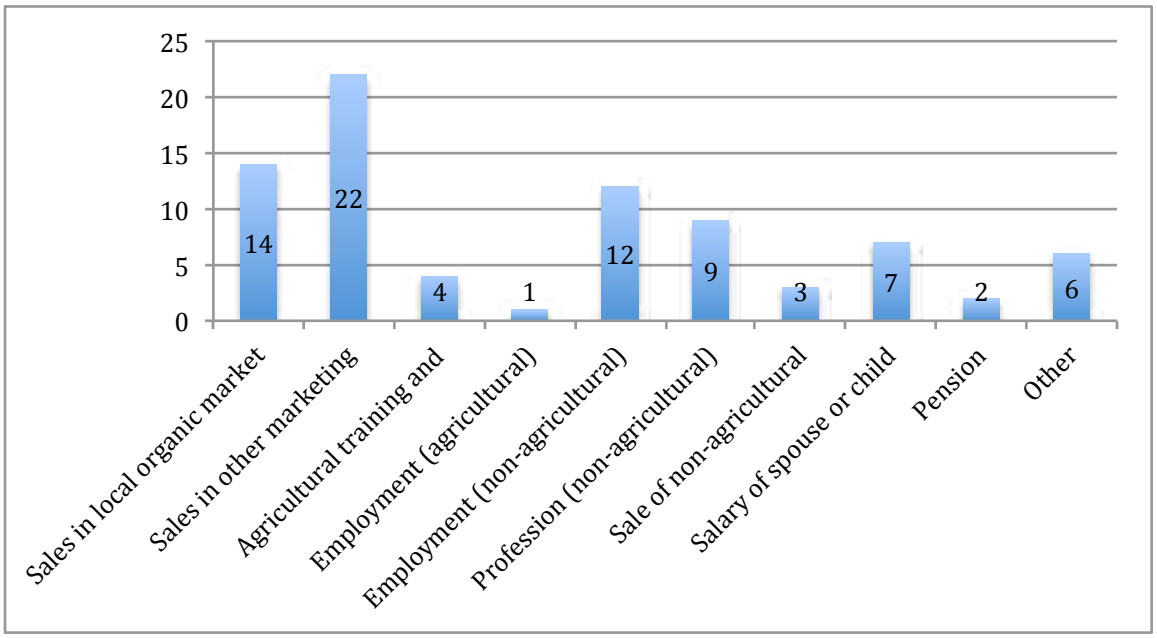

Figure 5: *Primary income sources for MNLOM producers*

Although sale either through a local organic market or a combination of other channels (including specialty stores and conventional markets) was certainly important, it is also worth noting that almost half (48.75%) of the respondents reported a primary income source entirely unrelated to agriculture (see Figure 5). This is consistent with a 2002 World Bank study that found, on average, 76% of household income for Mexican producers came from non-agricultural sources (primarily wage labour and remittances) (World Bank 2005). The role played by non-agricultural activity in the lives of many MNLOM participants was also made clear when respondents were asked how much time they dedicated to production and sale. Less than half (45%) categorized their activities related to production and sale (for both the local organic market and other sales channels) as a full-time occupation. Slightly more (46%) considered their production-related work part-time, while 9% defined it as only occasional.

Agricultural production

Of the producers surveyed, 64% were engaged in some form of direct agricultural production, while the remaining 36% produced processed goods or handicrafts, or, in a small number of cases, acted as intermediaries buying goods from a third party for sale at market. The MNLOM producers directly engaged in agriculture reported an average of 30 years experience with conventional farming methods, compared with an average of 12 years of experience with organic farming methods.

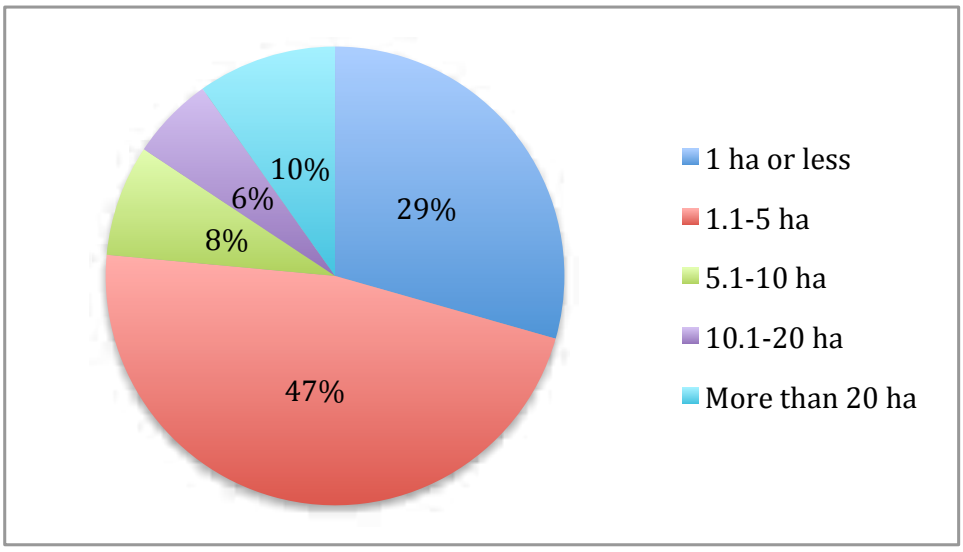

Figure 6: *Size of production units held by participants in the MNLOM*

The average parcel size for MNLOM agricultural producers was 8.6 hectares. However, in spite of this average, the great majority of producers surveyed actually farmed much less land. Just over three quarters (76%) reported farming 5 hectares or less, with 29% having access to between a few square meters and one hectare of land (see Figure 6). Only 24% of the producers surveyed were working with more than 5 hectares, with 10% reporting a farm size greater than 20 hectares. The prevalence of small farm sizes is consistent with national data, which suggests most Mexican producers (59%) farm less than 5 hectares, while only 4% have land holdings greater than 50 hectares (INEGI 2011).

The most common labour source cited by respondents was family labour, with 59% of MNLOM producers reporting that 2 or more family members helped them with some aspect of their operation – including production, processing, and sale (see Table 6). Of those who did include family labour in their operations, the average number of family members involved was 3.3. Whereas the majority of respondents had family members participating in their operations, only 30% reported having 2 or more paid full-time employees, and just 14% had 2 or more paid part-time or occasional staff. The majority of those surveyed reported having no paid full-time or part-time/occasional employees.

Table 6: Sources of labour relied upon by MNLOM participants

	Family Members	**Full-time Employees**	**Part-time or Occasional Employees**
0	24%	65%	82%
1	17%	5%	4%
2+	59%	30%	14%

In terms of the goods produced for sale at market, by far the most common product category – cited by 27.5% of respondents – was vegetables (see Figure 7). The second-most commonly found product, sold by 13.75% of those surveyed, was prepared food, such as quesadillas, *atole* (a traditional maize-based drink), tamales, and tacos. Similarly, prepared baked goods were popular, offered by 12.5% of producers. Fruit was also a frequently reported product, sold by 12.5% of producers; however, because it was generally only available for sale during short seasons, and in many cases producers sold only one or two fruit varieties, a lack of fruit was often cited as a problem in terms of attracting customers to the markets. Other products that were in short supply included meat and eggs. In addition,

although 8 producers offered dairy products, this was most often in the form of yogurt or cheese, while milk was often unavailable.

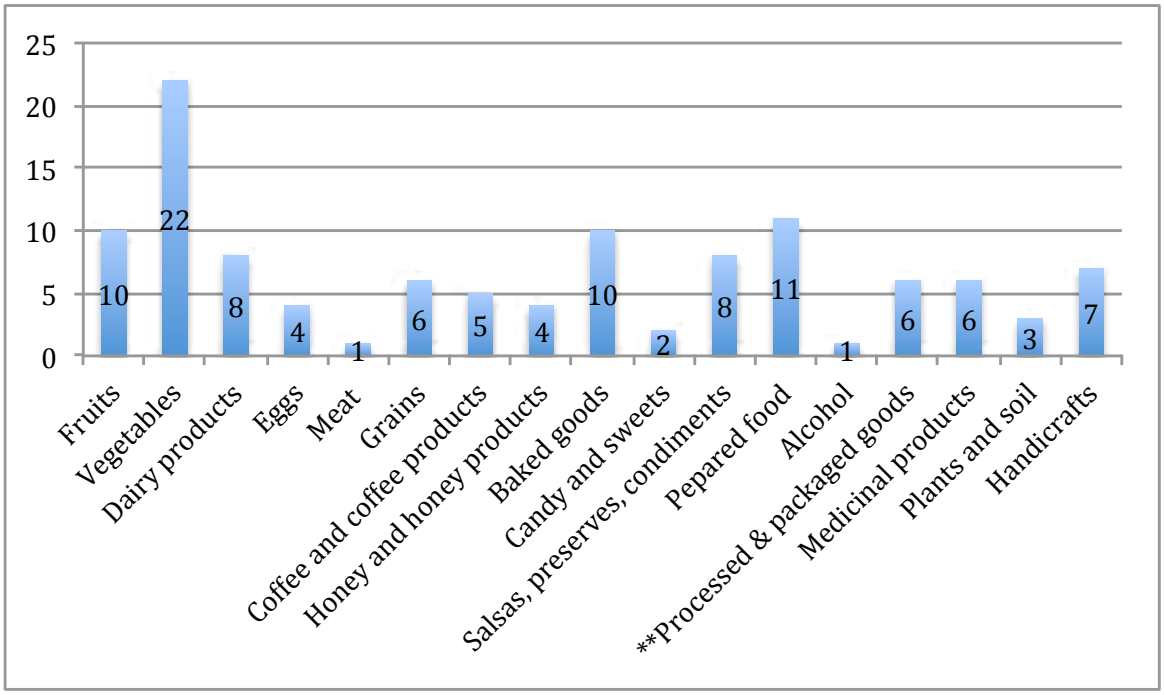

Figure 7: *Products sold by MNLOM producers in local organic markets**

* *The total number is greater than 80, as some producers sold goods in more than one category.*

** *This category refers to goods such as olive oil, ultra-pasteurized milk, tofu, and a variety of other products purchased for resale at a local organic market.*

A final important note regarding production is that the techniques used by MNLOM producers are not always entirely organic. Of the producers surveyed, 22% had certified their production as organic with an accredited third-party certification agency; however, the great majority (78%) had not. Independently of whether or not they had third-party certification, 60% of those surveyed reported having been granted access to a local organic

market within the framework of a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)[17]. The remaining 40% of MNLOM producers surveyed reported having neither third-party nor participatory organic certification. In most cases, these uncertified producers sold their goods as 'natural' or 'artisanal' rather than 'organic' and some form of differentiation was made within the market between their goods and certified organic goods. For example, in the case of the organic market in Chapingo, producers selling organic goods used green table cloths, while those whose products were considered natural were identified by orange cloths.

Food consumption

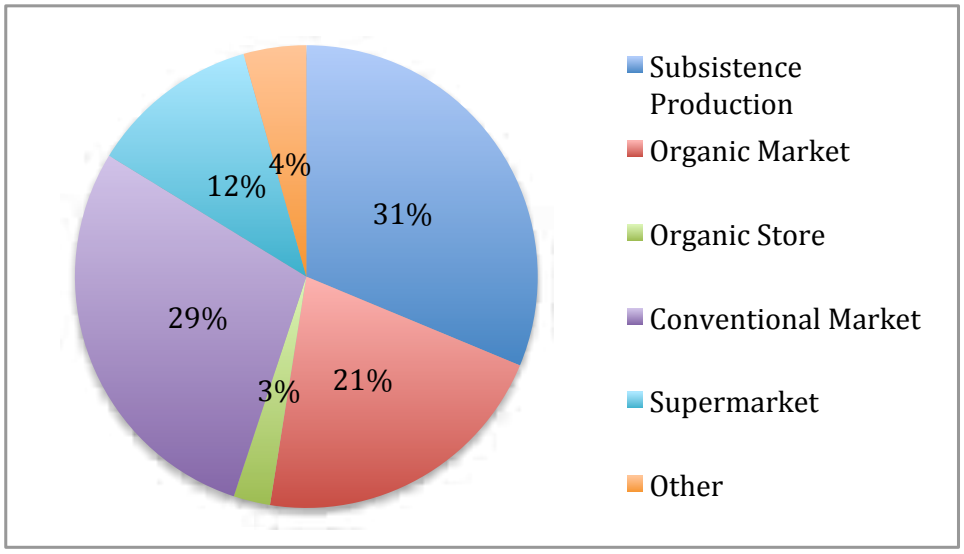

Figure 8: *Average importance of various food sources for MNLOM producers*

The MNLOM producers surveyed were asked to break down the importance of various sources they relied upon to meet their household food needs, and Figure 8 presents a profile

17 Participation in a PGS does not necessarily imply that production is 100% organic. Rather, this alternative form of certification is used as a means of assessing whether a producer is close enough to meeting organic standards to be allowed entry to a local organic market, determining whether said producer's goods should be sold as 'natural' (i.e. not yet entirely organic) or 'organic', and helping producers gradually improve their production practices so that they can eventually achieve organic status. The concept of PGS is an important part of the MNLOM's work and will be explored more fully in Chapter 7.

based on the average responses for each category. For this 'average' respondent, the most significant source of food, representing 31% of household diet, was subsistence production. This was followed closely in importance by purchases made at conventional local markets (29%) and the local organic market in which the producer was participating (21%). Many of those surveyed cited a conscious avoidance of supermarkets, while most noted that price acted as a constraint against buying food at organic specialty stores.

While Figure 8 offers an aggregated depiction of an average, but in reality non-existent, respondent, Table 7 presents a more detailed breakdown of the relative importance of various food sources for those surveyed. In some cases, this breakdown provides a substantially different picture from the averages presented above. For example, although subsistence production was, on average, cited as the most important food source, a significant number of respondents (29%) did not use their own production to meet any of their food needs, primarily because they sold processed goods made using purchased ingredients, or non-edible products such as handicrafts. By contrast, 9% of those surveyed reported meeting more than 90% of their food needs through subsistence production. (These two instances of difference are indicated by a star in Table 7.)

Table 7: Percentage of diet obtained from various food sources

% of Diet	Subsistence Production	Organic Market	Conventional Market	Super-market	Organic Store	Other
0	*29%	8%	29%	35%	86%	90%
<10	25%	46%	21%	39%	9%	1%
10-50	20%	36%	29%	20%	4%	6%
50-90	18%	9%	18%	6%	1%	3%
>90	*9%	1%	4%	0%	0%	0%

5.4 Consumer Profile

While in many ways MNLOM producers were the primary focus of the research presented here, the consumption end of the market chain is also highly important. In addition to the simple fact that producers would have no market for their goods without consumers, Escalona (2009) notes that consumers (both individually and as organized groups) have, in many cases, been the primary force behind the creation and development of local organic markets, as they search for ways to meet their demand for organic products and engage in responsible consumption. Because of the key role they play in Mexico's local organic movement, it is useful to try to understand who these people are.

Age, sex and formal education

The average age of the MNLOM consumers surveyed was 40, and the great majority (77%) were women. Perhaps the most notable consumer characteristic was that 85% reported having some form of post-secondary education. This is a sharp contrast with post-secondary education levels within the general Mexican population, which in 2005 stood at 13.6% (INEGI 2011) and is consistent with studies in other locations that demonstrate a significant correlation between post-secondary education and organic consumption (Dettman 2008).

Income

In terms of income, 40% of the consumers surveyed reported monthly household incomes of 10 000 pesos or less (see Figure 9). This contradicts, at least to a degree, the common perception that organic foods are generally accessible only to the wealthiest segments of Mexican society. Indeed, only 19% of those included in this study reported household incomes greater than 24 000 pesos/month. As a regular customer at one of Oaxaca's local organic markets explained, "I earn about 5000 pesos per month, but if you stop buying pop

and junk food, and things like that, you can easily afford to buy food here." A consumer who traveled twice a month from Mexico City to attend the local organic market in Chapingo, and purchased almost all of her household foodstuffs there, agreed that being able to afford to buy local organic products is more a question of priorities than strictly of income: "The local organic markets are not only for the rich, no, no, no. Together, my husband and I earn 20 000 pesos in a month, but we make food a priority. Instead of buying expensive clothes, or shoes, we prefer to spend our money on food that is healthy for our bodies." These findings echo the results of a US Department of Agriculture study that found education level to be a much more significant indicator of willingness to spend money on organic goods than income level (Dettman 2008).

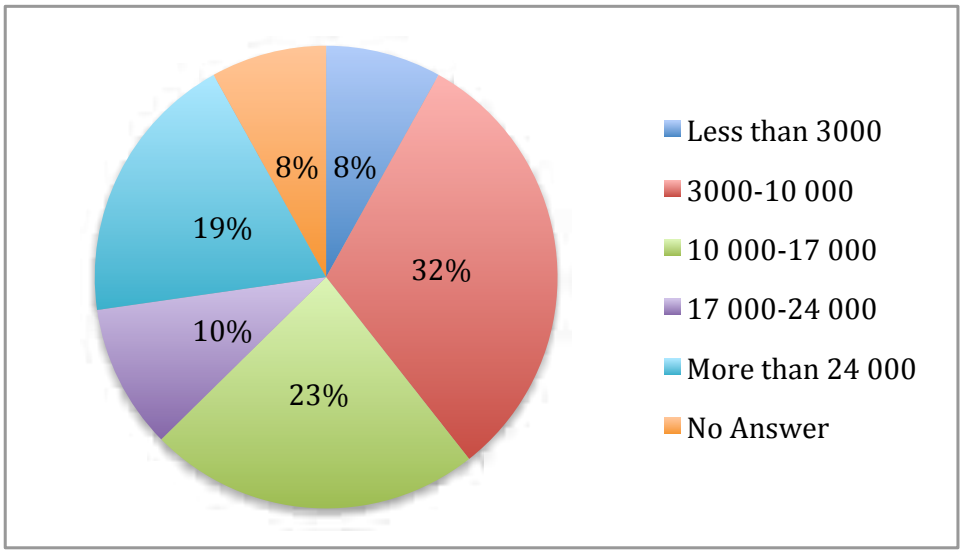

Figure 9: *Household incomes of organic market consumers*

When asked to rate the fairness of local organic market prices on a scale of 1 to 7, 80% of consumers gave a rating of 6 or 7, and 19% specifically cited fair prices as an important reason for market attendance. Only 4% of consumers surveyed indicated that high prices acted as a deterrent for their participation in the local organic market; however, many did

believe that a perception of high prices was likely a factor keeping new consumers away from the markets. Interestingly, a study comparing prices at the Chapingo local organic market to those at nearby supermarkets found that relatively few items were significantly less expensive at the latter (López Pérez et al. 2010). Indeed, depending on the season, many products (including tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, and zucchini) were similarly priced at the different locations, and some (including Romaine lettuce, radish, cauliflower, and pears) were even less expensive at the organic market (López Pérez et al. 2010).

Local organic market participation

A slight majority (57%) of the consumers surveyed reported attending the local organic market on a weekly basis, while most attended at least once a month. There was a substantial difference between the three locations where consumers were surveyed in terms of both the money and time spent at the market. In Chapingo, consumers purchased an average of 548 pesos worth of goods per week at the market, and almost half (43%) reported that their market visits lasted over one and a half hours (see Tables 8 and 9). By contrast, in Metepec and Puebla visiting times were substantially shorter, and the amount of money spent on average was less than half that in Chapingo. This is likely due to the fact that Chapingo has more participating producers than the other two markets, and thus more quantity and variety of available products.

In spite of the differences noted in terms of money spent and visit length, when asked what percentage of household food was purchased at a local organic market, the responses in the three markets were remarkably similar. The greatest percentage of consumers (34%) estimated that 25-50% of their household food supply was obtained at the local organic market, while a notable 31% claimed to source more than half of their household food there (see Figure 10).

Table 8: Average amount of money spent at the market (Mexican pesos)

	Money Spent/Week	Money Spent/Month
Chapingo	548	1634
Puebla	209	645
Metepec	250	833

Table 9: Average length of market visit

	< ½ Hour	½ - 1½ Hours	> 1½ Hours
Chapingo	0%	47%	43%
Puebla	43%	43%	14%
Metepec	100%	0%	0%

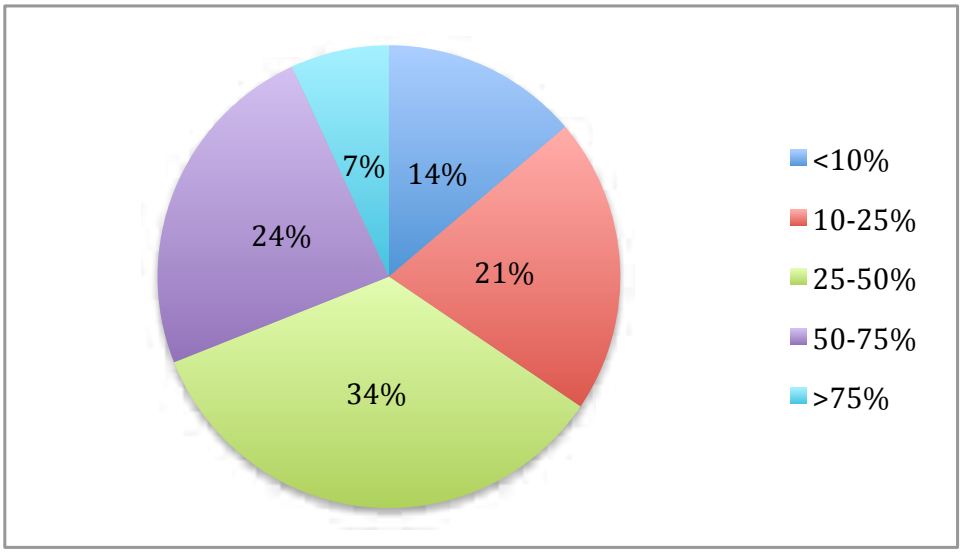

Figure 10: *Percentage of household food purchased at a local organic market*

5.5 The Primary Objectives and Impacts of MNLOM Markets

As mentioned in the introductory section to this chapter, each of the markets and market initiatives associated with the MNLOM has, to an extent, its own unique vision. Indeed, within the network – and within many individual markets – there is considerable ongoing debate regarding issues such as how to define sustainable agriculture, how to (or whether to) include small-scale artisanal but non-organic producers, what allowances should be made for the sale of organic goods by intermediaries, and how to best incorporate educational and cultural elements into the market structure. While different MNLOM members may sometimes have had different answers to these questions, it was still possible to identify a set of general objectives common to all markets. These objectives aim to address a number of interrelated problems with the conventional food system, as explained by one market coordinator and active MNLOM member:

> The abandonment of the countryside, the contamination of the earth, the exodus of our people and the family breakdown that this causes, the direct poisoning of agricultural workers and their families, and the toxins that we all put into our mouths when we eat conventional food. These are many worries, and when you think about how they can all be addressed by just one action, agroecology provides an answer. It protects biodiversity, it does not poison the earth, it offers an economic plus for producers and, when we are talking about combining it with local or regional markets, it also means that the producer gets to keep money that would otherwise go to an intermediary, and also that we are able to help build consciousness among producers and consumers.

This description is consistent with opinions expressed by MNLOM consumers surveyed, whose top three reasons for market attendance (each cited by over 50% of respondents) were: 1) the organic quality of the products; 2) support for an alternative economy, and; 3) the feeling of community. It is also consistent with the aforementioned definition of an

MNLOM 'ecological market' provided by Escalona (2009). For the purposes of this section, the many multi-faceted, layered objectives of the MNLOM markets are synthesized into three categories – promoting organic production and consumption, supporting small- and medium-scale producers, and creating consciousness and community – and the impacts that the markets have been able to achieve with respect to each one is assessed.

Objective 1: promoting organic production and consumption

As its name would suggest, one of the primary goals of the MNLOM markets is to promote both the production and consumption of organic products. For many consumers, the reason behind such an objective is personal health. As a regular consumer at the Chapingo organic market explained, "[f]irst and foremost we come [to the market] for health, so that we do not have to eat foods that are contaminated with poisons." A consumer in Oaxaca concurred: "I came to the conclusion that the most important thing in life is health, and here [at the organic market] I find health." Such comments are supported by Escalona's (2009) finding that, in most cases, the main impetus for initiating a local organic market in Mexico has been consumer demand for foods perceived to be healthy, natural and free of the contamination associated with conventional production.

One of the co-founders of the Chapingo organic market, herself a regular consumer, explained that, prior to the opening of the market, finding organic products was "very complicated," largely because, until recently, in Mexico "organics has been essentially synonymous with export." Indeed, although a select number of organic products are becoming increasingly ubiquitous in Mexico's large supermarket chains, including Wal-mart, for many consumers local organic markets represent one of the few places where they can reliably find a wide variety of organic goods. Indeed, for 42% of consumers surveyed, the local organic market was the only place where organic products were purchased.

Many MNLOM producers were quick to point out that consumption of organic products was an important part of market participation for them as well. Indeed, many increasingly used the term *prosumidor* – a combination of the words for producer and consumer – to indicate the dual role they play within the food system. Like their consumer counterparts, before becoming involved in a local organic market very few of the producers surveyed reported consciously consuming organic products (see Figure 11), with many noting that they had been unfamiliar with the term 'organic'.[18] It is not surprising then that almost all producers (91%) reported that participation in a local organic market led to an increase in organic consumption (see Table 10). The most common reasons cited for this change were, in order of importance: the easy access to organic goods as a result of weekly market attendance; increased awareness regarding the benefits of organic products; and the ability to obtain organic goods through barter, as opposed to having to pay cash. Indeed, 80% of those surveyed reported engaging in barter with other producers at their local organic market.

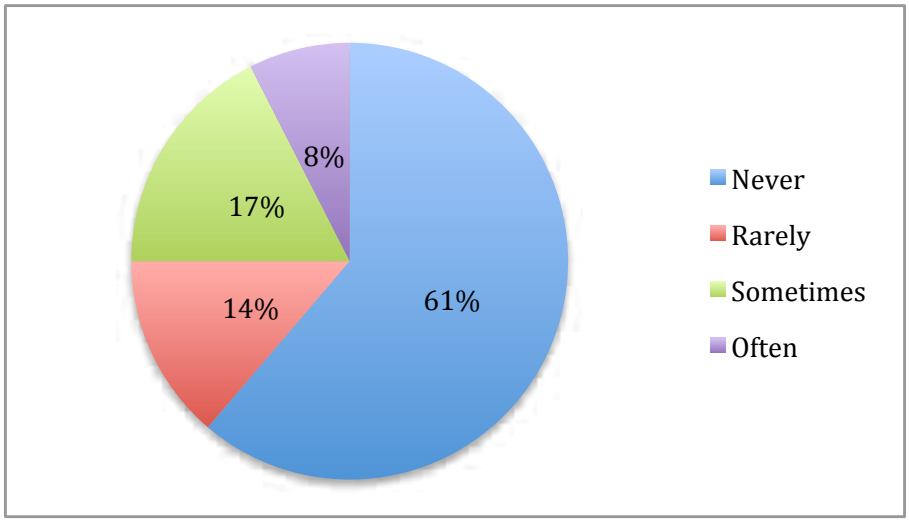

Figure 11: *Producer consumption of organic products prior to market participation*

18 It is important to note that, although they may not have had a conscious understanding of the term 'organic', many producers participating in the local organic markets did express knowledge and appreciation regarding 'traditional' or 'natural' farming practices, and indicated that they often consumed local products that were seen as "clean" whether or not they would have met organic standards.

Table 10: Changes in consumption of organic and subsistence products

	Change in Organic Consumption	Change in Subsistence Consumption
Less	0%	2%
No Change	9%	69%
More	34%	23%
Much More	57%	6%

One additional reason cited for an increase in organic consumption on the part of market producers was that 29% of them reported an increase in their levels of subsistence production after becoming involved with a local organic market (see Table 10). In most cases, respondents attributed this increase to a greater appreciation of the quality of their production and a desire to eat as much organic food as possible, while diversification of production was also important. This diversification was generally implemented both in response to market demand, and in an effort to achieve a more biologically diverse, and thus ecologically sustainable, production system, in accordance with the principles of organic agriculture.

In addition to increased diversification, many producers noted that market participation had led them to make other changes to production practices in an effort to become more ecologically sustainable. While 55% reported no significant changes to production as a result of market participation, 45% felt that their production practices had improved (see Figure 12). By far the most common improvement (cited by 25% of those surveyed) was the introduction of compost as a means of managing soil fertility or, in cases where compost was already being used, implementation of more effective composting techniques, including worm compost. A Oaxacan producer explained that, prior to entering the local organic market, "we burned everything that was left on the fields after harvest, and now we

incorporate everything back into the soil." He noted that, initially, stopping application of chemical fertilizer led to a decrease in yields; however, "now [after five years of organic production] we can see that the soil is improved and production levels are increasing again." Some of the specific ways in which market participation contributed to these production changes will be discussed later in this chapter.

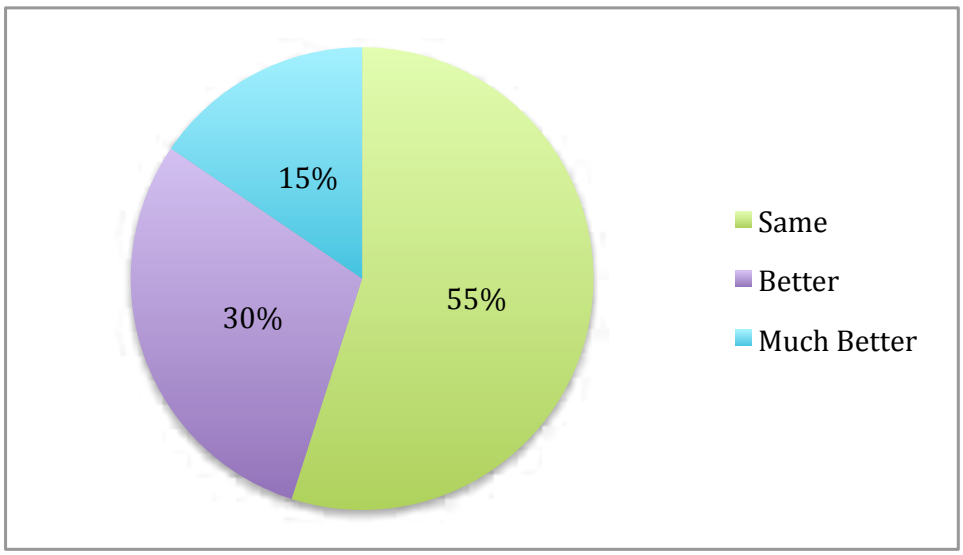

Figure 12: *Perception of changes in production practices*

Objective 2: supporting small- and medium-scale producers

Mexican culture has a long tradition of local markets where small- and medium-scale producers have the opportunity to sell their products directly to consumers; however, most present-day local markets, or *tianguis*, have come to be dominated by intermediaries. A producer from the Chapingo local organic market explained:

> Ages ago, *tianguis* were characterized by direct sale, and right here in the Mexico Valley, in Tlatelalco, the Aztecs had the most important market in all of Latin America, and it was characterized by direct exchange between producers, who came with their goods and traded. They used *trueque* [bartering] or cacao as a form of currency. And from that history we get the idea of the *tianguis*.

> It is a cultural thing, and part of our formation as individuals and as a society. It has a history…But the problem is that today in the conventional *tianguis*, especially the ones in bigger cities, there are almost no producers. The majority are intermediaries who buy goods in the *Central de Abastos* [food terminal] and re-sell them.

As a result of the growing dominance of local markets by intermediaries, small- and medium-scale producers find it increasingly difficult to access market channels and thereby earn income from their production. This problem was expressed by a producer who had recently joined the Metepec market, who noted that many of his neighbours had stopped harvesting fruit from their trees because they had nowhere to sell it: "Our production scale is too small, so there is no market for us" he explained. "I tried to sell my fruit at the *Central de Abastos* but they told me it was too small and I did not have enough quantity. We [small-scale producers] cannot compete in the conventional market." He went on to explain that, had he not found the local organic market, like that of his neighbours, his fruit would likely have been left to rot on the ground. This kind of disincentive to work productive land is reflective of 2007 census data, which found 971 736 units of agricultural production going unused or under-utilized, primarily because producers lacked money or other forms of support that would allow them to invest in production (INEGI 2011). That same survey found 10% of producers felt a lack of access to market channels was a significant problem in their lives.

Many MNLOM consumers were clearly aware of the challenges facing their country's small- and medium-scale producers. Indeed, while a health-focused desire to consume organic products topped the list of consumer motivations for participating in a local organic market, 50% of consumers surveyed also cited support for small- and medium-scale producers as an important objective. As a consumer and co-founder of the Chapingo market explained, "it is not just about the health of our family, but also about the well-being

of the people who are producing what we eat." Another Chapingo consumer noted that she specifically chose to buy organic goods at the local market (in spite of having to travel over an hour from Mexico City to get there), as opposed to in large supermarket chains, because "it is necessary to help the *tianguis* producers."

In terms of the actual levels of economic support provided by participation in the MNLOM markets, on average, producers reported weekly gross sales of 1237 pesos at their local organic market. When reported costs were subtracted from this figure, average weekly earnings totaled 1027 pesos[19]. This figure represents an increase of more than 100% when compared to average sales in 2007.[20] Notably, improvements can be observed regardless of earning bracket (see Figure 13). For example, in 2007, 7% of producers surveyed reported weekly losses, while by 2009 this figure had decreased to 4%. In 2007, the majority of producers (62%) took in between 0 and 500 pesos per week at their local organic market, while by 2009 less than half (45%) were in this category. Similarly, when considering the higher earning brackets, in 2007, just 5% of producers reported weekly sales between 1000 and 2000 pesos, and only 3% were taking home more than 2000 pesos weekly. By 2009, these figures had risen to 12% and 5% respectively. Finally, while in 2007 no one reported earning more than 3000 pesos per week, by 2009 8% of producers were taking home that

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19 These figures do not take into account costs of production, as in almost all cases producers did not maintain records of those costs and were unable to make clear estimates. The primary cost that was cited for market participation was transportation. This cost was particularly high for those using their own vehicles, who paid gasoline and in some cases toll booth fees, and for those who had to take a taxi to market because the quantity of goods they carried prohibited them from taking public transportation. Other reported costs included: a weekly or monthly fee charged by the market, which ranged from nothing to as high as 200 pesos per week; in some cases meals purchased over the course of market day; and, in a very few cases, payment for someone to work at the market table. The average total cost reported for market participation was 167 pesos per week.

20 The 2007 data is based on surveys applied to 50 producers in 9 MNLOM markets. Six of the markets were also part of the 2009 study (Chapingo, Tlaxcala, Xalapa, Coatepec, Xico, and Oaxaca-Pochote), while three were not (Cuautla, Guadalajara, and Oaxaca-Multibiocultural). The 2007 data was collected by the author on behalf of the Falls Brook Centre. Many, though not all, of the producers who participated in the first round of surveys also participated in the second. The exact number of duplicates is unknown, as the second round of surveys was anonymous.

amount. These comparisons suggest that the economic potential that local organic markets represent for producers is increasing.

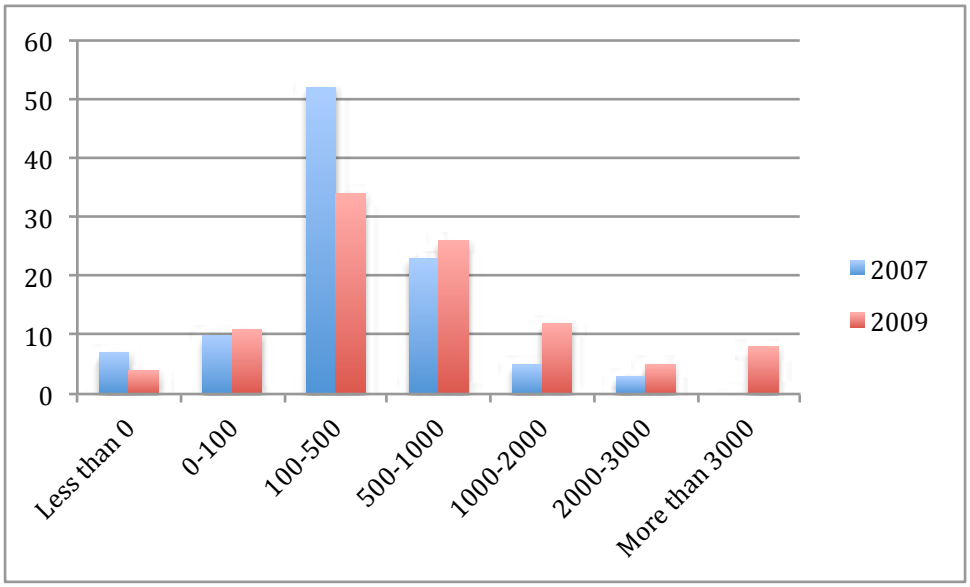

Figure 13: *Comparison of market sales in pesos/week (based on 2007 and 2009 data)*

Turning now to the degree to which organic market sales actually contribute to total income, 41% of the producers surveyed reported that organic market sales represented less than 10% of their household income, while for an additional 29% of respondents market sales accounted for 10-30% of household income (see Figure 14). While these figures may seem low, a not insignificant 17.5% of those surveyed cited sales from the local organic market as their primary source of cash income. In addition, although organic markets sales did not tend to be the most important source of reported household income, 56% of those surveyed still felt that their economic security had improved or improved greatly as a result of their participation in a local organic market. Part of the reason for this is that, while in some cases market sales may not have been *quantitatively* high, they nevertheless represented a stable weekly source of cash that was seen by many as providing qualitative economic improvement. For 60% of those surveyed, the local organic markets had also helped them

find new income sources. These usually took the form of clients who would make special orders, but also included contracts for agricultural training and extension services, or other job offers.

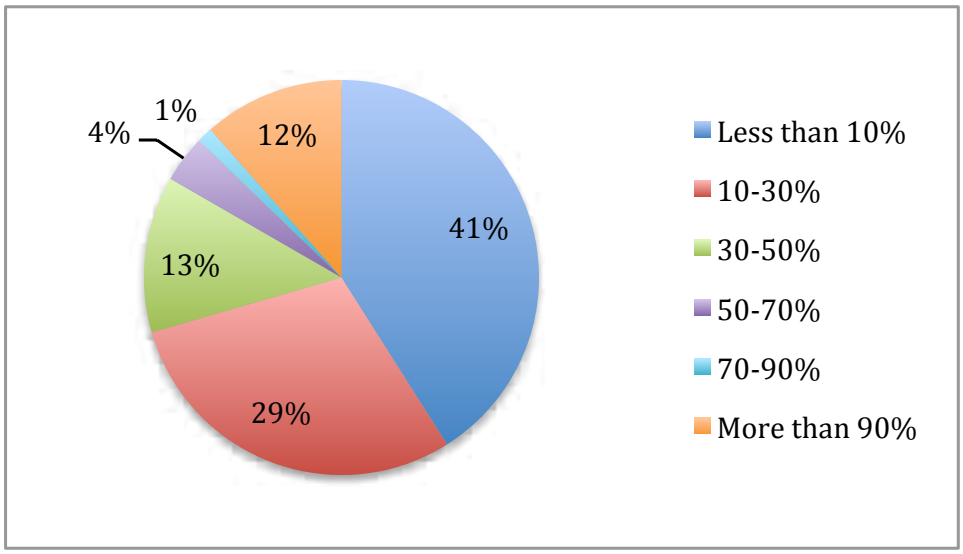

Figure 14: *Market sales as % of household income (based on 2009 data)*

Beyond supporting small- and medium-scale producers by providing them with income-generating opportunities, survey and interview results demonstrate that the MNLOM markets also play a role in improving the physical and, to an even greater extent, emotional well-being of participating producers. When asked about changes in physical health as a result of market participation, a slight majority (55%) did not cite any change; however, 20% felt their health was much better and an additional 20% felt it was better than it had been prior to market involvement (see Figure 15). The 5% of respondents who reported feeling that their physical health had worsened as a result of market involvement cited overwork as the main reason. Many cited increased consumption of organic food – and especially of vegetables – as the main reason for health improvements. For example, one producer from Chiapas said that her family "no longer eats so much processed food, or foods contaminated with chemicals. Now we eat more vegetables, and they are clean and healthy."

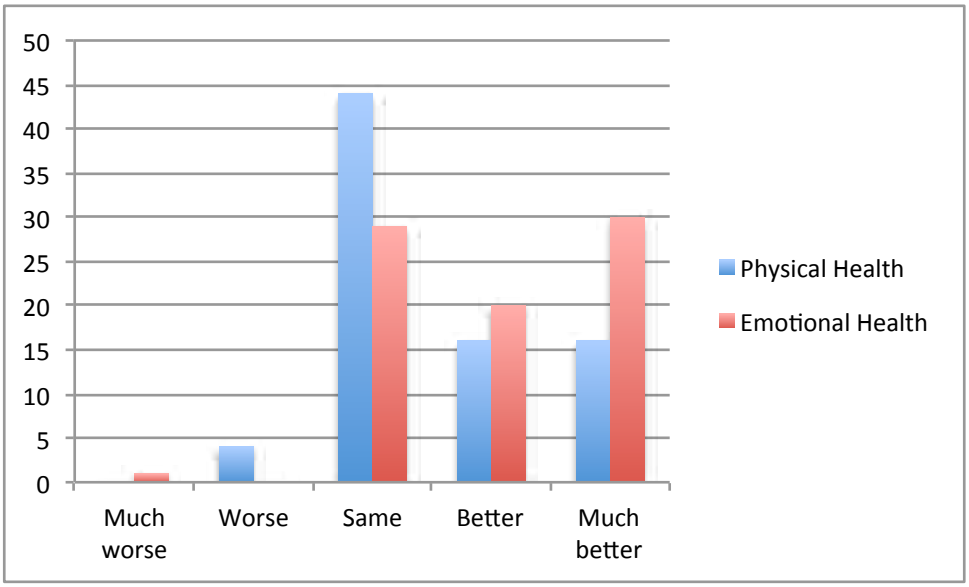

Figure 15: *Changes in Physical and Emotional Health*

A somewhat surprising finding was that reported changes in emotional health were more notable, with a majority (63%) of respondents feeling that their emotional health – as defined by feelings such as self-esteem and self-confidence – had improved as a result of participation in a local organic market (see Figure 15). One quarter felt their emotional health was better, while 38% defined it as much better. Only one respondent cited a decrease in emotional health, noting that it was the result of conflicts within the market. When asked to rate the level of overall personal satisfaction achieved as a result of market participation on a scale of 1 to 7, the average rating was 6.4. A producer participating in the organic market in Coatepec echoed the feelings of many, noting that, unlike in the conventional markets where she had previously sold her goods, in the MNLOM market "I found people who recognize my product, and they value it…And now I recognize that *I* have valuable knowledge, that *I* am an expert. That gives me confidence."

Objective 3: creating consciousness and community

While the most commonly recognized direct objectives of the MNLOM markets related to promoting organics and supporting small- and medium-scale producers, the notion of building environmental and social consciousness, as well as community, was also widely cited by both producers and consumers as an important function of the markets. As a producer from the Tlaxcala organic market put it, "I love being here because we are participating in the development of a community and because we are creating opportunities to educate people, including ourselves." Similarly, one of the co-founders of the Xalapa organic market explained that "[s]ince the beginning, capacity-building and education have been an important part of the market, with a great number of educational activities, conferences, workshops and even artistic presentations." Indeed, most MNLOM markets offered free workshops for producers and consumers on a variety of topics related to the environment, nutrition, agriculture and social justice, and many also had resources such as books or informational pamphlets available on the same topics.

In terms of agricultural education specifically, 49% of producers surveyed reported that they had received some training or education regarding organic production techniques through their organic market. The most common form of organic education cited was workshops held on market days that were given either by experienced members of the home market, visitors from other MNLOM markets, or outside experts, and were essential to the improvements to production practices discussed earlier in this chapter. In addition to receiving training and education, 37.5% of the producers surveyed reported having provided some type of training in organic methods to others. In some cases, this took the form of teaching formal classes or workshops (for which remuneration was received), while in other cases the work was voluntary. In some cases training was offered through market workshops; however many producers also reported offering informal organic extension

services to friends, neighbours and community members. The importance of this kind of extension was pointed out by a producer in Oaxaca: “There is a challenge to be a model that others can follow, so that everyone can see that what you are doing is possible, that it is possible to produce without using chemical inputs.”

While the educational and consciousness-raising aspect of the MNLOM markets is an important part of their contribution to community development, equally valued was the way in which they help build and strengthen social relationships. A consumer in Chapingo explained that the local organic market:

> is completely different from other markets, and it is a big difference, very big, because in other markets there is no sharing with people. In Mexico City everyone is running too quickly, and no one has time for conversation, no one has time to say ‘hello’ to each other. By contrast, here [at the organic market] one can come and the human contact is truly beautiful, and very important to me.

Another Chapingo consumer concurred: “The most important thing for me is that the idea of a *tianguis* comes from ancient times, it is part of our roots, and it is about having relationships with people.”

For producers, relationships with customers was also cited as an important benefit of market participation, with 87.5% reporting that they had a relationship they would define as friendship with at least some clients. Indeed, many producers listed the social relationships formed through the MNLOM markets as a main benefit of their participation. A producer from Coatepec put it simply: “The communication with other producers and with my clients is the thing I like best [about being part of the local organic market].” In addition, when asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 7 the degree to which participation in the market felt like being part of a community, the average rating was 6.

5.6 The Network

As noted in the preceding discussion of market objectives, each market associated with the MNLOM has its own particular vision, and each exists as an independent entity. However, in 2004 the four then-existing local organic markets (in Guadalajara, Chapingo, Xalapa and Oaxaca) decided to organize themselves into a network structure. With financial assistance provided by the Falls Brook Centre (a Canadian NGO) and the support of the University of Chapingo, the *Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos* held its first meeting in Chapingo in March of that year. In 2008, the MNLOM achieved legal status as an officially recognized *Asociación Civil* (Civil Association or NGO) and, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, at the time of writing it consisted of 15 fully-functioning markets along with an additional 11 initiatives.

Mission and objectives

According to Nelson et al. (2008), the main objectives of the MNLOM are to: facilitate information-exchange between markets; increase consumer awareness about and confidence in local organic products; provide capacity-building opportunities regarding organic production; act as a strong voice for Mexico's local organic movement at the national level; build solidarity within the local organic movement; and support the creation of new local organic markets[21]. These goals are clearly an extension of aforementioned objectives of the individual MNLOM markets.

For the producers involved in the local organic markets, one of the most commonly cited

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21 At the time of its founding, the MNLOM set the creation of 100 local organic markets across Mexico as one of its specific goals. The rapid growth in numbers of markets and initiatives suggests that progress is being made towards that objective; however, the speed of growth also presents a number of challenges in terms of organization and governance. Both the opportunities and challenges related to communication and governance within a rapidly expanding organization will be further explored in Chapter 6.

benefits provided by the MNLOM was related to its capacity-building activities. While the direct funding proportioned to individual markets as part of a project with the Falls Brook Centre was clearly much appreciated, non-financial contributions were perceived as having equal, if not greater value, with many producers explaining that they were able to make improvements to their production systems as a result of workshops or other training opportunities organized by the MNLOM. The "capacity-building and information we get from the [MNLOM] regarding everything to do with organics…is wonderful, and it motivates us a lot" noted a producer in Oaxaca, while another in Metepec wished to take advantage of participation in this research project to "publicly thank the MNLOM for promoting organic production and for its important assistance to producers in terms of capacity-building and training." Specifically recognized were the opportunities for *campesino-a-campesino* (direct farmer-to-farmer) training, with a market coordinator from Chiapas pointing out that producers responded much more positively to composting education from a producer visiting from the Guadalajara organic market than they had to information previously provided by the (non-producer) coordinating committee.

A second function of the MNLOM that producers highlighted as important was its success in achieving recognition or, to cite a producer from Tlaxcala "credibility" for Mexico's local organic movement. As a producer and market coordinator from Xico explained, "they [the MNLOM] involve us in the whole legislative process, and if we are ever going to have anything to say about public policy it is going to be through an organization like that." The frequent mention of the public policy contributions of the MNLOM refer almost exclusively to its success in lobbying the national government to include reference to participatory guarantee systems within the legislation governing the country's organic sector (see Nelson et al. 2010) and to its active participation in the development of Mexico's national organic standard. A market coordinator from Xalapa suggested that networking is essential in order

for the local organic movement to have any hope of influencing public policy in the face of a very strong agri-business lobby: "I think that each local organic market is like a cell" she said, "and if that cell joins with another and another, then soon we are a fabric…and like that we can grow, not like [big agri-business], but rather as many small markets, and we can strengthen each other in that way and that will help us have a greater voice and a say in public policy."

One final MNLOM objective that producers expressed appreciation for in both surveys and interviews was its work to create a sense of solidarity and dynamism within Mexico's local organic movement. A producer from Metepec described the most important aspect of the MNLOM as its ability to act as "a meeting point for the whole local organic movement", and a participant in the San Cristóbal organic market went even further, suggesting that the key to the MNLOM's value lies in the fact that "we are a family more than anything else." This sense of providing a meeting point, or familial structure, allows people participating in the MNLOM to feel that their actions go beyond what they could ever achieve as individuals (or through participation in an individual market). "It is really cool, because it makes you feel part of something that is much more than just yourself" said a producer from Coatepec, with another from Xico concurring that she is "really into networking because without it you are just an infinitely small thing."

Organization and structure

In its early years, the MNLOM existed in a relatively informal way; however, when it became a legally recognized entity in 2008 it adopted an official constitution that laid out the framework of its organization and structure[22]. For example, although the MNLOM had always been informally managed out of Texcoco's University of Chapingo, the 2008

22 A controversial process and document, there will be more detailed discussion of the organization's transition toward legal recognition and adoption of a constitution in Chapter 6.

constitution explicitly defined Texcoco as the location of MNLOM headquarters. Similarly, the constitution outlined the roles and responsibilities of the organization's General Coordinator, Technical Secretary and Treasurer, the three of whom make up the core of the MNLOM *Comité Directivo*, or Management Committee. According to the constitution, the MNLOM also consists of a General Assembly – made up of members of individual markets – and a *Consejo de Vigilancia* or Oversight Council. Finally, the MNLOM has three official working groups dedicated to the issues of participatory certification, media and communications, and technical training and capacity-building (see Figure 16).

Since its founding in 2004, the MNLOM has held several meetings per year. These meetings have primarily taken place at the University of Chapingo; however, in more recent years an effort has been made to rotate locations to include other markets, and many member markets have since hosted meetings. The primary source of funding for these meetings, and indeed for the general operating budget of the MNLOM, has been funding provided by the Falls Brook Centre. At the time of writing, a three year project with that NGO had recently ended; however, negotiations were ongoing regarding the possibility of renewed funding. Other support has been consistently provided by the University of Chapingo, first through its Centre for Economic, Social and Technical Research on Global Agriculture and Agro-industry (CIESTAAM) and later by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research for Integrated Rural Development (CIIDRI). This support has largely taken the form of in-kind contributions such as provision of office space and staff hours, phone lines, computers, printing and internet access, while more recently funding has also been available through projects that CIIDRI has been awarded by Mexico's Ministry of Agriculture (SAGARPA). It is important to note that the MNLOM does not receive any direct financial contributions from its member markets.

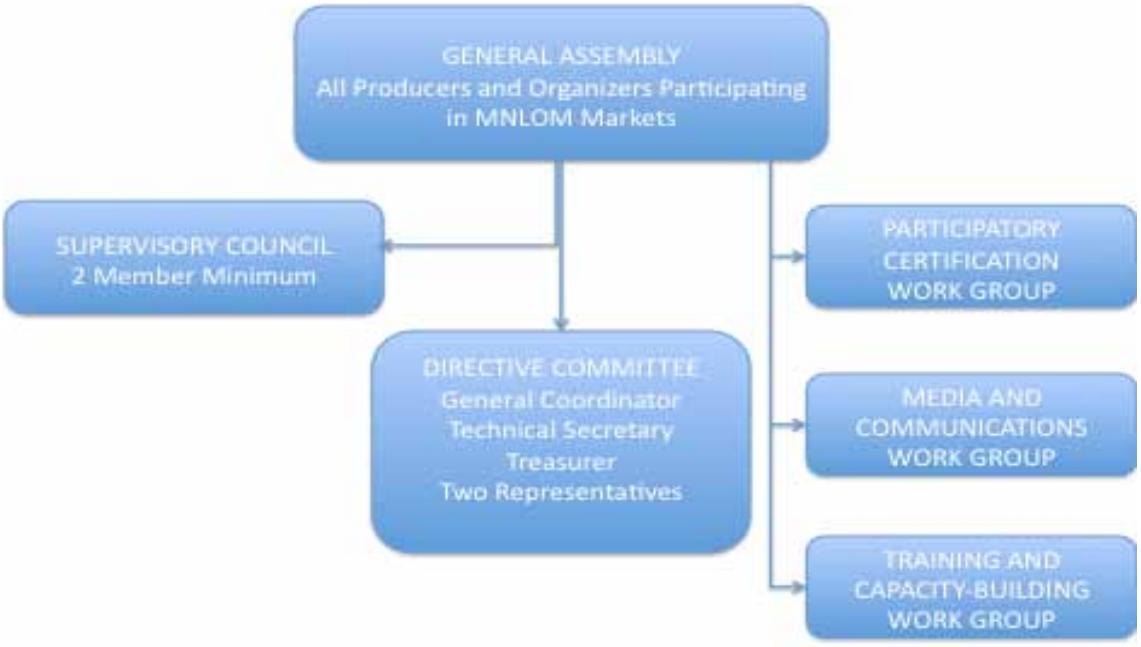

Figure 16: *Organizational structure of the MNLOM, as laid out in its 2008 constitution*

Producer opinions

When MNLOM producers were asked about the network, 82.5% were able to provide a general description of the organization, including its main functions, where its headquarters were located and, in many cases, that it received funding from a Canadian NGO. The remaining 17.5% were unfamiliar with the organization; however, in most cases these respondents were either new to the organic market or were not the primary person responsible for the market table. Although most of the participants had some knowledge of the work done by the MNLOM, the vast majority (77.5%) had never personally attended one of its meetings, while 17.5% of those surveyed had participated in three or more meetings.

In terms of usefulness, on a scale of 1 to 7 producers gave the MNLOM an average rating of 6; however, when asked about the degree to which they felt a sense of belonging to

the organization, the average rating fell slightly to 4.8 (see Table 11). With respect to this difference, while no one gave Network usefulness the lowest rating of 1, 12.5% did give that rating to their sense of belonging to the organization.

Table 11: Producer rating of usefulness of and sense of belonging to the MNLOM

Rating	MNLOM Usefulness	Sense of Belonging to MNLOM
1	0%	12.5%
2	1.5%	7.5%
3	3.75%	6.25%
4	8.75%	11.25%
5	7.5%	16.25%
6	15%	10%
7	48.75%	32.5%

While the vast majority of those surveyed and interviewed clearly expressed their support for the MNLOM and its mission, many also had critiques or suggestions regarding how they felt the organization could be more effective. By far the most common suggestions for improvement were: creating a mechanism to allow for regular exchange of products between MNLOM markets[23]; better defining the differentiated roles for 'organic', 'natural', 'artisanal' and other types of products available for sale within the MNLOM markets; and improving communication systems to facilitate more effective flows of information between various MNLOM actors.

23 Most producers surveyed (81%) reported selling in only one MNLOM market, while 16% were supplying two markets, 1.5% four markets and 1.5% 5 markets.

Each of these three common suggestions was somewhat contentious, as there was significant disagreement both within and between markets regarding what the most appropriate course of action should be. For example, when it comes to inter-market product exchange, many producers felt it would significantly improve the economic viability of their MNLOM participation; however, others strongly believed that markets should focus strictly on the sale of regional goods and avoid cross-country transportation, while MNLOM organizers pointed to the sizeable logistical challenges that create a natural barrier to such trade. Differences of opinion were even stronger regarding the issue of how to treat wholly organic versus other types of products, with some producers and organizers expressing a strong belief that the focus of the MNLOM markets should be on promoting a production standard that matches that of internationally recognized organic certification agencies, and others feeling equally strongly that a more realistic and inclusive strategy would be to provide space for small-scale producers using techniques that could be described as 'traditional', 'clean' or 'artisanal' without requiring them to work towards meeting more stringent organic standards.

5.7 Summary

Data collected regarding producers and consumers active in the MNLOM demonstrates that, in a number of ways, they fit a unique profile. Most notably, both producers and consumers have significantly higher levels of formal education when compared to the Mexican population in general, and to the Mexican producer population specifically. Similarly unique is the high level of female participation in the MNLOM, particularly amongst producers, which stands in stark contrast to the predominance of males evident in national agricultural survey results. Unlike education and gender, there was little striking about MNLOM participant incomes. Although more than half of the MNLOM producers and consumers had monthly household incomes greater than 5000 and 10 000

pesos respectively, thus indicating that in general they are not the poorest of Mexico's poor, neither were they particularly wealthy. Rather, most could be considered part of the country's lower-middle or middle classes, with producers more likely to be in the former category.

Both producers and consumers demonstrated agreement regarding the interrelated environmental, economic and social objectives and impacts of the MNLOM markets. For consumers, access to products perceived as healthy and safe was of paramount importance, while producers shared in a desire to consume these products, supply them for others, and care for the environment through ecological production methods. In terms of meeting an economic objective, producers did generally indicate that participation in an MNLOM market was an important element of a diversified livelihood strategy, in many cases not necessarily because sales were particularly high, but rather because they tended to be relatively stable over time, and represented cash-in-hand, as opposed to other marketing channels that often include a lag between delivery of product and receipt of payment. Although, for consumers, it was considered more of a social than an economic objective, contributing to the economic security of small- and medium-scale producers was an important motivator for their participation in MNLOM markets. Indeed, the social functions of the markets as spaces for mutual support, teaching, learning and relationship-building were among the objectives most valued by all those involved.

Finally, with respect to the organization of local organic markets into a network structure, results demonstrated that producers had a clear sense of the value inherent in such an endeavour. Of particular importance to them were the MNLOM's work to create opportunities for technical training in organic techniques and to lobby the government on behalf of Mexico's local organic movement, as well as the organization's ability to create a strong sense of community and solidarity within that movement. Issues highlighted by

both producers and organizers regarding where there might be room for improvement within the MNLOM included the potential facilitation of inter-market trade in both finished products and raw materials, clarification of the roles for different kinds of products within the markets, and development of more fluid mechanisms for communication that could help to improve organizational governance.

Chapter 6: The Slow, Circuitous Path Toward Participatory Governance

6.1 Introduction

The focus of the previous chapter was on assessing the extent to which the MNLOM is managing to meet the objectives explicitly considered part of its mandate. In this chapter, that focus shifts to the third research objective, which relates to the issues of power dynamics, communication patterns, and governance mechanisms. As discussed in Chapter 5, the MNLOM is firmly grounded in the food sovereignty framework, which includes, among other elements, a strong emphasis on the importance of grassroots participation in decision-making processes and horizontal structures of power. As such, implicit in the MNLOM's work is the ideal of empowering its members (especially the more traditionally marginalized among them) to participate actively in organizational governance. This chapter argues that this ideological position is, in practice, subject to countervailing tendencies that simultaneously contribute to and constrain the capacity of the MNLOM to engage in participatory governance. On the one hand, the focus on networking that is at the core of the organization's work has contributed significantly to the construction of social capital within Mexico's local organic movement, thereby ensuring the existence of a key prerequisite for participatory governance. At the same time, however, the impracticalities – or burden – of participation, the efficiencies associated with concentrated authority, and internal power dynamics have encouraged the creation and maintenance of more centralized governance structures.

The chapter begins with an overview of some important ideas in governance theory – specifically, the rise of the participatory paradigm and the growing influence of the concepts of social capital and networks. It then briefly outlines the context within which governance

occurs in Mexico. The evolution of governance structures within the MNLOM since the organization's founding in 2004 is then presented. This primarily descriptive section is followed by a more analytical discussion of four themes. The first is an assessment of the ways in which the MNLOM has helped build social capital within Mexico's local organic movement, with particular attention paid to the construction of a shared identity and vision, communication and information exchange, the development of trust, and engagement in collective action. The second topic of discussion is a more critical analysis of the challenges that have confronted the MNLOM as it seeks to (ostensibly at least) develop participatory governance structures. In this section, there is a focus on the potentially burdensome nature of participation for grassroots actors, the pragmatic benefits of centralization, and the power dynamics that exist within the organization. The negative implications of governance structures perceived to be lacking in broad-based participation and transparency are then examined. Finally, the chapter explores some relatively recent developments that suggest a more participatory form of governance may gradually be emerging within the MNLOM.

6.2 Key Concepts for Participatory Governance

Kaufman et al. (1999: 1) define governance as "the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised", adding that this includes "(1) the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced, (2) the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies, and (3) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them." This definition implies that governance refers specifically to an activity of the state; however, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 1997: n.p.) clarifies that, while "governance encompasses the state…it transcends the state by including the private sector and civil society organisations." Indeed, governance can include more formal exercises of governing power – often employed by state actors, though also by non-state entities such as non-

governmental organizations – as well as less formal manifestations that can occur at a very micro level, such as the family or community.[24]

The participatory paradigm

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, the notion of broad-based participation became increasingly ubiquitous within development circles. Popularized by the writings of scholars and activists such as Freire (1982) and Chambers (1987), the participatory paradigm suggests that a diversity of actors – particularly those traditionally marginalized by top-down practices, such as rural community members – can and should play an active role in making decisions and directing their own development. Gaventa (2006) argues that, although this perspective first gained traction in the realm of project-based development practice, it has since become highly important to thinking about governance as well. Indeed, along with transparency, consensus-orientation, equity, and a number of other elements, participation is cited by the UNDP (1997) as one of the cornerstones of good governance.

The entry of the participatory discourse into governance theory and practice became particularly evident during the 1990's, when many countries in the South (including Mexico) were establishing new democracies, and neoliberal thinking was gaining popularity. Both trends contributed, albeit in very different ways, to a shift "in the democracy debate from one of concern of democratic *government*, to the concern for democratic *governance*, which involved new forms of interaction between state, market and society" (Gaventa 2006: 12, italics in original). Such re-working of state-market-society relations is reflected in Flora and Flora's (2008: 325) assertion that "[g]overnance means broader community participation and more flexibility on the part of state, market and civil society groups." It is similarly echoed in Gaventa's (2006: 7) discussion of the "deepening democracy"

24 Multi-scalar manifestations of governance are particularly important to the governmentality framework – a concept that was introduced in Chapter 2, and will be further explored in the conclusions to this thesis.

movement, which is based on the goal of "developing and sustaining more substantive and empowered citizen participation."

Social capital

In conjunction with the rising popularity of more participatory approaches to governance, increasing attention has been placed on the concept of social capital as a lens through which governance issues can be viewed. More specifically, the presence of social capital is widely considered to be a prerequisite for participatory forms of governance (see ANGOC 2006; Walker and Shannon 2011). According to Grootaert (1998: 2), "social capital can be defined as the set of norms, networks, and organizations through which people gain access to power and resources, and through which decision-making and policy formulation occur." At the heart of the social capital concept is the creation, maintenance and strengthening of linkages, which can be of either the bonding or bridging variety. Bonding social capital refers to connections between like actors (such as members of a geographically bounded community, or religious organization), while bridging social capital involves – as its name suggests – linkages that bridge gaps between diverse actors (such as communities in different geographic locations, or people representing different sectors of society) (Adler and Kwon 2002). According to Putnam (1994), the presence of social capital in a community has a direct impact on socio-economic development outcomes as well as on the effectiveness of governance structures.

Essential to the construction of social capital are "traditions of engagement, trust, and reciprocity" (Putnam 1994: 106). As such, emphasis is commonly placed on activities that foment such traditions, including the creation of, and participation in, civic associations, such as clubs, teams, or other community organizations (Putnam 1994; Barraket 2005). These associations are particularly effective at building social capital when they promote

"interaction that strengthens members' commitment to particular values and goals" and "forging a common identity" (Flora and Flora 2008: 122). Other factors important to the construction and mobilization of social capital include increasing local economic diversity and self-reliance (Barraket 2005) and the facilitation of communication within and between groups (Flora and Flora 2008).

Activities that encourage social capital construction are important, as they help communities "believe that working together can make a difference" and thus facilitate their ability to "organize to collectively address their shared needs" (Flora and Flora 2008: 325). Importantly, they also have the potential to empower actors at the local level to perceive themselves (and be perceived by others) "as active agents and creators of their social world, not as passive victims of fate or government policy" (Onyx and Bullen 2000: 109). In so doing, collective agency is fostered and the potential for collective action is created. According to Ostrom and Ahn (2008), three specific elements of social capital are particularly relevant to the ability of groups to engage in collective action: 1) trustworthiness; 2) networks, and; 3) formal and informal rules or institutions.

For the reasons outlined above, the presence of social capital in a community tends to be viewed almost exclusively in a positive light; however, it should be noted that high levels of social capital may, in some cases, also create negative impacts. These tend to occur when an imbalance exists between levels of bonding and bridging social capital. When bonding social capital is high, but bridging social capital low, communities can tend to be insular and exclusive, to the point that it becomes difficult to build bridges with outside groups (Benn and Onyx 2005). Conversely, when bonding social capital is low but bridging social capital high, decision-making power can become concentrated in the hands of community elites and, although collective action may occur, "that action is more apt to benefit outsiders or their local surrogates…" (Flora and Flora 2008: 128). Such issues do

not negate the benefits of building social capital; however, it is important to bear in mind that "…the distribution of social capital within any given community is unequal and often stratified, meaning that [it] can function as a mechanism of exclusion as well as inclusion" (Dudwick et al. 2006: 1).

Networks

As noted above, essential to the creation and activation of social capital is the formation of networks (see Putnam 1994) – a process particularly important to the case study presented in this thesis. Networks can be thought of as flexible webs of interconnected nodes, that expand and change as new nodes are integrated and/or new linkages are created (Castells 1996). According to Dale (2005: 26):

> Networks are an important way to build empowerment, trust, cooperation, and collective norms. They are also critical to transferring and holding knowledge in both the informal and formal sectors, often leading to a reconciliation of previously competing information, interests, and agendas. They can also contribute to more rapid knowledge diffusion and are a means by which shared futures are developed, built, and enacted.

In order for networks to most effectively contribute to good governance, it is important for them to be characterized by inclusivity and diversity, open channels of communication both within and outside network boundaries, and a depersonalization of politics (see Dale 2005; Flora and Flora 2008). In the specific case of networks dedicated to strengthening alternative food systems, Knickel et al. (2006) found that key factors for success include: a coherent shared vision; coordination and communication systems that avoid dependence on a limited number of key actors, especially 'experts'; a clear marketing or branding strategy; and alliances with a wide variety of actors outside the network, especially civil society organizations, consumer groups, and government agencies.

Governance in the Mexican context

As alluded to in Chapter 3, the unique history and culture of Mexico has had a significant impact on the structures of governance that have emerged there. Following a long history of conquest, oppression, and co-opted revolution, newly constructed democratic institutions remain relatively fragile, and can be susceptible to cults of personality, authoritarianism, clientelism, and other forms of corruption that constrain active citizen participation (see Merrell 2003; Camp 2007; Loeza Reyes 2008; Holzner 2010). In the case of rural organizations specifically, Hellin et al. (2009: 17) cite Key and Runsten (1999) to suggest that many "have a history of being used for political ends, are manipulated by corrupt leaders, or have failed because of interpersonal mistrust." In spite of this potentially challenging context, Spink et al. (2008: 245) argue that, in more recent years, "significant moves are underway to enhance civil society participation in governance…" in the country.

One concrete indicator of the increasing role being played by civil society within governance in Mexico is the rising number of NGOs active in the country. Citing INEGI statistics, Spink et al. (2008) note that, in the early 1990s, there were approximately 2300 registered Mexican NGOs, while by the beginning of the 21st century, that figure had more than doubled to over 5000. Other visible evidence of an increasingly active civil society in Mexico – that is demanding participation in decision-making processes – includes the rise of the Zapatista movement for autonomous governance in Chiapas, the 2006 uprising against the state government in Oaxaca, and a number of large-scale protests in Mexico City organized by broad coalitions of civil society organizations (see Loeza Reyes 2008; Spink et al. 2008). Such coalitions may be considered representative of Mexico's new social movements that Stahler-Sholk (2007: 50) argues are "distinguished by their emphasis on autonomy, participatory processes, and solidarity around perceived collective identities."

6.3 The Evolution of MNLOM Governance – A Brief Description

The early years of ad hoc decision-making

As outlined in Chapter 5, the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets was founded in 2004, when four local organic markets (in Guadalajara, Chapingo, Xalapa and Oaxaca) decided – with support from a Canadian NGO – to incorporate themselves under the umbrella of a network structure. While the many specific objectives of the organization are discussed in Chapter 5, for the purposes of this chapter it is sufficient to note that the networking strategy was considered the most effective means of facilitating communication and information-sharing, scaling up the impact of work at the local level, and creating a national voice for the local organic movement.

In its early years, the MNLOM governance structure was relatively informal. Decision-making generally took place on an *ad hoc* basis, with no formal guidelines regarding issues such as membership prerequisites, roles and responsibilities of different actors, election of leaders, or management of funds and other resources. During this early phase, network membership was effectively open to any and all parties with an interest in the development of local organic markets in their community. Communication between members was primarily maintained through meetings, which were held several times per year, most often in Chapingo, and were attended by representatives of any local market initiative, regardless of its stage of development. In addition to hosting meetings, organizational leadership and decision-making was concentrated in Chapingo, where researchers at the local university (themselves closely involved in management of the Chapingo local organic market) provided the resources necessary for coordination, including in-kind contributions of staff hours, office space, and supplies, and the management of project funding received from the Falls Brook Centre.

Formalizing governance structures

In 2008, following four years of extremely rapid expansion[25], the MNLOM became a legally recognized civil association, or NGO. In a process led by actors at the University of Chapingo, the organization adopted a constitution that, as explained in Chapter 5, laid out an official governance structure. Within the framework of that document, Texcoco (the site of the University of Chapingo) is identified as MNLOM headquarters, and a number of different positions and groups are formally established: 1) a Directive Committee, consisting of a General Coordinator, Technical Secretary, and Treasurer; 2) a two-member Supervisory Council; 3) three official working groups dedicated to participatory certification, media and communications, and technical training and capacity-building, and; 4) a General Assembly consisting of all producers and organizers involved in MNLOM markets (see Figure 16 in the previous chapter). Other items, including the official responsibilities of the aforementioned positions, and voting and election processes are also outlined in the constitution.

Pushing for participation

From the beginning, the creation of the 2008 constitution and corresponding legal recognition of the MNLOM as an independent entity created controversy within the organization – an issue that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. In particular, there was a sense amongst some MNLOM members that the process of writing and enacting the constitution had taken place with too little consultation, and there was concern about whose names appeared as legally recognized members and – much more importantly – whose did not. These concerns were explored during a series of critical discussions regarding governance issues that occurred via email, through informal communications, and during

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25 The number of local organic markets and initiatives associated with the MNLOM grew from just four in 2004, to more than 20 in 2008, representing an average growth rate of almost 100% per year.

meetings in Puebla (October, 2009), Morelos (August, 2010), Chapingo (April, 2011), and Oaxaca (August, 2011).

Table 12: Key steps in the evolution of MNLOM governance

Date	Governance-related Events
2004	Four local organic markets form the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets.
2008	The MNLOM adopts a constitution and becomes a legally recognized civil association.
2009	Frustrations regarding governance and communication within the MNLOM are discussed at a controversial meeting in Puebla. The meeting is not endorsed by the MNLOM coordination, which does not send a representative.
2010	Frustrations regarding the constitution specifically, and governance structure more generally, are aired more formally at an official MNLOM assembly in Morelos.
2011	Signatories to the MNLOM constitution vote to use the document as a reference point only, and to adopt a new governing framework developed and agreed upon by a General Assembly consisting of 2 representatives of each member market.

In the 2010 meeting that occurred in Morelos, committees were formed to address communication and organizational functioning, with each committee reporting on its work in Chapingo the following spring. The debate that occurred at these meetings, and during the intervening months, culminated with a lengthy discussion of governance at the MNLOM general assembly held in Oaxaca in August, 2011. According to the minutes

of that meeting: “It was decided that the [MNLOM General] Assembly would consist of two members of each market and that the [2008] constitution is nothing more than an instrument to serve said Assembly. In other words, *participation is open to all markets regardless of whether or not they are signatories of the constitutional act*” (italics added). In addition to formally negating the authority of the controversial constitution, the 2011 Oaxaca meeting also resulted in the adoption (by majority vote) of modified descriptions of the rights and obligations of the various MNLOM governing committees and positions, and the election of representatives to fill each position for a period of two years, with the possibility of re-election remaining open.

6.4 The MNLOM and the Construction of Social Capital

The above description of the evolution of governance structures within the MNLOM offered a very simplified account of some highly complex processes. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to unpacking those processes and exploring their implications, specifically in relation to the capacity (or lack thereof) of MNLOM members to engage in participatory governance. In this section, the focus will be on how the MNLOM has helped build social capital within Mexico’s local organic sector, thereby increasing the potential for participatory governance structures to be created and maintained. It has done this primarily in four inter-related ways: 1) encouraging the development of a shared identity; 2) facilitating information-sharing and communication; 3) creating opportunities for the construction of trust-based relationships, and; 4) providing a platform for collective action.

Collective identity

Polletta and Jasper (2001: 285) define collective identity as “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution” and note that it implies “positive feelings for other members of the group” and

can be demonstrated through a variety of cultural materials, including narratives, symbols, and clothing. Although identity formation may never have been considered an *explicit* goal of the MNLOM, the development of a shared identity has been an implicit – and very important – part of the organization's work since its inception.

Figure 17: *Logo of the Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos (Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets, or MNLOM)*

Concrete expressions of a shared MNLOM identity include, among other things, a widely used and highly recognizable logo (see Figure 17), branded clothing and other merchandise, a slogan, audio-visual materials, and a website. Such cultural material plays a useful role in solidifying the kind of positive sense of group identity that can encourage members to prioritize group interest over self-interest, and dedicate themselves to work on the group's behalf (Kramer et al. 2001; Flora and Flora 2008) The development of a network-wide system for organic certification (something that will be discussed in detail in the following chapter) is further evidence of the MNLOM's work to construct shared norms, which Dale (2005) notes are another essential ingredient for collective identity.

A less concrete, though equally important, manifestation of the MNLOM's collective identity is the fact that "[w]hile remaining independent entities with distinct characteristics, the markets [that belong to the network] do share a common vision" regarding the necessity of supporting small-scale ecologically-oriented producers in Mexico, helping them gain

access to local marketing channels, and making safe, healthy products available to Mexican consumers (Nelson et al. 2008: 24). In addition to being recognized as essential to the functioning of any agri-food oriented network (Knickel et al. 2006), such a shared vision is essential for the construction and activation of social capital within a community (see Flora and Flora 2008). As discussed in Chapter 5, the precise details of the MNLOM's common vision have been, and continue to be, the subject of heated debate within the organization; however, such processes of continued contestation can be considered reflective of the notion that collective identity is best conceived of as fluid and relational, as opposed to fixed (Polletta and Jasper 2001).

Information-sharing and communication

In addition to helping Mexico's local organic movement construct a sense of collective identity, the creation of a network structure linking individual markets has also facilitated the flow of information within that movement. One of the coordinators of a market in Chiapas explained the importance of such information exchange, particularly for market initiatives in the early stages of development:

> …there were opportunities to participate in workshops, and to receive visits from [members of markets in Xalapa, Guadalajara, and Chapingo]…These visits were very good…because they came at a time that we were just starting out as a market…they helped the producers trust us [the coordinators] more… because some of them I think had been wondering, 'why do they give us so much trouble about having to make compost instead of applying fresh manure like we used to do' and then [a producer from Guadalajara] came and talked about his experiences, and explained the importance of compost and how it had worked for him in Jalisco, and the producers started to say 'ah, it isn't just these crazy people here trying to promote this way of doing things, but this is happening in other places too.' And it was important that that information came from another producer.

While participation in workshops, direct exchange visits between markets, and face-to-face interactions at MNLOM assemblies and other events were the preferred forms of communication and information-sharing, the organization's website and email contact list also provide complementary means of inter-market knowledge exchange. A producer from Oaxaca expressed his appreciation for the resources sent out regularly by the MNLOM coordination, noting that they "include a combination of international and national experiences. For example…we received the regulations of Costa Rica's organic agriculture law, and that kind of thing motivates us a lot." In addition to helping build professional and technical capacity, increase the legitimacy of MNLOM work in the eyes of its membership base, and strengthen participant motivation, Kramer et al. (2001) suggest that information-sharing also has the potential to improve organizational governance, as decision-making processes can be better informed.

Trust

While the MNLOM's work to promote information-sharing and communication within the local organic movement is, to an extent, useful in its own right, Tyler (1998: 278) argues that "[t]he credibility of a communicator or communication is strongly affected by the degree to which those experiencing the communication trust the motives of the communicator." Indeed, without the presence of trust within a community or organization, it is essentially impossible to build social capital and reap its benefits (see Putnam 1994; Kramer et al. 2001). As Ostrom and Ahn (2008: 22) explain, "trust is the core link between social capital and collective action."

In the case of the MNLOM, the processes of identity construction and information-sharing described above were partly predicated on pre-existing levels of trust based largely on a shared group membership; however, they also helped consolidate and increase trusting

relationships between a variety of actors involved in Mexico's local organic sector. The ability of networking activities to promote trust-based relationships is consistent with work by Granovetter (1985), Putnam (1993), and Ostrom and Ahn (2007), and is expressed in Kramer et al.'s (2001: 174) assertion that a network structure plays a key role in the "emergence and maintenance of trust within groups and organizations."

A variety of comments and events offered clear demonstrations of the presence of trust-based relationships within the MNLOM. For example, one producer suggested that the organization's members "are a family more than anything else." That familial feeling was evident when, at a 2008 General Assembly, a market coordinator from Veracruz opened the meeting with an exercise in which attendees formed a circle and took turns embracing each other. A co-founder of the organization present at the meeting recalled thinking:

> There are very few places where you can do that kind of thing. If they obligate you to do it, you can give a hug to everyone, but in this case I didn't feel obligated. You know practically everyone there, so you embrace them with a sense of real pleasure, because some of them you haven't seen in three months, five months, a year…but each time you do see them, you feel that friendship, that trust, and I think with very few groups of people you have the opportunity to feel that…Of course with family, but it is family. That's how I see it.

According to Kramer et al. (2001: 182), such public displays of friendly, trusting relationships within a group serve an essential function, as they "signal to others the importance [that group members] assign to the preservation of collective trust", while simultaneously generating positive emotional responses and reaffirming members' dedication to work toward group success.

Collective action

Constructing a shared identity, facilitating information-exchange, and promoting trusting

relationships are all important ways in which the MNLOM has helped build social capital within Mexico's local organic movement; however, the purpose that this serves is limited if it cannot be translated into some form of collective agency and action, which Flora and Flora (2008: 373) define as "the ability of a group of people to solve common problems together." In the case of the MNLOM, a number of examples provide evidence of how the organization has been able to use the network structure as a platform from which to translate local and regional work into collective action at a greater scale.

Without a doubt, the most widely recognized example of effective collective action on the part of the MNLOM has been its successful efforts to ensure the inclusion of participatory certification in Mexico's organic legislation (a topic that will be the subject of more detailed discussion in Chapters 7 and 8). In addition to that specific achievement – without which the majority of the country's small-scale organic producers would have lost the ability to use the organic label – the MNLOM was also a key participant in the creation of draft regulations for the implementation of the national organic law, it participates annually in the country's expo of organic products – in spite of initial resistance from a sector that favours large-scale, export-oriented, third party certified producers – and it recently secured significant support from the *Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria* (SENASICA, a branch of the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture responsible for food safety) to help develop its participatory certification systems.

All of these successes have contributed to increased recognition of Mexico's local organic movement, and the small-scale producers who form its backbone. Describing the dramatic nature of the degree of successful collective action engaged in by the MNLOM, a former organizer explained that, in spite of its relatively small size, the organization has been the primary national voice, not just for the local organic movement, but for the organic sector as a whole:

> All of this [about the importance of the organic sector, and the lack of support it has received from government] has been said by the [MNLOM], and we are very very few. I mean, we are a few hundred producers, out of 128 000 [organic producers in Mexico]. We don't cover more than a few hundred hectares, when in Mexico there are almost 400 000 under organic production. But even so, the [MNLOM] has taken on the role – and how great that they have, because if they hadn't, no one would – of discussing publicly the deficiencies that exist in terms of support from the state, from universities, the need for promotion…

A market organizer added that "the [MNLOM] plays an essential role within Mexico's broader organic sector, because it has a lot of power, because there are people within it whose capacity has been built over the years, and so, as an organization, it has a lot to contribute outside of its own boundaries."

6.5 Pressures for Centralization

The above discussion outlined four specific, closely inter-related ways in which the MNLOM has contributed to the creation of social capital within Mexico's local organic movement. However, while this may have increased the *potential* for participatory governance to function within the organization, other co-existing forces have been pushing in an opposing direction. Specifically, three main factors can be identified as encouraging adherence to a more centralized, hierarchical model of organizational governance: 1) the practical challenges that inhibit many MNLOM members' level of active engagement; 2) the efficiency and expediency associated with centralization, and; 3) internal power dynamics with deep socio-cultural roots.

The 'burden' of participation

Perhaps the most common critique of any attempt at participatory engagement, whether governance-related or otherwise, is that the expectations placed on grassroots actors can be

overly burdensome, and thus unrealistic (see Fung and Wright 2001; Gaventa 2006). This issue is reflected in the relative exclusion of producers from decision-making processes within the MNLOM and many (though not all) of its individual member markets, as the demanding schedules and isolated locations of many small-scale ecological farmers in Mexico renders involvement in governance activities exceedingly difficult. Reflecting the reality of many, one MNLOM producer explained that she "participates very little in decision-making [in her market], because [she is] hardly able to be present when decisions are made." Similarly, at the network level, more than 75% of the producers surveyed reported never having attended any MNLOM meeting.

In spite of the practical realities that limit *actual* producer participation in the governance of the MNLOM and its markets, when asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the *ability* to participate in market decision-making, almost three quarters of those surveyed (71%) were not unsatisfied (see Figure 18). For some, a relatively high level of reported satisfaction may represent an appreciation for real opportunities to engage in decision-making processes; however, for others it may be more reflective of a belief that a lack of engagement owes more to their own material and/or personal circumstances than any purposeful attempts at exclusion. This latter perception is consistent with Fung and Wright's (2001) suggestion that, in many cases, the exclusion of grassroots actors from decision-making processes occurs in an entirely unintentional manner, or even against the direct wishes of leaders. One market coordinator expressed this position: "Decisions [about how to run the market] do tend to be made by a small group, but it is *not* because we have a little dictatorship. It's because [many producers] don't have the means to participate…We try very hard to form committees, but in the end it is always the same three people doing the work and making the decisions."

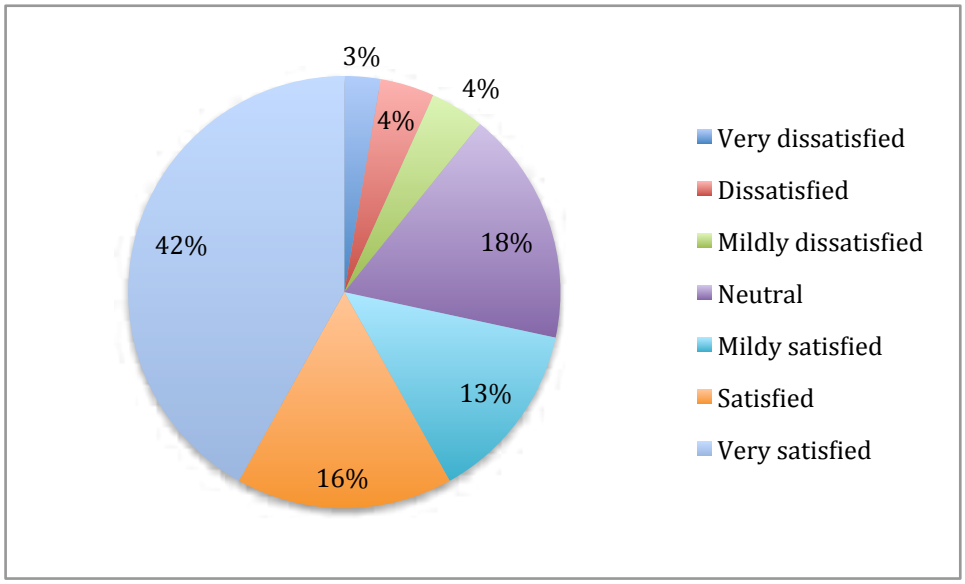

Figure 18: *Producer satisfaction with ability to participate in market decision-making*

The issue of the potentially burdensome nature of participation is not entirely limited to MNLOM producers. Rather, those involved in coordinating markets and the network can also find their ability to participate limited by time pressures, or other issues. One of the people involved in the early days of network formation explained how a lack of active engagement on the part of coordinators can inhibit the effectiveness of inter-organizational communication:

> The easiest way [to ensure participatory decision-making] would be to say there is certain information at the level of the network, such as invitations [for MNLOM representatives to participate in events], changes we want to make, projects…and we know that the organizational base wants to be involved [in deciding what gets done], so we communicate with the 20 coordinators and they pass the information along to the broader membership. That would be logical. But the reality is, you send the emails, or you even make direct phone calls…and many coordinators, more than half I would guess, for some reason or other do not pass it on…so something is not working. The communication breaks down.

The efficiency and effectiveness of a pyramidal power structure

Many of those directly involved in the coordination of the MNLOM and/or its member markets were cognizant of the contradiction inherent in having a project grounded in participatory ideals be governed in a relatively centralized manner. However, although a lack of broad-based participation – especially on the part of producers – was considered less than ideal, this perception tended to be tempered by the belief that centralization did permit a certain useful degree of efficiency and effectiveness in terms of market and network management. One market coordinator explained her ambivalence on the subject: "Since no one shows up at the [market management] meetings I make all the decisions by myself. That has its pros and cons. I might prefer to have more participation from the other producers but I understand why they don't participate, and in some ways it actually makes things easier. In the end, I'm ok with the way things are."

This tension between the MNLOM's ideological aspirations and the practical realities with which its members are confronted is reflective of the argument that a pyramidal power structure with centralized leadership can be a highly efficient form of organizational management (see Barraket 2005). Echoing the words of the aforementioned market manager, another coordinator offered a well-articulated expression of this dilemma between ideology and pragmatism:

> I would like to see that, within the market, the producers really become empowered, to the extent that I could say, 'goodbye, I'll come visit.' But, on the other hand, capacity-building, activity programs, conferences, workshops, artistic activities, all of these things have been part of the market concept from the beginning, and I think it's hard to imagine the producers doing all that, and taking care of relationships with academics, and with the media, etc., etc., if they are barely able to find time to do all the work involved in production….

> And you could sacrifice some of the other elements [of the market] but I feel like those elements are important…

Finally, research results made clear that many MNLOM members identify Chapingo as the site of considerable power and decision-making concentration within the organization. The choice of words of one market coordinator is telling: "I mean, the network is Chapingo, no?" In part, this concentration can be considered a natural extension of the processes that led to the creation of the network – i.e. initial funding was channeled through actors at the University of Chapingo, and those individuals were able to incorporate MNLOM management into their university work, thereby providing essential in-kind resources (including staff time, office space, etc.), without which the organization's ability to function would have been severely limited. Chapingo's status as Mexico's most prominent agricultural university, and the political connections of the MNLOM leadership based there, provide further rationale for its central position. This is all in keeping with observations by Benn and Onyx (2005) that the allocation of power to a relatively small group of elite actors can, in some ways, benefit an organization by facilitating access to resources, power and legitimacy in the eyes of external – particularly institutional – observers.

Power dynamics

The previous two sections have alluded, albeit somewhat indirectly, to the notion that power dynamics exert considerable influence on where, and in whose hands, the authority to govern the MNLOM lies. In his discussion of multiple forms of participatory governance, Gaventa (2006: 25) draws on Cornwall (2002) to directly address this issue: "Simply opening new spaces for engagement does not mean they will be filled by different voices. Rather, spaces are imbued and filled with prior power relations, affecting who enters them, with what knowledge and with what effects."

For the almost half of MNLOM producers who have achieved some level of post-secondary education (and, in some cases, have experience in professions such as teaching, accounting, law or architecture), such power relations may be a relatively minor issue in terms of impacting participation levels; however, for the other half of the MNLOM producer population, Gaventa's comment may be considerably more relevant. For example, one such producer suggested that producer exclusion from decision-making processes should not be viewed merely a function of insufficient time and energy, or other material concerns. Rather, "[i]t can be hard for us to participate because we lack [formal] education. We don't know how to express ourselves; we feel ignorant. I mean, we know things, but often we can't explain what we know." Even if participatory governance structures exist, then, producers who have internalized such feelings of disempowerment may find it impossible to engage in them.

To return to the language of social capital, power dynamics that favour more centralized governance structures within the MNLOM could also be seen, in part at least, as indicative of an imbalance between levels of existing bonding and bridging social capital. As Flora and Flora (2008: 128) explain, when bridging social capital outweighs bonding social capital, control tends to be "exercised by community elites, helping professionals or, in the most extreme form, local 'bosses'." In the case of the MNLOM, the leadership certainly views itself as forming part of Mexico's local organic community; however, there is no doubt that it represents a relatively elite part of that community, characterized by high-level academic positioning, strong connections to powerful government actors and, perhaps most importantly, direct linkages to significant governmental and non-governmental funding sources. Until such bridging linkages are more equally balanced by the kind of primarily bonding connections discussed earlier in this chapter, attempts to institute participatory governance structures within the MNLOM may be met with significant challenges.

6.6 Negative Impacts of Centralized Governance

Mistrust, resentment, and conflict

In spite of the pressures that could be considered natural reasons for the MNLOM to rely on more centralized governance mechanisms, there is evidence that such a structure also has a number of negative implications. The first of these implications is that the concentration of power and authority can generate feelings of distrust and resentment on the part of group members who experience exclusion. Such feelings can be a source of significant inter-organizational conflict and can inhibit a group's ability to engage in useful risk-taking behavior (Kramer et al. 2001). They can also contribute to a "personalization of politics", which constrains effective discussion and resolution of contentious problems because, rather than group members engaging in good faith debate based on mutual respect and trust, "lines are drawn and labels are assigned according to one's stance on a particular issues" (Flora and Flora 2008: 133).

One specific example of how decision-making processes perceived to be lacking in terms of both inclusivity and transparency can lead to mistrust and conflict is what happened when, as outlined earlier in this chapter, the Chapingo-based coordination sought to establish the MNLOM as a legally recognized NGO.[26] In the constitution that was created, 21 individuals representing 10 markets were named as comprising "the legal entity collectively designated as the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets…"[27] Both on and after the meeting at which this constitution was adopted, the MNLOM leadership made efforts to assure

26 This decision was made primarily so that the MNLOM could manage its own funds, rather than being obligated to have them channeled through private individuals or the University of Chapingo. It resulted in the signing of a constitutional document at an MNLOM meeting held in Chapingo on November 14, 2008.

27 While invitations were extended to all markets to submit the names of representatives to be included in the constitution, official identification documents were required and, for a variety of reasons, not all markets were able to meet the deadline for submitting these documents. In addition, in some markets the processes for choosing who would be named as a representative were unclear.

people that, even if they or their market had not been named, their membership in the organization was in no way diminished.[28] While this did assuage the concerns of some, the issue remained a source of conflict months, and even years, later. In the words of one producer: "Now that [the MNLOM] has been constituted, we were unable to appear as founding members…and I know that we *are* actually members, but we still do not appear in the constitution, and when we're in that document, I'm going to feel better."

While there are no guarantees that, had the decision to form a legal entity been made in a more participatory and transparent manner, the process would have been conflict-free, there is little doubt that some concern and resentment could have been avoided. As another producer (whose name did not appear in the constitution) explained: "The problem is that there was no clear process for deciding who would appear [in the constitution]. They never said to me 'now we're going to decide who the representatives of the network are going to be'." This position is reflective of Tyler's (1998) suggestion that, in order for people to willingly accept a group decision, it is very important that there is at least a *perception* of procedural fairness.

The issue of procedural fairness (or perceived lack thereof) has also been a problem with regard to the allocation of resources within the MNLOM. While a number of examples could be cited, perhaps the most widely recognized controversies involved two instances in which the MNLOM coordination chose people to participate in trips to Canada.[29] In both cases, information regarding the trips was not widely shared until after the individuals had

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28 One of the primary points made to bolster this assertion was the fact that one of the network's co-founders, and a long-time active participant in its coordination, was also not named in the constitution.

29 In both cases, the invitations were to visit the Falls Brook Centre – the Canadian NGO that has, for years, supported the work of the MNLOM. In the first instance, MNLOM leadership sent two Chapingo-based members closely associated with its team. In the second case, a market coordinator from Puebla and producers from Tlaxcala and Baja California were chosen. (A coordinator from Metepec also participated in the trip; however, her invitation was made directly by the Canadian NGO as the result of a pre-existing relationship.)

returned to Mexico. The coordination cited the need to respond quickly to the invitations in order to allow time to secure travel visas as the primary reason for a lack of consultation; however, this explanation was unsatisfactory to many. One producer expressed frustration, noting that "when they went to Canada, that's wonderful, but why them? They say that the invitation was to [the MNLOM], but I think for that kind of thing there needs to be a process, that they inform us 'we have received an invitation.' I wouldn't have gone, I couldn't have, so it isn't about me. It's that it isn't right that we only find out about this after the fact."

The kind of tensions described above are not merely a consequence of specific decisions on any particular issue, but are fostered more generally by an atmosphere in which some MNLOM members feel disconnected from the organization's governance structure and, even more importantly, perceive a lack of clarity regarding the mechanisms of which that structure consists. As one producer explained, "there is no clear principle outlining who gets [MNLOM] money and for what. Instead, it goes to whoever it occurs to [the coordination] to give it to, or whoever is in [the coordination's] favour at a particular moment." Another (who has personally attended a number of MNLOM meetings) added that "there is no clear line in terms of what are the functions of the network, what are the functions of each market, and who decides what in which space…There is a disconnect between the [MNLOM] coordination and its base [consisting primarily of producers in the member markets]."

Disengagement

In addition to provoking feelings of suspicion, resentment and personalized conflict, the centralization of MNLOM governance also presents a threat to the bonds of social capital that, as described earlier in this chapter, the organization has worked hard to construct.

Indeed, Putnam (1994: 102) argues that, when communities are characterized largely by vertical relationships, "the very concept of citizenship is stunted", thus rendering participatory engagement effectively impossible.

While the MNLOM is certainly not characterized entirely by vertical relationships, (rather tensions between competing interests create simultaneous pressures for verticality and horizontality), a number of signs point to the potential for at least some disengagement caused by frustrations regarding power concentration and the ensuing atmosphere of mistrust it can create. One form of such disengagement is the inhibition of open communication regarding contentious issues that was alluded to above. As one producer explained, "[t]here are a lot of things that you can't say in a public [MNLOM] meeting, because it's destructive, and the last thing you want is to destroy things." A number of others expressed the concern that, if they engaged in open criticism of the MNLOM coordination specifically, or governance structures more generally, they could suffer personal reprisals and/or potentially harm the overall progress of the organization's work.

A reticence on the part of some MNLOM actors to engage in open communication about challenging issues could be viewed, in part, as a reflection of the mistrust and resentments associated with a governance structure that lacks clarity, transparency, and inclusiveness; however, other issues of power and control are also at play. Specifically, the MNLOM has been, to an extent, characterized by the aforementioned personalization of politics, as discussions related to governance have sometimes been characterized by a confrontational tone. In the words of one market coordinator, witnessing expressions of such a tone "demobilize and demotivate us all significantly." Another market organizer – a relative newcomer to the MNLOM – recognized this danger when, at a national meeting, a clearly well-thought out and prepared proposal presented by an individual was received negatively.

Responding to what he saw, the newcomer made an impassioned plea for people to pay attention:

> I'm new here, but I see what's happening, and it's the same thing that happens at the local level, and it's very sad…Someone did an amazing job, and put a lot of volunteer time and effort into a proposal [for changes to MNLOM governance mechanisms]…and instead of congratulating him, he gets attacked, for reasons of politics and power. If people make excellent proposals that get rejected because of political reasons, we won't advance, because people lose the desire to participate.

This statement echoes Flora and Flora's (2008) assertion that, when networks are not functioning properly, rather than individuals perceiving group success as their own, they perceive the successes of one member as occurring at the expense of others. In such circumstances, the motivation to work on behalf of the group is significantly inhibited.

6.7 Signs of Emerging Participatory Governance

In his discussion of participatory governance models, Gaventa (2006: 8) suggests that true democracy-building cannot simply be achieved through "the adoption of a standard recipe of institutional designs", but rather must be conceived of as "an ongoing process of struggle and contestation." As such, it should perhaps not be surprising that competing tendencies both for and against participatory governance can be observed within the MNLOM. Drawing on experiences working with other networks, one market organizer suggested that the difficulties facing the MNLOM as it seeks to develop effective governance structures "are very normal. Knowing other networks, other movements, wow, [working on communication and governance] is always a struggle, and it can be very exhausting…it is a learning process that has to happen internally, every day."

While potentially difficult and exhausting, efforts to build mechanisms within the MNLOM

that would allow for more broad-based participation in decision-making process have come to be considered a priority for many. This is largely the case because a governance structure that is (or is even perceived to be) undemocratic, in the words of one market organizer, "goes directly against what is supposedly guiding our [local organic] movement…transparency, and building more equitable relationships…" In recognition of this discordance between ideology and practice, a network organizer explained that the MNLOM has now matured to the point where it is ready to begin a consultative process of "establishing mechanisms that clearly outline how decisions are made…how network representatives are elected…who is coordinator [and] what is the profile of each position [within the organization]." Evidence that such a process has indeed begun includes the fact that, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, four recent MNLOM meetings devoted significant time and attention to the subject of the organization's governance structure, including its systems of internal communication.

The discussions that have occurred at these meetings have not been easy, as the kind of power dynamics, personalization of politics, and mistrust described above are not entirely absent. Importantly, however, the fact that open debate is taking place at all indicates a willingness on the part of both the MNLOM membership base and leadership to engage in the kind of deliberative process that forms the basis of participatory governance models (see Fung and Wright 2001; Fung 2003; Gaventa 2006). It is also indicative of the significant advances that the MNLOM has made in constructing social capital within the local organic movement, as the push for more participatory governance has largely been driven from below, by producers and market organizers who feel ready to take on more ownership of – and responsibility for – the organization.

Drawing on Wheelan et al.'s (2003: 224) stages of organizational development, the increasing pressure for increased participation that is coming from the MNLOM's membership base could be taken as evidence that the organization has moved from the first

stage – characterized largely by group dependency on centralized leadership – to the second stage, "in which members disagree among themselves about group goals and procedures." Although this stage is inevitably characterized by significant conflict, Wheelan et al. (2003: 224) suggest that such conflict is actually "necessary for the establishment of trust and a climate in which members feel free to disagree with each other." Indeed, as discussed above, there are already signs that trust and open disagreement are gradually becoming more embedded in the MNLOM's organizational culture. If continued progress is made in this direction, the MNLOM could be considered to have entered a third stage of evolution, "characterized by more mature negotiations about roles, organization, and procedures… [and] work to solidify positive working relationships…" (Wheelan et al., 2003: 224).

6.8 Summary

This chapter explored the multiple, and sometimes opposing, ways in which the MNLOM is confronting issues of organizational governance as it both expands and matures. On the one hand, the organization's philosophy is deeply grounded in the ideals of grassroots participation, mutual trust, open communication, and horizontality, and these values are reflected in MNLOM achievements in building social capital within Mexico's organic movement. However, although ideological commitment and increasing social capital might create significant potential for the MNLOM membership base to actively engage in governance activities, the sometimes burdensome nature of participation (particularly for producers), certain efficiencies associated with centralization (particularly in Chapingo), and internal power dynamics act as pressures contrary to participatory governance.

In spite of these challenges, there is evidence of growing recognition by the MNLOM's leadership and membership base of the negative impacts of governance and communication structures perceived by some to be lacking in inclusivity and transparency. As a result, the

organization has showed signs of gradual movement toward a governance framework that, in both theory and practice, is based on the notion of true participatory governance.

Chapter 7: Participatory Guarantee Systems

7.1 Introduction

In many ways, the issues surrounding the certification of organic products mirror some of the broader tensions that exist between the conventional food system model and the alternatives that have emerged to challenge it. On the one hand, there is what has come to be known as mainstream or, somewhat ironically, conventional organic certification. Also referred to as third party certification, this framework allows organic producers to enter the rapidly increasing global market for organic products. When viewed through the lens of some of the ideas presented in Chapter 2, this certification option can be seen as having achieved hegemonic status, as it is widely considered the only possible way to guarantee the authenticity of an organic product. Indeed, in many jurisdictions third party certification has been made a legal requirement for use of the term 'organic'.

In spite of its dominance, however, the third party certification model has not gone unchallenged. To date, the most widely recognized alternative certification framework is the participatory guarantee system (PGS), also commonly referred to as participatory organic certification, or simply participatory certification. At a practical level, PGS seeks to make organic certification more accessible to small-scale producers (particularly, but not exclusively, in the global South). More broadly, it also attempts to challenge some of the ideological assumptions that underlie the third party certification perspective – for example, the prioritization of export-oriented production, the notion that organic agriculture can be measured primarily in terms of prohibited and allowed inputs, and the idea that only formally trained experts can be trusted to make valid determinations of certification status.

This chapter examines some key themes related to the subject of PGS, with a focus on exploring the tensions inherent in translating what is, in many respects, an alternative

ideological approach to organic guarantees, into a system that can function in a practical way in a world still largely governed by conventional thinking. The discussion will begin by briefly outlining the rationale behind PGS, the concept's major tenets, and its global relevance. The extent to which PGS is currently being practiced in Mexico will then be presented. These descriptive sections will be followed by an analysis of three specific ways in which the conventional-alternative debate is manifested in the development of PGS in Mexico. First, the need for the PGS movement to strike a delicate balance between maintaining space for local control and flexibility, and creating the degree of standardization necessary to ease functioning and assure legislative recognition will be explored. The chapter will then examine the issue of trust, and both the benefits and challenges of trying to engage in a trust-based system will be presented. Finally, the gap between the participatory ideal of PGS and the levels of active participation that have actually been achieved will be outlined.

7.2 Participatory Guarantee Systems

The idea of providing consumers of organic products with some form of guarantee that what they are consuming is truly organic has been around since the early days of the organic movement. Until the 1990s, these guarantee systems tended to be self-regulatory, voluntary, and based on a process of peer review (Seppänen and Helenius 2004; González and Nigh 2005). However, as the organic sector increased in scale, there has been a shift towards a third party model, in which standards and verification procedures are determined by independent agencies, certifications are carried out by professional inspectors and extension assistance is divorced from certification (González and Nigh 2005; Mutersbaugh2005).

The main benefits of this third party certification framework are that it offers a high degree of accountability and objectivity, and conforms to standards set by national governments

and organizations such as the International Standards Organization (ISO), thereby granting producers access to the potentially lucrative niche organic market. In spite of these benefits, Nelson et al. (2010: 227) note that third party certification has also been criticized, primarily "for promoting an input substitution model of organic agriculture, for being removed from the grassroots level, and for its inaccessibility to many small-scale producers." In response to these issues, a number of alternatives have emerged, including cooperativization and internal control systems (which reduce the bureaucratic and cost barriers to third party certification), alternative labeling strategies (which allow producers and consumers to create their own locally-based definition of sustainable production) and, in recent years, the idea of a participatory form of organic certification that has come to be referred to as participatory guarantee systems (PGS).

In its 2008 report on PGS, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) notes that "[t]he very lifeblood of these programs lies in the fact that they are created by the very farmers and consumers that they serve. As such, they are adopted and specific to the individual communities, geographies, politics and markets of their origin." Although this makes developing a concise definition challenging, in 2008 the IFOAM-based International PGS Task Force agreed that PGS could generally be defined as "locally focused quality assurance systems [that] certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange" (IFOAM 2011: n.p.). They also "tend to address not only the quality assurance of the product, but are linked to alternative marketing approaches (home deliveries, community supported agriculture groups, farmers' markets, popular fairs) and help to educate consumers about products grown or processed with organic methods" (Källander 2008: 1). Such a description is evocative of Ostrom's (1990) discussion of locally-grounded institutions for collective action, which "can influence behavior directly by establishing mechanisms of

rewards and punishments or indirectly to help individuals govern themselves by providing information, technical advice, alternative conflict-resolution mechanisms, and so forth" (Ostrom and Ahn 2008: 24-25).

The first international workshop on PGS was held in Brazil in 2004, with representatives from initiatives in Argentina, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, India, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, New Zealand, Palestine, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, the United States, Uganda and Uruguay. Today, IFOAM hosts an international task force devoted to promoting PGS, and its PGS database contains records for over 13 000 certified producers spread over initiatives in 18 countries.[30] The most prominent leader in the PGS movement to date has been Brazil, where the Ecovida network of ecological producers has certified over 3000 producers in the Southernmost part of the country, and has managed to create a nationally recognized seal for PGS certified products (see Zanasi et al. 2009). In addition to the significant support received from NGOs and producer associations such as Ecovida, PGS also has the important backing of IFOAM and has been included in legislation governing the organic sectors of a number of countries, including Bolivia, Brazil and Mexico.

7.3 PGS in Mexico[31]

A rationale for adopting PGS

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the majority of producers participating in the MNLOM markets have not had their production certified as organic by a third party agency. Nevertheless, almost all of those surveyed indicated that they felt having some form of certification system

30 Given the highly grassroots, and in many cases still experimental, nature of PGS initiatives, the numbers registered in the database are likely a significant underestimation of the actual numbers of producers and consumers engaged in some way in PGS around the world. This is borne out by stories presented in the PGS Task Force's monthly newsletter, which recounts many experiences with participatory certification that are not registered in the database.

31 For a more detailed account of how PGS functions on the ground in Mexico, as well as the rationale behind its adoption, see Nelson et al. (2010).

in place within a local organic market was highly important as a means of maintaining market integrity and consumer confidence. When asked to rate this importance on a scale of 1 to 7, the average response was 6.6. Local organic market consumers reported similar feelings, with 88% of those surveyed feeling that it was important for the markets to have some form of organic certification system in place as a complement to the trust built between producer and consumer. Again, this is reflective of Ostrom and Ahn's (2008: 22, italics added) argument that, even within communities already characterized by high levels of social capital and trust, that trust is "enhanced when individuals…are networked with one another, and are within *institutions* that reward honest behavior."

While producer and consumer desire for some kind of certification mechanism within MNLOM markets is certainly important, the issue of actively implementing certification systems became considerably more pressing following the 2006 adoption of a national law governing the organic sector. This law, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8, requires Mexican producers to be certified – either by an accredited third party agency or through a recognized PGS – in order to refer to their production as organic.

With its holistic interpretation of organic agriculture, which includes a focus on local production-consumption networks, social justice, and community building, PGS can be situated easily within the food sovereignty framework presented in Chapter 2, which, as noted in Chapter 5, is at the heart of the work done by the MNLOM. In addition to these ideological linkages, PGS's accessibility to the kind of small-scale producers who dominate the MNLOM markets has made it an appealing alternative, as most cannot afford the cost, or navigate the bureaucracy of third party certification.

Extent of PGS practice

In spite of its popularity when compared to third party certification, PGS has still not been

adopted uniformly across the MNLOM, and there are gaps in its implementation, even within markets where it is being actively practiced. At the time that research was conducted, all 10 participating markets were engaged to some extent in PGS, and almost all (89%) of the producers surveyed were able to explain its basic tenets, making mention for example of the joint participation of producers and consumers in the certification committees, the low costs and minimal bureaucracy involved, the extension work done in conjunction with certification, and the importance of trust as the underlying fixture of the process. A slim majority (60%) of the producers surveyed reported having achieved organic certification through their market's PGS[32]. Almost half (46%) also spent time volunteering as members of their market's participatory certification committee, making certification visits to fellow farmers (see Figure 19).

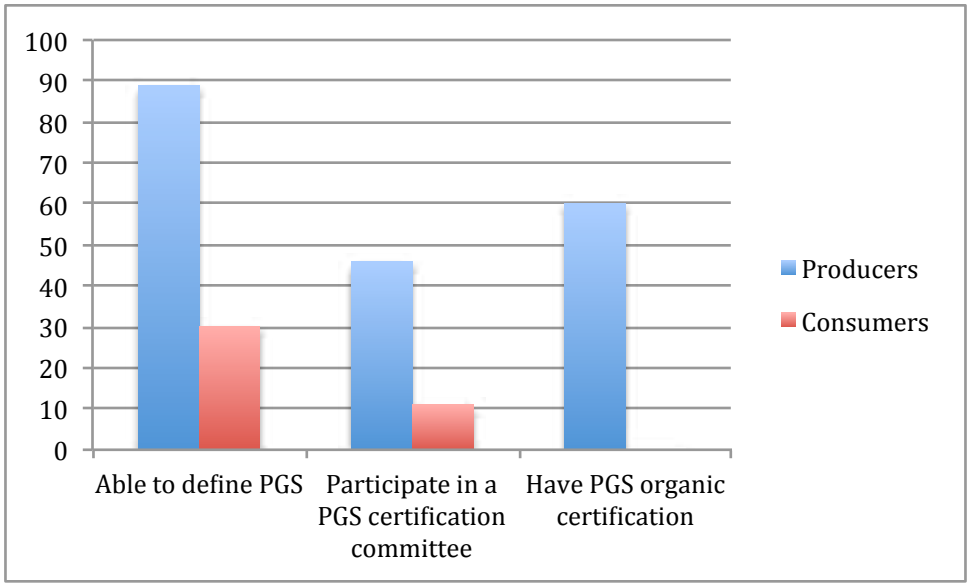

Figure 19: *Awareness of and participation in PGS (% of population)*

Although surveys and interviews with consumers were only conducted in four markets,

32 As discussed in Chapter 5, the remaining 40% of producers differentiated their goods in some way from the certified organic products offered, for example through the use of signage or colour-coded table coverings.

and the consumer population was much smaller than that of producers, results demonstrate a clear gap between the two groups in terms of awareness of, and participation in, participatory guarantee systems. Whereas 89% of MNLOM producers were able to readily define participatory certification, only 30% of consumers could do the same. The majority had never heard of the term, while a small number were familiar with it, but did not know what it meant. Only 27% reported that PGS contributed to the trust they had in the products available at an MNLOM market, with direct trust in the producers and in the market as a whole acting as more common guarantors of organic quality (see Figure 20). Finally, only 11% of the consumers surveyed reported participating in a participatory certification committee (see Figure 19).

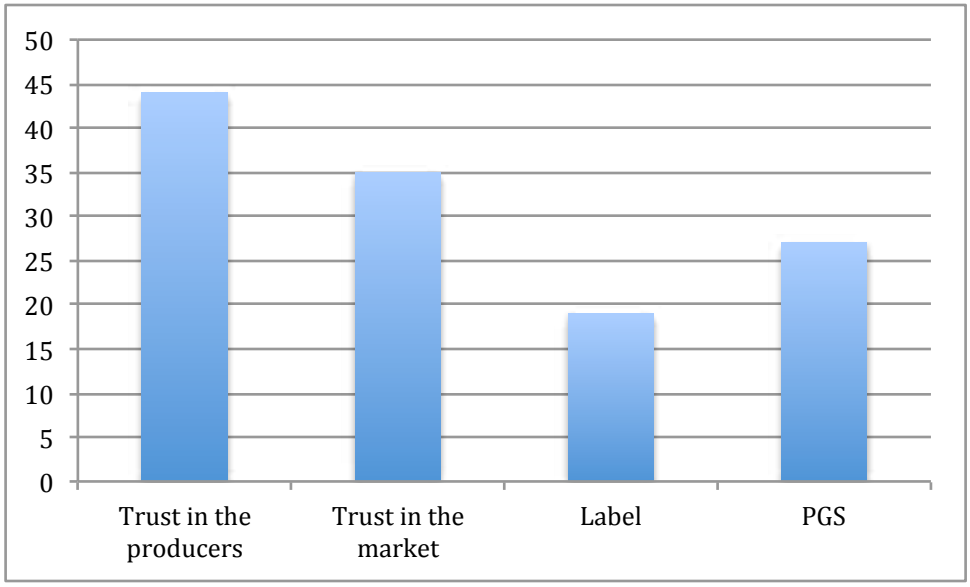

Figure 20: *Main factors contributing to consumer trust in MNLOM products (% of respondents citing each factor)*

The reach of PGS validity

Article 24 of Mexico's Organic Products Law explicitly states that "participatory organic certification will be promoted for small-scale producers organized to that effect…[so that their products] can be sold as organic *within the national market*" (italics added).

As such, currently, products certified through a PGS in Mexico can legally be sold as organic anywhere within, but not outside of, the country's borders. For the vast majority of MNLOM producers, the scale of their operations act as a natural barrier against export; however, when asked their opinion on the matter, 62% felt that PGS certification should be considered valid internationally so that sale outside of Mexico could be at least a potential option (see Figure 21). The most geographically restricted opinion regarding PGS validity – that the certification should only be considered valid within the market where it is carried out – was held by only 9% of respondents. In most cases, these respondents cited an ideological commitment to prioritizing local markets as the main reason for their opinion.

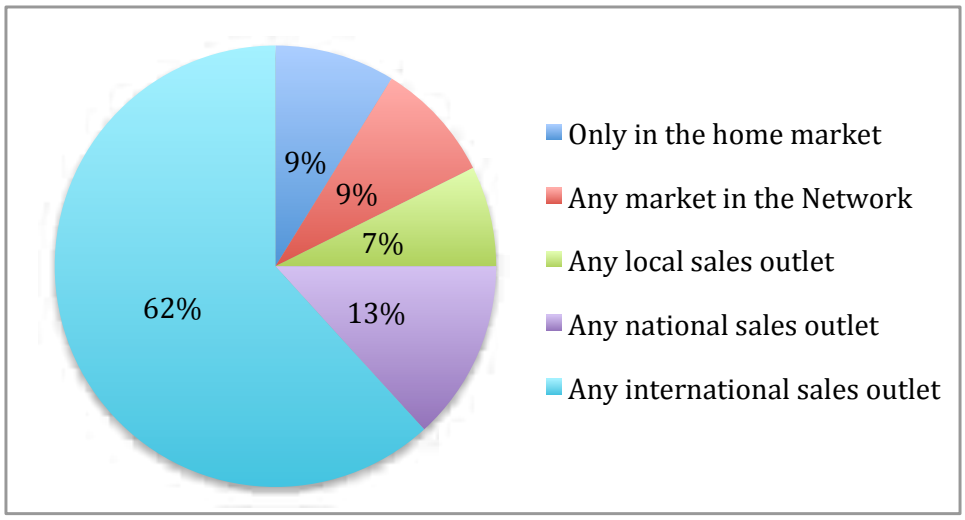

Figure 21: *Producer opinion on the geographical reach of the PGS label*

On the surface, the desire on the part of so many MNLOM producers to use PGS as a platform for expanding market access could be perceived as contrary to the promotion of a food sovereignty-based vision of locally-based production-consumption chains; however, the Vía Campesina has made clear that food sovereignty should not be viewed as a complete rejection of non-local trade, but rather as a declaration that such trade must be conducted within a framework not governed by conventional relationships of domination (Patel

2009). Seen through this lens, the use of a grassroots-based alternative to conventional organic certification may be viewed as a concrete example of how actors that have been marginalized by the global market system can potentially enter that very system on their own terms.

7.4 Maintaining a Grassroots Approach While Achieving Legitimacy

Legal recognition

Ostrom (1990: 212) argues that "regional and national governments can play a positive role in providing facilities to enhance the ability [of those involved in an institution for collective action] to engage in effective institutional design." Indeed, engaging with government to achieve legislative recognition has been widely recognized as critical to the success of PGS, and working toward this goal is considered a priority at the global level (see IFOAM 2008; Källander 2008; Meirelles 2010; Nelson et al. 2010). However, the same people arguing in favour of this legislative recognition acknowledge that there are some inherent challenges when it comes to incorporating PGS into a legal framework in a way that allows it to maintain its core principles. Källander (2008: 23) suggests that "there lies an interesting challenge, or even contradiction, in making a participatory guarantee system guide or manual" and they pose the question of whether it is even possible to successfully walk the line between "guiding and prescribing" (with the latter being seen in a negative light). Although this observation specifically references the development of *non*-legislative PGS norms, it is only more relevant when it comes to writing PGS into laws, which by their very nature are even more prescriptive than guides or manuals.

In Mexico, the MNLOM (which is the main proponent of PGS in the country) was able to successfully lobby the government to include the concept in its 2006 Organic Products Law. This was widely seen as a coup for supporters of non-industrial organics within the

country; however, the victory signaled the beginning of a challenging process to develop regulations clear and formal enough to be acceptable to SAGARPA, but flexible and inclusive enough to be consistent with the PGS philosophy. The details of this process, including a number of broad benefits and limitations, will be elaborated upon further in Chapter 8; however, two very specific challenges are worth noting here.

The first such challenge relates to the difficult – if not impossible – nature of translating the more alternative, or radical, elements of the PGS vision into law.[33] As an MNLOM market organizer explained, "our work implies a different world vision, different values, and we can talk about that here [at an MNLOM meeting], but how are we ever going to be able to get it put into the regulations [for the national organic law]?" Another concurred that "participatory certification is a civil society idea, a social process, and not something that can ever really be put into a law..." These discomforts could be considered reflective of Tovey's (1997: 33) assertion that, when governments seek to institutionalize organic agriculture through the creation of regulatory standards, they necessarily "wrench the production practices free from [the ideological content of the movement] and slot them into a di erent context in which they do not in fact fit at all easily."

Others have suggested that the process of trying to institutionalize an organic philosophy inevitably leads to suppression of the broader values put forward by more alternatively-oriented actors within the organic movement, which are seen as threatening to the dominant structures of industrial capitalist society (see Vos 2000; Goodman 2000; Rigby and Cáceres 2001). Indeed, a number of research participants were fearful about potential co-opting, and thereby conventionalizing, of the MNLOM agenda that could result from government

33 Notably, as mentioned in Chapter 5, even within the organization there are tensions between advocates of a more radically alternative food system vision and those with somewhat more conventional ideas regarding local organic markets.

involvement. Specifically questioning the state's ability to deal successfully with PGS one MNLOM leader suggested that "a good idea in the hands of the government is a lost idea."

If the MNLOM's more alternative positions on social, ecological and economic justice may be challenging – if not impossible – to incorporate into the relatively narrow scope of the legal framework governing Mexico's organic sector, perhaps equally challenging were attempts to use a participatory, consensus-based approach to develop national regulations for PGS. Notably, both the MNLOM and the Mexican government made attempts to be inclusive in the drafting of the regulations, which was done through a series of participatory meetings and workshops held over a two year period[34]. However, such attempts were fraught with difficulties. One market organizer who participated in the process summarized the issue, noting that "if the four markets [in her region] could not agree on how PGS should be managed, how could we ever expect to reach agreement at the national level." Indeed, primarily because of how difficult it proved to achieve consensus, the regulatory chapter governing PGS was one of the last sections of the Organic Products Law to be fully drafted. Interestingly, Meirelles (2010) explains that similar difficulties were largely responsible for stalling the development of organic legislation in Brazil in the 1990s.[35]

Operating procedures and perceptions of (il)legitimacy

While for some, the process of fitting PGS into a regulatory framework represents the risk of excessive formality and rigidity, a number of research participants express the opposite concern, arguing that, until further formalization in terms of operating procedures is achieved, the concept will not be able to achieve true legitimacy. The most extreme position – expressed by very few – was summarized by a producer in Oaxaca: "The way

34 The details of the process will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

35 The Brazilian legislation was eventually passed in 2003, and regulations that included recognition of three forms of organic certification (third party, PGS and social control) came into effect in 2007 (Meirelles 2010).

[participatory certification] works now, it is too subjective, so I don't think it's valid, even if you're just talking about selling in [one local] market."[36] Representing the majority opinion, another Oaxacan producer was less harsh but still critical, suggesting that "[t]he way the concept has been explained to me, I have all the confidence in the world in participatory certification, but the way it is actually working in practice right now, well, we're just starting, and it isn't that it doesn't work, but let's just say that because we're just starting I don't have 100% trust yet." The desire to ensure that PGS be practiced in a sufficiently formal manner was also expressed by some consumers. For example, a regular visitor to the local organic market in Puebla noted that "[t]he idea [of PGS] is wonderful, but it's still a bit open, and I think in order to maintain a certain level of recognition as something that is trustworthy, so that the [MNLOM] markets don't get burned, it has to be done in a strict way."

One of the MNLOM market coordinators explained how MNLOM efforts to promote PGS and ensure its inclusion within Mexico's organic legislation, along with his own reading on the subject, helped assuage his concerns about legitimacy: "At first I was against [PGS] because it had no official authorization and didn't offer the possibility to sell outside of my local market, but those concerns have been addressed now, and also, when I started to read more about the Brazilian experience, the idea became more interesting to me." Still, he qualified his support, noting that "it will be necessary to have an office, a seal, and all of those things organized. It [PGS] will have to be treated like a business model, not like something romantic." Many producers agreed that PGS "requires a seal or something to make it official" and that "it has to be professional." This is in line with case studies of PGS in India, New Zealand, Brazil, the United States and France, which unanimously find that a

36 Levels of concern regarding the validity of PGS were particularly high amongst members of Oaxaca's Pochote market, which, for a number of years, has been working collectively with the third party agency Certimex to achieve organic certification for its producers using an essentially internal control system model.

recognizable seal, whether it be an NGO logo, or a PGS-specific indicator, is an important element for a successful initiative (IFOAM 2008).

In addition to suggestions that a seal be developed as part of helping PGS gain legitimacy in Mexico, others pointed to the importance of ensuring that 'professionals' play a central role in the process. A producer often looked to as a model of agroecological practice explained that he did not feel competent to participate in his market's PGS committee because of a lack of formal training. "I do trust the participatory certification process" he said, "provided that people from the university, who are trained in how to make a proper determination [regarding certification status] are involved." This stance is, to an extent, at odds with the PGS philosophy of viewing producers as professionals by virtue of their practical experience; however, it is reflective of the discussion in the previous chapter regarding pressures to fall into conventional power dynamics and rely on 'expert' knowledge (see Gaventa 2006; Flora and Flora 2008), and was expressed by a number of MNLOM producers. In one market, for example, the exit of a professionally-trained organic inspector from the participatory certification committee led to a distinct decrease in the committee's activity for a period of time[37], and in another market, the committee only made visits provided that volunteer agronomists from a local university were able to attend.[38] Notably, such concerns were expressed even by MNLOM producers with high levels of formal education, likely because, in many cases, such education was unrelated to the field of agriculture.

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37 At the time research was being conducted, this committee was in the process of reestablishing its regular activities, with a group of newly empowered producers, including some with formal training in agronomy, optimistic about their abilities to effectively manage the PGS process.

38 At the time of research, the MNLOM was in negotiations with Certimex – Mexico's leading third party certification agency – to help train people to carry out PGS. Popular with some, this move was also viewed critically by those feeling that it brings PGS too far away from its principles and too close to replicating the third party inspection model.

Looking beyond operations in individual markets, the majority of producers expressed a desire for the MNLOM as an organization to act as a kind of authority guaranteeing the legitimacy of the PGS work carried out by its member markets. The hesitancy to entrust the PGS process to local committees without the overseeing eye of an organization such as the MNLOM is similar to the hesitancy to entrust certification visits to producers without the overseeing eye of a professional agronomist. Both concerns could be seen as being somewhat in conflict with the PGS tenets of trusting producers as professionals and devolving authority to the local level; however, even the staunchest promoters of trusting producers and ensuring that local markets do not lose their independence to a centralized power argued that:

> One thing we need to do really uniformly is the certification process. We need to be really clear about that, and make sure everyone [in the MNLOM] does it. Which means [the MNLOM] has to send out somebody to do verification. They have to look at the notebooks and do a random selection and go and check people out. As soon as it comes down that that's going to happen people are going to get their act together.

This perspective is consistent with Ostrom and Ahn's (2007) assertion that monitoring does play a key role, even within primarily trust-based institutions. It is also echoed in analysis of PGS in Brazil, which found the NGO *Rede Ecovida* plays an essential role in terms of providing some degree of centralized authority for PGS, thereby helping to guarantee its legitimacy (Zanasi et al. 2009). Studies elsewhere have also pointed to the important role of an organizing NGO or producer association for PGS success, and note that the capacity of this managing organization in terms of staff, funding, expertise and social capital is key (IFOAM 2008). To date, the MNLOM has worked with minimal resources to support PGS

in its member markets and at the national level, and it remains to be seen how it will sustain this work on an ongoing and consistent basis in the future.[39]

One final point related to whether PGS in Mexico, as both a concept and a practice, runs the risk of losing legitimacy because of insufficiently-stringent operating procedures, is the question of what happens when a producer within the system is not in compliance with organic standards. The potential for this to be an issue is consistent with Ostrom's (1990) suggestion that coping with possible 'free-riders' (i.e. individuals who may seek the benefits of a collective resource – in this case, a differentiated market – without complying with the rules that govern it) and ensuring broad-based commitment are some of the most common problems affecting efforts at collective action. In the case of the MNLOM, the issue could be relevant for new producers seeking entry to a market, but also for producers already participating in a market who may or may not be engaging in a PGS for the first time.

Referring specifically to examples of producers who have already been PGS certified and are selling in an MLNOM market, but who exhibit non-compliance with organic standards on subsequent PGS visits, a co-founder of the MNLOM and long-time proponent of, and participant in, PGS noted that "it is a worry, and it's something that we haven't yet resolved completely." In accordance with the PGS ideal of encouraging producers to gradually move towards organic best practices with the assistance of the PGS committee, she explained that "[w]e can't resolve it by saying 'we're kicking you out', no. That option doesn't even cross our minds. But the situation does make us think, and ask ourselves exactly what kind of a system do we have to implement, because we have to be making constant visits, because it seems that one visit is not enough." Notably, the issue of non-compliance has not been

39 At the time of research, a 3 year project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and administered by the Falls Brook Centre that had been central to the development of PGS capacity had come to an end, while a new short-term project with SENASICA was beginning. Upon conclusion of that new project, it is unclear where the MNLOM will obtain resources to continue supporting PGS.

widely discussed in the published information regarding PGS, although Källander (2008) does make a general suggestion that it is important for PGS initiatives to have some kind clearly defined mechanisms for dealing with non-complying producers. If Ostrom's (1990) work on institutions for collective actions is taken into account, it would be important for PGS to adopt a system of *graduated* punishments to sanction potential non-compliance.

Standards and the inclusive-exclusive debate

While the above discussion focused on legal recognition and operating procedures, the issue of PGS organic standards is one more arena where the tensions between maintaining a grassroots approach and achieving legitimacy through increased regulation and standardization manifest themselves. Specifically, MNLOM meetings on the subject of PGS revealed significant debate within and between markets on the issue of how (or if) to consider social and ecological indicators that go beyond the input-substitution model of organics found in most agency standards. Arguing for the need for PGS to be inclusive, a representative of SAGARPA's Organic Agriculture Working Group suggested that, if it tries to include elements that go beyond the basic organic standards used by certification agencies, "the great challenge of [PGS] will be that it could end up being even stricter than [third party certification] and it could become something very exclusive, more so than inclusive, and it could become something closed off, which is not really the idea." This potential risk is recognized by May (2008: 15), whose case study of PGS in New Zealand found that "overenthusiastic individuals" could sometimes "get carried away with their own ideas of what is organic when they visit a farm", and in so doing impose excessively strict standards. Still, a number of market representatives expressed a strong desire to work with expanded standards, and at the time of writing ,the degree to which they would be able to effectively do so while maintaining the support of the MNLOM remained unclear.

7.5 Building trust in a skeptical society

In its 2008 report on global experiences with PGS, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation declared that "[t]he assumption that an organic certification system could be an expression of trust in the farmers/producers seems to have plucked at the heartstrings of many of the stakeholders in the organic sector worldwide" (Källander 2008: 19). Indeed, trust is widely considered to be the foundation upon which all other elements of a PGS initiative must be built. In addition, the issue of trust is implicit in the above discussion of how PGS may best achieve and maintain legitimacy in the eyes of a variety of stakeholders, from the producers being certified, to those consuming their products, to government agencies. As a result, it is important for any analysis of PGS to consider the degree of trust various actors have in the system, as well as the factors that contribute to that trust (or the lack thereof).

Consumer opinion

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, only 30% of MNLOM consumers surveyed had a working understanding of the PGS concept, with most relying instead on trust in individual producers and/or MNLOM markets as a whole as a guarantee of organic authenticity. The high levels of trust demonstrated by consumers in the honesty of MNLOM producers might make the very notion of PGS seem almost redundant. Similarly, Zanasi et al. (2009: 54) suggest that, in the case of Brazil, levels of trust in small-scale organic producers tend to be so high that "it often happens that at the local market, consumers consider the Ecovida [PGS] Seal for organic products as being something superfluous." In spite of this, a regular consumer at the Chapingo market explained how PGS has the potential to act as a useful complement to such trust: "The trust I have in the products [sold at the market] is a result of the trust I have in the people. But I also know that there is a participatory certification

system, and that helps me have an even higher level of trust." Indeed, although only 27% of the consumers surveyed reported relying on PGS to guarantee the organic quality of products sold at the MNLOM markets, the vast majority (88%) did feel it was important for the markets to have some form of certification system in place to ensure their continued integrity.[40] Those with awareness of PGS expressed high levels of trust in the process, giving it an average rating of 6 on a scale of 1 to 7. Notably, this was equal to the average trust rating given to third party certification.

Producer opinion

In the case of producers, those surveyed actually reported higher levels of trust in PGS when compared to third-party organic certification. When asked for a rating on a scale of 1 to 7, the average producer score for PGS was 6, compared to an average of 4.8 for third-party certification. While a small number of producers did give third-party certification a slightly higher trust rating than PGS, 82.5% reported having more trust in PGS. In addition, whereas only one respondent gave PGS a trust rating less than 3, 17 respondents (or 21%) gave ratings less than 3 to third party certification. A producer from Puebla helped explain part of the reasons for this, noting that she has "more faith in participatory certification [when compared to third party certification] because we ourselves go and we see how people are producing."

Preference for a non-profit certification process

Although the levels of trust reported in PGS and third party certification were not dramatically different, it is worth noting that those who favoured PGS tended to express strong feelings

40 In addition to consumer preference for some kind of certification system to be in place it is worth remembering that, as mentioned earlier, the Mexican Organic Products Law makes such certification a legal requirement, and it is also beneficial for sales outside of MNLOM markets where there may be no direct contact between producer and consumer, for example in the case of organic specialty stores.

regarding their distrust of the accredited organic certification agencies operating in Mexico. As a producer from the San Cristóbal local organic market put it: "I have absolutely no trust in [third party] certification. Those who have money just pay, and they get it." Another producer at the same market echoed the sentiment, claiming that third party certification "is about paying, period. I don't have any trust in it." In MNLOM markets across the country, similar sentiments were expressed. "I don't really trust Certimex [one of the most active organic certification agencies in Mexico]" explained a Chapingo producer, "because it is a business that is dedicated first and foremost to economic interests…They have an interest in having more certified organic producers, because that way they make more money."

Producers were not the only ones to express concern about the profit-oriented third party certifiers. One of the MNLOM's co-founders, who is also a regular consumer at the Chapingo market and a certified organic inspector, noted that there are considerable doubts regarding the validity of certifications carried out by the Italian agency Bioagricert. She explained that "as a consumer [the concerns about Bioagricert] are a bit disappointing, especially because sometimes it's the only label available and I have to say to myself, 'I believe they're cheating me'. And I'm lucky, because most consumers wouldn't even know that, and that's frustrating." Another MNLOM consumer without the same specialized knowledge shared essentially the same opinion, noting that "in any kind of company doing certification of anything there is a lot of corruption."

These concerns about officially recognized forms of organic certification are perhaps not surprising considering that Mexico is characterized in general by extremely low levels of trust in institutions and authorities. A recent study of global youth found that Mexicans exhibited "record distrust of all of their national institutions", with only one third trusting the media, 19% the legal system, and 14% the police (Reynié 2011: 73) and Camp (2007) suggests that, largely because of its history as well as more recent corruption problems,

Mexico experiences lower than average levels of trust in authorities and institutions. Because this reality is the backdrop against which organic certification in Mexico takes place, the argument that, because of its presumed objectivity and professionalism, third party certification should be considered the only valid option loses some traction. Consequently, the not-for-profit, less institutional, less mainstream PGS alternative becomes potentially more appealing.

Engendering trust through face-to-face relationships

While its not-for-profit nature may help give PGS an edge over third party certification in the eyes of many associated with the MNLOM, perhaps the most important factor contributing to high levels of trust in PGS are the face-to-face relationships that form an integral part of the process. "I've never heard of participatory certification" said a regular consumer who reported purchasing more than 90% of her food at Chapingo's local organic market, "but I do have trust in the products [at the market] because I trust the people here…On occasion I've spoken to producers about their production, but normally I don't. I just trust them." Indeed, having a direct relationship with a producer received the same high ratings of trust from consumers surveyed as both third party certification and PGS.

This finding is consistent with Zanasi et al.'s (2009) research on PGS in Brazil, and Moore's (2006: 425) study of an Irish farmers' market, which found that "the personal, facework connection was seen to be of paramount importance, operating as an alternative expert system" in which "personal reassurance was more important than technical organic certification." The existence of such high levels of trust between producers and consumers

suggests that, in spite of some of the doubts regarding legitimacy raised above, a solid basis exists within the MNLOM upon which PGS may be strengthened over time.[41]

Avoiding an overly romantic view of PGS

It is important not to overlook the fact that, although respondents expressed generally high levels of trust in PGS, as the earlier discussion regarding legitimacy pointed to, the process is not without its challenges and potential flaws. When it comes specifically to the issue of trust, while face-to-face relationships and a not-for-profit orientation certainly help inspire faith, it is impossible to ignore the reality that PGS initiatives do not exist in an ideal world where honesty can always be assumed. Rather, they are constructed within imperfect socio-economic systems in which a certain amount of doubt or mistrust may be necessary, and even beneficial. Conscious of this, even those research participants with the highest levels of trust in PGS often made comments to the effect that the potential for dishonesty should not be ignored.

One reason given by respondents for maintaining a healthy skepticism about PGS was that, although the economic interests associated with it may be considerably less than in the case with third party certification, the ability to achieve certification via PGS and participate in the MNLOM markets does offer the potential for some financial reward. According to one consumer in Puebla, "[t]he honesty of the producers is the key to participatory certification, and it is very good to show trust, but we also can't be fools, because the reality is, if people

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41 As noted earlier in this chapter, the high levels of trust reported by consumers in MNLOM producers might suggest that constructing PGS is unnecessary. In Brazil, recognition of the unique circumstances created by face-to-face producer-consumer contact led the Brazilian government to officially recognize a third organic certification option. In cases of direct sale, producers can be granted certification based on their membership in a recognized producer or market association – a process referred to as certification by "social control" (MAPA 2008). This might be an avenue worth exploring in the Mexican context; however, the current structure of the country's organic legislation might render it impossible, while interest on the part of MNLOM producers to expand their marketing options through PGS might render it undesirable.

see that they can sell a product for a slightly higher price, there are people who will try to exploit that." Her suggestion was not that producers might engage in bribery within a PGS, but rather that they could take advantage of the trust-based nature of the system and lie about some aspects of their production; in other words, they could engage in the kind of 'free-riding' behaviour mentioned above.

Notably, fellow producers tended to express more concern than consumers about the potential for people to cheat within a PGS. This may be due to the fact that producers have a greater understanding of how PGS works, or because they have a more vested interest in ensuring that the integrity of the local organic markets does not come into question. In some cases, inter-market conflicts and competition could also contribute to a certain degree of suspicion. For example, one market coordinator noted that producers sometimes questioned their colleagues if the vegetables they were selling appeared to be too big, or too free of imperfections to be organic. A number of producers also noted that, in their opinion, cheating the system would be easy within the PGS framework. As a producer in San Cristóbal put it: "In the end, if I want to cheat you, I'll cheat you, whether or not there is some kind of certification process." Zanasi et al. (2009: 53) suggests that, in Brazil, high levels of social cohesion within producer groups mitigate the potential for this kind of cheating, as "the fear of losing their reputation becomes an important factor preventing farmers from breaking the rules".

In some cases, non-compliance with the PGS process in Mexico may occur in a less than intentional manner. A former MNLOM organizer active in the implementation of PGS cited the example of a family of corn producers who received fairly extensive extension assistance as part of their participation in a PGS, and made corresponding changes to their production, indicating a willingness to adopt organic techniques – particularly the composting of manure. Follow-up visits with this family demonstrated that some changes

had been abandoned over time in favour of a return to traditional methods that did not comply with organic standards; however, the family made no attempts to hide this information, instead claiming that they were unaware their practices were unacceptable. While expressing some doubt regarding this apparent lack of awareness, the MNLOM leader explained that "there are some people, especially the more elderly producers with very low levels of formal education, who, it's not that they aren't committed, but it seems to me that we need to have a more permanent extension presence with them." A producer added that, "it's often a question of culture. You can teach people how to do it [produce organically and comply with PGS procedures], and accompany them step by step, and they will do it, but once they're on their own, not likely."

Whether cases of noncompliance are primarily related to a lack of education, lack of clear understanding of organic standards or PGS requirements, lack of motivation and commitment, or some other factor was unclear. What was certain, however, according to the MNLOM leader, was that "they [the participatory certification committees] have to have a response…They cannot say that they have done nothing in these cases, because they don't have the capacity, or they haven't had time to meet. They have to do something, because any consumer could ask at any time." While the ideal response would certainly be increased capacity-building and extension assistance, the limited resources available to those working on PGS in Mexico make that option exceedingly difficult to realize.

7.6 The Participatory Ideal vs. the Practical Reality

The above closely-related discussions of legitimacy and trust highlight some of the challenges inherent in converting a conceptual framework, which consists of a number of ideals, into a system that can function in a practical way. However, perhaps the most basic demonstration of this tension relates to the participation required for a PGS to be effective.

With the word included in the very title of the concept, the importance of participation cannot be overstated. One MNLOM producer explained that, in her opinion, the best thing about PGS is that "it is a way of integrating all the different parts of the productive chain." Another producer explained more specifically the benefits that this integration of different food chain actors offers: "…when you involve a diverse group like that, you make a movement stronger, because it isn't depending on one person, or one agency, but instead on a whole community." Yet, while there was general consensus amongst research participants regarding how valuable broad-based, active and consistent participation is to PGS functioning, many noted that translating that ideal into practice is a significant challenge. This is consistent with findings from studies conducted on PGS around the world by IFOAM (2008) and Källander (2008).

Time constraints

One market coordinator explained that just arranging meetings to deal with the day-to-day market operations can sometimes seem impossible: "We don't do meetings. It's not like we don't try, but you can't just meet by yourself, and no one ever shows up." She recognized, though, that in order for PGS to work things will have to change: "Now we have to start meeting, because we can't do the participatory certification if we don't, and that's going to be the big challenge for us." Many producers and consumers noted that time constraints made participation in PGS difficult. Although most did not criticize the volunteer nature of the PGS committees, instead making apologies for their lack of time and/or commitment, one producer did explicitly state that ensuring participation is difficult because "there's the fact that no one wants to pay, so on top of being very complicated…you have people doing a lot of work and not getting paid for it….and no matter how committed you are, after 15 or 20 visits [on a volunteer basis], that's it, no?" This is reflective of concerns raised by Nelson et al. (2010) that dependence on donated time and resources is a significant

constraint to the development of PGS in Mexico. The particularly low levels of consumer participation in Mexico are also consistent with Källander's (2008) finding that a lack of consumer presence in the system was one of the most important weaknesses facing PGS at the global level.

Insufficient empowerment and/or expertise

In addition to time constraints, a lack of sufficient training (both real and perceived) acts as another barrier to achieving necessary levels of PGS participation. IFOAM (2008: 1) notes that "active participation on the part of the stakeholders results in greater empowerment, but also greater responsibility…", and a number of MNLOM members expressed concerns about their capacity to meet this responsibility. For example, the case was presented earlier in this chapter of a producer with model agroecological practices who did not feel comfortable participating on his market's PGS committee because of a lack of formal training and technical expertise. This discomfort was not mitigated by the fact that the producer had a university degree. Rather, the fact that his degree was in a field unrelated to agriculture may have contributed to his feelings of inadequate expertise.

While this producer could arguably be considered a prime candidate for PGS work, in other cases feelings of insufficient training may have been more well-grounded. One market coordinator explained that, in her market, a group of producers and consumers was ready and willing to act as a PGS committee; however, they had been stalled by the fact that only one member possessed what the group perceived to be sufficient technical training in organic practices. Employed, and the parent of two small children, this person's availability was reduced, and the market coordinator explained that "even she doesn't feel sufficiently trained…to provide technical training to the producers. And me even less so. I have a very

'lite' understanding of [organic production techniques], so how can I, in good conscience, go train others?"

Signs of progress

In spite of these significant barriers that can stand in the way of achieving the participatory ideal of PGS, there were indications across the MNLOM that suggest a shift towards greater participation may be gradually starting to take place. One of the most illustrative examples of this shift was a market where, for years, the PGS process had been led by a trained agronomist and organic inspector. She explained how producer attitudes about PGS began to change as she gradually decreased her participation in the system:

> I think that it used to be very easy for the producers to say 'there is a certification system [in our market]. They come to review our production, and I comply with the changes they ask me to make.' But then they had to start saying to themselves, 'let's see if this could work in a different way. Let's meet as producers and review the questionnaires [for entry into the market] ourselves.' And when I saw that starting to happen, I thought it was great. It's great that the producers decided it wasn't just about criticizing the system, but about saying 'wow, there are a lot of producers on the waiting list to get into the market, and they're not getting in because we're not active enough'.

As they began to take more ownership of the PGS process, the former leader noted that producers often expressed insecurity about their abilities:

> They started to say 'we have a lot of doubts.' Even [one of the most well-trained and formally-educated market leaders] told me that she wanted me to review the questionnaires and give my opinion. They began to see that things were not so easy. But I had supported them, in terms of explaining the standards, I had explained everything in our meetings, the questionnaires and everything, and we had gone through a process of improving them together, and we had made [certification] visits together, collectively, so they knew how to do it.

> They know how to do it. So let them do it. And, although they're realizing that it is not easy, they are starting to do it, and that's wonderful [because if] we are talking about participatory certification, the producers have to be the principal actors, the most interested in the process, because otherwise, they could just pay for a certification, but that would be far too expensive for them.

The changes happening in that one market were not an isolated experience. Rather, all of the markets participating in the study demonstrated some degree of progress toward solidifying PGS practice through increased participation and commitment to the idea, particularly on the part of producers and market coordinators. In Oaxaca, for example, a producer believed that PGS was gathering momentum in her market and she was able to identify the practical benefits that her own participation had on her production: "Many of the production techniques we're using right now are results of needing to comply with the notifications we received from the participatory certification committee. For example, we are now leaving more space between our production and our neighbours, and we've established permanent green fences to protect our production from contamination."

Driven by a combination of ideological commitment to the concept, and by the practical concerns of having to make the system functional to comply with Mexico's organic legislation, the MNLOM has played an important role in this transition, for example by providing assistance for people to attend PGS training workshops. An agronomist working with one market's PGS committee stressed the importance of that kind of training, explaining that "the producers' dependence on [the two professional agronomists on the committee] was very strong. But now, since one of them attended a [PGS] training course, there has been a restructuring, and our role in things has decreased." In 2010, SENASICA stepped in, offering the first significant sign of government support for PGS in the form of a joint project with the MNLOM. Consisting of a series of workshops across the country, this project was meant to stimulate increased participation in, and adoption of, PGS; however,

at the time of writing, it was still too early to tell the degree to which it will be successful in the long run.

A final note regarding these signs of progress is that they are still rather fragile in nature. Specifically, the process of greater numbers of people taking responsibility for PGS is not linear, but rather appears to be a question of incremental advances, accompanied by periods of sliding backwards. The agronomist-inspector cited above, who also had considerable experience helping to organize PGS at the level of the MNLOM as a whole, noted that, in the case of her home market, "sometimes I see that [the producers] are leaving [PGS] aside again, and so I get a feeling of 'should I go back, or should I not go back?' But if I go back, it seems likely that everyone will want to do things the way we did before, that they will want me to take care of everything again." In order to avoid that, she made a conscious decision to put her concerns aside and let the committee find its feet without her, trusting that they will gradually manage to do so. The gradual nature of progress toward solidifying PGS should not be viewed as surprising, or even as negative; rather, it is reflective of Ostrom and Ahn's (2008: 30, italics added) argument that "simply agreeing on an initial set of rules…is rarely enough. Working out exactly what these rules mean in practice takes time…The time it takes to develop a workable set of rules, known to all parties, *is always substantial*."

7.7 Summary

The concept of PGS is a clear fit with the ideological underpinnings of the MNLOM's work and, indeed, the organization has gained a reputation for itself in recent years as Mexico's leader in the development of the alternative organic certification framework. Nevertheless, implementing PGS – and creating structures that facilitate its functioning at the local, regional, and national levels – remains a work in progress. Research results demonstrate

that almost all MNLOM producers are now familiar with the concept, and a majority have had their production certified by a PGS committee. Engaging consumers in the process has been more challenging; however, when the concept was described to them, most expressed interest in potential future participation, suggesting that, as PGS structures become more solidified, there may be opportunities to increase consumer involvement.

For both producers and consumers, the extent to which active participation in PGS is feasible (or not) is a challenge faced by the system's advocates, as time constraints, coupled with (perceived) lack of expertise, have proven to be barriers, even for some of the most committed MNLOM members. Two other significant challenges that the MNLOM has faced in its efforts to promote PGS within and outside of its organization are the need to strike a balance between trust and oversight, and between flexibility and regulation. In the case of the former, producers tended to express more desire for some kind of official oversight of PGS than their consumer counterparts (perhaps because their livelihoods depend on the long-term maintenance of a market's organic guarantee); however, notably, both groups had at least as much faith in PGS as in third party certification, with producers placing more trust in the former. With respect to the question of adequately regulating PGS without usurping the decision-making authority of local stakeholders, although the legal regulations have now been finalized, the debate continues.

Chapter 8: Civil Society Advocacy for Alternative Agri-food Policy

8.1 Introduction

Each of the previous three chapters referenced, in one way or another, the role that the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets has played (or would like to play) in terms of influencing decision-making at the level of public policy. Chapter 5 suggested that, while the bulk of the organization's work has tended to focus on grassroots community actions outside the realm of policy-making, influencing government at a variety of scales is also considered an important part of its mandate. Chapter 6 then alluded to the fact that, although the MNLOM represents a relatively small percentage of Mexico's organic producers, and an even smaller part of the increasingly lucrative organic market, the organization is widely considered an important voice for the organic sector on the national scene, and has established connections to a number of important government actors. Finally, Chapter 7 introduced the specific case of how the MNLOM was able to ensure institutional recognition of participatory certification (or PGS) within Mexico's national organic legislation.

In this chapter, the case of the MNLOM will be used to more closely examine the ways in which a civil society actor has (or has not) been able to effectively engage in policy-making discussions in order to further its agenda. Specifically, it will be argued that the organization's participation in the crafting of Mexico's national organic policy – and especially its successful efforts to ensure the inclusion of PGS in that policy – can be considered an important achievement, not only for its membership base, but also for other food sovereignty advocates in the country, and for those working on PGS internationally. However, while these positive implications are not insignificant, they do not appear to have substantially altered the strongly negative opinions that MNLOM members have

regarding Mexico's overall agri-food policy framework or, more broadly, the credibility of the country's political institutions.

The chapter will begin by outlining a number of key policies and programs that help constitute a governing framework for Mexico's agri-food sector. Attempts by actors within civil society to influence that framework will then be discussed, with a specific focus on the MNLOM's participation in the drafting of Mexico's national organic legislation. Following this assessment of the MNLOM's relatively successful experience participating in the political arena, the chapter will explore why it has had little impact on its members' negative opinion of the country's overall agri-food policy model, or on their cynicism regarding Mexican political institutions and the ability to which they – either as individuals or through an organization – have any power to effect change at the political level.

8.2 Important Policies and Programs Affecting Mexico's Agri-food Sector[42]

Liberalizing trade: PROCEDE and NAFTA

As discussed in Chapter 3, since the 1980s the Mexican government has been a fervent adopter of policies based on the neoliberal philosophy of liberalizing trade and allowing the forces of the free market to govern the economy. In the case of the agricultural sector, one of the most illustrative examples of this trend was the 1992 implementation of the *Programa Nacional de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Solares Urbanos* (National Program for the Certification of Ejidal Rights, or PROCEDE). Created by amending Article 27 of Mexico's 1917 Constitution (wherein the *ejido* structure of semi-communal land tenure was established), PROCEDE allows *ejidatarios* to obtain private title to their

42 A full-fledged analysis of policies and programs that impact Mexico's agri-food sector is beyond the scope of this chapter. What is presented here is merely intended to provide a general outline of some of the more influential elements of Mexican agri-food policy, primarily as identified by research participants.

share of an *ejido* property and, consequently, rent or sell the land and/or its resources on the free market (see Deininger and Bresciani 2001; de Ita 2006; Yunéz-Naude and Barceinas Paredes 2006). Citing Appendini (2001), de Ita (2006: 151) explains that "[t]he guiding idea of these reforms was to create an active land market that would promote the efficient allocation of resources and improve agricultural investment."

Just two years after PROCEDE laid the foundation for free market trade of *ejido* land, the country entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which opened essentially the entire Mexican economy (including its agri-food sector) to free trade with its northern (and significantly wealthier) neighbours, the United States and Canada. To reiterate a point made in Chapter 3:

> the introduction of NAFTA brought an increase of basic grain imports and a change in crop patterns that favored big agricultural corporations that could adapt to and integrate the new market conditions. However, the small- and medium-sized producers of traditional staples – corn and beans – saw their crop prices plummet as a result of cheap and subsidized imports; they were unable to compensate for the drain by using economies of scale (Rivera and Whiteford 2009: xvii).

Addressing rural poverty: PROCAMPO, Oportunidades, and MasAgro

In 1994, in recognition of the potential negative impacts that trade liberalization was expected to have on Mexico's small-scale basic grain producers, the national government introduced the *Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo* (Program of Direct Support to the Countryside, or PROCAMPO). The main income support for many rural households, PROCAMPO involves direct cash transfers to producers on a per hectare basis. In 2009, the amount paid per hectare was 963 pesos for the fall-winter and spring-summer seasons,

though farmers with less than 5 hectares were eligible to receive 1300 pesos/hectare during the latter cycle (see Zahniser et al. 2010).

While PROCAMPO was designed specifically to aid producers, other programs were created to help the rural poor more generally. Most prominent among them is the conditional cash transfer program *Oportunidades* (Opportunities), which was implemented in 1997 (under the name *Programa de Educación, Salud, y Alimentación*, or PROGRESA). Targeting mainly rural populations (though in recent years urban ones as well), *Oportunidades* provides cash payments that are intended for spending on education, health care, and improved nutrition, and are contingent on school attendance and regular health clinic visits (see Parker 2003). By 2009, 5 million Mexican households were receiving funds through the program (Fiszbein and Schady 2009).

One final program that merits mention is the recently implemented *Modernización Sustentable de la Agricultura Tradicional* (Sustainable Modernization of Traditional Agriculture, or MasAgro) initiative, which is being funded jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture (SAGARPA) and the Inter-American Development Bank, and managed collaboratively by SAGARPA and the *Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo* (International Centre for Maize and Wheat Improvement, or CIMMYT). Designed to run between 2011 and 2021, MasAgro "targets small-scale farmers who lack access to modern agricultural technologies and functional markets…[and] aims to help them increase their income through a combination of improved cropping practices…and conventionally-bred, high-yielding maize and wheat varieties…" (CIMMYT 2012). Notably, the program appears to be designed specifically to combat the decline in food sovereignty that has accompanied trade liberalization, as its primary objective is to increase maize and wheat production on non-irrigated land in order to, among other things, decrease basic grain imports and the amount of cash income spent on food by the rural poor (CIMMYT 2012).

It also appears to be a fairly direct response to a World Bank (2005: 173) report that called for a shift in agricultural policy in Mexico, noting that "[r]esolving the challenges faced by the agricultural sector, including increasing labor productivity, and ensuring that smaller farms and the rain-fed [i.e. non-irrigated] sector can become more competitive, is…essential to rural poverty alleviation."

The Ley de Desarrollo Rural Sustentable (Sustainable Rural Development Law)

Each of the aforementioned policies and programs represent fairly specific manifestations of the Mexican government's views on the country's rural and agricultural sector; however, it is important to remember that they are implemented within a much broader public policy framework. While the predominant ideology underlying that framework could be considered neoliberalism, the 2001 *Ley de Desarrollo Rural Sustentable* (Sustainable Rural Development Law) is evidence that the concept of sustainable development is also on the government's radar, at least in theory.

According to Article 4, the Sustainable Rural Development Law is designed to:

> promote a process of social and economic transformation that recognizes the vulnerability of the [rural] sector and leads the sustained and sustainable improvement of the well-being of the rural population through the bolstering of productive and social development activities…that strive for optimal use, conservation, and improvement of natural resources and are oriented toward the diversification of rural productive activities…increases in productivity, profitability, competitiveness, income, and employment…

Although it offers very little in the way of specific mechanisms for achieving sustainable rural development, the existence of the legislation does signify some institutional recognition of the need to improve economic, social, and environmental conditions in Mexico's rural

areas. In particular, it "emphasizes the food security dimension of agriculture and highlights the needs of marginalized groups" (Morgera et al. 2009: 196).

8.3 Civil Society Attempts to Influence Agri-food Policy in Mexico

In spite of the presence of these programs and policies that seek to address the socio-economic and environmental problems afflicting Mexico's rural regions, the statistics presented in Chapter 3 make clear that government action has been insufficient (to say the least). As such, much of the work to offset the 'crisis in *el campo*' has fallen to organizations (both national and international) from within civil society. This situation is reflective of a global context in which the non-state sector is increasingly responsible for taking action on issues ranging from poverty to environmental degradation.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there is a long history in Mexico of civil society being disenfranchised from politics, particularly in rural regions. Indeed, when compared to its NAFTA partners, Canada and the United States, Mexico is characterized by very low levels of political participation, especially by rural and low income segments of the populations (see Camp 2007; Holzner 2010). However, also mentioned in both Chapters 3 and 6 was the fact that recent decades have seen a significant increase in the importance of – and power possessed by – Mexican civil society (see Foweraker 1990; Stahler-Sholk 2007; Loeza Reyes 2008; Holzner 2010). Indeed, although the degree to which Mexico's relatively new multi-party democracy can be considered fully functional is the subject of much ongoing debate, there appears to be consensus that even a minimal increase in political pluralism has helped social movements that had, for decades, been subject to co-option and clientelism by the single ruling party, gradually gain a greater measure of representativeness and independence, and thus increase their capacity for mobilization (see Camp 2007; Spink et al. 2008; Holzner 2010).

A Mexican movement for food sovereignty

Increased political activism on the part of actors from within civil society has targeted a number of issues, including corruption, drug violence, and land use disputes; however, most relevant to the work presented in this thesis has been the growing movement for food sovereignty in the country. As explained in Chapter 3, this movement can trace its roots, to an extent, to the 1994 Zapatista uprising for autonomy in Chiapas, which "was founded upon many of the themes voiced by the food sovereignty movement" (Schanbacher 2010: 60).

In 2003, civil society organizations specifically dedicated to the issue of food sovereignty in Mexico solidified their own coalition. Under the umbrella slogan '*el campo no aguanta mas*' (the countryside cannot take it anymore), this loose coalition organized a high profile march on Mexico City's central plaza (or *zócalo*) to protest ten years of Mexican participation in NAFTA, and the resultant damage to the national agricultural sector. Such occupation of the *zócalo* can be considered, according to Foweraker (1990: 7), an important symbol of the "(re)appropriation of public and political space by the [Mexican] 'people'." By 2007, the *el campo no aguanta mas* campaign had evolved into an even broader coalition – involving over 300 civil society and peasant organizations – that began to refer to itself as the *Sin Maíz no Hay País* (Without Corn There is no Country) movement.

Like its predecessor, *Sin Maíz no Hay País* has organized demonstrations in Mexico City's *zócalo*, and influencing decision-making regarding public policy is considered an explicit part of its mandate (*Sin Maíz No Hay País* 2011). Although the movement lobbies for a number of policy positions – including, for example, a strengthening of the restrictions on GMO corn – its primary political demand to date has been a call for a renegotiation of NAFTA, and a more general retreat away from a neoliberal policy framework, in order to

protect the viability of Mexico's *campesino* agriculture. To that end, in 2009, the campaign presented an open letter to US President Barack Obama, in which they stated the desire of the Mexican people to "renegotiate NAFTA to protect our corn, the employment of millions of Mexican *campesinos*, and the ways of life of the Mexican countryside" (*Sin Maíz No Hay País* 2009: n.p.). More specifically, they called for renegotiation of NAFTA in order to:

> recover our food sovereignty and security, have the right to preserve our native corn varieties without transgenic contamination, have the right to produce our own food, have the right to maintain the livelihoods and ways of life of 3 million corn producers and their families, have the right to exist and to have our culture and identity as people of corn valued, and for the right to sustainable human development in the Mexican countryside.

The letter to Obama is one example of the *Sin Maíz No Hay País* coalition's direct efforts to engage in public policy discussion. Although this kind of civil society engagement may be encouraged in theory by those in power, Tetrault (2010: 72) argues that, in reality, "peasant organizations are welcome to participate in political processes [only] as long as they go along with the neoliberal agenda." Indeed, the kind of lobbying efforts described above have had little or no perceptible impact on public policy[43], and a sense of being shut out of formal political processes has led many associated with the food sovereignty movement in Mexico to take to the streets. Thus far, the most significant example of food sovereignty-related mass demonstration occurred in 2008, when hundreds of thousands of peasants and

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43 Interestingly, the recent initiation of the MasAgro program does partially address some of the concerns of Mexico's food sovereignty movement. Although it seems unlikely to do anything in the way of promoting agroecological production techniques, its focus on increasing the productivity of small-scale basic grain producers and its explicit objective of decreasing expenditures on food for rural households do seem to signal at least some recognition of the importance of returning the country to self-sufficiency in corn production.

supporters marched to Mexico City from various regions of the country[44]. Although the protest was sparked largely by the acute crisis caused by rising corn and tortilla prices, its scale was indicative of broader feelings of discontent regarding the direction of Mexico's agri-food sector, and the policies that govern it.

8.4 The MNLOM and Mexico's *Ley de Productos Orgánicos* (Organic Products Law)

While the MNLOM and many of its member markets have, in a general sense, supported the political activism of movements like *Sin Maíz no Hay País*, the organization has also engaged with the state in a more direct, targeted effort to help shape newly emerging public policy to govern Mexico's organic sector. As discussed in Chapter 7, the first concrete impact of this engagement was the recognition of participatory certification in the 2006 *Ley de Productos Orgánicos* (Organic Products Law). This recognition was secured by Article 24 of the legislation, which states that:

> Participatory organic certification of production by family and/or small-scale producers organized to that end will be promoted. For this purpose, the Secretary [of Agriculture] taking into account the opinion of the [National] Council [of Organic Production] will issue the necessary legal requirements for its regulation, in order that said products maintain compliance with this Law and other applicable requirements and can be sold as organic within the national market.

As Nelson et al. (2010: 231) explain, the inclusion of this article was achieved as the "result of heavy lobbying by the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets" and was widely considered to be a "major victory for the local organic movement in Mexico." A further victory was the government's decision to consult with the MNLOM regarding the crafting

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44 Notably, in January, 2012, a similar (though smaller in scale) march – dubbed the '*Caravana del Hambre*' or 'Hunger Caravan' - was organized to protest a lack of government response to drought-induced crisis in production levels in the northern states of Chihuahua and Zacatecas.

of a regulatory framework for participatory certification. In response to this invitation, the MNLOM held a two-day workshop in March, 2009, during which representatives from markets across the country came together in Chapingo to develop a proposal for the legislative regulation of participatory certification. The initial document that emerged from the March meeting was revised over the course of that year, primarily via email exchange. It was then used as a starting point for more formal discussions regarding the implementation of Mexico's Organic Products Law that took place in a series of workshops held between 2008 and 2009, and were designed to develop a complete set of regulations (including a national organic standard) to enable the full enacting of the 2006 law. Notably, this workshop series was jointly organized by SENASICA and Chapingo's *Centro de Investigación Interdisciplinaria para el Desarrollo Rural Integral* (Centre for Interdisciplinary Research for Integrated Rural Development, or CIIDRI), which, as mentioned in Chapter 5, houses MNLOM headquarters and is closely connected to the organization. As a result, the MNLOM had a strong presence at the workshops, and its members were able to provide input, not only for the regulation of participatory certification (although that was their primary focus), but also for the broader regulatory framework created to enact the Organic Products Law.

This opportunity for influence at the policy level is an important example of the powerful potential created by the kind of bridging social capital discussed in Chapter 6 and, similarly, by a certain degree of organizational concentration in Chapingo. Indeed, even one of the most vocal critics of that concentration acknowledged that a benefit of Chapingo's important connection to the MNLOM is that it permits "very effective action before SAGARPA" because of "all of the contacts with *diputados* [representatives sitting in the national legislature] and senators." The ability to participate in the policy-making arena could also be seen as reflective of Cornwall's (2002: 3) discussion of a global trend toward

"creating spaces where previously there were none" that allow a variety of actors to engage in governance-related activities. As will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter, these spaces have the potential to create important opportunities for change; however, they are also subject to traditional power dynamics and conventions that, in many cases, may "circumscribe the possibilities for public engagement within a frame determined by external agencies..." (Cornwall 2002: 3).

8.5 Benefits of MNLOM Engagement in the Policy-Making Sphere

As discussed in the previous chapter, the ability of small-scale producers to use PGS as a means of acquiring organic status represents, in and of itself, a significant positive impact of the MNLOM's political activism; however, a number of broader achievements can also be identified. The first, and perhaps most important, more far-reaching benefit of the MNLOM's ability to engage with state actors in public policy development is that it represents at least some degree of institutional recognition for agri-food initiatives that exist in opposition to the conventional system. Specifically, it can be considered a form of official validation – albeit limited in scope – of the importance of: developing locally-focused markets; encouraging ecological production; supporting small-scale producers; and protecting some space for local autonomy over food systems. Notably, taken together, these elements bear much in common with the food sovereignty framework discussed in Chapter 2. They could also be seen as consistent with the IAASTD's (2009) global call for a shift in politics to encourage support for small-holder agiculture, agroecological production practices, and more equitable agri-food trade frameworks.

Such an alternative agri-food model has not traditionally received a lot of support from the Mexican state. As a member of SENASICA's organic working group explained, "it did not simply occur to people in the government to create something like [an article supporting

PGS]…it was purely a result of pressure from the [local organic] sector." Ortigoza (2010) argues that similar pressure from the organic sector as a whole was responsible for the creation of the Organic Products Law (and simultaneously a National Council for Organic Production). While both instances demonstrate the potential for civil society to help shape government decision-making, because its values represent such a contrary position to much of Mexico's broader agri-food policy framework, the inclusion of PGS is particularly striking.

While the government's acceptance of the MNLOM's position on participatory certification could be seen as a perceptible, if small, nod to the food sovereignty movement in the country, it is an even more direct acknowledgement of the credibility of the organization and, by extension, its membership base and their work. Indeed, when the full regulatory guide for implementation of the Organic Products Law was published in 2009, the list of primary authors included the General Coordinator of the MNLOM and two other individuals closely associated with the organization, and the long list of additional contributors included many MNLOM market producers and organizers. A producer from Chapingo directly linked that achievement with the potential for future impacts:

> Right now we have proven that we [the MNLOM] can have some impact on the government…because of the [Organic Products] Law, and our involvement in the creation of its regulations. But this process is not over; we have to think about going the distance. And we might not know exactly where it's going to go, but we have to hope that more spaces will open [like the one that opened for the writing of the Organic Products Law] and that we will be able to take advantage of them and establish a real national program to promote what we stand for.

This kind of comment is evocative of Cornwall's (2002) assertion that, even in cases where political participation might be constructed as "fleeting formations", as opposed to more

permanent arrangements, the potential for more transformative institutional change may be created. In the case of the MNLOM, although its inclusion in a series of workshops on organic policy formation was a somewhat limited event, it certainly has the potential to create "opportunities to lever open policy and political space, and to forge links with other spaces through which networks and alliances can form around particular options and positions" (Cornwall 2002: 21).

While within Mexico, MNLOM influence on the development of organic legislation represents an important advance in terms of institutional recognition of the organization's credibility and legitimacy, there are also international implications related to best practices in organic policy. According to a report published by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), such policy should: be developed in a participatory manner, wherein the government takes an enabling or facilitating role and leaves considerable decision-making power in the hands of grassroots actors; be careful not to over-regulate the domestic sector; provide special provisions for the domestic market and for small-scale producers; and refrain from making third party certification compulsory while encouraging the use of PGS (UNEP and UNCTAD 2008). In part because of the pressure exerted by the MNLOM (along with other actors from within Mexico's organic movement), the resulting legislation offers a potentially useful concrete example of these best practice principles.

8.6 Limitations to Political Engagement

Few, if any, of those associated with the MNLOM would deny that the organization's ability to effectively engage with the government to help shape the direction of its organic legislation was a positive achievement; however, such engagement has also been subject to a number of limitations. As discussed in Chapter 7, a principal challenge was trying to

ensure that the Mexican state did not co-opt PGS and, through the process of legislating its use, strip it of some of its core values. In this section, some of the broader limitations will be discussed. In particular, the pervasive sense of anger, resentment, and frustration toward the Mexican state on the part of many MNLOM members and, consequently, the deep ambivalence about working in collaboration with it will be explored.

An inability to shift the overall direction of agri-food policy

One of the reasons for such ambivalence was a sense that the creation of legislation for the organic sector – and the consequent legal recognition of PGS – did little or nothing to shift the overarching direction of Mexico's agri-food policy framework, generally perceived as being strongly biased in favour of a conventional model of production and trade. In terms of production methods, support for conventional agriculture can be viewed as beginning with the provision, through state-sponsored programs, of industrially-produced seed that is often not good for saving. One MNLOM producer described a problem expressed by both organic and conventional producers: "The seed I am able to purchase using my support from PROCAMPO is rarely good for saving and using the next year", which is problematic because "we earn barely enough to be able to afford a tiny house like this one, where nothing even fits, so how can we buy seed every year?"

MNLOM producers were even more resentful of the government's heavy promotion of chemical fertilizer use, with a producer from Mexico State suggesting that it is the only 'gift' the government provides to farmers in her community. A small-scale MNLOM producer from Oaxaca concurred that the state provides essentially no support to his *campesino* community, noting that "if we do get anything [from the government], it is a dependency on having to buy chemicals, and when we can no longer afford them, we can

no longer produce anything."[45] Similarly, a producer from Tlaxcala explained that "because SAGARPA promotes technological packages, we [producers who want to engage in low input, ecological farming] have to rely on NGOs for support instead."

In addition to a perception that government favours those wanting to engage in high-input agriculture, there was a clear sense amongst research participants that programs are heavily geared toward larger-scale producers. One of the MNLOM's many small-scale producers expressed the essentially unanimous opinion that "[t]he government may have [farming support] programs, but they don't reach the *campesino*; they only reach those with large parcels of land, and the small-scale producers – the true *campesinos* – don't get anything." Another producer explained that, in part, this happens because "small-scale producers lack information about available programs, and don't have the capacity to fill out all of the required forms, and comply with all the prerequisites [for support]." Yet another highlighted the illogical nature of such a tendency, suggesting that "because we are small-scale, we can't get any [government] support, and so sometimes we can't even get our production to market. And you have those who already have the most, and are the biggest, getting the support. Obviously it should be the other way around – that those with the least get the most support – but it's not like that here in Mexico."[46] These sentiments are supported by the findings of a 2005 World Bank report, which determined that agricultural support programs

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45 Many research participants referred to receiving conventional inputs through PROCAMPO. While the program does not officially provide such inputs, Eakin (2006: 47) explains that the Mexican government "has established a system by which farmers can trade in a PROCAMPO voucher to a group of private fertilizer and chemical companies, receiving a credit for their input purchases in the amount of their PROCAMPO payment." Although such an arrangement is technically voluntary, it is strongly encouraged "as a means to influence farmers' technology choices and improve rates of chemical and fertilizer adoption" and "it does not give farmers much flexibility in their choice of inputs or the option to use the voucher for alternative investments."

46 Notably, small-scale conventional producers expressed essentially the same opinion as their organic counterparts, with one from Mexico State noting that: "Those who already have more get more. Here, you see people who have the most advanced greenhouses, and suddenly you notice that they're tearing it down, and building one that is even more advanced, and it's because they get help from the government."

in Mexico – most notably PROCAMPO – "could be better targeted towards small-scale farming" as, in their current form, "[t]hey are generally oriented towards the commercial sector, with limited support for poorer farmers needs" (World Bank, 2005: 174).

Resentment toward a state seen as supporting the kind of production (and producer) eschewed by the MNLOM is further aggravated by a policy framework perceived as favouring free trade over food sovereignty. A medium-scale MNLOM producer who once exported much of his produce, but has since shifted his focus to the internal market, described why he believes the Mexican government's approach to agricultural trade policy is flawed:

> A public policy framework designed to support local production and consumption…and a focus on achieving food self-sufficiency, that is what least interests the state. They keep privileging exports and they want to force us [small- and medium-scale ecological producers] into the mentality that we too can export. They are always telling us we can export. They say that, even if we have very little land, we can coordinate with others, and together fill a container and send it abroad. That is the vision. And that vision is leading us into bankruptcy. We take out loans, and get ourselves into that [export-oriented] dynamic and it leads to failure, because we can't comply with what's needed. For starters, we can't pay the interest on the loans, or we can't maintain the quantities necessary…

Similarly, a long-time regular consumer at one of the MNLOM markets expressed her deep frustration with trade policy and the agri-food sector:

> Our governments have dedicated themselves to removing all support for our agricultural sector. They allow foreign powers to dominate our markets, to come and sell everything they want, and we have to buy it, no matter what, whether it is produced poorly, leads to health problems, impoverishes us, because it's a business, and the politicians are part of it, that's how they stay in power.

Her comment alludes, not only to disagreement with Mexico's trade-liberalizing policies,

but also to the power dynamics that she feels led to the implementation of such policies. This suggestion regarding the close linkages between international agri-business and Mexican politics is supported by Pérez-Ferrer et al.'s (2010: 47) argument that, in Mexico, "the largest food industries form a powerful lobbying group which historically has been central in influencing nutrition and food policy." Notably, it is also reflective of broader global trends for agri-business to exert considerable influence over public policy (see Clapp 2003; Clapp 2005; Morgan 2008).

Beyond the specific language used by research participants to decry their government's agri-food policy priorities, there was often a palpable sense of both desperation and resignation in the tone of the commentary that suggested a striking lack of belief in the ability to effect political change. Such a position was reflected, for example, in a consumer's declaration that: "I have absolutely no hope that our agricultural policy can be changed for the better, none." Indeed, any feelings of achievement stemming from the PGS policy victory seemed to be more than offset by an overall sense that corporate interests continued to hold much more sway when it comes to influencing Mexican agri-food politics than actors – most often from within civil society – advocating for an alternative perspective. Such a situation is not unique to the Mexican context. Rather, it could be considered an example of how, even when new spaces may be created to allow for a degree of engagement in the policy sphere, it is critical to acknowledge that such spaces are situated "within existing relationships of patronage and power" and tend to be limited in scope both by peoples' perceptions of them and, to use Bourdieu's language, by the rules of the game (Cornwall 2002: 14).

A pervasive cynicism about government

While a policy bias perceived to favour a conventional agri-food model was the source of unanimous frustration for research participants, a more general belief in the tendency

for state institutions to be corrupt, and a corresponding cynicism regarding the potential efficacy (or lack thereof) of engagement, tended to provoke an even stronger emotional response. Giving voice to the full range of commentary on the shortcomings of Mexico's political institutions is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, presenting even a small number of comments helps explain why many MNLOM members are ambivalent about collaborating with the state, which they fear may grant it a certain legitimacy that, in the eyes of most, is undeserved.

Expressing a viewpoint reflective of the majority of research participants, a market organizer from Metepec suggested: "Politics here in Mexico is absolutely disgusting. I have no hope. None at all. It is evil, perverse and entirely corrupt, and for any of that to change there would have to be a miracle." A Chapingo consumer began to cry when discussing the issue: "We have 'dis-government'; we do not have government. Before [the shift to multi-party democracy] we didn't have government, but even when we only had one party the rats were less rat-like than they are now. Now they are incredible…their actions are unforgiveable…The worst part is, I have no hope at all that we can do anything to change the situation. It's our reality." An MNLOM producer summed up the sentiment simply, noting that "the [Mexican] government, at all levels, has lost all credibility, if they ever had any." Such feelings are reflective of issues mentioned in Chapter 3, including widespread perceptions of systemic corruption, and overall low levels of belief in political efficacy (that are particularly pronounced in rural regions) (see Cleary and Stokes 2006; Camp 2007).

In addition to general expressions of lack of faith in government, many research participants were quick to point out specific cases of corruption they had witnessed. For example, a producer from Oaxaca explained how new tractors were provided to a group of farmers who had supported the winning political party in recent municipal elections: "They don't

give the tractors to the people who most need them; instead they say 'I'm giving them to the people who helped me win the election.' They promise you everything during an election campaign, but if you live in an isolated community, or you don't want to give your vote, you don't get anything." Conventional producers described similar experiences, with one from Mexico State noting:

> The government is great at scamming the people. They talk and talk and talk, but you can easily see the corruption. One particular case is burned into my memory. A producer group was given a computer worth 7000 pesos, but it came with a receipt for 21 000 pesos, and everyone is in on the scam, and the money gets split. Part of the extra 14 000 pesos goes to whoever provided the computer, part of it goes to the government officials, and part of it goes to the leaders of the group. None of the benefit goes to the *campesino*. We get absolutely nothing. And there is no control. No way to change this.

Such examples help explain why, as mentioned in Chapter 3, Mexicans tend to exhibit extremely low levels of trust in institutions associated with the state (including political parties, the police, and the legal system) (see Camp 2007). Abhorrence of government structures perceived as corrupt has led some producers to turn down supports they might be eligible to receive. One producer, who could have had an artisanal-scale mill partially paid for through a government program, spoke at length about her belief that the program was corrupt, and concluded that participation was not worth it: "With supports like that, it's better to just say no, don't you think?"

While at least 4 other producers mentioned eschewing government support for which they were eligible,[47] other MNLOM members spoke more generally about a preference to, as far as possible, avoid engaging with the state. For example, one market organizer suggested that

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47 In two cases, producers refrained from participating in PROCAMPO because, as one explained, "we didn't trust the government, so we didn't want to sign the necessary papers."

"everything has to come from the people, from civil society, because with the government… no." Another explained how she "would really like to do more [in terms of political work], at least at the municipal level, but then I go, and I talk to those [government] guys, and it just seems so hopeless, so I stop." Finally, a third market organizer provided a clear expression of the ambivalence that many MNLOM members feel about engagement with the government: "I personally feel that the more independently from the government we work, the better it is for the [MNLOM]."

Such a position evokes Cornwall's (2002: 25) suggestion that, in some cases, "[c]itizen groups...may represent the interests of the public more effectively by remaining outside attempts to include them [in the political sphere] and using public space – radio, the press, public hearings – to air their grievances and seek accountability." In so doing, organizations may be able to "exert pressure in ways that collaborating with state or suprastate authorities might preclude, as the dance of diplomacy and the dangers of losing opportunities to influence put out of reach more active tactics to hold powerful institutions to account" (Cornwall 2002: 25-26). However, the aformentioned market organizer who expressed a clear personal preference for such an approach also noted: "It's complicated because, at the same time [as I prefer to work independently of government], it can be useful to take advantage of official channels to facilitate our work, like we did in the case of participatory certification. So political involvement is not really desirable, but at the same time it's necessary."

8.7 Summary

Both the literature and the research presented in this thesis suggest that public policy in Mexico (as in much of the world) has, to date, not only done an insufficient job of addressing the crisis in *el campo*, but has – through its strong focus on trade liberalization – contributed

significantly to its creation. As a result, much of the work done to improve conditions for the country's rural population, and to increase the sustainability of its food system, has been led by groups from within civil society – including international NGOs, national peasant organizations, and groups like the MNLOM. While much of this civil society work has focused on grassroots-based programs designed to address concrete issues, attempts to influence public policy have also been made – particularly since the formation of the *Sin Maíz no Hay País* coalition.

Through its very targeted engagement in public policy-making for the governing of the national organic sector, the MNLOM could actually be considered to have had more political impact than many other civil society organizations. Such impact has the benefits of: protecting the ability of producers working within the framework of participatory certification to continue using the organic label; providing some measure of official recognition for the values associated with the food sovereignty movement; lending institutional legitimacy to the MNLOM; and providing an example that can be used as an international best practice – in terms of both content and process – for the legalization of participatory certification. More broadly, it could also be considered an example of how "legislative reform coupled with activism by social movements has enabled citizens to more effectively demand their entitlements and pressure for accountability" (Cornwall 2002: 4).

In spite of these positive achievements, however, it is impossible to ignore the deeply negative sentiments that were almost unanimously expressed by research participants toward their governmental institutions. Reflective of a long history of undemocratic government and systemic corruption in Mexico, as well as global power dynamics that favour conventionally-oriented agri-food politics, it was almost impossible for most MNLOM members to believe in their potential to create meaningful change in the political

sphere. Rather, there was a strong sense of the kind of circumscribing of action described by Cornwall (2002: 23), as citizens may engage with government, "yet do so, necessarily, on terms set by others." As such, the 'victory' of participatory certification seemed to many to be a somewhat pyrrhic one. In the end, the words of the aforementioned market organizer – that engagement in formal politics can best be conceived of as a necessary evil – offers a good summary of the opinions of research participants on the subject.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

"Everywhere we hear it said, all day long – and this is what gives the dominant discourse its strength – that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neoliberal view, that it has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident, that there is no alternative" (Bourdieu 1998: 29).

"Resistance resides in the fields, in the ways in which good manure is made, noble cows are bred, beautiful farms are constructed, and fresh milk is delivered" (van der Ploeg 2010: 16).

"These [MNLOM] markets are kind of like a cultural revolution. For the last 60 years, everyone has been told that modern is bigger and better, and it's at the supermarket, and what we're doing is saying 'No!'. It's better to buy your neighbour's tlacoyos than pizza at Pizza Hut. And people are understanding that, more and more. They understand the impact that has on our economy immediately, but also on other parts of our lives. It is extremely important. I can't tell you how important [our work] is" (MNLOM producer and market organizer).

9.1 Introduction

The primary intention of this thesis was to contribute to an improved understanding of the processes by which alternative food systems – that are more nourishing to our bodies, our communities, and the Earth than the conventional model – can be created, and their development fostered. In order to facilitate an exploration of this issue, the case of the Mexican Network of Local Organic Markets (MNLOM) was used. A focus on that organization allowed the thesis to address the particular absence of experiences from the Global South in discussions of alternative agri-food initiatives that seek to move beyond the boundaries of the mainstream organic and local food sectors, and present a more holistic

challenge to the conventional food system framework that is grounded in the principles of food sovereignty.

In this final chapter, the data and analysis presented in Chapters 5-8 will be summarized, and their relevance to the themes explored in Chapters 2 and 3, already implicit in the preceding chapters, will be examined more explicitly. The chapter will begin by revisiting the research objectives, and briefly summarizing how the results speak to each one. This overview will be followed by a discussion structured around, first, the food sovereignty framework and its component elements as presented in Chapter 2 and, second, ideas regarding the complex relationship between conventional systems and the alternatives that challenge them.

9.2 Revisiting the Research Objectives

Objective 1: To assess the degree to which participation in the MNLOM contributes (or not) to positive socio-economic changes for small-scale producers

Conventional thinking tends to dictate that, when assessing the value of an initiative such as the MNLOM, one of the first considerations is the degree to which it is contributing to an improvement in people's material well-being. In the case of the MNLOM, it was clear from the outset of this study that its member markets provide an important opportunity for small-scale ecological producers to gain access to a market for their goods. What was less clear was the extent to which such an opportunity actually translated directly into any significant economic benefits. Research results suggest that these benefits may actually be greater than what might have been suspected and, importantly, that they show signs of increasing over time. Although only a small minority of the MNLOM's producers rely on sales at one of its markets as a primary income source, a majority feel that their economic security has increased as a result of the additional marketing channel that a local organic

market represents and, in particular, the cash-in-hand that its direct sale model provides on a relatively reliable weekly basis.

While the positive economic changes brought about by MNLOM participation are certainly important, the research revealed that social impacts are at least equally so. Indeed, in an era when Mexico's small-scale producers, or *campesinos*, are subject, not only to significant economic pressures, but also to considerable social challenges brought about by the declining viability of their livelihoods, the re-valorization of their work and, by extension, their identities, facilitated by participation in a local organic market is valuable beyond measure. Consumer appreciation was an important contributing factor to this process of re-valorization; however, for many, opportunities to participate in decision-making at the market and/or network level, to provide training and education to fellow producers and to the general public, to have a say in certification procedures, to attend conferences and special events, and to play a role in shaping national policy offered additional reasons for improved feelings of self-esteem and self-worth.

Objective 2: To establish how people's attitudes and behaviours may change over the course of their participation in the MNLOM, and the processes by which these changes occur

The most obvious and, to an extent expected, change in the behaviour of both producers and consumers associated with the MNLOM was an increase in the consumption of organic products. Notably, both groups also reported decreases in their consumption of *comida chatarra* (or junk food), particularly cola drinks and highly processed snack foods, and a corresponding rise in vegetable consumption. These changes were attributed to increased accessibility of organic goods, health and nutrition education provided by market workshops and, in the case of producers, the ability to barter for organic products as well as to consume

one's own production. Indeed, one of the more surprising findings of the research was that, for producers, participation in a local organic market often led to a substantial increase in the amount of subsistence production. On the production end of the food chain, it was common that MNLOM involvement led to increasing incorporation of organic techniques (particularly improved composting) into production practices. Findings also suggest that some MNLOM producers and consumers have adopted other environmentally-conscious practices (notably recycling garbage and saving water) at least in part because of messages received at a local organic market.

At the heart of such shifts in consumption, production and resource use practices are attitudes about personal and environmental health. While such attitudes certainly play a role in motivating initial involvement in an MNLOM market, there seems to be little doubt that market participation helps deepen awareness and increase knowledge, thereby strengthening and solidifying values that may have been, to an extent, pre-existing. Importantly, people's feelings and beliefs about social responsibility and the value of community also influence, and are influenced by, MNLOM market participation. As mentioned above, for many producers, participation in a local organic market helps contribute to increased feelings of self-worth. Part of this shift is related to the sense of solidarity created by the markets (and the network) – something that, in spite of the presence of some interpersonal conflict, is palpable in the comments of many producers and consumers.

Objective 3: To explore the extent to which the MNLOM represents the notion of economic activity embedded within social relations and ecological context

Research results clearly demonstrate that the MNLOM markets are a good example of how a food economy can be re-embedded into a broader socio-ecological context. This concept will be expanded upon below; however, for the purposes of summary, a number of

key issues are relevant. Firstly, the markets represent the cultivation of community based around exchange and consumption of food, thereby re-inventing cultural traditions that, in spite of their long history in Mexico, have been on the wane in recent years. Along with a focus on building social relationships and solidarity, the markets also prove to be spaces where both producers and consumers are willing to forego profit maximization in favour of other benefits for themselves, their communities, and their environment. While economic viability is certainly one element of the market experience – particularly for producers – it is not the only concern and, in many cases, not necessarily the primary one.

Objective 4: To identify where decision-making power in the MNLOM is concentrated and how this relates to governance within the organization

The issue of power relations within both individual MNLOM markets and the network as a whole is complex and, at times, contradictory. Results indicated a strong desire on the part of leadership at both levels to empower the membership base to engage in participatory governance; however, the degree to which this was actually being realized is another question. Although a variety of individuals (including some producers) are certainly able to participate in some aspects of organizational decision-making within their markets and the network, the research suggested that a fair amount of authority remains vested in market organizers (who in many, though not all, cases are not producers) and, even more noticeably, in Chapingo. Such a power structure offers a number of benefits, including efficiency and expediency of operations, and the facilitation of connections with influential actors (including government institutions and funding agencies). It also reflects, at least in part, the many barriers that constrain the ability (and in some cases desire) of producers to actively engage in decision-making and governance. However, as individual markets, and the MNLOM as a whole, mature, there are signs of increasing grassroots pressure for more horizontal power structures, and of some advances toward making changes to that end.

Objective 5: To assess the degree to which participants in the MNLOM are scaling up their actions to the level of public policy

The final objective of this thesis was to explore ways in which people associated with the MNLOM are scaling up their work in an effort to effect change, not only for themselves, their families, and their communities, but in a broader, more institutional sense. At the local level, a number of market initiatives have managed to secure municipal government support – most often through the provision of a market space; however, by far the most notable example of political impact was the MNLOM's ability to ensure recognition of participatory certification in the country's 2006 Organic Products Law, and then to participate in the crafting of that law's regulatory framework, which was enacted in 2009. Such public policy influence was greatly facilitated by the organization's location within the University of Chapingo's Centre for Interdisciplinary Research for Integrated Rural Development (CIIDRI), and to the political connections enjoyed by its leadership.

Although there was essentially universal appreciation of the benefits of collaboration with the government on the development of its organic legislation, research results also demonstrated a deep ambivalence regarding engagement with formal political institutions. Indeed, if MNLOM participation in policy-making for the organic sector could be seen as reflective of a democratization process that has created increasing space for civil society engagement in Mexican politics, there was at least equal evidence to suggest that such democratization remains fragile. Indeed, the majority of research participants expressed strongly negative sentiments toward government institutions of all kinds and, in many cases, indicated a preference for avoiding political engagement because of both a belief that it would be ineffective, and a fear that participation might ascribe undeserved legitimacy to political institutions and processes perceived as illegitimate.

9.3 Revisiting the Food Sovereignty Framework

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the concept of food sovereignty has served implicitly as a thread throughout the thesis; however, in this section, research results will be more directly tied to the four elements of the food sovereignty framework that were presented in Chapter 2: diversity; autonomy; equity; and embeddedness.

Diversity

In Mexico, as in other parts of the world, agricultural production is increasingly characterized by declining diversity, from the planting of ever-fewer varieties of seed, to extensive application of agrochemicals that weaken the biodiversity of the soil and the life that depends upon it, to increasing use of monoculture. Although the polyculture-based *milpa* system remains an important part of the country's rural culture, the socio-economic pressures brought about, first and foremost, by trade liberalization are posing a serious threat to its viability. Similarly, local markets that were once dominated by small- and medium-scale producers engaged in direct sale are now almost exclusively monopolized by intermediaries, and more and more consumers are relying on a small number of transnational supermarket chains to meet their food needs.

One of the ways that the MNLOM is helping to challenge these trends and foster diversity is through its committed promotion of agroecological production methods. These methods include: composting techniques designed to increase the diversity of life present in the soil; the use (and exchange) of heritage seed varieties, which helps protect the genetic diversity of crops such as corn; non-chemical pest management strategies that leave the biodiversity of agro-ecosystems intact; and the use of polyculture and, where possible, mixed farming to maximize the diversity of on-farm plant and animal species. The main methods used for encouraging diversity-enhancing techniques such as these are workshops held at the

market level, informal intra-market communication, inter-market exchange visits, the dissemination of training materials by the network coordination, and visits conducted as part of the participatory certification process. A shift to increasingly biodiverse operations is also facilitated by educating MNLOM consumers about the cultural and health benefits of eating seasonally and consuming alternative products. Indeed, in many cases, producers indicated that consumer demand had led them to increase the diversity of products they brought to market.

While biodiversity is an essential element of farm system sustainability, and hence food sovereignty, a diversity of marketing options is also important for the sustained viability of the small- and medium-scale producers who form the backbone of the MNLOM and, more generally, of Mexico's rural communities. Although, as mentioned above, local organic markets do not represent a majority share of household income for most participating producers, they nevertheless provide them with an important means of diversifying their livelihood strategy. Importantly, they also offer consumers an increased diversity of options for meeting their food needs, thereby curbing dependence on a handful of (primarily transnational) supermarket chains.

Autonomy

Like diversity, the notion of protecting the decision-making autonomy of local people over their land and resources is closely linked to food self-sufficiency and food system sustainability, both of which are embedded in the food sovereignty framework. As was outlined in Chapter 3, the degree to which Mexico is self-sufficient in food production has been declining in recent decades, particularly since the country's entry into the North American Free Trade Agreement. Indeed, the adoption of a free trade paradigm has significantly increased the degree to which the Mexican agricultural sector is influenced by

the interests and decisions of parties – often large-scale agribusiness – in other countries, particularly the United States. An illustrative example of this trend has been the gradual relaxing of a prohibition against the planting of GMO corn, which is generally attributed to heavy lobbying by Monsanto.

In a discussion of alternative agri-food initiatives that challenge this trend, Kloppenburg et al. (2000: 182) suggest a number of elements that are integral to their success, each of which is evident, to an extent, in the work of the MNLOM: "An emphasis on locally grown food, regional trading associations, locally owned processing, local currency, and local control over politics and regulation…" The emphasis on locally grown food and local processing needs no further explanation, as it is at the heart of everything that the MNLOM markets do. In terms of regional trading associations, efforts are underway to help develop such associations by facilitating trade (as well as organizational cooperation) between member markets on a regional basis, and, while the organization has not directly implemented an alternative currency, its extensive use of barter could be considered somewhat of an equivalent.

While each of the above items are useful means of facilitating self-sufficiency and autonomy at the local or regional level, without a doubt the most direct way in which the MNLOM contributes to an increase in autonomy for grassroots actors is through its work on participatory certification or, to use IFOAM's preferred terminology, Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS). By rejecting the kind of top-down, inflexible, centralized and, in many cases foreign-based, authority of third party organic certification, PGS represents a mechanism explicitly designed to devolve decision-making power to the local level. In spite of the significant challenges that have been encountered as the organization seeks to implement PGS across its member markets (including the development of some kind of regulatory framework, striking a balance between inclusivity and validity, and ensuring

sufficient levels of active participation), the progress that has been made to date (in particular with regard to achieving legal recognition) is impressive.

Equity

As has been discussed throughout this thesis, Mexico's *campesinos* – like their peasant counterparts around the world – are finding their livelihood strategies increasingly threatened by the pressures of a global capitalist economy. A particularly striking demonstration of this trend was the tortilla crisis of 2007/2008, which saw the price of the staple food increase by 66% in just one month, creating a sharp rise in food insecurity that, ironically, was acutely felt even by households that produced corn. Indeed, food insecurity, along with other indicators of poverty, ia experienced by more than half of the country's rural population, and the lack of opportunities for improvement has led to a mass exodus to both urban centres and, in many cases, to the United States.

Since its inception, the MNLOM has been explicit about promoting a fair trade model to address the inequities facing Mexico's small- and medium-scale producers. Unlike most modern-day markets in the country, the markets or *tianguis* belonging to the organization have strict policies to ensure that the producers themselves, rather than intermediaries, sell goods directly to consumers, thereby capturing the bulk of the profit. For some producers, entry into the MNLOM represents the first time they have been able to gain market access and earn some income from their production. This is particularly the case for a number of female producers, who often sell food grown or processed on an especially small scale. While income generation for marginalized producers is important, the MNLOM is also acutely aware of the common perception that organic goods are an elite product and, as a result, its markets make an effort to maintain reasonable prices. The success of these efforts is borne out by the research results, which suggest that MNLOM consumers are not, on

average, from the highest income brackets of Mexican society, and generally perceive the prices found at the markets to be fair.

Just as important as the income-generating opportunities for small-scale producers created by the MNLOM markets is the way in which the organization helps challenge power differentials and create more equitable relationships. One reflection of this priority is the high representation of women, not only as market producers and consumers, but also in positions of leadership both in individual markets and at the network level. Another is that, although questions about leadership, governance and broad-based, democratic participation may not yet be fully resolved, space does exist within the organization for producers to actively engage in decision-making processes. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the participatory certification committees, where – in a direct challenge to the trend toward devaluing *campesino* knowledge – the expertise of member producers is highly regarded.

Embeddedness

To an extent, the concept of embeddedness brings together each of the themes discussed above, as the value that the MNLOM ascribes to diversity, autonomy, and equity implies a vision in which: food is conceived of as much more than a simple commodity; markets are considered spaces for much more than sales transactions; and profit maximization is explicitly rejected as a guiding principle for decision-making. There was abundant evidence in the research results that suggest such a vision is, more than anything, what provides a shared identity for those associated with the MNLOM and its markets.

Indeed, there is an explicit acknowledgement in the MNLOM's work of the cultural traditions around agriculture, food, and markets that preceded the 'Great Transformation' – to use Polanyi's phrase – to an industrialized, free market society. For example, respect for the sacredness of corn, and a corresponding reverence for the people who produce

it, is ever-present in the markets – on posters, during workshops, in pamphlets and informational booklets on hand, and in casual conversation. Bartering – or *trueque* – is also widely practiced, as was the case in the ancient markets of the Aztec empire, and efforts are made to educate both producers and consumers about the cultivation and preparation of traditional foodstuffs that, in addition to their cultural value, offer health benefits to humans and add to the diversity of agroecosystems.

Finally, and importantly, the MNLOM markets are places where concerns about profit maximization are, while not eschewed entirely, subsumed within a broader set of objectives, the foremost of which for many is the experience of community. Indeed, amongst the MNLOM's producers are lawyers, architects, bankers, accountants, and academics, each of whom made the transition to farming and became involved with the MNLOM because of a desire to find meaning in their livelihood, even if that meant taking a financial loss. Similarly, consumers are willing to pay premiums on a number of products, and to forgo the convenience of supermarkets – where all household necessities can be purchased in one visit at any hour of any day – in order to participate in MNLOM markets, where they often spend far more time than would be required to make their desired purchases. Finally, even for the producers who most depend on a local organic market for income, the community aspect of their participation, including the relationships built with fellow producers and consumers, the knowledge gained, the ability to spend time with family, and the appreciation received for their work, were of the utmost importance.

9.4 The MNLOM, New Subjectivities, and New Structures

According to Pepper (1993: 235) "liberal-capitalist assumptions about the purpose of life and how to live it have gained such hegemony that any attempt to move towards a society based on alternative assumptions does seem either undesirable or futile." Notably, however,

in spite of his recognition of the difficult nature of challenging hegemonic systems, doing just that was something that Pepper actively advocated. Similarly, as was discussed in Chapter 2, Gramsci and Bourdieu – both of whom wrote extensively about the incredible power of cultural hegemony or, to use Bourdieu's language, doxa – acknowledge the possibility of change. Indeed, according to Wolf (1999: 44), in Gramsci's view, "hegemony was envisaged not as a fixed state of affairs but as a continuous process of contestation", wherein "the balance between hegemony and counterhegemony would always be in flux."

New subjectivities

One of the ways that the MNLOM has helped contribute to the emergence of a counterhegemonic food system vision is by facilitating the development of new subjectivities, whose actions – in this case, primarily those related to food – are governed by unconventional values and priorities or, to use Harvey's (2010) terminology, 'mental conceptions of the world'. These new subjectivities bear much in common with Agrawal's (2005: 16) conception of the 'environmental subject', "for whom the environment constitutes a critical domain of thought and action." They also challenge conventional conceptions of humans as, essentially, profit-maximizing beings, and are instead more reflective of the notion that human decisions are shaped by many factors beyond the purely economic. Finally, they could be considered a concrete expression of van der Ploeg's (2010: 16) ideas regarding peasant patterns of producion as "vehicles through which resistance [to the conventional agri-food system] is expressed and organized."

One long-time MNLOM consumer and market organizer from Chiapas offered a good summary of how involvement with the organization provides an opportunity for both the expression and reinforcement of an alternative subjectivity:

> More and more it is becoming clear to me that eating is a political act, and that

> my forms of consumption have environmental, social, and political impacts; they even have effects that go much deeper as well. What I eat, or what I stop eating, just like what I wear or stop wearing, everything has a link to the environment, to social well-being, to politics. Being involved [in the MNLOM] is helping me become increasingly conscious of that reality, and it has transformed my life.

Producers from markets across the country similarly equated participation in the MNLOM with the ability to express an alternative set of values. For example, "here [in an MNLOM market in Puebla] it isn't just 'profit, profit, profit'; instead it's about selling, but at the same time about supporting health, community, nutrition…" Such commentary evokes van der Ploeg's (2010: 18) discussion of 'peasant marketplaces', which he describes as: "meeting points where producers of food and consumers meet face to face and interact"; spaces that "embody [alternative] values that are shared by producers and consumers"; and places that "represent a new kind of community."

For some, participation in an MNLOM market (or 'peasant marketplace') made it possible – or easier – to express already-held alternative values; however, for others it represented the first time such values become solidified in a conscious way. The latter was the case for a producer participating in the Metepec market, who explained: "When we first visited the market, it was by accident, and I was amazed. Suddenly I realized that it could be possible to do many more things than what I had imagined; that I could sell my fruit, and even that I could market it as something special." Another producer from Chapingo noted that the potential to help change peoples' attitudes through education is one of the most valued aspects of her MNLOM participation: "If instead of seeking power to dominate others, I seek power to educate them, what greater satisfaction is there in the world?"

One more point that should be made regarding the MNLOM and the emergence and/or

reinforcing of new subjectivities is that it helps to re-appropriate the notion of a *campesino* identity in Mexico and, following the lead of the Vía Campesina and its many member organizations, imbue it with a restored sense of pride. In his discussion of peasant agriculture, Bourdieu (1977: 176-177, italics in original) suggests that, in a system "measured by the yardstick of monetary profit, the most sacred activities find themselves constituted negatively…as lacking concrete or material effect, in short, *gratuitous*, i.e. disinterested but also useless." It would be difficult to overstate how important helping producers and consumers internalize a different perspective is to the MNLOM's work. Indeed, just as Mexican feminists have re-appropriated the meaning of *la Malinche* – declaring with pride '*Yo soy la Malinche'* ('I am *la Malinche*') (see Pratt 1993) – the MNLOM helps small-scale farmers do the same, and creates a space where they can affirm with dignity '*Yo soy campesino'* ('I am a *campesino*'). It is by no means the only such space; however, in a country (and world) where the viability of peasant livelihoods is significantly threatened[48], it is, for those who occupy it, a welcome one.

New structures

According to Seyfang (2007: 118), individuals participating in alternative food networks tend to "find little support within social institutions or social norms, and require an immediate community of people sharing their values, in order to consolidate and reproduce a practical lifestyle, and to provide status and recognition according to different values from the mainstream." The MNLOM and its member markets certainly function as such a community; however, the organization has, importantly, also made some headway in the construction of alternative institutional structures that serve to support its alternative value system. The most notable example of institutional shifting accomplished by the

48 For a more in-depth discussion on the global re-emergence and increasing importance of peasant livelihoods see van der Ploeg (2010).

organization is certainly its work to develop participatory systems for organic certification, and secure legal recognition of the validity of these systems at the national level.

As discussed in Chapter 7, PGS exists in direct ideological opposition to the paradigm of third party certification. Whereas the latter (in addition to having achieved essentially hegemonic status) is almost entirely market-oriented, vertically structured, and based on an absence of relationship between producers and consumers, the former is grounded in the concept of embeddedness, as relationship-building, mutual learning, and trust are prioritized along with the guaranteeing of organic integrity. The fact that PGS can now be used as a legal means of certifying organic production in Mexico represents a significant, albeit still not fully developed, example of how institutions reflective of the new subjectivities described above may begin to be constructed. The PGS experience also serves as a reminder that, although many Mexicans are deeply cynical about conventional politics in their country, spaces do exist to engage in politics in a different way and, even more importantly, to develop institutions, such as PGS, that represent "a shift from bureaucracy to democracy, colonization to freedom, and state to community" (Agrawal 2005: 203).

9.5 Final Thoughts

The research presented in this thesis leaves no doubt that the MNLOM offers an example of how the dominant discourse of the conventional food system can be challenged; how new subjectivities can be developed; how spaces and systems can be constructed within which these new subjectivities can be expressed. However, the research results also make clear that the organization as a whole, along with each of its member markets, is a work in progress. As such, it is possible to identify a number of hopes for its future evolution.

The first is that the organization continue on its trajectory of bringing new markets and, by extension, new producers and consumers, into its fold. Based on recent rates of growth, it seems entirely possible that the network may reach its goal of 100 member markets in the not-too-distant future. While such dynamic expansion has the potential to broaden the scope of the MNLOM's impact, and infuse the organization with new energy and ideas, based on experiences to date, it will also surely provoke intense debates that highlight the heterogeneity of Mexico's local organic movement. Ideally, such debate will be characterized, not by a 'personalization of politics', but rather in accordance with the principles of Wheelan's (2003) latter stages of organizational maturity, wherein negotiation, decision-making, and conflict-resolution are conducted in a constructive, rather than destructive, manner.

Closely linked to this idea is the hope that the MNLOM will continue on its path toward enacting increasingly participatory forms of governance, both at the network level, and within individual markets. As noted in Chapter 6, steps have already been taken in that direction and, ideally, the momentum that has been created from within the organization's membership base in recent years will not be lost. While many constraints will naturally limit the ability – and desire – of some actors to take on an active role in market and/or network governance, research results did reveal a significant number of individuals interested in scaling up their level of participation, and there is little doubt that the organization would benefit – particularly in the long term – by creating mechanisms that allow such participation to occur in a meaningful way, and ensuring that those mechanisms are put into practice.

It must be noted that both expansion of the MNLOM and strengthening systems of participatory governance will be challenging to carry out without access to resources. With funding from the Canadian International Develoment Agency (via the Falls Brook Centre) coming to an end in 2009, and funding from SENASICA ending in 2010, as

of 2011 the organization found itself struggling to finance its basic operations. Ideally, experiments with new forms of communication (e.g. skype, Facebook, and blogging) will help facilitate communication and organization in the absence of funds for face-to-face meetings; however, research results demonstrated that such meetings, as well as the presence of at least minimal paid staff, play a vital role in the organization's work. As such, the MNLOM would benefit from finding a means to self-finance such activities (e.g. through membership fees, payment for extension services, etc.) and/or seeking out new opportunities for external assistance, which would require the building and maintenance of relationships with potential funders. Making such practical matters a priority will be key to the MNLOM's long term sustainability.

Finally, the greatest hope for the future of the MNLOM is that those associated with it continue to remain inspired by the work they do, and committed to persevering in spite of the significant challenges they face in doing so. To paraphrase one MNLOM market organizer: it can be easy for members of a group to fall into patterns of petty politics, jealousies, and power struggle, particularly when available resources are limited, and individuals feel a genuine passion for what they do and the positions they hold; however, such patterns are highly dangerous, as their demoralizing potential can be enormous. The MNLOM can help minimize this risk by continuing to focus on efforts to build both bonding and bridging social capital, thereby strengthening its sense of collective identity and increasing its capacity to engage collaboratively with other actors in order to scale up the impact of its work. In so doing, the organization may continue to serve as an example of van der Ploeg's (2010: 16, italics in original) assertion that: "Resistance resides in the *multitude of alterations (or actively constructed responses)* that have been continued and/or created anew in order to confront the modes of ordering that currently dominate our societies."

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Appendix I: Producer Survey

ESTUDIO SOBRE LA RED MEXICANA DE TIANGUIS Y MERCADOS ORGÁNICOS: GENERANDO UNA BASE DE DATOS

Un Trabajo Doctoral
Erin Nelson
Universidad de Guelph, Canadá

1. **Datos Básicos**
   1.1. Fecha:
   1.2. Tianguis orgánico de pertenencia:
   1.3. Sexo: M F
   1.4. Edad:
   1.5. Estado civil:

2. **Producción Agropecuaria**
   2.1. Años de experiencia en la agricultura:
   2.2. Tamaño de su(s) parcela(s):
   2.3. Superficie de invernadero(s):
   2.4. Tipo de propiedad:
   2.5. Durante cual periodo del año trabaja usted en la producción?
   2.6. Numero de familiares involucradas en la producción (incluyendo usted):
   2.7. Numero de empleados pagados
      a. De tiempo completo:
      b. De tiempo parcial:
      c. Temporales:
   2.8. Usted forma parte de una empresa de producción? Sí No
   2.9. Usted forma parte de una cooperativa de producción? Sí No

3. **La agricultura orgánica**
   3.1. Para usted que significa la agricultura orgánica?

   3.2. Años de experiencia con la agricultura orgánica:
   3.3. Como supo usted de la agricultura orgánica?

   3.4. Cuales eran sus principales razones para empezar con la producción orgánica?

   3.5. Cuales son para usted los principales retos de la producción orgánica?

4. **El tianguis orgánico**
   4.1. Años de pertenencia en el tianguis:
   4.2. Como supo usted del tianguis?

   4.3. Distancia para llegar al tianguis (en km.):
      4.3.1. Forma de transporte utilizada:

   4.4. El tianguis cuenta con un reglamento interno? Sí No No lo sé

4.4.1. En el caso que sí, usted está familiarizado con lo que dice? Sí No Más o menos

4.5. El tianguis cuenta con comités de trabajo/de organización? Sí No No lo sé
4.5.1. En el caso que sí, usted participa en uno(s) de ellos? Sí No
4.5.1.1. Cual(es) puesto(s) tiene?
4.5.1.2. Desde hace cuando lo(s) tiene?
4.5.1.3. Porque le interesa tener este(s) puesto(s)

4.5.2. En el caso que no participa en ningún comité, porque?
a. Quería participar pero no me eligieron
b. Antes participaba pero no me gustó
c. No tengo tiempo
d. Siento que no tengo suficiente conocimiento y/o experiencia
e. Vivo demasiado lejos
f. Otro

4.6. Cada cuanto hay reuniones para todos los productores del tianguis?
4.6.1. Usted asista a estas reuniones:
a. siempre b. casi siempre c. de vez en cuando d. casi nunca e. nunca
4.6.1.1. Cuando asista, participa en votaciones sobre decisiones? Sí No
4.6.1.2. Cuando asista, comparte sus opiniones con los demás:
a. siempre b. casi siempre c. de vez en cuando d. casi nunca e. nunca

4.6.1.3. En el caso que no asista, porque?
a. No tengo tiempo
b. Siento que no tengo suficiente conocimiento para participar
c. Me parecen inútiles las reuniones
d. Otro

4.7. Que tan satisfecho se siente usted con su habilidad de participar en la toma de decisiones sobre la organización del tianguis?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

4.8. Que tan satisfecho se siente usted con la comunicación de decisiones tomadas sin su participación al respeto de la organización del tianguis?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

4.9. Horas (indica si por semana o por mes) dedicadas al trabajo del tianguis
4.9.1. Producción:
4.9.2. Venta:
4.9.3. Reuniones:
4.9.4. Transporte:
4.9.5. Certificación participativa:
4.9.6. Otro _____ :

4.10. Horas dedicadas al tianguis consideradas como 'trabajo voluntario':

4.11. Usted ha donado algunos productos y/o otros recursos al tianguis? Sí No

4.11.1. Por favor apunta lo que ha donado en el ultimo año (incluyendo el valor monetario de las aportaciones en especie)

4.12. Usted ha invitado a otros productores a participar en el tianguis? Sí No

4.12.1. En el caso que sí, cuantos han iniciado participación?

5. **Productos**

5.1. Por favor llene el siguiente cuadro sobre todos los productos que usted maneja:

Producto	**Cantidad (por temporada)**	**Precio**	**Venta en Tianguis**	**Venta en Otros Lugares**	**Auto-consumo**	**Otro Uso**

6. **Cambios en su producción agropecuaria**

6.1. Siente usted que a lo largo de su participación en el tianguis su producción agropecuaria:

a. ha empeorado mucho
b. ha empeorado
c. ha seguido iguales
d. ha mejorado
e. ha mejorado mucho
f. no lo sé

6.2. Por favor señale los cambios que se han producido en sus procesos de producción agropecuaria después de haber iniciado con la agricultura orgánica y/o después de haber iniciado su participación en el tianguis:

Elemento de Producción	**Cambio (indica si fue antes o después de entrar al tianguis)**	**A/D**
Tipo de cultivos		
Semillas utilizadas		
Fertilización de suelo		
Manejo de plagas y enfermedades		
Riego		
Rotación de cultivos		
Especies de animales		
Alimentación de animales		
Cuidado de animales		
Numero de jornales familiares		
Numero de jornales asalariados		
Procesamiento de productos		
Otro		

7. La Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos

7.1. Usted sabe como está organizada la estructura de la Red? Sí No Más o menos
7.2. Usted sabe cuanto financiamiento tiene la Red? Sí No Más o menos
7.3. Usted sabe como se manejan los recursos que tiene la Red? Sí No Más o menos
7.4. Usted ha recibido algún apoyo monetario por parte de la Red? Sí No
- 7.4.1. Cuando lo recibió?
- 7.4.2. Cuanto recibió?
- 7.4.3. Fue regalado o prestado?
- 7.4.4. Para cual(es) uso(o) fue?

7.5. Usted puede dar tres ejemplos de gastos que han sido pagados por la Red?

1.
2.
3.

7.6. Usted ha participado en alguna reunión de la Red? Sí No

7.6.1. En el caso que sí, cuantas veces ha participado?

7.6.2. En el caso que no, porque?

a. Quería participar, pero no me eligieron
b. No tengo tiempo
c. Siento que no tengo suficiente conocimiento y/o experiencia
d. No me interesa la Red
e. Otro

7.7. Usted vende sus productos en otros tianguis de la Red? Sí No

7.7.1. En el caso que sí, en cuantos?

7.7.2. Como llegan sus productos a los demás tianguis?

7.8. Usted ha desarrollado algunas relaciones de negocio con productores de otros tianguis de la Red? Sí No

7.8.1. En el caso que sí, con cuantos?

7.8.2. Que tipo de negocio?

7.9. Que tan útil le parece la existencia de la Red? (1 indica no útil; 7 indica muy útil)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

7.10. Que tanto se siente que pertenece usted a la Red? (1 indica no pertenece; 7 indica un fuerte sentimiento de pertenencia)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

8. Asesoría, Capacitación y Educación

8.1. Nivel de educación formal:

8.2. Usted ha recibido alguna forma de capacitación o asesoría técnica a través del tianguis y/o la Red? Sí No

8.2.1. En el caso que si, por favor indica de que se trató, cuanto tiempo duró, quien lo dio, si había algún costo, cuantas familiares participaron, y que tan útil le pareció en una escala de 1 a 7 (1 indica no útil; 7 indica muy útil):

Tema	Tiempo	Capacitadores	Costo	Personas	Utilidad

8.3. Usted ha recibido alguna forma de capacitación o asesoría técnica a través de alguna otra organización? Sí No

8.3.1. En el caso que si, por favor llene el siguiente cuadro:

Tema	**Tiempo**	**Capacitadores**	**Costo**	**Personas**	**Utilidad**

8.4. En cuales temas le gustaría recibir mas capacitación?

8.5. Usted ha dado alguna capacitación o accesoria técnica sobre la agricultura orgánica?
Sí No

8.5.1. En el caso que si, por favor señale los detalles de su trabajo en el siguiente cuadro:

Gente Capacitada (quien y cuanto)	**Tema(s) de Capacitación**	**Tiempo de trabajo**	**Algún pago**

8.6. Usted puede apuntar por favor 3 cosas especificas que ha aprendido a través de su participación en el tianguis y como las aprendió (por ejemplo nuevas técnicas de producción, formas de comercialización, cosas personales, etc.)?

Cosa aprendida	**Fuente de información/forma de aprendizaje**

8.7. Para usted que tan importantes son las siguientes fuentes de información/aprendizaje? (1 indica que no son importantes; 7 indica que tienen una importancia alta)

a. Los talleres del tianguis 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
b. Eventos y/o materiales de la Red 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
c. Comunicación con otros productores del tianguis 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
d. Comunicación con consumidores del tianguis 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
e. El proceso de certificación participativa 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
f. Otro _____ 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

9. La Certificación

9.1. Cuenta su producción con certificación por agencia? Sí No

9.1.1. Cual agencia(s)?

9.1.2. Desde hace cuando está certificada?

9.1.3. Cuanto paga por año para la certificación?

9.2. Para usted que significa la certificación participativa? (Cuales son los elementos claves?)

9.3. Cuenta su producción con certificación participativa? Sí No

9.3.1. Desde hace cuando?

9.3.2. Cuando fue la ultima visita a su parcela?

9.4. Participa usted en el comité de certificación participativa del tianguis? Sí No

9.4.1. En el caso que no, porque?

a. No tengo tiempo
b. Siento que no tengo suficiente conocimiento
c. Vivo demasiado lejos
d. Otro

9.5. Según usted, que tan importante es que los productores del tianguis cuenta con alguna forma de certificación orgánica? (1 indica que no es necesario; 7 indica que es necesario)

1----2----3----4----5----6----7

9.6. Por favor, indica su nivel de confianza en las siguientes formas de garantizar que un producto sea orgánico (1 indica ninguna confianza; 7 indica confianza completa)

a. Certificación por agencia (como Certimex): 1----2----3----4----5----6----7
b. Certificación participativa: 1----2----3----4----5----6----7
c. La palabra de un productor del tianguis: 1----2----3----4----5----6----7

9.7. Usted considera que un producto certificado a través de la certificación participativa se debe de poder vender como un producto orgánico:

a. Solo en el tianguis donde se hizo la certificación
b. En todos los tianguis de la Red
c. En cualquier punta de venta local
d. En cualquier punta de venta nacional
e. En cualquier punta de venta del mundo
f. No lo sé

10. Ingresos

10.1. Anexo 1 – costos de producción agrícola

10.2. Anexo 2 – costos de producción pecuaria

10.3. Anexo 3 – costos de producción de productos procesados

10.4. Costos semanales de la participación en el tianguis:
10.4.1. transporte al tianguis:
10.4.2. cooperación para la mesa:
10.4.3. pago a vendedores en el tianguis:
10.4.4. otro _____ :
10.5. Ventas semanales (promedio) en el tianguis:
10.6. Cual es su actividad económica principal?
10.7. Cuales otras fuentes de ingresos tiene (en orden de importancia)?

10.8. Ingreso neto de su hogar por mes:
10.9. Porcentaje del ingreso total de su hogar que viene de las ventas en el tianguis:
a. <10% b. 10-30% c. 30-50% d. 50-70% e. 70-90% f. > 90% g. No lo sé

10.10. A lo largo de su participación en el tianguis, las ventas han:
a. empeorado mucho b. empeorado c. seguido iguales d. mejorado e. mejorado mucho

10.11. Por favor indica su nivel de satisfacción con sus ingresos del tianguis (1 indica ninguna satisfacción; 7 indica satisfacción completa).
1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
10.11.1. A lo largo de su participación en el tianguis, el nivel de satisfacción ha:
a. bajado mucho b. bajado c. no ha cambiado d. subido e. subido mucho

10.12. A lo largo de su participación en el tianguis los ingresos netos de su hogar han:
a. bajado mucho b. bajado c. seguido iguales d. subido e. subido mucho
10.12.1. En el caso de que hayan cambiado, puede dar algunas razones?

10.13. Usted ha encontrado alguna(s) fuente(s) de ingreso nueva(s) a través de su participación en el tianguis? (Por ejemplo contratos con tiendas, consumidores que le compran en otros lugares, contratos para dar capacitación, etc.)
10.13.1. En el caso que si, por favor apuntalas:

10.14. Usted cuenta con algún crédito o préstamo? Sí No
10.14.1. De donde lo tiene?
10.14.2. Desde hace cuando lo tiene?
10.14.3. Cuanto recibió?
10.14.4. Taza de interés:
10.14.5. Para cual(es) uso(s) es?

10.15. Usted recibe algún subsidio para su producción? Sí No

10.15.1. De donde?

10.15.2. Cuanto?

10.15.3. Para que?

11. Consumo

11.1. Por favor señale en el siguiente cuadro como usted obtiene los alimentos para su hogar:

Actividad/Lugar	**Dinero gastado por mes**	**Productos obtenidos**	**% de Consumo**
Su propia producción			
Tianguis orgánico			
Tienda orgánica			
Tianguis convencional			
Supermercado			
Tienda de abarrotes			
Restaurantes			
Otro			

11.2. Antes de entrar al tianguis orgánico, con que frecuencia compraba usted productos orgánicos?

a. Nunca b. De vez en cuando c. Frecuentemente d. Siempre

11.3. A lo largo de su participación en el tianguis, su nivel de consumo de productos orgánicos ha:

a. bajado mucho b. bajado c. seguido igual d. subido e. subido mucho

11.4. Usted intercambia productos con otros productores del tianguis? Sí No

11.4.1. Cuales productos aporta usted?

11.4.2. Cuales productos recibe usted?

11.4.3. Aproximadamente cual es el valor monetario de los productos que intercambia por semana?

11.4.4. Ha crecido la cantidad de productos intercambiados a lo largo de su participación en el tianguis? Sí No

11.5. A lo largo de su participación en el tianguis, su nivel de consumo de alimentos de su propia producción ha:

a. bajado mucho b. bajado c. seguido igual d. subido e. subido mucho

11.6. Que tan satisfecho se siente usted con la calidad de nutrición de los alimentos que consume su familia? (1 indica muy insatisfecho; 7 indica completamente satisfecho)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

11.6.1. Después de haber iniciado su participación en el tianguis, el nivel de satisfacción con la calidad de nutrición de sus alimentos ha:

a. bajado mucho b. bajado c. seguido igual d. subido e. subido mucho

11.6.2. En el caso de que haya cambiado, puede dar algunas razones?

12. Relaciones sociales

12.1. Se han desarrollado algunas relaciones de amistad con otros productores del tianguis?
Sí No

12.1.1. En el caso que sí, con aproximadamente cuantos?

12.2. Se han desarrollado algunas relaciones conflictivas con otros productores del tianguis?
Sí No

12.2.1. En el caso que sí, con aproximadamente cuantos?

12.3. Aproximadamente cuantas consumidores tiene usted que considera como 'consumidores fieles' (o sea que le compran constantemente)?

12.3.1. Este numero ha crecido a lo largo de su participación en el tianguis? Sí No

12.3.2. En el caso que haya crecido, por cuanto?

12.4. Se han desarrollado algunas relaciones de amistad con sus consumidores? Sí No

12.4.1. En el caso que sí, con aproximadamente cuantos?

12.5. Usted a veces regala productos a sus consumidores? Sí No

12.5.1. En el caso que si, cuanto regala por semana/mes/año?

12.6. Usted recibe a veces regalos de sus consumidores? Sí No

12.6.1. En el caso que sí, que le han regalado?

12.7. Por favor indica el nivel de sentido de pertenencia a una comunidad que le da su participación en el tianguis: (1 indica ningún sentido de pertenencia; 7 indica sentido de pertenencia muy alto)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

12.7.1. A lo largo de su participación en el tianguis, este nivel ha:
a. bajado mucho b. bajado c. seguido igual d. subido e. subido mucho

12.7.1.1. En el caso que haya cambiado, puede dar algunas razones porque?

13. Relaciones familiares

13.1. Numero de adultos que viven en su hogar (incluyendo usted):

13.2. Numero de niños (menores de 18) que viven en su hogar:

13.3. Después de haber iniciado su participación en el tianguis, cuales de las siguientes descripciones sobre sus relaciones familiares aplican? (por favor apunta todas las que aplican)

a. Mi papel en mi familia no ha cambiado
b. Contribuyo mas que antes a los ingresos de mi hogar
c. Mi familia me respeta mas que antes
d. Mi familia me critica por mi participación en el tianguis
e. Siento que tengo mas autoridad dentro de mi familia que antes
f. Tengo mas tiempo con mis hijos
g. Tengo menos tiempo con mis hijos

13.4. En el siguiente cuadro por favor señale si otros miembros de su familia participa en el trabajo (incluyendo asistencia al tianguis):

Relación	Actividades	Tiempo	Desde cuando

13.5. A lo largo de su participación en el tianguis, el tiempo que dedican otros miembros de su familia al trabajo del tianguis ha:

a. bajado mucho b. bajado c. seguido igual d. subido e. subido mucho

13.5.1. En el caso de que haya cambiado, puede dar algunas razones porque?

13.6. Para usted, que tan importante es que su familia esté involucrada en el trabajo del tianguis? (1 indica que no tiene ninguna importancia; 7 indica que es muy importante)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

13.7. Algún miembro de su hogar ha salido de la comunidad para trabajar?

13.7.1. A donde fue?

13.7.2. Para cuanto tiempo?

13.7.3. Que tipo de trabajo tiene/tenía?

13.7.4. En el caso que envía/enviaba dinero, cuanto por mes?

13.7.5. Como se siente usted al respeto de esta salida?

14. Otras opiniones

14.1. Después de haber iniciado su participación en el tianguis, siente usted que su salud física ha:

a. empeorado mucho b. empeorado c. seguido igual d. mejorado e. mejorado mucho f. no lo sé

14.1.1. En el caso de que haya cambiado, puede dar algunas razones?

14.2. Después de haber iniciado su participación en el tianguis, su nivel de autoestima/confianza en si mismo ha:

a. empeorado mucho b. empeorado c. seguido igual d. mejorado e. mejorado mucho f. no lo sé

14.2.1. En el caso de que haya cambiado, puede dar algunas razones?

14.3. Que nivel de satisfacción personal siente usted con su participación en el tianguis? (1 indica ninguna satisfacción; 7 indica satisfacción completa)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

14.3.1. Comparado con el trabajo que hacia antes de iniciar su participación con el tianguis, este nivel es:

a. mucho mas bajo b. mas bajo c. igual d. mas alto e. mucho mas alto

14.3.2. A lo largo de su participación en el tianguis su nivel de satisfacción personal:

a. ha bajado mucho b. ha bajado c. ha seguido igual d. ha subido e. ha subido mucho

14.3.2.1. En el caso de que haya cambio, puede dar unas razones porque?

14.4. A parte del tianguis, usted participa en alguna otra actividad relacionado con el medioambiente o la justicia social? Sí No

14.4.1. En el caso que si, cuales actividades? Y desde hace cuando?

14.5. Para usted, cuales son los beneficios mas importantes de su participación en el tianguis?

14.6. Usted tiene algunas sugerencias para el mejoramiento del tianguis orgánico?

14.7. Usted tiene algunas sugerencias para el mejoramiento de la Red?

¡¡¡MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU PARTICIPACIÓN!!!

Appendix II: Consumer Survey

Encuesta del consumidor del tianguis de la Red

1. **Datos**
   1.1. **Sexo**: M F
   1.2. Edad:
   1.3. Distancia entre su casa y el tianguis:
   1.4. De donde viene usted?
   1.5. Numero de personas en su hogar:
   1.6. Como usted se enteró de que existe este tianguis?

A: letrero/manta B: radio C: televisión D: revistas/periódicos E: personas conocidas F: otra (por favor explica)

2. **Tiempo**
   2.1. Desde hace cuanto tiempo viene usted a este tianguis?
   2.2. Cuantas veces al mes/año, viene usted a este tianguis?
   2.3. Cuanto tiempo se queda usted en el tianguis, en promedio?
   2.4. **Participa usted en los talleres del tianguis?** Si No

3. **Razones para venir a este tianguis**
   3.1. Porque viene usted a este tianguis? Poner en orden sus tres principales razones.

- A: el apoyo a pequeños productores
- B: el ambiente del tianguis
- C: la característica orgánica de los productos
- D: el precio de los productos
- E: la calidad y/o sabor de los productos
- F: el consumo de productos locales
- G: la higiene de los productos
- H: mi salud
- I: el cuidado del medio ambiente
- J: la cercanía del tianguis
- K: los talleres
- L: otra razón (cual?)

4. **Consumo**
   4.1. Cuales son los tres principales productos, en frecuencia, que usted compra en el tianguis?

1.	2.	3.

   4.2. Hoy, cuanto dinero ha gastado usted en el tianguis?
   4.3. Cuanto dinero en promedio gasta usted por visita al tianguis?
   4.4. **Que tan justo le parece los precios en el tianguis** (1=no justo, 7=completamente justo)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

   4.5. Aproximadamente cual porcentaje de su consumo de alimentos esta cubierto por el tianguis?

A: 0-10%	B: 10:25%	C: 25-50%	D: 50-75%	E: 75-100%

   4.6. Cuales productos quisiera comprar en el tianguis pero no se encuentran?

   4.7. **Compra usted productos orgánicos en otros lugares?** Si No

Cuales lugares? Cuales productos?

   4.8. Donde usted prefiere comprar los productos orgánicos?

A: en un supermercado B: en una tienda especializada C: en el tianguis orgánico D: en algún otro lugar, cual? E: no tengo preferencia

4.9. Cuales factores influyen sus decisiones con respeto a donde compra los productos orgánicos?

LUGARES	PUNTOS A FAVOR	PUNTOS EN CONTRA
Tianguis		
Tienda especializada		
Supermercado		

FACTORES
A: el precio
B: el ambiente (música, estética, limpieza,…)
C: la confianza en los productos
D: la conveniencia (lugar, horario)
E: la calidad de los productos
F: el apoyo a una economía alternativa
G: la variedad de los productos
H: sentirse como parte de una comunidad
I: la información disponible
J: otro (cual?)

5. El orgánico

5.1. Que es la agricultura orgánica para usted?

6. La garantía del organico

6.1. Cuando usted compra un producto orgánico, busca que sea certificado?

- En los supermercados	si	no	no se
- En Greencorner u otra tienda especializada	si	no	no se
- En el tianguis orgánico	si	no	no se

6.2. En el caso que no, entonces, cual es lo que le da la confianza en el producto?

A: el lugar de venta como garantía
B: la relación de confianza con los productores
C: la calidad de los productos
D: otra?

6.3. **Un(os) productor(es) de este tianguis le ha(n) explicado las razones de tener confianza en la calidad orgánica de sus productos?** (Por favor apunta todas las respuestas que aplican)

A: Si, me han explicado las técnicas orgánicas que usan
B: Si, me han explicado el sistema de garantía orgánica que se aplica en el tianguis
C: No he preguntado
D: He preguntado pero no me han respondido

6.4. Como sabe usted que los productos que compra en este tianguis son orgánicos?

A: por confianza en los productores
B: por confianza en el tianguis
C: por la información disponible en el tianguis
D: por etiquetas y/o sellos de certificación
E: por visitas de mi iniciativa a las granjas de productores del tianguis
F: por visitas de verificación que ha hecho gente del tianguis a las granjas (la certificación participativa)
G: tengo dudas sobre la calidad orgánica de los productos del tianguis
H: otra

6.5. **Usted sabe la diferencia(s) entre los productos orgánicos y naturales?** Si No

7. La certificación participativa

7.1. **Usted ha escuchado hablar de la certificación participativa?** Si No

7.2. Para usted en que consiste la certificación participativa?

(Explicación de lo que es la certificación participativa)

7.3. **Participa usted en la certificación participativa?** Si No

- Si, porque?
- No, porque?
  - A: no sabia que los consumidores pueden participar
  - B: falta de tiempo
  - C: no conozco bien las normas del orgánico
  - D: no me han invitado
  - E: vivo lejos
  - F: otra? cual

7.4. **Cual es el nivel de confianza de usted en las siguientes formas de garantizar que un producto es orgánico?** (1 = nada de confianza, 7 = toda la confianza)

- un sello de certificación orgánica de una agencia como CERTIMEX:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	no se
- una certificación participativa:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	no se
- una relación directa y de confianza con el productor:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	no se

7.5. **Usted piensa que es importante tener un sistema que respalda de manera mas formal la confianza que puede tener con los productores del tianguis?** Si No

8. Opiniones

8.1. **Seria dispuesta usted a involucrarse mas en el tianguis?** Si No

En el caso que si, en cuales actividades les interesaría participar?

A: publicidad B: organizar y/o dar talleres C: organización general D: eventos
E: otro (que):

8.2. Según usted porque no hay mas consumidores en este tianguis? Poner en orden sus tres principales razones.

A : poca oferta de productos
B : precios altos
C : falta de conocimiento sobre el orgánico
D : falta de información sobre este tianguis
E : falta de interés por la alimentación en general
F : el horario (día y hora)
G : el lugar (lejos, difícil de acceder)
H : la calidad de los productos
I : el ambiente del tianguis
J : otra, cual?

8.3. Según usted, que se podría hacer para mejorar este tianguis?

9. Otros datos

9.1. Nivel de estudio:

9.2. Nivel de ingreso por mes:

<3 000	3 000 - 10 000	10 000 - 17 000	17 000 - 24 000	> 24 000

Appendix III: Interview Themes (Organic Producers)

Interview Themes (Organic Producers)

- Motivations for joining the MNOM
  - how did these motivations develop? e.g. specific events, etc.

- Changes to production techniques since joining the MNOM
  - how and why were they made?
  - was assistance offered? from whom?

- Changes to consumption patterns since joining the MNOM
  - consumption of own products, other organic market products, other organic products, more seasonal goods, etc.

- Income earned
  - do market sales meet income needs?
  - if not, what other strategies are used?
  - degree of satisfaction with income earned through market
  - has income increased, decreased or stayed the same over course of involvement with the MNOM

- Participation in market and MNOM decision-making
  - contributions made to decisions regarding how the market is run? the Network?
  - feelings about ability (or lack thereof) to contribute to decision-making
  - impacts of decisions on work/feelings about work
  - satisfaction with communication regarding decision-making processes
  - suggestions for improvement
  - thoughts on decisions that affect market or MNOM made by other actors (e.g. SAGARPA)
  - feelings about ability to influence these actors
  - degree of knowledge regarding market functioning, MNOM activities

- Participation in market and Network activities
  - participation in participatory certification committee? why/why not?
  - other activities?
  - attendance to Network meetings? why/why not?
  - would you like to be more or less involved in market/Network activities?

- Participation in political activities, or environmental or social movements outside of the MNOM
  - opinions about current agricultural policy
  - knowledge regarding political activities of the MNOM
  - motivations for any participation in other groups/activities

- Incorporation of social and/or environmental values into economic decisions

    - where does profit fit on a list of other goals of market involvement – including e.g. environmental conservation, helping to support other local producers, providing quality goods to consumers at prices they can afford, educating people, building community, preserving culture...
    - willingness and/or ability to forgo profit for other values
    - time spent volunteering and/or other donated contributions to MNOM

- Potential social changes since joining MNOM
    - e.g. education level, social circles, self-perception, role in family

Appendix IV: Interview Themes (Organic Consumers)

Interview Themes (Organic Consumers)

- Age, gender, education level, income bracket

- Motivations for participation in the MNOM
  - how did these motivations develop? e.g. specific events, etc.

- Changes to consumption patterns since joining the MNOM
  - consumption of own products, other organic market products, other organic products, etc.
  - changes to quantities of food purchased? types of foods purchased?

- Money spent
  - how much on average?
  - opinions of prices

- Thoughts about supply
  - what products are purchased
  - to what extent are consumption needs met by market?
  - what would you like to buy that is not available?
  - where else to you purchase food? why? (e.g. other local markets, supermarkets, other organic suppliers)
  - satisfaction with quality of products (including packaging, taste, freshness)

- Participation in market activities
  - participation in the participatory certification committee? why/why not?
  - contributions to other market activities (besides consumption)?
  - would you like to be more involved in market activities?

- Participation in market and MNOM decision-making
  - contributions made to decisions regarding how the market is run? the Network?
  - feelings about ability (or lack thereof) to contribute to decision-making
  - satisfaction with communication regarding decision-making processes
  - suggestions for improvement

- Participation in political activities, or environmental or social movements outside of the MNOM
  - opinions about current agricultural policy
  - knowledge regarding political activities of the MNOM
  - motivations for any participation in other groups/activities

- Incorporation of social and/or environmental values into economic decisions
  - where does price fit on a list of other elements of market – including e.g. environmental conservation, helping to support local producers, building community, knowing producers personally, preserving culture, feelings about the market space, presentation and quality of products...

    - willingness and/or ability to pay more for other values
    - time spent volunteering and/or other donated contributions to MNOM

- Any other noteworthy changes in lifestyle, values, thoughts, actions, social circles, education levels, self-perception, etc. since joining MNOM

Appendix V: Interview Themes (Conventional Producers)

Interview Themes (Conventional Market Producers)

- Income earned
  - do market sales meet income needs?
  - if not, what other strategies are used?
  - degree of satisfaction with income earned through market

- Participation in market decision-making
  - contributions made to decisions regarding how the market is run?
  - feelings about ability (or lack thereof) to contribute to decision-making
  - satisfaction with communication regarding decision-making processes

- Participation in political activities, or environmental or social movements
  - opinions about current agricultural policy
  - participation in any social, environmental or political organization

- Incorporation of social and/or environmental values into economic decisions
  - where does profit fit on a list of other goals of market involvement – including e.g. environmental conservation, helping to support other local producers, providing quality goods to consumers at prices they can afford, educating people, building community, preserving culture...
  - willingness and/or ability to forgo profit for other values
  - time spent volunteering and/or other donated contributions to market

- Thoughts on the local organic market
  - heard of it?
  - if so, what is it?
  - would you ever consider participating? why/why not?

- Migration
  - Considered migration?
  - Family members who have migrated?
  - Benefits/problems